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OF NORTH HOLLYWOOD**

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SUNDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 1, 1970, AT 7:30 P.M.

**LOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE
AND SINFONIA ORCHESTRA**

ROGER WAGNER, Music Director

BRITTEN War Requiem

I. REQUIEM AETERNAM

Requiem aeternam
Te decet hymnus
What passing bells
Kyrie eleison

Chorus
Boys' choir
Tenor solo
Chorus

II. DIES IRAE

Dies irae
Bugles sang
Liber scriptus
Out there
Recordare
Be slowly lifted up
Dies irae
Lacrimosa
Move him
Pie Jesu Domine

Chorus
Baritone solo
Soprano solo & chorus
Tenor & baritone solos
Chorus
Baritone solo
Chorus
Soprano solo & chorus
Tenor solo
Chorus

INTERMISSION

III. OFFERTORIUM

Domine Jesu Christe
Sed signifer
So Abram rose
Hostias et preces

Boys' choir
Chorus
Baritone & tenor solos
Boys' choir

IV. SANCTUS

Sanctus
After the blast

Soprano solo & chorus
Baritone solo

V. AGNUS DEI

One ever hangs
Agnus Dei

Tenor solo
Chorus

VI. LIBERA ME

Libera me, Domine
It seemed that out of battle
"None," said the other
Let us sleep now
In paradisum

Chorus & soprano solo
Tenor solo
Baritone solo
Tenor & baritone solos
Boys' choir, chorus & soprano solo

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PROGRAM NOTES

By ARTHUR F. EDWARDS

Annotator, Los Angeles Master Chorale

The *War Requiem* was completed on December 20, 1961, and was first performed in St. Michael's Cathedral, Coventry. The extraordinary scope and tension of the work is implicit in the title — *War*: the unquiet periodic madness of men; *Requiem*: the formal liturgical prayer that the dead may have eternal rest. One point cannot be overemphasized: this is not a *Requiem* in the tradition of the settings of Mozart, Berlioz, Verdi, Fauré, and Duruflé. The Latin text simply provides a frame for the nine poems of Wilfred Owen, the entire work serving as a preparation for the final poem, *Strange Meeting*.

Britten presents the work in three planes: soprano soloist, chorus, and full orchestra for the Latin texts; a "distant" boys' choir and organ also for the Latin texts; and tenor and baritone soloists and chamber orchestra for the Owen poems. One is immediately struck by the spare selectivity of the orchestration — no instrument is used that is not absolutely necessary. The main orchestra is rather standard except for a large brass section and the requirement of four percussion players in addition to the timpanist. The chamber orchestra consists merely of flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, percussion (one player including timpani), harp, and five solo strings. Throughout the work Britten rigidly restricts himself to the small ensemble in scoring the Owen texts. Only once (*Be slowly lifted up*) does he "borrow" two trumpets from the main orchestra.

Since the nine poems of Wilfred Owen form the core of the entire work, the texts are reproduced in full with the titles given them by the author (which do not appear in the score). Wilfred Owen was bitterly and knowledgeably against war. He earned his right to speak out; he was killed in battle on November 4, 1918, one week before the Armistice. He was in his twenty-fifth year.

I. REQUIEM AETERNAM

From the first notes of the *War Requiem* it is obvious that this is a *Requiem* on a battlefield. As Alec Robertson writes in his excellent book *Requiem, Music of Mourning and Consolation*, it is "a painfully halting procession along the *Via dolorosa*, the highway of war." Against this tapestry of grief

the bell and chorus sound the basic motive of the work — a chord that is not a chord — the medieval *diabolus in musica*, the tritone (an interval of three whole tones) C - F sharp. No succession or conjunction of notes could more perfectly strike the mood of this unrestful *Requiem*.

The boys' choir (always distant and perhaps representing the innocence of the unborn — the boys destined to be the casualties of future wars) is heard in a fresh and joyous melody. Against them the high strings alternate the C and F sharp. The way the melody entwines itself around these two notes is but one of many felicitous touches in the score.

The procession resumes and, in the first of many exquisite transitions, the spotlight, as it were, shifts to the chamber orchestra and the first of the Owen poems:

Anthem for Doomed Youth

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?

Only the monstrous anger of the guns.

Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle

Can patter out their hasty orisons. No mockeries for them from prayers or bells,

Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, —

The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;

And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?

Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes

Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.

The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;

Their flowers the tenderness of silent minds,

And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

The melody of the boys' *Te decet hymnus* is heard on various winds (oboe, clarinet, horn, flute, bassoon) and finally is sung in notes of double length. A coda dissolves into the unaccompanied chorus singing the three petitions of the *Kyrie*. The first two end on the tritone, but the final *Kyrie eleison* resolves to the absolute tranquility of an F major chord.

II. DIES IRAE

Britten's *Dies irae* (Day of wrath) is located at the place of wrath — the battlefield. The three bugle calls on trombone, trumpet, and horn are followed by a downward scale on the trombone and tuba. These are used as

points of reference again and again throughout the remainder of the work. The chorus enters in a lurching, broken rhythm that builds inexorably to the *Tuba mirum*. Here is an apocalyptic fanfare that in weight, terror, and immediacy surpasses all previous settings of the text. The chorus dies away and the horn of the chamber orchestra sounds the first bugle motive, repeated by the soloist.

Voices

Bugles sang, saddening the evening air,
And bugles answered, sorrowful to hear.

Voices of boys were by the riverside.

Sleep mothered them; and left the twilight sad.

The shadow of the morrow weighed on men.

Voices of old despondency resigned,
Bowed by the shadow of the morrow, slept.

The solo soprano launches into the liturgy with an imperious setting of *Liber scriptus* echoed by the groveling moans of the chorus doubled by strings *sul ponticello*. After a short pause, the rattling rhythm of the snare drum jolts the listener back to the trenches as the soldiers sing of

The Next War

Out there, we've walked quite friendly up to Death;

Sat down and eaten with him, cool and bland, —

Pardoned his spilling mess-tins in our hand.

We've sniffed the green thick odour of his breath, —

Our eyes wept, but our courage didn't writhe.

He's spat at us with bullets and he's coughed

Shrapnel. We chorussed when he sang aloft;

He whistled while he shaved us with his scythe.

Oh, Death was never enemy of ours!

We laughed at him, we leagued with him, old chum.

No soldier's paid to kick against his powers.

We laughed, knowing that better men would come,

And greater wars; when each proud fighter brags

He wars on Death — for Life; not men — for flags.

The bitter sarcasm of the last line is somewhat ameliorated by soft chords of the trumpets (marked *sweetly*), and the women of the chorus sing a quiet, Verdian setting of the *Recordare, Jesu pie* and *Qui Mariam absolvisti*. The basses, low brass, and strings bring a

(continued on p.27.)

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snarling fury to *Confutatis maledictis* followed by the terrified whimper of the tenors and the scurrying, skirling winds at *Oro supplex*. The themes are combined and build to savage hysteria. Here occurs what is perhaps the master stroke of the entire work: the timpanist of the chamber orchestra, using a hard stick, continues the arpeggio of *Confutatis maledictis* against which the winds and strings move upwards in block chords.

On Seeing a Piece of Our Artillery Brought into Action

Be slowly lifted up, thou long black arm,
Great gun towering toward Heaven, about to curse;
Reach at that arrogance which needs thy harm,
And beat it down before its sins grow worse;
But when thy spell be cast complete and whole,
May God curse thee, and cut thee from our soul!

"The last word of each line is rammed home with a huge, violently dissonant chord on the orchestra, followed by one or another of the bugle calls . . . On the last words . . . the voice rises to a climactic high G, and *Dies irae* erupts on chorus and full orchestra. One sees that evil black gun slowly rising to kill and maim, the immediacy of the battlefield envelops one." (Robertson, *ibid.*) The eruption gradually dies down, and *Lacrimosa* (O what tears upon that day) at a tempo one-third as fast as before. For the first time the Latin and English texts are alternated as the tenor begins:

Futility

Move him into the sun —
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields unsown.
Always it woke him, even in France,
Until this morning and this snow.
If anything might rouse him now
The kind old sun will know.
Think how it wakes the seeds, —
Woke, once, the clays of a cold star.
Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides,
Full-nerved — still warm — too hard to stir?
Was it for this the clay grew tall?
— O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth's sleep at all?

The chamber orchestra's tremolo becomes the tritone, and the chorus sings *Pie Jesu Domine* (Sweet Lord Jesus, grant them rest) with the same magic resolution that concluded the *Kyrie*.

III. OFFERTORIUM

Domine Jesu Christe is intoned antiphonally by the boys, supported by a prominent organ part. For the only time in the work an almost hectic nervousness disturbs their tranquillity. The chorus takes over at *Sed signifer* (But let holy Michael bring them into the holy light, which Thou didst promise to Abraham and to his seed). At *Quam olim Abrahae* the chorus launches into a *scherzo*, a mindlessly optimistic ditty which is flung from one part to another. It is too happy, too nervous — which is exactly the effect Britten wants. It is merely a preparation for the chilling Owen poem:

The Parable of the Old Men and the Young

So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,
And took the fire with him, and a knife.
And as they sojourned both of them together,
Isaac the first-born spake and said,
My Father,
Behold the preparations, fire and iron,
But where the lamb for this burnt-offering?
Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,
And builded parapets and trenches there,
And stretchèd forth the knife to slay his son.
When lo! an angel called him out of heaven,
Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,
Neither do anything to him.
Behold,
A ram, caught in a thicket by its horns;
Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.
But the old man would not so, but slew his son,—
And half the seed of Europe, one by one.

The off-stage organ is heard in a slow, dissonant march which has no relationship to the music on stage — another ghastly master-stroke. The text *Hostias et preces* sung by the boys' choir reminds us that the promise made to Abraham was that the believer would "pass from death to [eternal] life." On earth man has free will to slaughter his children. The chorus gibbers *Quam olim Abrahae* like frightened ghouls.

IV. SANCTUS

Against the brittle clangor of percussion (first on F sharp, then on C) the soprano melismatically intones the *Sanctus*. It is, it has to be, far different from any traditional setting. The mur-

mur of a gathering crowd gradually overflows into an inflated paean at *Hosanna in excelsis*. It is Palm Sunday — or a war rally. *Benedictus* is sung by the soprano and chorus as a slow, sad minuet. He who is to be crucified is welcomed.

To quote Robertson again: "What can come after Passion and Death? Owen, alienated from Christianity, could only return a tragic answer in the poem . . . for solo baritone that follows."

The End

After the blast of lightning from the East,
The flourish of loud clouds, the Chariot Throne;
After the drums of Time have rolled and ceased,
And by the bronze west long retreat is blown,
Shall life renew these bodies? Of a truth
All death will He annul, all tears assuage? —
Fill the void veins of Life again with youth,
And wash, with an immortal water, Age?
When I do ask white Age he saith not so:
"My head hangs weighed with snow."
And when I hearken to the Earth, she saith:
"My fiery heart shrinks, aching. It is death.
Mine ancient scars shall not be glorified,
Nor my titanic tears, the sea, be dried."

V. AGNUS DEI

The tenor and the chorus share the same accompanimental figure, based on the tritone (a downward scale from F sharp; an upward scale from C). After each verse the chorus sings *Agnus Dei*.

At a Calvary Near the Ancre

One ever hangs where shelled roads part.
In this war He too lost a limb,
But His disciples hide apart;
And now the Soldiers bear with Him.
Near Golgotha strolls many a priest,
And in their faces there is pride
That they were flesh-marked by the Beast
By whom the gentle Christ's denied.

The scribes on all the people shove
And bawl allegiance to the state,
But they who love the greater love
Lay down their life; they do not hate. (continued on p.29)



An Arpege Promise

Dear Broadway.

*I promise never to let
them tear down Gardi's no
matter what they offer me.*

Love, Vincent

(Promise her anything but give her Arpege.)

Instead of closing on the chorus's *Dona eis requiem sempiternam* (Grant them eternal rest), Britten has the tenor sing the ending of the *Agnus Dei* used on festive occasions: *Dona nobis pacem* — Grant us peace. The movement is an oasis of quiet beauty.

VI. LIBERA ME

This is marked *March* and is, according to the composer, "a kind of recapitulation of the whole Mass, with the chorus, up to the climax of *Dies irae* overtaken, as it were, by the steadily accelerating orchestra." The soprano enters at *Tremens* (I am in fear and trembling). At the repetition of *Libera me* the bugle calls are heard again. The effect of this long crescendo is pervasive, inexorable, cataclysmic. It collapses into a gigantic G minor chord that lasts for a full minute, slowly shredding apart and diminishing until its dead echo is all that remains (it is sustained by the strings of the chamber orchestra playing without *vibrato*). The listener is prepared for the final poem, the consummation of the entire work. It was Wilfred Owen's last poem. It is unfinished.

Strange Meeting

It seemed that out of battle I
escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel,
long since scooped
Through granites which titanic
wars had groined.
Yet also there encumbered sleep-
ers groaned,
Too fast in thought or death to
be bestirred.

Then, as I probed them, one
sprang up, and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed
eyes,
Lifting distressful hands as if to
bless.

And no guns thumped, or down
the flues made moan.
"Strange friend," I said, "here is
no cause to mourn."

"None," said the other, "save the
undone years,
The hopelessness. Whatever
hope is yours,
Was my life also; I went hunting
wild
After the wildest beauty in the
world.

For by my glee might many men
have laughed,
And of my weeping something
had been left,
Which must die now. I mean the
truth untold,
The pity of war, the pity war dis-
tilled.
Now men will go content with
what we spoiled.
Or, discontent, boil bloody, and
be spilled.

They will be swift with swiftness
of the tigress,
None will break ranks, though
nations trek from progress.
Miss we the march of this re-
treating world
Into vain citadels that are not
walled.
Then, when much blood had
clogged their chariot-wheels
I would go up and wash them
from sweet wells,
Even from wells we sunk too
deep for war,
Even the sweetest wells that ever
were.
I am the enemy you killed, my
friend.
I knew you in this dark; for so
you frowned
Yesterday through me as you
jabbed and killed.
I parried; but my hands were
loath and cold."
"Let us sleep now . . ."

A few masterly touches of Britten must be noted: the contrast of the "cold" tone of the sustained chords and the throbbing *vibrato* at "probed" and afterwards, the C-F sharp at "strange friend," and the instrumental commentaries between the lines of the baritone.

As the soldiers sing "Let us sleep now" the boys' voices begin the antiphon *In paradisum*. It is the melody of *Quam olim Abrahae* transmuted to become the fulfillment of the promise: angels lead them into Paradise. The "chorus and main orchestra, joined by the soprano soloist, gradually build up a radiant welcome, gentle not strenuous in sound, and only reaching one high point of climax. Then the music is halted. Britten will not end on a paradisaic note. We are in the world, and it is a tragic world, and so the bells toll and the boys sing . . . the processional music goes forward . . . The bells toll again, and the chorus very softly sings the final words of the liturgy *Requiescant in pace*. Amen to the exquisite phrases of the *Kyrie* and *Pie Jesu*, and the mourning motif makes its final resolution onto the utterly peaceful chord of F major. The soldiers sleep at last, the sleep of peace in Christ, by which the early Christians meant the friendship of Christ." (Robertson, *ibid.*)



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WHO'S WHO



DOLORES RAVICH, soprano with the Portland Opera Association, is a local product, having attended Los Angeles City College and University of Southern California as a music major. She has performed with the Los Angeles Civic Light Opera Association and the Beverly Hills Opera Company. Upon completion of her role for the Chorale, she returns immediately to Seattle to perform the role of Giulietta in Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffman* with the Seattle Opera Association.

THE LOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE, formed by Roger Wagner in 1964, became a Resident Company of the Music Center and has also participated at Hollywood Bowl. Each year the Chorale presents a series of important choral works at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, establishing Los Angeles as the only city in the country which supports its own professional resident chorus presenting an annual choral season. The southland's finest singers have been auditioned and admitted to a select membership in the 100-voice ensemble.



HAYDEN BLANCHARD, tenor, celebrates ten years' association with Roger Wagner when he appears with the Los Angeles Master Chorale in tonight's performance. It will also mark his second appearance in the Britten work under Dr. Wagner's direction, for he previously sang the role with the Omaha Symphony. A native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, he is currently on the faculty at the University of Southern California and teaches at Mt. San Antonio College.



ROGER WAGNER. In the field of choral art, Roger Wagner's contributions have made his name synonymous with the highest achievements. He has conducted choral groups in every state in the union as well as on extensive overseas tours covering Europe, South America, Canada, Mexico, Central America, and the Orient. Dr. Wagner's other endeavors are numerous. For the past two decades, he has been Music Director of Choral Activities at the University of California at Los Angeles. He has appeared as guest conductor with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and has conducted countless times in the Hollywood Bowl. Every phase of music has been embraced by Wagner in his long and illustrious career, including composing, arranging, and the recording of more than thirty albums. Among the many honors which have been bestowed upon him are a knighthood by Pope Paul VI for his contributions to sacred music throughout the world and a doctorate cum laude in musicology.

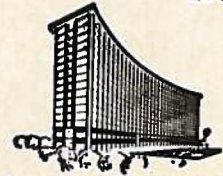


ROGER ARDREY, baritone, has appeared extensively under Roger Wagner's direction, notably as soloist during the Roger Wagner Chorale's tour of Europe and the Middle East. Earlier this year, he was singled out for his projection and feeling in the role of the Inquisitor in the United States premiere performance of Boris Blocher's *Der Grossinquisitor* (The Grand Inquisitor) at Foothill College. Mr. Ardrey has a Ph.D. in musicology and was the opera theatre director at Northern Arizona University for seven years. He is now on the faculty at California State College at Long Beach.

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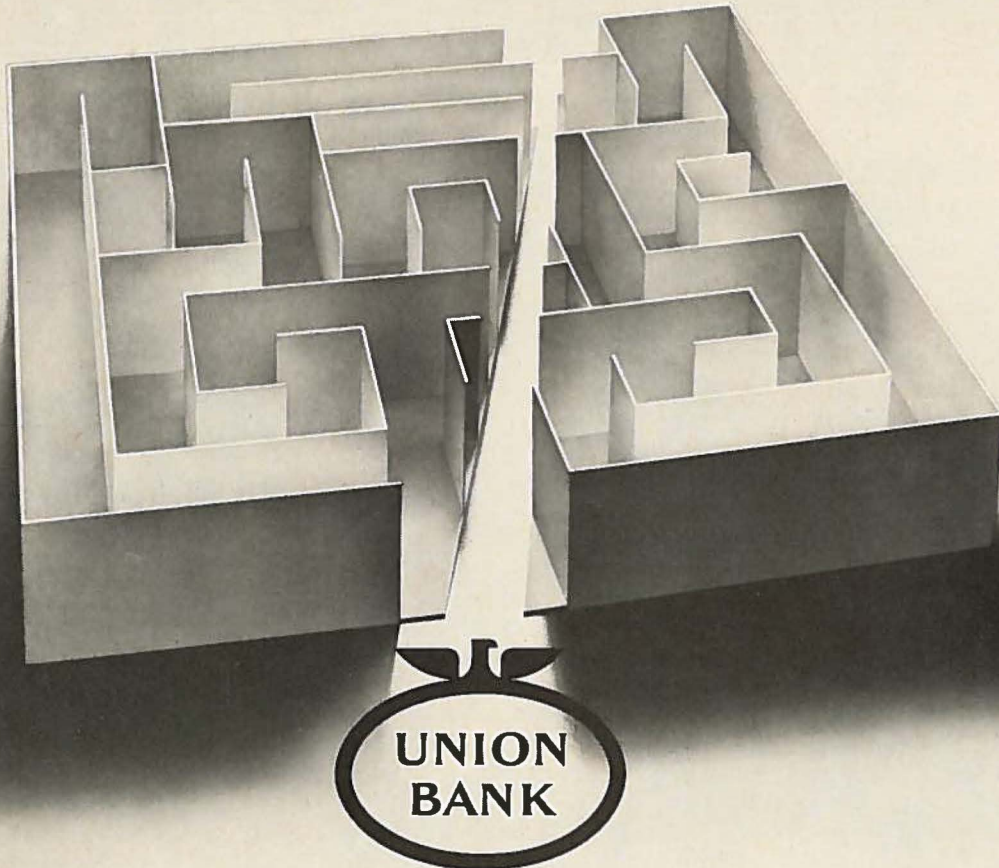
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Robert Selland
Joseph Smayda
Kenneth Westrick
Charles Zimmerman

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Rolla Boyer
Richard Buchwitz
Alfred Chan
James Cox
Arthur Edwards
George Gardner
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Hugh Grinstead
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Frank Hobart
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