

Lyrita

Mirror of Perfection
Vision of a Garden

Richard
Blackford

Ikon • Britten Sinfonia
The Bach Choir • Philharmonia Orchestra
CONDUCTOR DAVID HILL

RICHARD BLACKFORD

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Elizabeth Watts, soprano Roderick Williams, baritone
Ikon Britten Sinfonia

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Stephen Gadd, baritone
The Bach Choir Philharmonia Orchestra

conducted by David Hill

Total playing time 53.27

RICHARD BLACKFORD



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Richard Blackford studied at the Royal College of Music London, where he was awarded the Tagore Gold Medal and the Mendelssohn Scholarship, then in Italy, on a Leverhulme Award, with Hans Werner Henze. He was subsequently first Composer-in-Residence at Balliol College Oxford and later with the Brno Philharmonic. He completed his Doctorate at Bristol University, where he has also been Lecturer in Advanced Orchestration. His music, which includes three operas, two ballets and many works for orchestra, chorus and chamber ensembles, has been performed and broadcast all over the world and has been recorded on Sony Classical, Warner Classics, Decca, Signum and Nimbus labels. He has composed over 200 film and television scores, including over 140 feature dramas for ZDF Germany, the award-winning *Song For A Raggy Boy*, and *Fingersmith* for BBC. In 2000 his four-hour choral and orchestral score for CNN/BBC *Millennium* won an Emmy Award for Best Title Sequence and for which Richard was nominated for Outstanding Achievement in Music. His three critically acclaimed choral works *Mirror Of Perfection*, *Voices of Exile* and *Not In Our Time* were all subjects of television documentaries and have been frequently broadcast and performed around the world. In 2014 *The Great Animal Orchestra* was premiered to great acclaim at the Cheltenham Festival and broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 before being successfully released on Nimbus Records. Multiple performances followed in the UK, USA and Germany. In July 2015 Richard was awarded Die Goldene Deutschland for services to music in Germany, along with Placido Domingo and Jonas Kaufmann. His *Niobe*, a Czech Philharmonic commission for solo violin and orchestra, was given an ovation at its premiere in the Rudolfinum, Prague in 2016, and was released on Signum Classics. In 2018 his *Kalon*, for string quartet and string orchestra, another Cheltenham Festival commission, was premiered by BBC NOW under Martyn Brabbins. *Pietà*, a joint commission from The Bournemouth Symphony Chorus and St Alban's Choral Society, received a standing ovation at its premiere at The Lighthouse, Poole in June 2019, and won the Ivor Novello Composer Award in 2020 in the Choral Category. Richard Blackford is a Trustee of The Bach Choir, Music For Youth, the Aberystwyth MusicFest, Chair of the English Music Festival, and is President of the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus. He is published by Novello and Nimbus Publishing.

www.blackford.co.uk

Mirror Of Perfection

The words, with the exception of the Canticle of The Creatures, are settings of almost unknown poems by St Francis of Assisi. They cover a wide expressive and emotional range: from hope to despair, longing to acceptance, love to bitterness, delight in Creation to an impassioned plea for peace amongst mankind. The cantata is no pious word-setting of an ancient saint – rather it is a passionate and vibrant evocation of a man who remains a symbol of hope for millions of all faiths and none

I *Canticle of The Creatures*. The baritone solo presents a little refrain in rising fourths to the words “laudate sie, misignore,” a theme in praise of Creation which recurs in all seven movements. The chorus *a capella* takes it up in imitative counterpoint as if in response, clinging across the centuries to celebrate Francis’ vision. At the words “frate sole” the strings introduce a rising, ecstatic figure which appears in each of the Canticles of Love as well as the Canticle of Peace. The form of the movement is an arch spanned by symmetrical pillars of choral polyphony and spanned by the baritone refrains.

II *Canticle of Love I*. The baritone’s angular melody in the Aeolian mode is answered by the soprano with the poignant rising figure. Both themes are extended in the second verse, with the soprano soaring upwards on the words “Tanto monta l’ardore”. Here pain and ecstasy co-exist.

III *Canticle of The Furnace*. After a stormy orchestral introduction the chorus bursts in with the refrain “In foco l’Amor mi mise”. The surging triple metre turns to duple in the second and third verses with gasping syncopations. The momentum of the final verse, once again in triple metre, is suddenly arrested at the words “Nella superna Corte”, as the rising, ecstatic figure carries the chorus upward to fortissimo.

IV *Canticle of Love II*. An expansive unison string melody introduces the soprano who slowly, painfully utters the words that, despite herself, she has no choice but to love. The declamatory middle section leads to a majestic entry of the three horns with bell, on which the soprano surges joyfully to the words, “*Bellezza antiqua e nuova.*”

V *Canticle Of the Birds. Mirror Of Perfection*, the 13th century account of Francis’ life, says: *At times Francis, overflowing with the melody of the spirit within him, would manifest it in the French tongue, and the soul of the Divine whisperer in his ears would break forth with a song of joy.* The two verses, from a 19th century translation from the original Latin, are given to the baritone soloist and are bridged by an instrumental interlude featuring the first horn.

VI *Canticle of Love II*. A passacaglia bass unifies the four verses of this astonishing poem in which the word *Amore* appears no less than forty-eight times. From the restrained alto opening verse to the full choral version the orchestra builds contrapuntally and in intensity to the explosive fortissimo of verse three, joined by the soprano soloist. The final verse, for the most part a unison hymn-like version of the theme, dies away leaving only the pizzicato basses that began the movement.

VII *Canticle of Peace*. The opening Creation theme in fourths rises from the depths of the orchestra, like the smoke of incense rising to the topmost vault of a church or cathedral. A high solo violin softly presents the same theme in a falling, mirror version of the original as the chorus sopranos chant Francis’ prayer for peace. The contrapuntal choral material from the first movement re-appears, now more subdued. As the baritone solo softly enters for the last time the soprano and chorus weave contrapuntal variations of the original theme as the music spirals upwards enharmonically through all twelve keys. The three horns, punctuated by unison strings and harp, usher the work to a close.

Richard Blackford

The Genesis of ‘Vision of a Garden’

In 2020 I spent nearly five months (March to August) in hospital with Covid-19, and was in an intensive care unit for more than half that time. In October, when I went back to the hospital for a check-up, I was given two little booklets called ‘ICU Diaries’ which contained messages of support written by the nurses who looked after me in intensive care. I find it astonishing that these people whom I never knew (and who didn’t know me as a person, but only as a bundle of unpleasant symptoms) could write such warm and personal messages. The text that the choir sings in ‘Vision of a Garden’ is taken from their words.

I have plentiful memories from my time in intensive care, but they are almost all false ones: things which my mind invented to keep itself occupied while my body was otherwise engaged in fighting the virus. The narratives that my mind constructed had many strands which overlapped and interconnected in various ways; taken together, they were of course inconsistent, but each of them had its own internal consistency. And, whilst I call them ‘dreams’ for want of a better word, they were much more vivid than ordinary dreams: they engaged all five senses, not just vision and sound.

In the centre of the Addenbrooke’s Hospital complex in Cambridge there is a little garden (called the Jubilee Garden), which is a lovely oasis of peace amid the hospital bustle. As I now know, I was taken to this garden from the ICU a couple of times in May, to get the benefit of the fresh air and sunshine. I wasn’t consciously aware of this, but my subconscious transplanted the garden to Cape Town and incorporated it into my ‘South African dream’. In July, when I was in the rehab ward, the physiotherapists who were then encouraging me to get used to walking longer distances took me out to the garden, and I immediately recognized it as the same place I had visited in the dream. This was extremely worrying, since as far as I knew I’d never been there before, and I couldn’t believe that my mind had invented something that actually existed. It wasn’t until three months later, when I was given my ICU Diaries, that I learned I had in fact seen the garden in May.

Peter Johnstone

Musical Note

When David Hill proposed a Bach Choir commission based on Peter Johnstone's ICU diaries I was immediately drawn to his idea of composing a work to be written during the Covid -19 pandemic about one man's direct and intense experience of it, and the care he received from the nursing staff. Peter was very patient and generous in allowing me to select entries that I felt could provide a satisfying musical structure, entries which could encompass the different stages of his experience, from delirium, crisis, lyrical reflection, to recovery and gratitude to his nurses. The work is framed by gently overlapping choral entries in which the nurses introduce themselves, set against a pulsating, almost mechanical string accompaniment *col legno battuto* that evokes the sounds of hospital ward machines. The first choral outburst, "You are positive with the Covid-19 virus" is thematically linked to the later chorus, "He died from the Covid-19 virus" after the dream garden sequence. A male nurse describes how he sung along to a recording of Handel's Messiah which was played to the delirious Peter. This quote, with its harmonically blurred cadence, leads to the first garden dream music. A lyrical solo viola weaves through the baritone's vocal line. Later, in the real visit to the garden, the viola's material is taken up and transformed by a solo violin. These musical mirrors help to unify the work and help prepare for the choral climax that starts, "I hope you feel better soon." In the final section, in which the baritone articulates the overwhelming feeling of love Peter felt for his nurses, their soft overlapping voices return, as if introducing themselves once more to the next patient in the ICU.

Richard Blackford

Vision of a Garden was commissioned by The Bach Choir and was first performed by them with the Philharmonia Orchestra on 24 October 2021 at the Royal Festival Hall, London. The baritone soloist was Gareth Brynmor John. The conductor was David Hill

Canticle of the Creatures

Laudato sie, misignore,
Cum tucte le tue creature,
Spetialmente messor lo frate sole,
Lo qual è iorno et allumini noi per loi.
Et ellu è bellu e radiante
Cum grande splendore
Da te, Attissimo, porta significazione.

Laudato si, misignore,
Per sora luna e le stelle,
In celu l'ài formate clarite et pretiose et belle

Laudato si, misignore, per frate vento
Et per aere et nubilo et sereno
Et onne tempo,
Per lo quale a le tue creature
Dai sustentamento.
Laudato si, misignore, per sor acqua,
La quale è multo utile et humile
Et pretiosa et casta.

Laudato si, misignore, per frate focu,
Per lo quale ennallumini la nocte.
Ed ello è bello et iocundo
Et robustoso et forte.

Laudate si, misignore,
Per sora nostra matre terra
La quale ne sustenta et governa
Et produce diversi fructi
Con coloriti flori et herba.

Altissimu, omnipotente bonignore,
Tue son le laude, la gloria, et l'honore
Et onne benedictione.

English Translation: Richard Blackford

All praise be yours, my Lord,
For all your creatures,
Specially for Brother Sun,
Who brings the day and the light to us.
He is beautiful and radiant
In all his splendour
To you, Most High, he bears likeness.

All praise be yours, my Lord,
For Sister Moon and Stars,
You made them bright, precious and fair in heaven.

All praise be yours, my Lord,
For Brothers Wind and Air, fair and stormy
All the weather's moods,
For the sustenance
Of all your creatures.
All praise be yours, my Lord, for Sister Water,
So useful, humble,
Precious and pure.

All praise be yours, my Lord, for Brother Fire,
Through whom you brighten the night.
He is beautiful and jocund,
Full of power and strength.

All praise be yours, my Lord,
For our Sister Mother Earth,
Who sustains and governs us
And produces various fruits
With coloured flowers and herbs.

Most high, all-powerful, Lord of Goodness,
All praise is yours, all glory and honour,
And all blessing.

Canticle of Love I

Amor de caritate,
Perché m'hai si ferito?
Lo cor tutt'ho partito,
Ed arde per amore.
Arde ed incende, nullo trova loco:
Non può fuggire, però ch'è legato:
Si si consuma, come cera a foco;

Vivendo muor, languisce stemperato:
E domanda poter fuggier un poco,
Ed in fornace trovasi locato
Oimè do'son menato
A sì forte languire?
Vivendo sì è morire:
Tanto monta l'ardore.

Canticle of the Furnace

In foco l'Amor mi mise:
Divisemi lo core,
E'l corpo cadè in terra.
Quel quadrel dell'amore,
Che balestra disserra,
Percosse con ardore,
Di pace fece guerra.
Moromi di dolciore.

In foco l'Amore mise:
Le sorti, che mandava,
Eran pietre piombate,
Che ciascuna gravava
Mille libbre pesate:
Si spesse le gittava,
Non le arei numerate;
Nulla mai ne fallava.

Love of loves,
Why have you so wounded me?
My heart, torn from its dwelling
Is consumed with love.
It is on fire, it burns, it finds no resting place:
It cannot escape, because it is so chained:
It is consumed like wax in the fire;

Dying, it lives, its langour is sweet:
It prays for power to escape,
And finds itself in a furnace
Alas where will I be led
By this terrible faintness?
It is death to live like this:
Such is the stifling heat of this fire.

Love has cast me in a furnace:
He has pierced my heart,
And my body has fallend to the ground.
The arrows fired
From his bow of love,
Have struck me,
He has turned peace into war.
I am dying of sweetness.

Love has cast me in a furnace:
The darts which he threw
Were lead-covered stones,
Each one weighing
Thousands of pounds:
They rained on me,
like thick hail;
I was unable to count them;

Non mai avrebbe fallato;
Si ben trarle sapeva.
In terra io sternato,
Aitar non mi poteva;
Tutto ero fracassato;
Niente piu mi senteva,
Com'uom, ch'era passato.

In foco l'Amor mi mise:
Passato, non per morte,
Ma di gioia adescato:
Poi rivissi sì forte
Dentro dal cor fermato,
Che seguìi quelle scorte,
Che m'aveano guidato
Nella superna Corte.

In foco l'Amore mi mise.

Canticle of Love II

Chè cielo e terra grida, e sempre clama
E tutte cose, che io sì debbia amare.
Ciascuna dice: con tutto core ama
L'amor, ch'ha' fatto briga d'abbracciare;
Chè quell'amore, per ciò che t'abbrama
Tutti noi ha fatti per a se tirare.
Veggio tanto abbondare
Bontade e cortesia
Da quella luce pia,
Che si spande di fore.

Bellezza antiqua e nuova,
Che ho trovata;
O luce smisurata
Si sì dolce splendore!

He never missed me once;
Such was his good aim.
On the ground I lay,
My limbs could not assist me;
My body was broken;
I had no more feeling,
Than a dead man.

Love has cast me in a furnace:
Not on account of death,
But because of joy:
After my body recovered
I became so strong,
That I could follow the guides,
Who conducted me
To the gates of heaven.

Love has cast me in a furnace.

Heaven and earth and all creation cry out to me
That I must love.
Everyone tells me: with all your heart
Love the love that loves you;
Love the love which desires you
Which has created you to draw you
Wholly to itself
Therefore I desire never to stop drawing
On this holy light
And this ineffable goodness.

O beauty, both old and new born,
Which I have found.
O immense Light
Whose splendour is so sweet!

Canticle of the Birds

Mes frères, le petits oiseaux,
Vous devez louer votre Créateur
Et l'aimer toujours.

Car il vous a donné
Des plumes pour vous couvrir,
Des ailes pour voler,
Et tout ce que vous avez.
Il vous a fait nobles
Entre tous les ouvrages de ses mains,

Mes frères, les petits oiseaux,
Vous devez louer votre Créateur.
Il vous a choisi une demeure
Dans la pure région de l'air.

Et sans que vous ayez besoin de semer
Ni moissonner,
Sans vous laisser aucune sollicitude,
Il vous nourrit et vous gouverne.

Canticle of Love III

Amore, amore, che sì m'hai ferito.
Altro, che amore, non posso gridare.
Amore, amore, teco sono unito,
Altro non posso che te abbracciare
Amore, amor, sì forte m'hai rapito,
Lo core sempre spando per amare.
Per te vo'spasimare:
Amor, ch'io teco sia:
Amore, per cortesia
Fammi morir d'amore.

My Brothers, the birds,
You should praise your Creator
And Always love him.

For he has given you
Feathers to cover you,
Wings with which to fly,
And everything that you have.
He has made you noble
Among all his works,

My Brothers, the birds,
You should praise your Creator.
He has chosen for you a dwelling
In the pure region of air.

And without your needing to sow
Nor reap,
You are delivered from all care,
He sustains and governs you.

Love, love, who has so wounded me.
I can only utter one cry, love.
Love, love, I am united to you,
I can only embrace you.
Love, love, who has so ravished me,
My heart grows weaker with love.
I am absorbed in you:
Love, let me abide with you:
Love in your goodness
Let me die of love.

Amore, amore grida tulto 'l mondo:
Amore, amore ogni cosa clama:
Amore, amore tanto se'profondo,
Chi più t'abbraccia sempre più t'abbrama.
Amore, amor, tu sei cerchio rotondo;
Con tutto ' cor, chi c'entra, sempre t'ama;
Chè tu se' strame e trama:
Chi t'ama di vestire
Dai sì doce sentire,
Sempre grida amor.

Amore, amor tanto penar mi fai,
Amore, amore, nol posso patire:
Amore, amore, tanto mi ti dai,
Amore, amore, ben credo morire:
Amore, amore, tanto preso m'hai,
Amore, amore, fammi in te transire:
Amore dolce languire
Amore mio desioso
Amor mio diletto
Annegami in amore.

Amore, amore, lo cor mi si spezza,
Amore, amore, tal sento ferita:
Amore, amore trammi alia tua bellezza,
Amore, amor, per te sono rapita:
Amore, amor vivere disprezza,
Amore, amore, l'alma teco unita.
Amor, tu sei mia vita:
Già non si può partire,
Perchè la fai languire
Tanto struggendo, amore.

Canticle of Peace

Beati quelli kel soteranno in pace,
Ka da te, Altissimo, sirano incoronati.

Love, love, it is the cry of the whole world:
Love, love, it is the cry of everything:
Love, love, such is your depth,
The more embraced, the more desired.
Love, love, you are the circle around my heart;
He who possesses you, loves you forever;
You are my food and my clothing:
He who loves you
Is happy to feel your sweetness,
To forever cry, love.

Love, love, you make me suffer so,
Love, love, I cannot bear it.
Love, love, you give me so much,
Love, love, I think I will die:
Love, love, you have such dominion over me,
Love, love, transform me into yourself:
Love, sweet langour
Love, my desire
Love, my delight
Bind me with love.

Love, love, my heart is broken
Love, love, my heart I wounded:
Love, love, draw me towards your beauty,
Love, love, I am ravished by you:
Love, love, disdain life
Love, love, my soul is united with you
Love, you are my life:
Do not forsake me,
For you have made me faint
All-embracing love.

Blessed are the peacemakers.
By you, Most High, they will be crowned.

Vision of a Garden

I – The Nursing Staff

(fragmentary, soft overlapping phrases
from the sections of the Chorus)

Chorus:

Hi Peter, my name is Sini,
Me and Alvin are looking after you tonight ...
Hi Peter, my name is Jericho,
The late shift nurse ...
Hello Peter, my name is Erika
Hi Peter, I'm Eden,
Hi Peter, Erika again...
Hi Peter, my name is Liz,
Your nurse tonight...
Hi Professor Johnstone.
My name is Dan
Hi Peter, this is Ruben....
Hi Peter, my name is Evie,
One of the critical care nurses....

II – The ICU

Peter:

Why am I in hospital?
I do not know what illness I have,
Only that I cannot stand.
What happened to me?

Chorus:

You are sedated
You have seizure episodes
So we need to put you on sedation
You are breathing with the support of a ventilator.
You are being fed through a tube in your nose.

You have a tracheotomy.
You are positive with the Covid-19 virus.
The drugs we give you can cause delirium.

Peter:

My cousin Roland comes to visit.
He brings me a pear from his garden.
It is the most delicious pear I have ever tasted.

Chorus:

We listened to Stainer's Crucifixion this morning,
Followed by a bit of Handel's Messiah:

(The Chorus hums a few bars of Handel's Messiah)

Basses:

You are lucky I have a mask,
So I could not sing too loudly!

Chorus:

And he shall purify.
Shall purify....

III – Vision of the Garden

Peter:

It is a fine spring day
I am wheeled through long corridors,
And out to a garden.
In the centre, a triangular open space
Around a granite monolith
With strange inscription.
Here I enjoy the sun and fresh air.

Chorus
You have made great progress,
Though you can't walk yet
You have enough strength to stand.

Peter:
Another spring afternoon in the garden.

Chorus:
It's a lovely day today.
You were hoisted into a chair,
They took you down to the garden.

Peter:
One young man, to whom I spoke last time,
Is not here today.

The others tell me:

Chorus:
He died from the Covid-19 virus
The plague that is sweeping the world:
Corona virus.

IV – The Rehab Ward

Peter:
Now I am in the Rehab Ward:
The fog is clearing from my mind
I know now what it was that made me ill:
It was the plague, the deadly plague
That is sweeping the world.
I try to discard false memories,
But it is hard to separate them from the truth.
And now I know now what made me ill.

Chorus:
You still need a little oxygen,
Hopefully, in a day or two, you may not...
You are doing well –
Your confusion seems to be resolving...

Peter:
They give me a walking frame.
I walk along corridors
Out into a garden.
There is the triangular open space,
The granite monolith.
It is the garden from my dream!
How did my brain invent a garden which really exists?

V – Farewells

Chorus:
I hope you feel better soon...
I truly hope you feel better soon...
Keep fighting!
Get out of hospital soon.
Keep fighting!
Continue to fight.
All the best!
I hope you continue to improve.

VI – Two Months Later

Peter:
It is two months since I left hospital.
I'm back for a follow-up visit.
A nurse gives me diaries of my time in ICU.
Reading them I am overwhelmed with love
For these people I never knew,
Who only knew me as a bundle of symptoms.
And finally I know that the garden was not a dream!

Chorus:
Jericho, Alvin, Liz, Erika, Dan Sini,
I know the garden was not a dream!

(The music fades away, leaving the overlapping
voices of the Chorus, as at the beginning)

My name is Evie,
One of the critical care nurses.
My name is Alvin,
Looking after you tonight.
My name is Liz,
Your nurse tonight.
It's Erika again,
Evie...Jericho...Alvin....

Mirror Of Perfection

was recorded at St Jude's, Hampstead Garden Suburb 30 October 2021

Vision Of A Garden

was recorded at All Saints, Tooting, on 26 October 2021

Producer: Andrew Walton

Director of Recording: Deborah Spanton

Recorded at 96 kHz/24 bit and also mastered for Dolby Atmos

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Further information about Richard Blackford's music: www.blackford.co.uk

Elizabeth Watts was a chorister at Norwich Cathedral and studied archaeology at Sheffield University before studying singing at the Royal College of Music in London. She was awarded an Hon DMus by Sheffield in 2013 and became a Fellow of the RCM in 2017. She is a prolific recording artist; recordings include critically acclaimed discs of *Lieder* by Schubert and Strauss, works by Alessandro Scarlatti with The English Concert, and Handel *Brockes Passion* with the Academy of Ancient Music. She regularly appears in concert with orchestras including the London Symphony, BBC Symphony, London Philharmonic, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Orquesta y Coro Nacionales de Espana and NDR Elbphilharmonie, and conductors including Sir Simon Rattle, Sakari Oramo and Nathalie Stutzmann; at festivals including Edinburgh, Oxford Lieder and the BBC Proms; and in recital at Wigmore Hall and Het Concertgebouw Amsterdam. Opera roles have included Countess *Le nozze di Figaro*, Donna Elvira *Don Giovanni*, Fiordiligi *Così fan tutte*, Marzelline *Fidelio* and Almirena in Handel *Rinaldo* for companies including the Royal Opera House, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Welsh National Opera and English National Opera. Elizabeth won the 2007 Rosenblatt Recital Song Prize at the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition and the 2006 Kathleen Ferrier Award.

www.maxinerobertson.com



Photo by Marco Borggreve

Roderick Williams is one of the most sought after baritones of his generation with a wide repertoire spanning baroque to contemporary which he performs in opera, concert and recital. He enjoys relationships with all the major UK opera houses and has sung opera world premières by David Sawer, Sally Beamish, Michel van der Aa, Robert Saxton and Alexander Knaifel as well as performing major roles including Papageno, Don Alfonso, Onegin and Billy Budd. He performs regularly with leading conductors and orchestras throughout the UK, Europe, North America and Australia, and his many festival appearances include the BBC Proms, Edinburgh, Cheltenham, Aldeburgh and Melbourne. As a composer he has had works premièred at Wigmore Hall, the Barbican, the Purcell Room and on national radio. In December 2016 he won the prize for Best Choral Composition at the British Composer Awards. Roderick Williams was awarded an OBE in June 2017 and was nominated for Outstanding Achievement in Opera in both the 2018 Olivier Awards for his performance in the title role of the Royal Opera House production of Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* and in 2019 for his role in ENO's production of Britten's *War Requiem*. He is Artist in Residence with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra from 2020/21 for two years.

www.grovesartists.com



Photo Groves-Artists



Born in Berkshire, **Stephen Gadd's** operatic engagements have taken him to the Brooklyn Academy of Music and Drama, the Baden Baden, Buxton, Glyndebourne, Lucerne and Salzburg Festivals, as well as to The Royal Opera, English National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Grange Park Opera, Opera Holland Park, Opera North, Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera, Dallas Opera, Finnish National Opera, the Netherlands Opera, Den Norske Opera, the Paris Opera, the Opéra de Metz, the Opéra de Montpellier, the Opéra de Nantes, the Opéra national du Rhin and the Opéra de Rouen. He sings regularly in concert, his engagements including performances with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Royal Scottish National

Orchestra and the Radio Filharmonisch Orkest at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw. He is a prolific recording artist, his discography including Beethoven's *Der glorreiche Augenblick* with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Richard Blackford's *Not In Our Time* and *Pietà* with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Mahler *Das Lied von der Erde* with the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra, Mahler *Symphony No. 8* with both the LPO and the Philharmonia, Sullivan's *The Beauty Stone* and *Ivanhoe* with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and *Euryanthe* with the Orchestra of Polish Radio.

www.jamesblackmanagement.com

Renowned for his fine musicianship, **David Hill** is widely respected as both a choral and orchestral conductor. His talent has been recognised by his appointments as Musical Director of The Bach Choir, Music Director of Leeds Philharmonic Society, Associate Guest conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Principal Conductor of Yale Schola

Cantorum, and International Chair in Choral Conducting at the Royal Northern College of Music. He was Chief Conductor of the BBC Singers from September 2007 to September 2017 and is a former Music Director of Southern Sinfonia. Born in Carlisle and educated at Chetham's School of Music, of which he is now a Governor, he was made a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists at the remarkably young age of 17. Having been Organ Scholar at St John's College, Cambridge, David Hill returned to hold the post of Director of Music from 2004-2007. His other appointments have included Master of the Music at Winchester Cathedral, Master of the Music at Westminster Cathedral and Artistic Director of the Philharmonia Chorus. He holds an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Southampton for Services to Music, and in March 2018, he was honoured with the prestigious Royal College of Organists medal, in recognition of distinguished achievement in choral conducting and organ playing.

David Hill has a broad-ranging discography covering repertoire from Thomas Tallis to a number of world premiere recordings. As well as achieving prestigious Grammy and Gramophone Awards, many of his discs have been recommended as Critic's Choices, with his ongoing series of English choral music for Naxos, and discs for Hyperion with the Yale Schola Cantorum receiving particular acclaim. Hill has appeared with the BBC Symphony and BBC Philharmonic orchestras, London Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, City of London Sinfonia, English Chamber Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, the Orchestra and Chorus of Welsh National Opera, the Orchestra and Chorus of Opera North, Ulster Orchestra, Hallé Orchestra, RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg, Réal Filharmonia de Galicia, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Omaha Symphony, and Portland Baroque Orchestras as well as the Netherlands Radio Choir, the National Youth Choir of Australia, and RIAS Chamber Choir, Berlin. His commitment to new music has led to him premiering works from leading composers including Judith Bingham, Carl Rütti, Francis Pott, Bob Chilcott, Gabriel Jackson, James Macmillan, Philip Moore, Naji Hakim, Sir John Tavener, Philip Wilby and Jonathan Dove. Recent highlights include the world premiere of Gabriel Jackson's *The World Imagined* with the Philharmonia at Three Choirs Festival. In January 2019 David Hill was awarded an MBE for services to music.

www.rayfieldallied.com

Ikon is a group first formed ten years' ago, comprising some of the finest professional singers in the UK and conducted by David Hill. It comes together for specific projects and with particular care for the sound each project requires depending on the repertoire. A CD of carols will be released in 2022 on the Signum label.



Photo by Nick Rutter 2020

In 1992, **Britten Sinfonia** was established as a bold reimagining of the conventional image of an orchestra. A flexible ensemble comprising the UK's leading soloists and chamber musicians came together with a unique vision: to collapse the boundaries between old and new music, to collaborate with composers, conductors and guest artists across the arts, focussing on the musicians rather than following the vision of a principal conductor; and to create involving, intelligent music events that both audiences and performers experience with an unusual intensity. The orchestra is named after Benjamin Britten, in part a homage to its chosen home of the East of England, where Britten's roots were also strong. But Britten Sinfonia also embodies its namesake's ethos. Its projects are illuminating and distinctive; characterised by their rich diversity of influences and artistic collaborators; and always underpinned by a commitment to uncompromising quality, whether the orchestra is performing in New York's Lincoln Center or in Lincolnshire's Crowland Abbey. Britten Sinfonia musicians are deeply rooted in the communities they work with, with an underlying philosophy of finding ways to reach even the most excluded individuals and groups.

www.brittensinfonia.com

The Bach Choir is the leading independent UK chorus known for performing the very best in choral music since 1876. Directed by David Hill MBE, our mission is to inspire and connect people of all backgrounds with the magnificence and emotional power of choral music through our performances, recordings and community projects. We were founded in 1876 to sing the first UK performance of Bach's Mass in B minor. In our 150-year history we have had only nine musical directors including Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Sir David Willcocks. The common thread since 1876 has been the passion and pursuit of excellence. Today, with HRH The Prince of Wales as our Patron, John Rutter CBE as our President, and David Hill MBE as our Musical Director, our performances and recordings go from strength to strength.

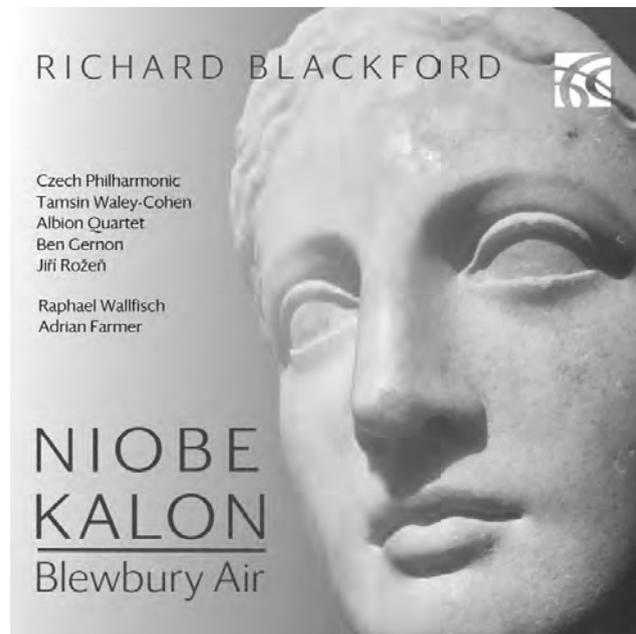
www.thebachchoir.org.uk

Orchestral Works by Richard Blackford



There are moments of genuine magic: microtonal wolves blending with horns; the tree frogs' croaking rhythms bleeding into percussion combo. Blackford and Krause's eco-friendly piece might make only small steps towards saving the planet, but it can still inspire, entertain and spread wonder. *BBC Music Magazine*

Recording quality throughout is natural and clear with a manageable dynamic range. The animal sounds in the symphony are in just the right proportion to the orchestra. The combination is subtly managed by the engineers. The orchestral playing is top notch under the guidance of Martyn Brabbins. *MusicWeb-International*

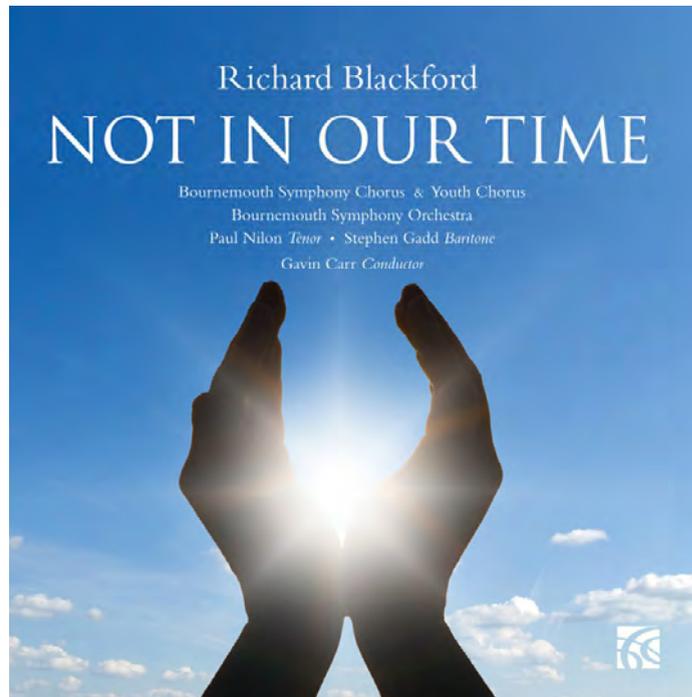


Richard Blackford has been well served by the Nimbus label over the years, and this disc adds a further instalment to an impressive catalogue of recordings. The presentation is admirable as always... and the sound recording is never less than exemplary. Those who already know and love the composer's output, as I do, will need no further recommendation; those who have yet to make the pleasure of his acquaintance could do no better than to begin here.

MusicWeb-International

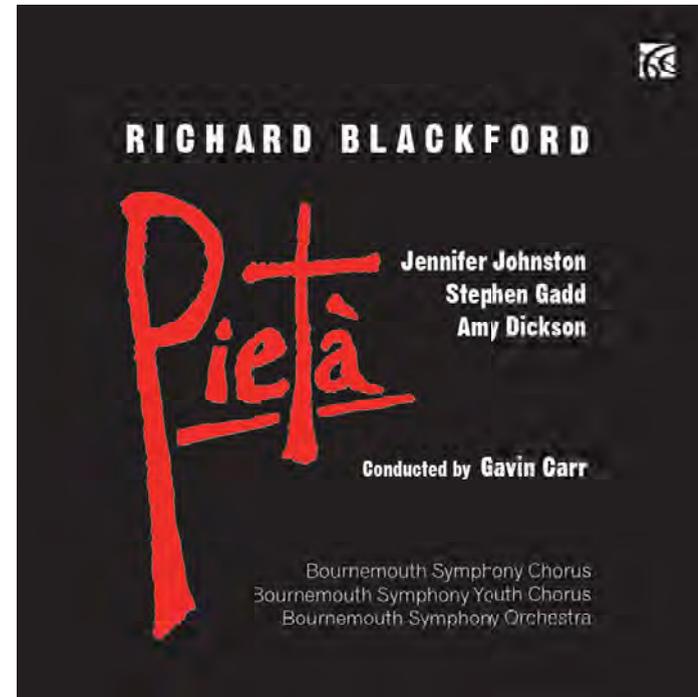
Available from Nimbus Records

Major Choral Works by Richard Blackford



Not In Our Time "Fiercely paced and vividly dramatic, it's a huge sing and a grateful one. It's perfectly designed to stretch the chorus without asking the impossible. Out of this meltingpot comes something that speaks for itself, and with tremendous force" Michael White, *Telegraph*

"This is a paean of and to hope, a proclamation of shared humanity and, above all, a great oratorio for the peacemakers. This is a serious piece, but infinitely rewarding. Frankly, the more people who listen to it, the better, happier and more at peace with itself the world will be." Michael McManus, *Gramophone*



"Inspired by the traditional Latin text of the Stabat Mater, poems from Anna Akhmatova's Requiem and the Pietà by Michelangelo, Richard Blackford has created an outstanding choral work: a passionate personal tribute in memory of all who suffer from violence, suppression and political persecution, which has deeply impressed me. Finally a modern composer who is not afraid to write beautiful and touching music! *Jonas Kaufmann*

Available from
Nimbus Records