

Benjamin Britten – War Requiem (2002)

Written by bluesever

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1. *War Requiem, Op.66* 1:35:20 Elina Prokina - soprano Anthony Rolfe Johnson - tenor
Andreas Schmidt – baritone Coventry Cathedral Boys' Choir Boys Choir of St. Nikolai,
Hamburg Philharmonia Chorus NDR Choir BBC Singers NDR Symphony Orchestra NDR
Radio Philharmonic Hannover Mstislav Rostropovich – conductor live broadcast
Turbinenhalle, Peenemünde, 28 September 2002

After more than a half-century, the "War Requiem" has lost none of its unique power to inspire performers and stir listeners. Britten composed his 1962 requiem mass for the newly built cathedral in Coventry, England, that arose alongside the ruins of the old church which had been destroyed by German air raids in 1940. A lifelong pacifist, Britten inserted settings of poems by Wilfred Owen (who died near the close of World War I) between sections of the Latin mass for the dead.

The juxtaposition of the ritual solemnity of the ancient liturgical text and the bitter irony of Owen's poetry, through Britten's masterful music, gives this passionate indictment of war its disturbing, timeless resonance. The music and the statements it makes are an act of anger and atonement for wars of every period, everywhere. Britten, who normally holds back emotion in his music, holds nothing back here, the result being 80 minutes of music that speak directly, powerfully, immediately.

Britten designed his "War Requiem" as an act of reconciliation, requesting that the solo vocal parts be sung by citizens of three combatant nations of World War II: Russia, England and Germany. --- John von Rhein , chicagotribune.com

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Benjamin Britten was commissioned to compose a work for the inauguration in 1962 of Coventry's new cathedral, adjoining the old cathedral that had been bombed and nearly completely destroyed by the German Luftwaffe at the beginning of World War II in November 1940. The commission gave Britten complete freedom to choose the type of music to compose. He conceived of setting the traditional Latin Mass for the Dead interwoven with nine poems by the English poet Wilfred Owen, who had been killed in World War I. It has become one of the defining masterpieces of the twentieth century: a devastating meditation on the pity of war that is every bit as relevant today. ---arkivmusic.com

The Peenemünde Concerts were initiated by the Usedom Music Festival, the North German Radio (NDR) and the Historical-Technical Museum Peenemünde. They fulfil a special mission: where formerly rockets were designed and tested, now there is applause for music. During the "Third Reich", the research station of the German Army and Air Force in Peenemünde was involved in developing "secret weapons" – including the so-called Aggregat 4 (also known as "V2"), the world's first large-scale rocket.

The Peenemünde Concerts are unique on the German museum and festival landscape. They focus on humanity's great themes – war and peace, freedom, love and life – themes the ambivalent location dictates. The internationally acclaimed concert series was launched on September 28, 2002: under the baton of Mstislav Rostropovich, more than 250 musicians performed Benjamin Britten's War Requiem in the turbine hall of the former power station. ---efa-aef.eu

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