

SOMMCD 071

Dona nobis pacem

Song Cycle by Ralph Vaughan Williams
for soprano, baritone, chorus and orchestra

1. Agnus Dei

- by Bible or other Sacred Texts

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi
miserere nobis, etc.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi
dona nobis pacem, etc.

Dona nobis, pacem.

2. Beat! beat! drums!

- by Walt Whitman (1819 - 1892)

Beat! beat! drums! - blow! bugles! blow!
Through the windows - through the doors - burst like a ruthless force,
Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,
Into the school where the scholar is studying:
Leave not the bridegroom quiet - no happiness must he have now with his bride,
Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field or gathering his grain,
So fierce you whirr and pound you drums - so shrill you bugles blow.

Beat! beat! drums! - blow! bugles! blow!
Over the traffic of cities - over the rumble of wheels in the streets;
Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? No sleepers must sleep
in those beds,
No bargainers bargains by day - no brokers or speculators - would they continue?
Would the talkers be talking? Would the singer attempt to sing?
Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case before the judge?
Then rattle quicker, heavier drums - you bugles wilder blow.

Beat! beat! drums! - blow! bugles! blow!
Make no parley - stop for no expostulation,
Mind not the timid - mind not the weeper or prayer,
Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,
Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties,
Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie awaiting the hearses,
So strong you thump O terrible drums - so loud you bugles blow.

3. Reconciliation

- by Walt Whitman

Word over all, beautiful as the sky,
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time be utterly lost,
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly softly wash again,
and ever again, this soil'd world;
For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin - I draw near,
Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin.

4. Dirge for two veterans

- by Walt Whitman

The last sunbeam
Lightly falls from the finish'd Sabbath,
On the pavement here, and there beyond it is looking,
Down a new-made double grave.

Lo, the moon ascending,
Up from the east the silvery round moon,
Beautiful over the house-tops, ghastly, phantom moon,
Immense and silent moon.

I see a sad procession,
And I hear the sound of coming full-key'd bugles,
All the channels of the city streets they are flooding,
As with voices and with tears.

I hear the great drums pounding,
And the small drums steady whirring
And every blow of the great convulsive drums,
Strikes me through and through.

For the son is brought with the father,
(In the foremost ranks of the fierce assault they fell,
Two veterans son and father dropt together,
And the double grave awaits them.)

And nearer blow the bugles,
And the drums strike more convulsive,
And the daylight o'er the pavement quite has faded,
And the strong dead-march enwraps me.

In the eastern sky up-buoying,
The sorrowful vast phantom moves illumin'd,
('Tis some mother's large transparent face,
In heaven brighter growing.)

O strong dead-march you please me!
O moon immense with your silvery face you soothe me!
O my soldiers twain! O my veterans passing to burial!
What I have I also give you.

The moon gives you light,
And the bugles and the drums give you music,
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,
My heart gives you love.

5. The Angel of Death

(this is a multi-text setting)

- by John Bright

The Angel of Death has been abroad throughout the land;
you may almost hear the beating of his wings.
There is no one as of old . . .
to sprinkle with blood the lintel
and the two side-posts of our doors,
that he may spare and pass on.

- From the Bible – Jeremiah 8:15-22

We looked for peace, but no good came;
and for a time of health, and behold trouble!
The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan;
the whole land trembled at the sound
of the neighing of his strong ones;
for they are come, and have devoured the land,
and those that dwell therein. . . .

The harvest is past, the summer is ended,
and we are not saved?

Is there no balm in Gilead?
Is there no physician there?
Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

- From the Bible – Daniel 10:19

O man, greatly beloved, fear not,
peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong.

- From the Bible – Haggai 2:9

The glory of this latter house
shall be greater than the former,
and in this place will I give peace.

- From the Bible – adapted from Micah 4:3; Leviticus 26:6; Psalms 85:10; & 118:19;
Isaiah 43:9 & 66:18-22; and Luke 2:14

Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation,
neither shall there be war any more.
And none shall make them afraid,
neither shall the sword go through the land.
Mercy and truth are met together,
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
Truth shall spring out of the earth,
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.
Open to me the gates of righteousness, I will go into them.
Let all the nations be gathered together,
and let the people be assembled;
and let them hear, and say, it is the truth.
And it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues.
And they shall come and see my glory.
And I will set a sign among them,
and they shall declare my glory among the nations.
For as the new heavens, and the new earth,
which I will make, shall remain before me,
so shall your seed and your name remain for ever.
Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,
good-will toward men.
