

Requiem

John Rutter (b.1945)

Requiem aeternam
Out of the deep
Pie Jesu
Sanctus & Benedictus
Agnus Dei
The Lord is my shepherd
Lux aeterna

Though he is perhaps best known for his carols and other short pieces, John Rutter also has a number of large-scale works for chorus and orchestra to his name. Most of these received their first performances in the United States, where Rutter is a frequent visitor, writing regularly for American choirs and conducting performances of his own music.

The *Requiem*, completed in 1985, does not adhere strictly to the conventional Catholic liturgy, but combines texts from the Requiem Mass and the Book of Common Prayer. This is by no means unusual; Faure, Brahms and Durufle all followed their own individual preferences when selecting appropriate verses to set.

The first movement comprises the Requiem Aeternam and Kyrie Eleison. This is followed by a setting of Psalm 130, 'Out of the deep have I called unto thee O Lord' which begins darkly with an unaccompanied cello solo in C minor, later giving way to a more positive C major at the words 'for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption'. As with the Requiems of both Fauré and Duruflé, the Pie Jesu focuses on the soprano soloist, though in this case with the addition of a subdued choral commentary. The Sanctus and Benedictus are both followed by an exhilarating Hosanna. In the Agnus Dei the Latin text alternates with verses from the Burial Sentences, taken from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. At this point Rutter inserts his superb setting of the 23rd Psalm, notable for its plaintive oboe solo, delicate orchestration and sensitivity to the text. This exquisite piece, though composed some seven years earlier for Mel Olson's First United Methodist Church Choir in Omaha, was surely destined for this context, encapsulating as it does the work's message of reassurance. The last movement opens with another verse from the Burial Service, sung by the soprano soloist, which leads seamlessly into the Lux Aeterna, finally returning to the opening Requiem Aeterna theme for the peaceful conclusion.

The *Requiem* was first performed in its entirety on 13 October 1985 at the United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas, conducted by the composer. Since then it has become a firm favourite with choirs and audiences the world over. Though it necessarily has its dark moments, Rutter's *Requiem* is unmistakably optimistic in its message of hope and comfort, expressed through the beauty of the chosen texts and Rutter's uplifting music. It is not entirely surprising that after the tragic events of 9/11 it was this setting of the Requiem that was the preferred choice of music at the many memorial services which followed across the USA.

programme notes by John Bawden

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