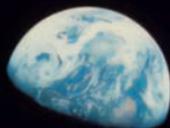


THE ANGRY GARDEN SILVERED NIGHT

MICHAEL STIMPSON

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
City of London Choir
Hilary Davan Wetton



THE ANGRY GARDEN and SILVERED NIGHT

MICHAEL STIMPSON

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
City of London Choir
Hilary Davan Wetton *conductor*

THE ANGRY GARDEN

Soli, choir, and orchestra

Words: Simon Rae

Stephanie Corley *soprano*
Marta Fontanals-Simmons *mezzo soprano*
Ed Lyon *tenor*
William Berger *baritone*

1. The Dark Mirror	7.02
2. Eden	4.56
3. Through Spawn and Spore	5.18
4. Man	6.57
5. The Mirror Cracked	11.57
	36.10

SILVERED NIGHT

piano and orchestra
Mark Bebbington *piano*

6. Silvered Night	20.01
-------------------	-------

The Angry Garden was first performed at St. John's Smith Square in London on the 8th March 2002 in support of the World Wildlife Fund.

THE ANGRY GARDEN

I was aware of damage to the environment during my studies as a scientist in the early 1970's, but I am not sure when general abuse turned into major threat. Neither am I sure when for me it became an emotive issue, but now it is clear that it connects to the very being of civilisation. For this reason, *The Angry Garden* takes a longer-term view, the Earth and human action seen within a broader and somewhat detached perspective, reflected in the title which implies that the world has a personality, one which does not like what is being done to it.

The first movement, which had a working title of 'Creation', appears from nothing other than the wind. The feel is edgy and ethereal, the minor second being the important interval, most powerful at the words "that would nail God's palm to Time". The second movement, 'Eden', is light in character, more reminiscent of a dripping rain forest than that of Adam and Eve.

The third movement, built around the age of the dinosaur, not surprisingly is heavy and ponderous, but with a majesty that reflects the grandness of the inhabitants. Man's entrance is in the fourth movement, via an instrument that represents early civilisations, the didgeridoo. The choir has 'primitive' sounds, gradually constructing the vowels of the Western alphabet. From here the tension builds, phrases such as "more mouths, more land" and "turn up the heat" providing the driving force.

The effect of Man was held for the final movement, the crushed semitone reappears as ice creaks under off-beat motifs within the strings. This section ends with the words "the signs of change", but of equal import is the gentle singing of "and so the prophecies have come to pass". It was tempting to finish with the warmth of this passage but it seemed a luxury inappropriate to the subject matter, and my own feelings. Wherever one's beliefs lie, nothing is forever, and the opening words of "Stillness Darkness Emptiness Silence" draw the piece to its close, ending where it began, with the wind.

THE ANGRY GARDEN

Words: SIMON RAE

1. THE DARK MIRROR

Silence

Stillness

Darkness

Emptiness

Silence like a frozen lake

Stillness, not the echo of a breath

Two mirrors face to face

reflecting darkness

Two mirrors face to face

reflecting emptiness

Two mirrors face to face to face to face

reflecting nothing

*

The void imploding

an ingot of pure darkness

reduced to a ball-bearing,

a pin-ball magic bullet

that would nail God's palm to Time

and smash the mirrored glass

to shards and slivers

silvering the universe

to flower in super nova

showering space

with flecks of lava

tumbling through aeons

settling to stillness

in the Light

2. EDEN

Light summons song
from every tongue

The wide horizons
widen eyes

Each grain of sand
unlocks a hand

and grass grows tall as flesh

Fins flash,
fur finds its mate,
the open skies discover flight:

wingbeats, spirallings ...

And all creation sings

All creation sings
and apples like a tree of notes
bend down the bough

Time teaches hands to reach and feed
to share and seed
new apple trees

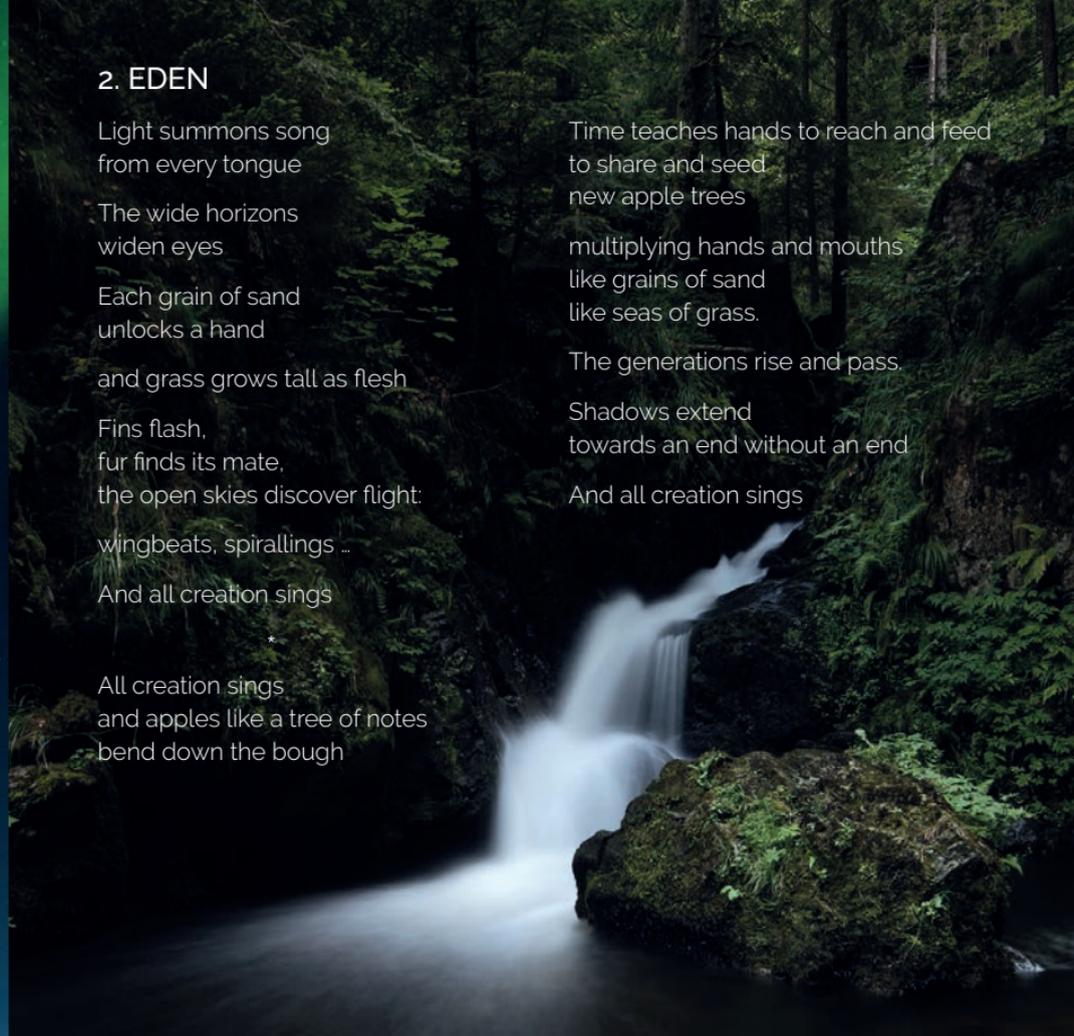
multiplying hands and mouths
like grains of sand
like seas of grass.

The generations rise and pass.

Shadows extend
towards an end without an end

And all creation sings

Simon Rae is a poet, playwright, prose writer and broadcaster. He presented Radio 4's Poetry Please and won the National Poetry Competition in 1999. He has been a Royal Literary Fund Fellow at three universities, has a number of collections and publications to his name, and has recently published the third of his Inspector Dalliance detective series.



3. THROUGH SPAWN AND SPORE

The great plates shift and link and lock.
Along each wrenched and heaving shore
salt and shaping tongues explore ...
Earth starts its clock.

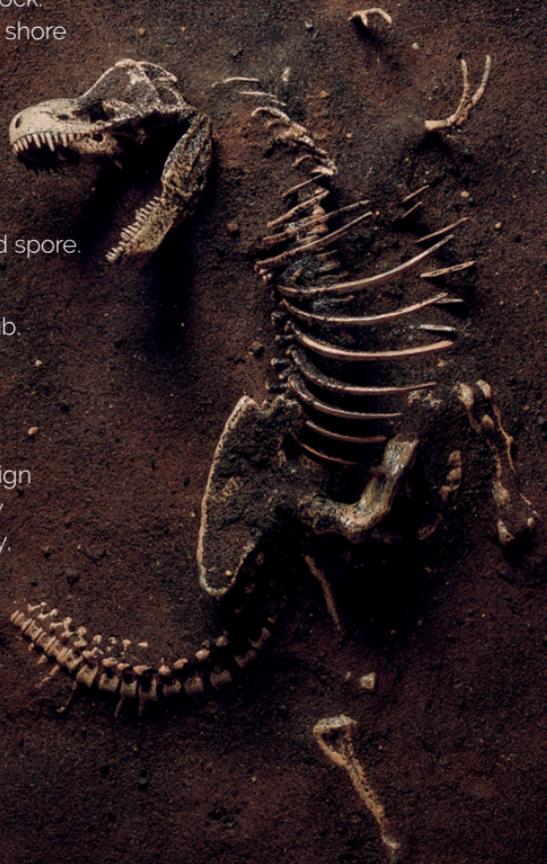
There's now an After to Before,
and like a firefly through the dark
Life's unaccountable first spark
begins to chase through spawn and spore.

Out of soupy cauldrons, slime
must slowly learn to crawl and climb.
Interdependencies of flesh and jaw
evolve the razor bill and claw.

Rain wrestles to the light as green
and vast, grass-eating stomachs reign
until time shrouds the green in grey
and strips the cavernous flesh away,

leaving, locked in lava dust,
blood and muscle's darkening rust,
cathedral scaffolding of bone
and random footprints set in stone.

Now an After
After
Now



4. MAN

The great apes swung down
from the trees
and sniffed the sweet savannah breeze

They scattered north and south
and east and west
bent on their amazing quest

that led from apemen up to man
gathered in a ragged clan

defenceless till flint struck a spark
and set a boundary to the dark

Fire throws shadows through the cave;
more mouths, more meat;
new hands contrive

the first crude spears: the bison fall
and leave their image on a wall.

Man makes his mark and then moves
on from turf stockade to Babylon.

Mouths and markets, trade and war:
Empires stretch from shore to shore.

Swords and ploughshares take
their turn;
the cities then the forests burn.

Furnaces light up the sky
declaring that the dark must die.

The furnace roars: more mouths,
more meat.
Turn up the heat; turn up the heat.

More mouths, more land;
and so the forked flames are fanned.

While the black sun finally falls
it burns man's image on to walls.

Forests flame and rivers boil,
a poisoned wind tears at the soil,
oceans sicken, skies ignite,
the last flocks dip in broken flight.

5. THE MIRROR CRACKED

It must have been apparent from the air:
the anorexic shorelines,
icebergs and ice-caps frayed –
the signs of change.

The seabirds saw it, circling high,
the mirror ice holds to the sky,

but could not, as they wheeled and tacked,
evaluate how badly cracked the mirror was,
nor comprehend the message.

It showed a war zone at the poles,
long-range artillery punching holes

through ice, as strong gales stripped
snow towers and glaciers, ripped

the icefields up like slates, then hurled
them round the unprotected world:

a new Pandora's box of tides
and terror-tempests no one rides,

a cataclysm kept on ice
before extorting such a price

in swollen and rampaging seas
that rise, because they cannot freeze,

to flood through delta-basins, drown
factory, farm and sprawling town

and leave vast tracts of fertile land
no more than deserts of blown sand.

The seabirds circle in the sky;
they cannot know the sea is high
or that the ice is wearing thin.

II

Crawl into the ransacked garden
the ruin of a perfect Eden.

The Tree of Knowledge barely stands
holding five foul apples in its hands.

One is rotten to the core
tormented by the wasps of war.

The next is stripped by acid rain;
another shrivelled by the vengeful sun.

A billion mouths have sucked the fourth one hollow.
The last has nothing left to swallow

lying rancid on the blackening grass.

And so the prophecies have come to pass

Coda

Silence

Stillness

Darkness

Emptiness

Silence

SILVERED NIGHT

Silvered Night has a background of historical conflict as it was based on a work for solo piano, *Variations on Papaver Rhoeas*, written to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of World War One. Papaver Rhoeas is the Latin name of the Remembrance poppy, and this solo piano piece had been set in the shape of the flower, four variations (petals) surrounding the central black core. Although *Silvered Night* opens with music from the first variation, and uses some of the last variation as a small cadenza, it is the central core of *Papaver* which provides the bulk of this new work for piano and orchestra. Certainly, elements of the conflict still exist in *Silvered Night*, the aggression of the early stages with its short motif for one, and the quiet, rather eerie central section which ends with a peaceful elegy, a dove emerging from the broken landscape.

But just as the time of the anniversary has moved on, so has *Silvered Night*. The introduction of new material, the adjustment of shape and texture, all bring it closer to the more traditional piano concerto form. Certainly I still recall Siegfried Sassoon's evocative phrase, "the slow silver moment" but now it is tempered by the span of time, not forgetting but moving on, as exemplified by the majesty and light which closes the piece.

Acknowledgements

Michael would like to thank Robin and Pegi Biellik-Henderson for their generosity in making this recording possible.

Production supported by the Gemma Classical Music Trust Registered Charity No. 1121090

Hilary Davan Wetton has been Artistic Director of the City of London Choir since 1989. One of the country's most distinguished choral conductors, he was founder/conductor of the Holst Singers, is Conductor Emeritus of the Guildford Choral Society, and was recently appointed Artistic Director of the Military Wives Choir. He is also Associate Conductor of the London Mozart Players.



Educated at Brasenose College, Oxford and the Royal College of Music, Hilary studied conducting with Sir Adrian Boult. Over a career spanning 50 years, he is particularly admired for his interpretations of 20th century British music, conducting many first performances and neglected works for British composers. His extensive discography includes recordings for Hyperion with both the Holst Singers and GCS, a series of highly-praised recordings for Collins Classics with the LPO, and acclaimed discs for Naxos, EM Records, and Decca with the City of London Choir.

Hilary was Jo Brand's organ teacher for the BBC1 series *Play it Again* and has broadcast frequently for the BBC and Classic FM, where he was presenter/conductor of *Masterclass*. He has been awarded honorary degrees by the Open University and De Montfort University and is an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.

Mark Bebbington is fast gaining a reputation as one of today's most strikingly individual British pianists. His 30 discs of British music for Somm have met with international acclaim and notably, his recent cycles of Frank Bridge, John Ireland, and Vaughan Williams have attracted nine consecutive sets of 5-star reviews in BBC Music magazine.



Over recent seasons, Mark has toured extensively throughout Central and Northern Europe, the Far East, and North America and has performed at major UK venues with the London Philharmonic, Philharmonia and Royal Philharmonic orchestras, and the London Mozart Players. As a recitalist, he makes regular appearances at major UK and international festivals. Recently, Mark made his highly successful Carnegie Hall debut with Leon Botstein and the American Symphony Orchestra in the US premiere of Richard Strauss's *Parergon*.

Upcoming projects include continuing releases for the Somm label, performances with the South Florida Symphony and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras during 2021/22, and appearances at major concert series and festivals both in the UK and throughout Europe.

"Truly a remarkable pianist" The Times

Photo: Rama Knight

Michael Stimpson has had works performed and recorded by some of the UK's most distinguished artists including the Philharmonia Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Allegri and Maggini String Quartets, and Bristol Bach Choir. Venues have included the Wigmore Hall, South Bank, and various UK Festivals, with international performances in Europe, the USA, and Australia.

Works are varied in their subject matter, the stimulus often from contemporary events, favourite authors, and poets. *String Quartet No. 1 (Robben Island)* reflected the breakdown of apartheid; *Dylan*, the life and times of the Welsh poet; and *Age of Wonders*, a four-stage work to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin. This evolved from violin and piano, through string quartet and string orchestra, to complete for full orchestra, commissioned by the Darwin Symphony Orchestra. Michael's full length opera, *Jesse Owens*, designed to break down barriers in casting and audience, told the remarkable story of the iconic US athlete who won four gold medals at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Other CDs of Michael's music include: *Journeymen* (Allegri Quartet); *Dylan & The Drowning of Capel Celyn* (Roderick Williams and Sioned Williams); *Incidental Music from the opera Jesse Owens* (Philharmonia Orchestra); and *Age of Wonders* (Philharmonia Orchestra).

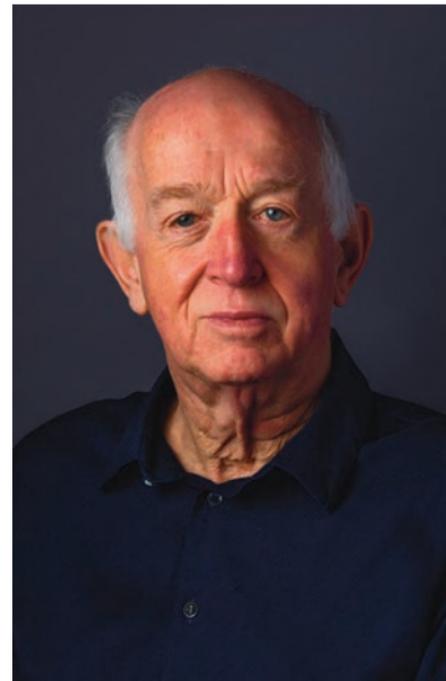


Photo: Andrew McCombie



Founded by Sir Thomas Beecham in 1946, the **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO)** has been at the forefront of music-making in the UK for more than seven decades, performing around 200 concerts each season, with a worldwide audience of more than half a million. Its home base at London's Cadogan

Hall serves as a springboard for seven principal residencies as well as more than forty-five concerts per year in long-term partnership venues across the country, often in areas where access to live orchestral music is very limited. In London, its regular performances are complemented by a distinguished series at the Royal Festival Hall, and it is Associate Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall.

The RPO's principal conductors have included Rudolf Kempe, Antal Doráti, André Previn, and Vladimir Ashkenazy. The repertoire has encompassed every strand of music from the core classical repertoire to music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and works by leading contemporary composers. The RPO is unafraid to push boundaries and is equally at home recording video game, film and television soundtracks and working with pop stars, as it is performing the great symphonic repertoire. As a respected cultural ambassador, the RPO enjoys a busy schedule of international touring.

Photo: Chris Christodoulou

The **City of London Choir** was founded in 1963 and is a "leader among non-professional choruses" in the words of The Times. Under the inspirational leadership of Hilary Davan Wetton, the CLC has earned an enviable reputation, both in the national media and with audiences, for its distinctive youthful sound and the quality of its performances. The CLC regularly promotes its own concerts in London's finest concert halls, with leading professional orchestras, instrumentalists, and soloists, as well as performing each year for a variety of other promoters in major venues. The choir has a broad repertoire, but thanks to Hilary Davan Wetton, it has developed a particularly strong reputation for English music of the twentieth century.

The choir is a registered charity whose object is to nurture a love and understanding of music. It is committed to creating opportunities for children and young people both to perform and to attend concerts, notably through its Young Singer Scheme, the Front Row Club, and the Young Apprentice Bass and Tenor Scheme which aims to foster new young choral tenors from London schools with bursaries. Besides concerts and recordings, the choir organises choral workshops and residential weekends which are open to members and non-members alike.



Photo: Roger Way



Recorded 21st September 2019
at Henry Wood Hall

Produced, engineered, edited, and mastered
by Jonathan Stokes, Classic Sound

www.michaelstimpson.co.uk