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Britten: War Requiem (Cambridge Music Handbooks)



Synopsis

The book examines from various viewpoints Britten's War Requiem, written in 1962 to celebrate the consecration of the new Coventry Cathedral and uniting the famous anti-war poetry of Wilfred Owen with the Latin Requiem Mass. Britten's and Owen's pacifist beliefs are compared, and the chronology of the compositional process unraveled from documentary and manuscript sources. The musical language is analyzed in detail, and the fluctuating critical responses to the score are assessed.

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Customer Reviews

The book examines Britten's War Requiem, written in 1962 to celebrate the consecration of the new Coventry Cathedral and uniting the famous anti-war poetry of Wilfred Owen with the Latin Requiem Mass, from various viewpoints. Britten's and Owen's pacifist beliefs are compared, and the chronology of the compositional process unravelled from documentary and manuscript sources. The musical language is analysed in detail, and the fluctuating critical responses to the score are assessed.

The essential book to have for a thorough understanding of the genesis of this choral masterpiece!!!

The book also has a first-rate analytical discussion of the music as well as an interesting discussion

of Britten's inspired use of Wilfred Owens' poetry.

Essential if you are doing the work.

Excellent delivery time. Very pleased indeed

I have read several of the books in the Cambridge Music Handbooks Series. The purpose of the books in this series is to aid the listener in understanding the theoretical/analytical aspects of the music (such as form, recurring thematic material, growth process, etc.) as well as the historical background of the piece, including critical reaction to the premiere of the work. The book is divided logically into four chapters. The first chapter deals with Britten's pacifist beliefs and how they led to his encounter with the poetry of Wilfred Owen, a soldier who had been killed in World War I. Owen turned out a small body of poetry during the last two years of the war, nine of which Britten chose to use in his Requiem, along with the text for the Latin Mass of the Dead. The second chapter gives the historical background of the piece: commission, composition, and the premiere performance. The third chapter is subtitled "The musical language: idiom and structure." This chapter details the musical content of the piece and how it conforms or deviates from the traditional Requiem formula set up by Mozart and Verdi. This chapter is the "meat" of the book as far as this critic is concerned. In understanding the musical content, one is better equipped to listen with an ear of understanding instead of ignorance. The final chapter reveals the critical reception of the piece, which was extremely positive. Most critics immediately hailed this work as Britten's masterpiece. As the author states, "it is difficult to call to mind any other major twentieth-century work which met with such instantaneous and unanimously high praise from almost all sectors of the media." In conclusion, I can highly recommend this book without hesitation if you are at all interested in the music of the twentieth century. Britten was clearly a brilliant composer; the War Requiem is, arguably, his masterpiece; and this book is a fine tribute to a wonderful piece of music.

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