

NAXOS

Malcolm **WILLIAMSON**

Choral Music

**Symphony for Voices • Requiem for a Tribe Brother
Joyful Company of Singers • Peter Broadbent**



Malcolm Williamson (1931-2003)

Choral Music

Malcolm Williamson was born in Sydney on 21st November 1931. At the age of eleven he went to the Sydney Conservatorium to study piano, violin and French horn and later studied composition with Eugene Goossens. In 1950 he moved to London where he studied with Erwin Stein and Elisabeth Lutyens. He settled permanently in England in 1952 and quickly gained a reputation both as a composer and performer. In his early years in Britain he worked as an organist and choirmaster before concentrating on composition. As a young composer he experimented with the twelve-tone serial technique, became interested in medieval music and, not long after his conversion to Catholicism in 1952, he discovered an affinity with the compositions and philosophy of Olivier Messiaen. Having fully immersed himself in various trends and influences of the day, his music became recognised as a truly individual voice from the mid-1950s. From 1958 he began to earn a living as a nightclub pianist and this had a major impact on his attitude to the popular music he wrote. These lighter pieces sometimes appeared simultaneously with intensely serious religious works, a juxtaposition that has occasionally baffled his critics.

Malcolm Williamson's vast output includes almost every genre imaginable but it is his work in the 1960s and 1970s that still remains the most fruitful. Indeed, at this time, he was one of the most frequently commissioned and performed composers in Britain. He was the first non-Briton to be appointed to the position of Master of the Queen's Music (1975) and had been awarded several honorary doctorates from universities such as Princeton, Sydney and Melbourne. He was awarded the Order of Australia medal in 1987 and held university fellowships both in Australia and the United States. His work specifically written for children is no small part of his output and includes *Julius Caesar Jones*, *The Terrain of Kings* and *Dunstan and the Devil* and a series of *Cassations* that teach children the mechanics of putting on an opera. Williamson was a true master of both the 'big

tune' as well as of the quirky and the avant-garde. The importance of his contribution to all musical genres cannot, and should not, be overlooked. It would seem that the time has come to reassess the work of this great composer.

Given his astonishing career and remarkable list of works, one would think that Malcolm Williamson's music would regularly appear in concert programmes and on the radio. Sadly, this is not the case. Williamson's choral music is a large portion of his compositional output and this disc gives the listener an excellent overview of almost the entire span of his choral writing from the early *Symphony for Voices* (1960) to the *Requiem for a Tribe Brother* (1992).

The Scunthorpe Festival commissioned Williamson to compose a choral work for the 1972 festival. The commission for *Love, the Sentinel* came at the time of electricity strikes and industrial troubles in Britain. During these strikes, a young man called Fred Matthews was killed by a strike-breaking vehicle. This tragedy moved Williamson to take words from Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and set them in Matthews' memory. There is an almost optimistic irony in the setting of the text, with the repetition of the words "*All is well*" constantly reminding us not to dwell on the negative.

One of the most astonishing works in the choral canon, Williamson's *Symphony for Voices* remains an example of how one should write for the unaccompanied choir. For his text Williamson turned to the Australian poet, James McAuley, focusing on the collections *Under Aldebaran* (1946) and *A Vision of Ceremony* (1956). Though not a symphony in the true sense of the word, it is a four-movement work preceded by an invocation, which, in a truly audacious move, is set for a single alto voice. The four following sections have the titles *Terra Australis*, *Jesus*, *Envoi* and *New Guinea*. The work was commissioned for the John Alldis Choir and was first performed by the group in 1962. Williamson's setting of the 'native' texts with the visionary Christian texts is

vorangestellt ist. Die nachfolgenden Abschnitte heißen *Terra Australis*, *Jesus*, *Envoi* und *New Guinea*. Das Werk entstand als Auftrag für den John Alldis Choir, der es 1962 auch uraufführte. Williamson hat die „eingeborenen“ und die christlichen Texte in einer bemerkenswerten texturalen und harmonischen Sprache vertont. McAuleys Text wird von gezackten musikalischen Linien und Rhythmen reflektiert, und doch ist die Musik zugleich von tiefer spiritueller Ruhe. Mit Ausnahme vielleicht des *Requiem for a Tribe Brother* dürfte diese *Symphony* Williamsons „australischstes“ Werk sein.

Edith Sitwells Buch *English Eccentrics* bildete die Grundlage einer Oper, die Williamson 1964 auf ein Libretto von Geoffrey Dunn komponierte. Die Chorsuite aus der Oper stellt eine Kollektion seltsamer und faszinierender Charaktere dar: *Goose-Weather*, der „im Staub der menschlichen Historie eine Heilung für die Melancholie“ sucht; *Mr. Robert Coates*, der in dem *Buch heroischer Irrtümer* als der „schlechteste Schauspieler aller Zeiten“ aufgeführt ist; *Sarah Whitehead*, eine Frau, die in eine inzestuöse Affäre hineingezogen wurde; die *Quacks*, ein Pään auf Graham und Katerfelto, die mit Antworten auf die Probleme des Lebens hausieren gehen; sowie eine geheimnisvolle *Reisende*, die behauptet, die ostindische Prinzessin Caraboo von Jevasu zu sein, dann aber in Wahrheit nichts weiter ist als Mary Baker, ein Dienstmädchen aus Devonshire. *The Old Beau* aus dem letzten Satz ist kein anderer als Beau Brummel, der sich immer wieder weigerte, der Obhut der Schwestern von

Bon Sauvreur unterstellt zu werden; die Nonnen, die nur sein Bestes wollen, rufen ihn mit sanften Stimmen. Ihre Rufe verschmelzen mit der Invokation von *Goose-Weather*, mit der die Suite begann und jetzt zu Ende geht.

Williamson verbrachte zwar den größten Teil seines Lebens in Großbritannien, blieb aber immer Australier. Sein Nationalstolz gehörte zu seinem musikalischen wie zu seinem persönlichen Leben. Etliche seiner großen Werke schrieb er für Australien oder auf australische Texte. Dazu gehört das *Requiem for a Tribe Brother* (Requiem für einen Stammesbruder), eine seiner gefühvollsten und persönlichsten Kompositionen. Diese entstand, nachdem er von dem Tod eines jungen Aborigines gehört hatte, mit dem er befreundet gewesen war. Dabei handelt es sich um ein religiöses Werk, da es den Text des Requiem verwendet. Doch in die musikalische Struktur lässt Williamson verschiedene Dinge einfließen, die australischen Ursprungs sind – besonders zu bemerken sind in dieser Hinsicht die Didgeridoo-Imitationen der Männerstimmen. Das *Requiem for a Tribe Brother* ist eines von Williamsons größten *a capella*-Werken und eignet sich vorzüglich für diese CD. Es wurde für die *Joyful Company of Singers* geschrieben und 1992 von dieser uraufgeführt. Peter Broadbent und seine Sängler führten es 2003 als Abschied von Williamson bei dessen Trauerfeier auf.

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Deutsche Fassung: Cris Posslac

Joyful Company of Singers



One of Europe's most prominent chamber choirs, the Joyful Company of Singers is renowned for its virtuosity and intensity of spirit, as well as for an astoundingly wide repertoire, ranging from the sixteenth century to the present day, and particularly featuring contemporary *a cappella* works, including many first performances. Together with founder and conductor Peter Broadbent, the choir has won an impressive list of national and international competitions, and has a history of success in recordings, broadcasts and concerts. The choir makes regular appearances at all the main British festivals as well as at concerts in Europe, Russia and the United States. Recordings feature a regular collaboration with Richard Hickox and CLS, as well as several other discs of music by Poulenc, Barber, Roxanna Panufnik and Jonathan Harvey.

Soprano

Amanda Abbott
Sally Donegani
Karen Filsell
Amy Finegan
Helen Freed
Catherine Harris
Bridget Howarth
(7, 15, 20)
Catherine Jordan
Priscilla Macpherson
Wendy Norman (15)
Clare Porter (11, 15, 20)
Nicola Roberts

Alto

Debbie Alder (15)
Hannah Bale
Kathryn Cook (1)
Elaine Gould
Annika Lindskog
Lorna Perry (15, 16)
Joanna Thompson

Tenor

Colin Fleming
Andrew King
Nick King
Steve Sanders
Andrew Shepstone
(13, 15, 16)
Tom Stapleton (15)

Bass

Tim Colborn
Peter da Costa
Simon Filsell (13, 15)
Neville Hargreaves
Paul Kiang
Peter Murphy
Greg Skidmore (13,15)
Garrod Stephen
Chris Williams

**(1) denotes soloist
on this track**

Peter Broadbent

Peter Broadbent is one of Britain's leading choral conductors, known for his awareness of style, breadth of experience and commitment to contemporary music, having given first performances of works by many leading composers. In addition to his work with choirs and orchestras in the UK, Broadbent has worked as a guest conductor in France, Hungary and Ireland and as a choral clinician throughout Europe and beyond, adjudicating regularly at International Choral Competitions. He is director of Choral Conducting Courses for the Association of British Choral Directors.

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Malcolm Williamson (1931–2003)

Chorwerke

Malcolm Williamson wurde am 21. November 1931 in Sydney geboren. Mit elf Jahren kam er ans Konservatorium seiner Heimatstadt, wo er Klavier, Violine und Horn studierte und später auch Kompositionsschüler von Eugene Goossens wurde. 1950 ging er nach London, um bei Erwin Stein und Elisabeth Lutyens zu studieren. 1952 ließ er sich auf Dauer in England nieder, und schon bald hatte er sich als Komponist und Interpret einen Namen gemacht. In seinen frühen britischen Jahren experimentierte er mit der seriellen Zwölftontechnik; außerdem interessierte er sich für mittelalterliche Musik, und kurze Zeit nach seinem Übertritt zum Katholizismus (1952) entdeckte er seine Affinität zu den Werken und der Philosophie Olivier Messiaens. Nachdem er sich mit verschiedenen aktuellen Trends und Einflüssen auseinandergesetzt hatte, erkannte man seit der Mitte der fünfziger Jahre in seiner Musik eine wirklich eigene Stimme. Seit 1958 verdiente Williamson seinen Lebensunterhalt als Pianist in Nachtclubs, was seine populäre Musik deutlich beeinflusste. Diese leichteren Stücke erschienen bisweilen zur selben Zeit wie seine ersten, geistlichen Werke – ein Nebeneinander, mit dem er seine Kritiker gelegentlich verblüffte.

Malcolm Williamsons enormes Schaffen umfasst beinahe alle vorstellbaren Gattungen. Dabei erwiesen sich die sechziger und siebziger Jahre als besonders fruchtbar. Tatsächlich war er damals einer der meistgespielten und meistbeauftragten britischen Komponisten. Als erster Nicht-Engländer wurde er 1975 zum *Master of the Queen's Music* ernannt, und er erhielt etliche Ehrendoktorate von Universitäten wie Princeton, Sydney und Melbourne. 1987 wurde er mit der Medaille des *Order of Australia* ausgezeichnet, ferner war er *fellow* australischer und amerikanischer Universitäten. Einen nicht unerheblichen Teil seines Oeuvres bildet Musik für Kinder. Dazu gehören: *Julius Caesar Jones*, *The Terrain of Kings* und *Dunstan and the Devil* sowie eine Reihe von *Cassations*, mit denen die Kinder die Abläufe lernen

können, die für eine Oper nötig sind. Williamson verstand sich wirklich meisterhaft auf die große Melodie, auf den musikalischen Humor und die Avantgarde. Was er zu den verschiedenen musikalischen Gattungen beigetragen hat, kann und darf nicht ignoriert werden. Es scheint die Zeit gekommen, das Schaffen dieses großen Komponisten einer neuerlichen Betrachtung zu unterziehen.

Angesichts seiner erstaunlichen Karriere und seines bemerkenswerten Werkverzeichnisses sollte man annehmen, dass Malcolm Williamsons Musik regelmäßig in den Konzerten oder im Rundfunk gespielt wird. Das ist aber leider nicht der Fall. Einen großen Teil seines Schaffens bildet die Chormusik, und die vorliegende CD bietet dem Hörer einen vorzüglichen Überblick über diesen Bereich – von der frühen *Symphony for Voices* (1960) bis zu dem *Requiem for a Tribe Brother* (1992).

Das *Scunthorpe Festival* bestellte für 1972 bei Williamson ein Chorwerk. *Love, the Sentinel* (Liebe, der Wächter) entstand, als gerade die britischen Elektrizitätswerke bestreikt wurden und die Industrie des Landes sich in Schwierigkeiten befand. Dabei kam ein junger Mann namens Fred Matthews unter die Räder eines Fahrzeugs, das den Streik brach. Williamson vertonte aufgrund dieses tragischen Vorkommnisses Worte aus Tennysons *In Memoriam* zur Erinnerung an Matthews. Diese Vertonung ist von beinahe optimistischer Ironie, wobei uns die Wiederholung der Worte „*All is well*“ (Alles ist gut) immer wieder daran erinnern soll, nicht in negativen Geschehnissen steckenzubleiben.

Eines der erstaunlichsten Werke im Chorrepertoire ist Williamsons *Symphony for Voices*. Die Texte zu diesem Musterbeispiel eines *cappella*-Chorstücks stammen aus den Sammlungen *Under Aldebaran* (1946) und *A Vision of Ceremony* (1956) des australischen Dichters James McAuley. Zwar handelt es sich nicht um eine Symphonie im eigentlichen Sinne des Wortes; gleichwohl besteht das Stück aus vier Sätzen, denen – ein wahrhaft wagemutiger Schritt – eine *Invocation* für eine solistische Altstimme

remarkable in its textural and harmonic languages. The jagged musical lines and rhythms are mirrored in McAuley's text, yet at the same time they have a deeply spiritual, tranquil quality. Of all his choral works, with the possible exception of the *Requiem for a Tribe Brother*, the *Symphony* is the most Australian in feeling.

Edith Sitwell's book *English Eccentrics* was the basis for an opera written by Williamson in 1964, with a libretto by Geoffrey Dunn. The choral suite from the opera depicts a miscellany of strange and fascinating characters: *Goose-Weather*, who seeks a 'cure for melancholy in the dust heap of human history', *Mr Robert Coates*, who is listed in the *Book of Heroic Failures* as the 'worst ever actor', *Sarah Whitehead*, a woman who was caught up in an incestuous passion, *The Quacks*, a paean to Graham and Katerfelto who peddle their answers to life's problems, and a *Traveller*, a mysterious woman who claimed to be Princess Caraboo of Jevasu in the East Indies but turned out to be no more than Mary Baker, a servant girl from Devonshire. *The Old Beau* of the last movement is none other than Beau Brummel, who constantly resisted attempts to be placed in the care of the nuns of the Bon Sauvreur, but the nuns, who have his best interests at heart, gently call to him. Their calls are merged with a return of

the opening invocation of *Goose-Weather*, bringing the suite to a close.

Despite spending the greater part of his life in Britain, Williamson remained an Australian. His sense of national pride was as much a part of his musical as it was his personal life. Several of his major works were written for Australia or were based on Australian texts. One such work is the *Requiem for a Tribe Brother*. One of his most deeply felt and personal compositions, it was written when he learned of the death of a young Aboriginal friend. It is a religious work, in that it uses all the text of the Requiem, but within the musical structure Williamson embeds a number of specifically Australian-influenced ideas, most noticeably in his use of the male voices as the drone of the didgeridoo. The *Requiem for a Tribe Brother* is one of Williamson's largest unaccompanied choral works and it is particularly fitting that it appears on this disc. Written for the Joyful Company of Singers who gave the work's first performance in 1992, it was chosen by Peter Broadbent and his Singers as their farewell to Williamson, when they sang the work at his funeral in 2003.

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13 Requiem aeternam (Introit)

Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine,
 et lux perpetua luceat eis.
 Te decet hymnus Deus in Sion,
 et tibi reddetur votum in Jerusalem:
 exaudi orationem meam,
 ad te omnis caro veniet.

14 Kyrie

Kyrie eleison.
 Christe eleison.
 Kyrie eleison.

15 Domine Jesu Christe (Offertory)

Domine Jesu Christe, Rex gloriae,
 libera animas omnium fidelium defunctorum
 de poenis inferni,
 et de profundo lacu:
 libera eas de ore leonis,
 ne absorbeat eas tartarus,
 ne cadant in obscurum.
 Sed signifer sanctus Michael
 repraesentet eas in lucem sanctam:
 Quam olim Abrahae promisisti,
 et semini ejus.
 Hostias et preces tibi,
 Domine, laudis offerimus:
 tu suscipe pro animabus illis,
 quarum hodie memoriam facimus:
 fac eas, Domine,
 de morte transire ad vitam.
 Quam olim Abrahae promisisti,
 et semini ejus.

16 Pie Jesu

Pie Jesu Domine,
 dona eis requiem,
 sempiternam requiem.

17 Sanctus

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,
 Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
 Pleni sunt caeli et terra
 gloria tua.
 Hosanna in excelsis.

Eternal rest (Introit)

Eternal rest grant to them O Lord,
 and let perpetual light shine upon them.
 A hymn, O God, is fitting for you in Sion
 and a vow shall be paid to you in Jerusalem:
 hear my prayer,
 to you all flesh shall come.

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy.
 Christ have mercy.
 Lord have mercy.

Lord Jesus Christ (Offertory)

Lord Jesus Christ, King of glory,
 set free the souls of all the faithful departed
 from the pains of hell,
 and from the deep pit:
 set them free from the lion's mouth,
 lest hell swallow them up,
 lest they fall into darkness.
 But let the holy standard-bearer Michael
 bring them into holy light,
 as you once promised to Abraham,
 and to his seed.
 Victims and prayers of praise
 we offer you, O Lord;
 accept them for those souls
 whom we commemorate today;
 make them, O Lord,
 pass from death to life,
 as you once promised to Abraham,
 and to his seed.

Merciful Jesus

Merciful Lord Jesus,
 grant them rest,
 eternal rest.

Holy, holy, holy

Holy, holy, holy
 Lord God of Sabaoth.
 Heaven and earth are full
 of your glory.
 Hosanna in the highest.

18 Benedictus

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

19 Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi:
dona eis requiem,
requiem sempiternam.

20 Lux aeterna (Communion)

Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine,
cum sanctis tuis in aeternum,
quia pius es.
Requiem aeternam, dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

21 Libera me

Libera me, Domine,
de morte aeterna,
in die illa tremenda:
quando caeli movendi sunt et terra:
dum veneris iudicare
saeculum per ignem.
Tremens factus sum ego et timeo,
dum discussio venerit
atque ventura ira.
Dies illa, dies irae,
calamitatis et miseriae,
dies magna et amara valde.
Requiem aeternam, dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

22 In Paradisum

In paradisum deducant angeli:
in tu' adventu
susciptant martyres,
et perducant te
in civitatem sanctam Jerusalem.
Chorus angelorum te suscipiat,
et cum Lazaro quondam paupere
aeternam habeas requiem.

Blessed is he

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Lamb of God

Lamb of God,
who takes away the sins of the world,
grant them rest,
eternal rest.

Eternal light (Communion)

Let eternal light shine on them, O Lord,
with your saints for ever,
because you are merciful.
Eternal rest grant to them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.

Set me free

Set me free, O Lord,
from eternal death,
in that terrible day,
when the heavens and earth are to be moved:
when you shall come to judge
the world through fire.
I tremble and am afraid
when I think of the judgement
and the anger to come.
That day, day of anger,
of calamity and wretchedness,
the great and very bitter day.
Eternal rest grant them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.

Into Paradise

Into Paradise may the angels lead you:
at your arrival
may the martyrs receive you,
and lead you
into the holy city of Jerusalem.
May the chorus of angels receive you,
and with Lazarus, once poor,
may you have eternal rest.

We regret that we are unable to print the texts for tracks 1-12.

Australian composer Malcolm Williamson was the first non-Briton to be appointed Master of the Queen's Music. His vast output includes almost every genre imaginable, a large proportion of which is choral music. This disc gives an excellent overview of his choral writing, from the deeply spiritual *Symphony for Voices* to his *Requiem for a Tribe Brother*, written when Williamson learned of the death of a young Aboriginal friend. The work was premièred by the Joyful Company of Singers, who also performed it with Peter Broadbent at Williamson's funeral in 2003.

Malcolm
WILLIAMSON
(1931-2003)
Choral Music

Symphony for Voices (1960-62)	16:31	11 A Traveller	1:22
1 Invocation*	3:36	12 The Old Beau	3:27
2 Terra Australis	3:08	Requiem for a Tribe Brother	
3 Jesus	2:29	(1992)	29:24
4 Envoi	2:18	13 Requiem aeternam (Introit)	3:37
5 New Guinea	5:01	14 Kyrie	2:45
6 Love, the Sentinel (1972)	8:30	15 Domine Jesu Christe (Offertory)	4:44
		16 Pie Jesu	4:04
English Eccentrics Choral Suite		Sanctus and Benedictus	
(1964)	15:16	17 Sanctus	1:49
7 Goose-weather	4:25	18 Benedictus	1:21
8 An Amateur of Fashion	1:58	19 Agnus Dei	3:14
9 from "Sarah Whitehead"	3:03	20 Lux aeterna (Communion)	2:31
10 The Quacks	1:00	21 Libera me	2:38
		22 In Paradisum	2:40

Joyful Company of Singers • Peter Broadbent
***Kathryn Cook, Alto Solo**

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