

LIGHT PASSING

Music: Nicola LeFanu
Libretto: John Edmonds

Commissioned by BBC R3 and first produced by the National Centre for Early Music, York, October 2004.

Light Passing is a chamber opera on the life of Pope Clement VI. It weaves together music of mediaeval France (plainchant and polyphony) and contemporary music. A cast of seven singers, and a small chorus, play a variety of roles; the central character is Clement VI, most famous of the Avignon Popes.

Clement (1291-1352) was a brilliant man: urbane, cultivated, generous patron of the arts and music. As a spiritual leader, he stood for tolerance, keeping the church free of fundamentalism and anti-semitism during the crisis of the Black Death. As a man, he lived a courtly life of greatest extravagance, commissioning sumptuous decorations for his Papal Palace at Avignon, where leading men and women of the day gathered.

The opera is set in Avignon during Clement's papacy (1342-52)

At the outset, Clement is recalling the events of his life. Gradually, the action moves into 'real time' as Clement relives/re-enacts his coronation and the subsequent dramatic events of his Papacy.