

Triptych for Baritone and Chamber Orchestra (2020) - 14 minutes EP 73513

Soloist: Baritone

1fl. 2 ob. 2 bsn. 2 hn. strings

Programme note

Triptych, for baritone and chamber orchestra, is a setting of three poems by Rowan Williams. The first, 'A view', and the third, 'What is Man', seem to me to contemplate the Welsh landscape, and our human place in it. Separating these two more substantial poems is a brief and very topical one, 'Never Wasting a Word'.

I have followed the vivid imagery of 'A View' closely, so that the music is constantly varied in its colours, textures and tempi. In contrast, 'What is Man', a translation from the Welsh of Waldo Williams, has a slower tempo and simpler texture. It also reflects aspects of 'A View', so that they form a pair and create the overall shape of the Triptych. In both settings, the baritone part is lyrical and follows the contours of the poems. I have set 'Never wasting..' as an ironic scherzo, in which the singer is always just out of step with the orchestra, and the flow of the outer 'panels' of the Triptych is interrupted.

Triptych lasts 15 minutes and plays continuously, without breaks between the movements. I am grateful to Dr Rowan Williams for permission to set his poetry; it has been a privilege and a delight to do so.

Triptych was commissioned by the Welsh Chamber Orchestra; it is dedicated to the soloist, Jeremy Huw Williams.

The first performance at the Beaumaris Festival, May 26th 2020, was postponed to 2021 because of the pandemic.

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