

Usher Hall 8 pm
Sunday 1 September

Edinburgh International Festival 1968

New Philharmonia Orchestra

leader Carlos Villa

Scottish Festival Chorus

chorus master Arthur Oldham

**Boys of St Mary's Roman Catholic
Cathedral, Edinburgh**

chorus master Arthur Oldham

Melos Ensemble

conductors Carlo Maria Giulini, Benjamin Britten

Galina Vishnevskaya *soprano*

Peter Pears *tenor*

Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau *baritone*

USHER HALL

Edinburgh International Festival 1968

NEW PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

EVENING 8-0

Sunday 1 September

UPPER TIER

C53

10/6

urgh

Patrons are respectfully requested to be seated five minutes before the performance commences. The management reserve the right to change cast or performance where necessary owing to unavoidable causes.



Benjamin Britten (b 1913)

War Requiem

My subject is War and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity. All a poet can do today is warn. Wilfred Owen

From a generation deeply scorched by "the mark of the Beast" in war, Benjamin Britten's **War Requiem** speaks from under its shadow directly to the hearts and minds of those to whom the threat of war still remains the gravest menace to mankind. It is a cry of protest and compassion—an act of contrition for what is past as well as a warning to humanity for the future. Down the centuries, artists have repeatedly probed the springs of human conscience more deeply than their fellows. That their admonitions have so often gone unheeded is the greater misfortune. The *War Requiem* voices the conviction that Death is the only victor in war: it invokes the "Glorious Dead" not as an example to posterity but as a warning. It is a Requiem for humanity bold and clear-sighted enough to question its own responsibility.

As a Christian pacifist and compassionate humanitarian, Britten had long felt the need to express his beliefs in terms of music, with which words could be combined to make each element the more explicit. He found the means by interpolating into the traditional Latin text of the Mass for the Dead, verses from the poems of Wilfred Owen, the officer-poet killed in action at the Sambre Canal a week before the Armistice of November 1918. In contrast to Rupert Brooke, whose poems of the First World War embodied the popular image of heroic youth sacrificing itself for the greater good, Owen was concerned with the misery and vainglory of a war he saw as a violation of Christianity, and with the unforgivable deeds that men were made to do to others and to suffer themselves. Owen's words at the head of these notes stand also at the head of Britten's score, and the composer's choice of poems suggests that Owen's sense of pity led him to a vision of some kind of reconciliation beyond the horror of his experiences.