



BRITTEN

Les Illuminations
en français and in English

(première recording of the
English version)

BARBER

Knoxville:
Summer of 1915

Julia Kogan *soprano*

Britten Sinfonia | Steven Lloyd-Gonzalez

Benjamin BRITTEN (1913–1976)

Les Illuminations, Op. 18 (1939)

[21:53]

(text by Arthur Rimbaud, 1854–1891)

- | | | |
|----|----------------------|--------|
| 1 | I. Fanfare | [2:06] |
| 2 | II. Villes | [2:26] |
| 3 | IIIa. Phrase | [1:02] |
| 4 | IIIb. Antique | [2:09] |
| 5 | IV. Royauté | [1:39] |
| 6 | V. Marine | [1:05] |
| 7 | VI. Interlude | [2:43] |
| 8 | VII. Being Beauteous | [3:43] |
| 9 | VIII. Parade | [2:44] |
| 10 | IX. Départ | [2:15] |

Samuel BARBER (1910–1981)

11 Knoxville: Summer of 1915, Op. 24 (1947)

[15:37]

(text by James Agee, 1909–1955)

BRITTEN

Illuminations, Op. 18 (sung in English) * [22:17]

(translated by Timothy Adès, b. 1941)

[12]	I. Fanfare	[2:00]
[13]	II. Towns	[2:26]
[14]	IIIa. Phrase	[1:04]
[15]	IIIb. Antique	[2:08]
[16]	IV. Royalty	[1:40]
[17]	V. Seascape	[1:07]
[18]	VI. Interlude	[2:44]
[19]	VII. Beautiful Being	[3:48]
[20]	VIII. Parade	[2:50]
[21]	IX. Departing	[2:29]

Total Timing [60:04]

Julia Kogan *soprano*
Britten Sinfonia
Steven Lloyd-Gonzalez

Première recording of the version sung in English *

Britten Sinfonia

Violin I

Clio Gould
Julian Azkoul
Michael Jones
Lucy Jeal
Hannah Bell
Sophie Ryan

Violin II

Miranda Dale
Suzanne Loze
Anna Bradley
Judith Stowe
Jo Watts

Viola

Clare Finimore
Sarah-Jane Bradley
Bridget Carey
Laura Cooper

Cello

Ben Chappell
Joy Hawley
William Clark-Maxwell

Double Bases

Stephen Williams
Paul Sherman

Flute / Piccolo

Emer McDonough

Oboe / Cor Anglais

Nicholas Daniel

Clarinet

Joy Farrall

Bassoon

Luke Tucker

Horn

Francisco Gomez
Isaac Shieh

Trumpet

Imogen Whitehead

Triangle

Jeremy Cornes

Harp

Sally Pryce



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Recorded by **K&A Productions Ltd**:

Produced and edited by **Andrew Walton**

Engineered by **Debs Spanton**

24bit, 96kHz high resolution recording and editing

A surround sound mix with Dolby Atmos of this recording, by **Debs Spanton**,
is also available on streaming services

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Julia Kogan thanks Corey Field

Thanks to Hayden Jones and Colin Matthews

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BRITTEN: *Les Illuminations* • *Illuminations*

BARBER: *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*

Among the most personal and powerful music ever written for the human voice, Britten and Barber's masterpiece settings of texts by Rimbaud and Agee continue to resonate intensely – musically, emotionally, and even historically. Taken together, they form bookends to the cataclysms of the 20th century, with its two life-shattering world wars, a prequel to today's uncertainties. The colours, verbal and harmonic, of such human drama are a dazzling mix, running the gamut of life in dramatic flux. Mild mannered it is not, though parts are hauntingly beautiful.

It's not hard to guess what drew the young Benjamin Britten to the wild and wondrous words of Arthur Rimbaud, another young genius misfit, whose turbulent (and drug-fuelled) visions gave rise to sometimes violent, other times sublime bursts of sensuous creativity, from the rage of bestial dancing cities to ethereal threads connecting stars. He held 'the key to all this untamed parade', in Timothy Adès's translation, which marks the work's first English version of the nine Rimbaud texts that made it into Britten's final selection, forming a loosely held-together and immensely varied orchestral song 'cycle' for strings and high voice.

Together with Britten's life partner, the tenor Peter Pears (whose own recording of *Les Illuminations* must inform every subsequent version), the pair set off across North America in

1939, composing at the Gray Rocks resort in Quebec, then Woodstock, New York, where they met with Aaron Copland, and completing the cycle at the home of the Meyer family in Long Island. War had broken out when the score was shipped across the Atlantic for its première in London in early 1940. By the time Britten and Pears returned to England in 1942, their world was on fire. Britten knowingly came back to face the humiliating ordeal of a public trial that could have seen him imprisoned as a conscientious objector.

By the time Samuel Barber composed his *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* in 1947, the war was over, and some 100 million souls in every shade of guilt and innocence had perished.

Barber's orchestral setting of James Agee's stream of consciousness prose poem, written in one fell swoop by yet another troubled young genius, is permeated with a sense of loss even in its most bucolic moments, of which there are many. It is accompanied by one of the purest, most beautiful melodies ever written, so captivating that once heard, it is nearly impossible to forget. Barber, too, was in his twenties at the time of writing. It is staggering that all four authors of words and music on this recording had only just stepped out of their own childhoods.

The subject is a perfect summer's evening in 1915. Agee's family



is stretched out on the long, rough, wet grass in their back yard in Tennessee, loving voices talking of ‘nothing in particular’, in a world of street cars, strawberries, and starched milk.

Still, a melancholy foreboding flows through this idyllic world before it is ‘taken away’ beyond the scope of the piece itself. Agee’s father was killed in an accident the following year when his son was only six. Something must have broken inside the sensitive boy, and Agee’s own death came early on the heels of his alcoholism. In Barber’s music, only the shadow of tragedies to come lingers, casting its inevitable darkness backwards. Barber’s own father died shortly before he began his work on *Knoxville*, a text that moved him to compose the piece in a gesture of shared grief with Agee. Premiered in 1948, it remains one of his most enduring works and an outstanding American classic.

At the end, the child narrator offers up an unbearably poignant prayer, ‘May God bless my people [...] oh, remember them kindly in their time of trouble; and in the hour of their taking away.’

Those were the words I could not bear to utter during the recording sessions that began on the 8th of October, 2023, one day after the massacre in Israel that had profound ramifications for my immediate family. It took a year before I could return to the studio for the final five minutes of the recording.

And so, history marches on with or without us. Our existence is, was, and ever will be fragile. Worlds come and worlds go. And what of art and music? They are what remains of us.

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Handwritten musical score on two pages, featuring staves with notes, rests, and various annotations in red and blue ink. The score includes circled numbers 18 and 19, and time signatures such as 3/4 and 4/4. The text 'poco rallentando, molto chiaro' is written below the staves. The right page also features the word 'Allegro' and the number '19' circled in blue.



Les Illuminations, Op. 18

(text by Arthur Rimbaud, 1854–1891)

1 I. Fanfare

J'ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage.

2 II. Villes

Ce sont des villes! C'est un peuple pour qui se sont montés ces Alleghanys et ces Libans de rêve! Des chalets de cristal et de bois se meuvent sur des rails et des poulies invisibles. Les vieux cratères ceints de colosses et de palmiers de cuivre rugissent mélodieusement dans les feux. Des cortèges de Mabs en robes rousses, opalines montent des ravines. Làhaut, les pieds dans la cascade et les ronces, les cerfs tettent Diane. Les Bacchantes des banlieues sanglotent et la lune brûle et hurle. Vénus entre dans les cavernes des forgerons et des ermites. Des groupes de beffrois chantent les idées des peuples. Des châteaux bâtis en os sort la musique inconnue. Le paradis des orages s'effondre. Les sauvages dansent sans cesse la fête de la nuit.

Illuminations, Op. 18

(translated by Timothy Adès, b 1941)

12 I. Fanfare

I hold the key to all this untamed parade.

13 II. Towns

These are the towns! It's a people for whom arose these lofty Alleghenies, these Lebanons of dreaming. These are the towns! Their cottages of crystal and wood are moved by means invisible, hidden rails and pulleys. The ancient craters, ringed with colossi and with palm-trees of copper, that rumble mighty and melodious in the flames. These are the towns! The processions of Mabs, in opaline and russet dresses, climb from narrow gorges. Up high, their feet in the cascade and the briars, stags batten on Diana. The Bacchantes of suburbs are in anguish, and the moon is burning, howling. Venus appears inside the caverns of toiling smiths and of holy hermits. These are the... Belfries assemble in choirs to sing the notions of peoples. From castles built of bone emerges music known to no-one. These are the towns! The paradise of the storms is collapsing. Savage tribes go endlessly dancing, dancing, endlessly dancing to celebrate the night.

Quels bons bras, quelle belle heure me rendront cette région d'où viennent mes sommeils et mes moindres mouvements?

3 **IIIa. Phrase**

J'ai tendu des cordes de clocher à clocher; des guirlandes de fenêtre à fenêtre; des chaînes d'or d'étoile à étoile, et je danse.

4 **IIIb. Antique**

Gracieux fils de Pan! Autour de ton front couronné de fleurettes et de baies, tes yeux, des bleues précieuses, remuent. Tâchées de lies brunes, tes joues se creusent. Tes crocs luisent. Ta poitrine ressemble à une cithare, des tintements circulent dans tes bras blonds. Ton coeur bat dans ce ventre où dort le double sexe. Promène-toi, la nuit, en mouvant doucement cette cuisse, cette seconde cuisse et cette jambe de gauche.

5 **IV. Royauté**

Un beau matin, chez un peuple fort doux, un homme et une femme superbes criaient sur la place publique: 'Mes amis, je veux qu'elle soit reine!' 'je veux être reine!' Elle riait et tremblait. Il parlait aux amis de révélation, d'épreuve terminée. Ils se pâmaient l'un contre l'autre.

These are the towns! What strong arm, what glorious hour will give me back this domain from which comes all my sleep and my movements great and small?

14 **IIIa. Phrase**

I have fastened ropes connecting steeple to steeple. I have hung garlands from window to window, and golden chains from one star to another. I am dancing.

15 **IIIb. Antique**

Graceful son of Pan! Your brow is encircled with delicate flowers and laurels. Your eyes, those two precious orbs, are in motion. Disfigured with lees and brown stains, your cheeks are too gaunt, your fangs are gleaming. O your breast is very like to a kithara, and tinkling bells re-echo in your blond arms. Your heart beats in the loins where sleeps the double sex. Go walking out by night, by night, go very gently moving your thigh, and your opposite thigh, and gently move your left leg.

16 **IV. Royalty**

One sunlit day, among folk soft at heart, a woman and a man, very grand, were shouting, shouting: shouting in the public square: 'O my friends, O my friends, I want her to be queen here!' – 'I want to be queen here! to be queen here!' She was la-ha-haughing and trembling. He spoke among his friends of unveiled mysteries, of ordeals terminated. They were swooning, each upon the other.

En effet ils furent rois toute une matinée où les tentures carminées se relevèrent sur les maisons, et toute l'après-midi, où ils s'avancèrent du côté des jardins de palmes

6 V. Marine

Les chars d'argent et de cuivre –
Les proues d'acier et d'argent –
Battent l'écume –
Soulèvent les souches des ronces.
Les courants de la lande,
Et les ornières immenses du reflux,
Filent circulairement vers l'est,
Vers les piliers de la forêt,
Vers les fûts de la jetée,
Dont l'angle est heurté par des tourbillons de lumière.

7 VI. Interlude

J'ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage.

8 VII. Being Beauteous

Devant une neige un Etre de Beauté de haute taille. Des sifflements de mort et des cercles de musique sourde font monter, s'élargir et trembler comme un spectre ce corps adoré: des blessures écarlates et noires éclatent dans les chaires superbes. Les couleurs propres de la vie se foncent, dansent, et se dégagent autour de la Vision, sur le chantier. Et les frissons s'élèvent et grondent, et la saveur forcenée

And they reigned as king and queen for an entire morning, when the caparisons of crimson rose up above the roofs of houses; and long past the noontide, when they made a progress, approaching the gardens of palm-trees.

17 V. Seascape

The silver and copper chariots,
the prows wrought of silver and steel,
assault the wavecrests,
uprooting the stumps of the brambles.
The small streams of the moor,
and the prodigious ruts of the ebb-tide,
in their circling courses flow east,
towards the tall trunks of the forest,
to the stanchions of the jetty,
whose corner is assailed by mighty whirlwinds,
mighty whirlwinds of resplendence.

18 VI. Interlude

I hold the key to all this untamed parade.

19 VII. Beautiful Being

Against falling snow, a Beautiful Being of lofty stature. The whistling sounds of death, and of circles of indistinct music, raise high, with enrichment and tremors of a spectre, this body adored. And wounds of scarlet, scarlet and sable, explode within the vaunted flesh: the palpable colours of life grow darker and dance and detach themselves around the Dream, as it is formed.

de ces effets se chargeant avec les sifflements mortels et les rauques musiques que le monde, loin derrière nous, lance sur notre mère de beauté, – elle recule, elle se dresse. Oh! nos os sont revêtus d'un nouveau corps amoureux.

O la face cendrée, l'écusson de crin, les bras de cristal! Le canon sur lequel je dois m'abattre à travers la mêlée des arbres et de l'air léger!

9 VIII. Parade

Des drôles très solides. Plusieurs ont exploité vos mondes. Sans besoins, et peu pressés de mettre en œuvre leurs brillantes facultés et leur expérience de vos consciences. Quels hommes mûrs! Des yeux hébétés à la façon de la nuit d'été, rouges et noirs, tricolores, d'acier pique d'étoiles d'or; des facies déformés, plombés, blêmis, incendiés; des enrouements folâtres! La démarche cruelle des oripeaux! Il y a quelque jeunes...

O le plus violent Paradis de la grimace enragée! Chinois, Hottentots, bohémiens, niais, hyènes, Molochs, vieilles démences, démons sinistres, ils mêlent les tours populaires, maternels, avec les poses et les tendresses bestiales. Ils interpréteraient des pièces nouvelles et

And the shudders rise high and groan, and the savage pungency of all these effects is charged with the sound of deathly whistling and the dissonant music which the world, far behind us, far away, hurls at our mother who is beautiful. She steps away, she stands erect. O! our bones are clothed again in an amorous new body.

O the face ashen-pale, the escutcheon of hair, the two crystal arms! The great gun upon which I must throw myself down in the affray of the trees and the gentle wind!

20 VIII. Parade

Some very sturdy rascals. Your worlds are theirs to be exploited. Not in want, and never hurrying to set their brilliant faculties in train, and their experiences of your consciences. What ripened men! What ripened men! Their eyes dull and dim, in the manner of a summer night, scarlet and black, three-coloured too, steel bespangled with stars of gold; the countenance deformed, death-pale, the leaden, the burned; the croaking sounds of grotesque fools; and the cruel procession of talentless poseurs! And there are some young ones!

O the savage, insane paradise, facial contortions of rage! Chinese, Hottentots, Bohemians; halfwits, hyenas, Molochs; primitive frenzies, sinister demons; they blend their maternal and ordinary tricks with the caresses and the acts of brutish beasts. They might interpret

des chansons “bonnes filles”. Maîtres jongleurs, ils transforment le lieu et les personnes et usent de la comédie magnétique.

J’ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage.

10 IX. Départ

Assez vu. La vision s’est rencontrée à tous les airs.

Assez eu. Rumeurs de villes, le soir,
et au soleil, et toujours.

Assez connu. Les arrêts de la vie.

O Rumeurs et Visions!

Départ dans l’affection et le bruit neufs.

their theatrical novelties and their ‘songs for nice young ladies’. Masters of tricks, crafty fakers of places and of persons, they make use of illusion, mesmeric technique.

I hold the key to all this untamed parade!

21 IX. Departing

Enough seen. For the dream was encountered on every breeze.

Enough won. Echoes of cities at dusk, and in the sun,
and always.

And enough known. The suspensions of life.

O you Echoes and you Dreams!

Departing in new love, and sound unknown.

11 Knoxville: Summer of 1915, Op. 24

(text by James Agee, 1909–1955)

...It has become that time of evening when people sit on their porches, rocking gently and talking gently and watching the street and the standing up into their sphere of possession of the trees, of birds’ hung havens, hangars. People go by; things go by. A horse, drawing a buggy, breaking his hollow iron music on the asphalt: a loud auto: a quiet auto: people in pairs, not in a hurry, scuffling, switching their weight of aestival body, talking casually, the taste hovering over them in vanilla, strawberry, pasteboard, and starched milk, the image upon them of lovers and horsemen, squaring with clowns in hueless amber. A streetcar raising its iron moan; stopping; belling and starting, stertorous; rousing and raising again its iron increasing moan and swimming its gold windows and straw seats on past and past and past, the bleak spark crackling and cursing above it like a small malignant spirit set to dog its tracks; the iron whine rises on rising speed; still risen, faints; halts; the faint stinging bell; rises again, still fainter; fainting, lifting, lifts, faints foregone: forgotten. Now is the night one blue dew.

Now is the night one blue dew, my father has drained, he has coiled the hose.

Low in the length of lawns, a frailing of fire who breathes...

Parents on porches: rock and rock. From damp strings morning glories hang their ancient faces.

The dry and exalted noise of the locusts from all the air at once enchants my eardrums.

On the rough wet grass of the back yard my father and mother have spread quilts. We all lie there, my mother, my father, my uncle, my aunt, and I too am lying there... They are not talking much, and the talk is quiet, of nothing in particular, of nothing at all in particular, of nothing at all. The stars are wide and alive, they seem each like a smile of great sweetness, and they are very near. All my people are larger bodies than mine... with voices gentle and meaningless like the voices of sleeping birds. One is an artist, he is living at home. One is a musician, she is living at home. One is my mother who is good to me. One is my father who is good to me. By some chance, here they are, all on this earth; and who shall ever tell the sorrow of being on this earth, lying, on quilts, on the grass, in the summer evening, among the sounds of the night. May God bless my people, my uncle, my aunt, my mother, my good father, oh, remember them kindly in their time of trouble; and in the hour of their taking away.

After a little I am taken in and put to bed. Sleep, soft smiling, draws me unto her: and those receive me, who quietly treat me, as one familiar and well-beloved in that home: but will not, no, will not, not now, not ever; but will not ever tell me who I am.

Julia Kogan is an international award-winning British American French opera singer, writer and presenter. She was born in Kharkiv, Ukraine, to nuclear scientist parents who brought their family to the US as Soviet Jewish refugees. Prone to chronic illness, she grew up immersed in books and performing for her grandmother's neighbours in the 'communal' rooms where nine families shared one WC. Kogan was eight years old when her family arrived in New York after a six-month stint in Vienna, but her formal education didn't begin until her family moved to Ohio, where she entered 4th grade. She studied music and performed in local musical theatre productions throughout school. At university, she read English literature and music, graduating with a Master's degree in Vocal Performance.

Kogan has performed at top venues around the world (Carnegie Hall, the Lincoln Center, Library of Congress in Washington D.C., etc.) and sung a variety of operatic roles, including Queen of the Night (Musikfestival Steyr, the opera companies of Avignon, Toulouse, Indianapolis, Manitoba, and Oxford Summer Proms), Madame Herz (Toulon Opera, Aix-en-Provence, Compiègne, Abeville, Amiens), Blonde (Limoges Opera), and Zerbinetta

in R. Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Limoges Opera, Queen's Opera), Greta Fiorentino in the French première of Kurt Weill's *Street Scene* (Toulon Opera), and *Kurt Weill from Berlin to Broadway* with Edwin Cahill (Campos do Jordão, Brazil, Palm Beach Opera). Her performance of 'Fiordiligi' in the Oxford Philharmonic's production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte* at the Oxford New Theatre was described as a 'tour de force' by the *Oxford Times*.

Kogan has recorded six solo albums (First Hand Records and Rideau Rouge Records / Harmonia Mundi distribution) and has had her work featured by *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Opera News*, BBC Radio 3 and 4, and many others. Her recording with composer Isabelle Aboulker was the Best Classical CD of 2019 pick by *The Arts Desk*. Kogan's BBC Radio 4 documentary about the unknown personal songs of exiled composers, *The Lost Songs of Hollywood*, was 'pick of the week' on the BBC. She is the co-writer of feature film *Florence Foster Jenkins* and has further scripts in development. This is her third release for First Hand Records.

juliakogan.com



Steven Lloyd-Gonzalez is a conductor and orchestrator of exceptional range, whose career spans the concert hall, recording studio, and arena stage. Equally fluent in classical, cinematic, and popular idioms, he is recognised for performances of striking precision and emotional depth.

He studied at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire with Andrew Mogrelia and received further guidance from Sir Simon Rattle, Christopher Adey, Frank Shipway, and Kenneth Kiesler. He later assisted Vernon Handley with the English Symphony Orchestra. Lloyd-Gonzalez was appointed Chief Conductor of the Cairo Symphony Orchestra in 2005 and has held key posts with orchestras in Germany. He has recorded at Abbey Road with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and conducted internationally across Europe, the USA, China, and the Gulf States.

His 2022 recording of Shostakovich's *Symphonies Nos. 6 and 9* with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales received a double

five-star review in *BBC Music Magazine*. David Nice (*The Arts Desk*) wrote: 'The BBC National Orchestra of Wales has never been on finer form... the sonorous directness of the *Sixth* is up there with the best.' MusicWeb International hailed it as 'a cracking CD... He has a real gift for Shostakovich.'

Lloyd-Gonzalez has conducted original scores for Philippe de Broca's *Vipère au poing*, SEGA's *Headhunter* (Richard Jacques), and Sony's *Xenosaga* (Yasunori Mitsuda), and collaborated with composers including Steve Reich, Alex Heffes, and Richard Rodney Bennett. His orchestrations feature in arena-scale crossover concerts for artists such as James Arthur, Jess Glynne, Montez, and Rea Garvey, including James Arthur's No. 1 UK album *Bitter Sweet Love*.

He is an Honorary Member of the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA).

stevenlloydgonzalez.com



Britten Sinfonia creates impactful and inspirational musical experiences through its adventurous programming in concert halls and innovative formats – such as its immersive Surround Sound Playlist – and through its programmes created especially for school pupils, hospital patients and local communities.

Rooted in the East of England, where it is the only professional orchestra working throughout the region, Britten Sinfonia also has a national and international reputation as one of today's finest ensembles. 'Innovative as always' (*The Guardian*, 2025), it is equally renowned for the remarkable breadth of its collaborators – from Steve Reich and Mahan Esfahani to

Anoushka Shankar and Jacob Collier – and for its nurturing of new compositional voices: over three decades, Britten Sinfonia has premiered more than 250 new works.

Britten Sinfonia's main concert activity is in London, Saffron Walden, Cambridge and Norwich, and it also performs in Bury St Edmunds, Ely, Peterborough and Chelmsford. The orchestra appears at UK festivals including Aldeburgh, Brighton, Norfolk & Norwich and the BBC Proms. Its discography features award-winning recordings on labels such as Harmonia Mundi, Chandos, Warner Classics and Hyperion.

brittensinfonia.com

Timothy Adès is a prolific translator-poet, mostly rhyming, with eleven books to date from French, German and Spanish, and awards for Robert Desnos, Victor Hugo, Alfonso Reyes, and Jean Cassou. His book of Brecht's poems will be available in the near future. He has rewritten and published Shakespeare's *154 Sonnets* without using letter E, loads of fun and a vital aid to study. He fitted English words to Isabelle Aboulker's witty settings of French poems, which Julia Kogan recorded in

both languages, and has done the same for these extraordinary *Illuminations*, a high point of his career. Adès is on Facebook and YouTube, and runs a bookstall of translated poetry, his own works and a great many others, and translates English poems into Latin verse, as he did at school, 70 years ago. His son Thomas – composer, pianist, conductor – is one of Benjamin Britten's successors.

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