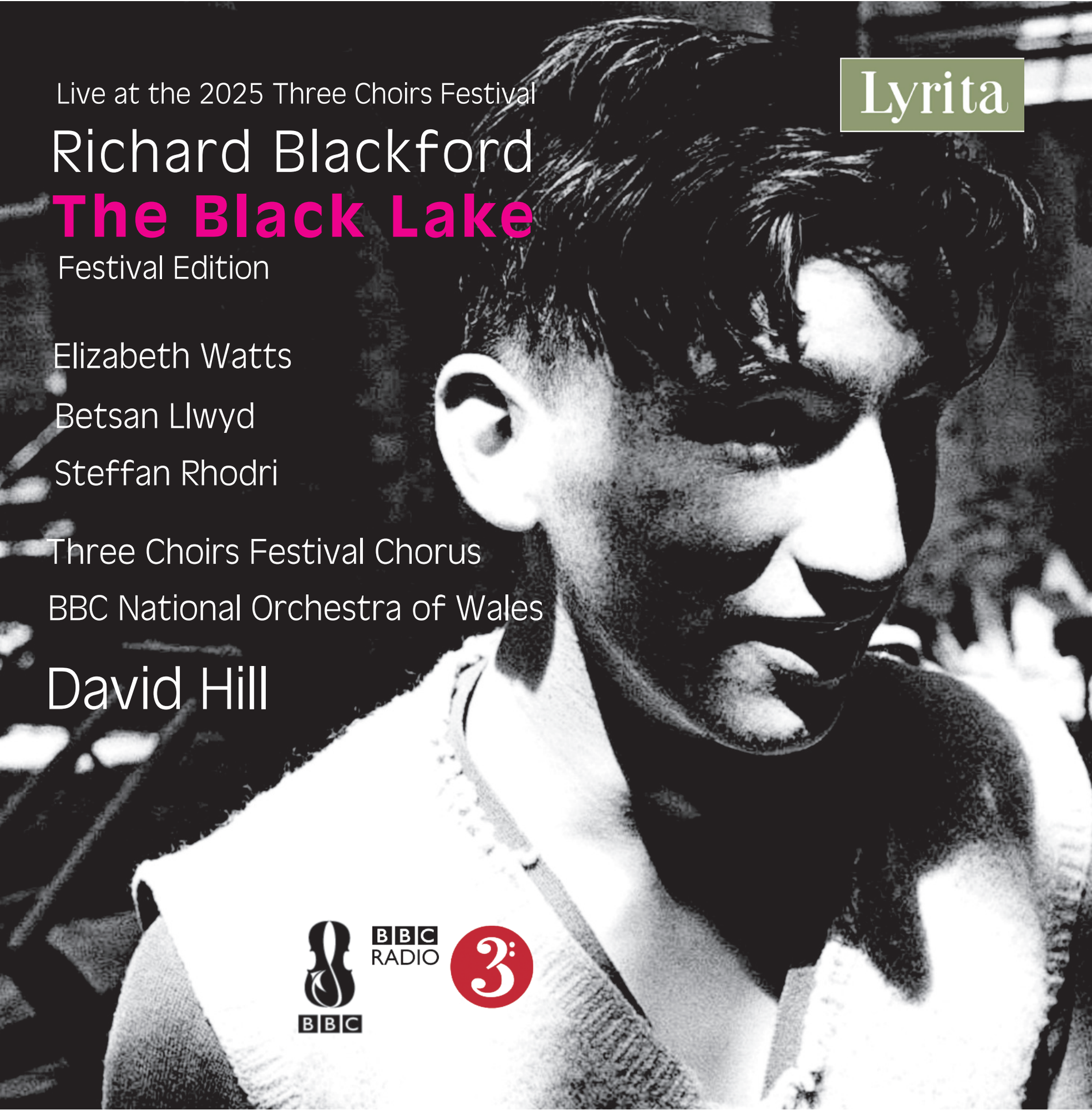

Live at the 2025 Three Choirs Festival
Richard Blackford
The Black Lake
Festival Edition
Elizabeth Watts
Betsan Llwyd
Steffan Rhodri
Three Choirs Festival Chorus
BBC National Orchestra of Wales
David Hill
Lyrita
BBC
BBC RADIO 3

Richard Blackford

The Black Lake

Narrative Cantata based on the novel *Un Nos Ola Leuad*,
"One Moonlit Night"
By Caradog Prichard English Translation by Philip Mitchell

1	Introduction	3:19
2	Village	3:08
3	Home	8:40
4	Church	7:00
5	Moi	3:31
6	Mam's Illness	0:52
7	The Choir from the South	6:36
8	Huw's Departure	1:53
9	The Asylum	6:55
10	The Black Lake	6:26
		Total Playing Time 48:20

Elizabeth Watts, soprano
Betsan Llwyd & Steffan Rhodri, narrators
Three Choirs Festival Chorus Chorus Master Geraint Bowen
BBC National Orchestra of Wales
David Hill, conductor

Produced in association with Radio 3 and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales

Front cover image: Penrhyn Quarry, Bethesda 25th June 1966,
photo by Geoff Charles, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth

SRCD 450 2

The Black Lake

In 1993 I wrote incidental music for a theatrical adaptation of Caradog Prichard's novel Un Nos Ola Leuad (One Moonlit Night) for Theatr Clwyd. In addition to a handful of live players we were fortunate to work with a Welsh male-voice choir, whose powerful renditions of Welsh hymns were highlights of the evening. Over the years I returned again and again to this poignant tale of a young boy growing up in the North Wales village of Bethesda in the years leading up to and during World War I. I wanted to go much further than the limited music I was able to offer for the play: to set the highly charged poetic sections that are strongly reminiscent of the Song of Songs as extended choruses with soprano solo; to evoke the splendour of the meeting of choirs on the Welsh hillside; the dramatic denial of communion to a young pregnant woman during Chapel. All these scenes, and many more, suggested choruses that accompany the young boy as he recalls events from his life.

I was privileged to have several conversations and working sessions with Mari Prichard, Caradog Prichard's daughter, during which we discussed which elements of the novel could be included to make a satisfying musical and dramatic structure. I decided to call it a Narrative Cantata because of the volume of spoken material for the male and female actors, the latter who takes on multiple roles, but principally that of the boy's Mam. The orchestra underscores them almost throughout, and my hope is that the audience, being able to hear their every word, will come to love these people who are on the brink, as they struggle with poverty, loss and mental decline, coping as best they can with music, friendship and humour. Music brings the villagers together in church or chapel, funerals and choirs, and a hymn in the car on the way to Denbigh Asylum. Mam sings by the fireside with her son and music evokes memories of the Welsh Religious Revival a few years before and the mystery of the Black Lake. By telling much of the story in the spoken word, the soprano soloist and choir become free to evoke the mystery, the religious fervour, the heartbreak, the compassion, every large or small experience as perceived through the eyes and ears of the young boy. The soprano solo, with the exception of her bravura aria, sings with the chorus, connecting the

listener with the Queen of The Black Lake, Mam, and the shunned Grace Ellen. She adds dimensions of mystery, lyricism, fury and gentleness beyond the spoken words of the actors.

The role of the orchestra goes well beyond underscoring the spoken scenes and provides transitions and interludes that propel the evolving drama: the storm before which the boy loses his last remaining friend; an evocation of the Voice from the Wheel of Fire during the Revival; or the mysterious Black Lake to which the boy, now an adult, is ineluctably drawn in the final scene.

The Black Lake is consequently a hybrid, texturally different to cantatas that combine actors with singers, such as Honneger's Jeanne d'Arc au Bûcher, or Martin 's The Epic of Gilgamesh. Unlike a radio play underscored by music, the variety and scale of the orchestral interludes and choral scenes and arias in The Black Lake cry out for live performance in a hall, church or cathedral.

Note on the music

The novel Un Nos Ola Leuad makes direct reference to the Welsh hymn sung in the scene with the Choir from The South. Church music for Passion and Ascensiontide is also mentioned. So I felt I had no choice but to fully embrace the tradition of Welsh hymn singing and to create arrangements of these hymns (the brief Ascension hymn is my original setting of the Welsh words) as pillars that support the edifice of the cantata. The hymn tune Cyfamod appears twice – in its first iteration a descending clarinet counter-theme in an alien key denotes that all is not well with Mam's mental state. The choral arrangements include descants and often expand to seven or eight parts.

Another musical gift was the opportunity to set Caradog Prichard's extraordinary poetic texts, given to the Queen of the Black Lake and her counterpart the Queen of the Mountain Yr Wyddfa. I split these up to provide choruses at the very opening, a fiery soprano aria following Grace Ellen's humiliation in Church, a bitter meditation on the death of Moi, and Boy's final return to the Black Lake. I seized on other choral opportunities, such as the wonderful description of Will The Sinner hearing the Voice of the Wheel of Fire. The orchestra's role is largely one of accompanying the chorus

and soprano. But after the scene in which the terrified Boy realises that his mother is falling into insanity I wrote an orchestral storm interlude as a musical evocation of his despair as his world falls apart.

All the principal themes, from the opening lullaby on high strings, to the horn theme that heralds the bright Sunday morning at Church, to Mam's incipient madness, are all reprised in the last third of the cantata, binding it together, like threads in the puzzled Boy's mind. The clear, tonally rooted diatonicism of the hymns is contrasted with music that is often dissonant, chromatic and polytonal, as the Boy's experience of the instability around him threatens his own mental balance. It is the dream-like quality of the book that initially grasped my musical imagination, the strangeness of a world in which music is so present and yet so mysterious.

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The Black Lake was initially envisioned as a narrative cantata featuring a large choir, soprano solo, two narrators and orchestra. This version was commissioned by the Three Choirs Festival and premiered at Hereford Cathedral in 2025. This is the 'Festival' version which was recorded live on 27 July 2025 at Hereford Cathedral.

Later, I restructured the piece by removing the narration to align it with my other major choral works, including *Mirror of Perfection, Voices of Exile, Not in Our Time*, and *Pietá*. In this revised edition, I removed twenty minutes of material and incorporated new choral elements into the composition. This version was recorded with Britten Sinfonia and Voices, soprano Elizabeth Watts, conducted by David Hill and is released by Lyrita SRCD.452

I take great pride in both versions and feel that both are true to Caradog Prichard's novel One Moonlit Night, which tells the poignant story of a young boy growing up in Bethesda, North Wales during the final years of World War I -

Richard Blackford

The Black Lake

(Orchestral introduction – like a soft lullaby)

Female Narrator -
(Nar F): Long ago in a slate quarry, a slab fell onto a quarryman's head from the terrace above.
Another widow with a small child. A whip-round for a mangle, another washerwoman.

(A wordless chorus, like soft, sighing wind)

Soprano: *I am the Queen of the Black Lake,*
My kingdom is the grievous waters
That lie beyond the utmost sorrow.

Chorus: *I am learned in the chemistry of tears;*
I assembled them in the cauldron of the centuries,
Then measured and reduced them to their elements.

Soprano &
Chorus: *I swallowed the sun;*
And the moon I took as a pillow to my resting place.

(Orchestral transition)

Scene 1 – Village

Male Narrator -
Boy
(Nar M): I'll go and ask Huw's Mam if he can come out to play.

Can Huw come out to play?

Huw's Mam
(Nar F): No, he can't.
He's in bed and that's where you should be, you little monkey.
What were you two doing yesterday - making mischief, driving people out of their minds?

Boy
(Nar M): What people out of their minds?
We're not driving them out of their minds - it's them that's going out of their minds themselves.

(*Bright organ introduction to Ascension Day hymn)*

Chorus: *Daeth Angylion llon ger llaw,*
Haleliwia! Seinient trwy'r uchelder draw,
Haleliwia!
Translation:
Joyous angels came nearby,
Hallelujah!
Sounding the far heavenly heights,
Hallelujah!

Huw
(Nar F): Tell me Huw, Why do people go to church on Ascension Day?

Boy
(Nar M): Well, because Jesus Christ went up to Heaven like a balloon of course, after he rose from the dead.

(Orchestral transition)

Boy
(Nar M): Can Moi come out to play,
Just to the Sheep Field to get pignuts?

Moi's Mam
(Nar F): Don't you be late now, you little monkey

Boy
(Nar M): Come on, lads, or it'll be getting dark.

(Mysterious music)

Huw
(Nar F): Look, There's a moon.

Boy
(Nar M): There's Little Owen the Coal's Mam.

Em's Mam
(Nar F): Come and see, cyw bach, my little chick, before they put a lid on him.

Boy
(Nar M): It's Em, Little Owen the Coal's big brother, who used to wear women's clothes, home from the Asylum, from Denbigh – in his coffin…

Moi
(Nar F): Come on, lads or we'll never get any pignuts

Boy

(Nar M): So we went very quietly to where the pignuts were.
And what did we see in front of us – Grace Ellen Shoe Shop and Frank Bee Hive lying down by a tree stump. Why is Frank lying on top of Grace Ellen, and nearly choking her?

Huw
(Nar F): I don't know.

Boy
(Nar M): Me neither.

Moi
(Nar F): They must have been playing, as people do after they get married…

Boy
(Nar M): But Grace Ellen and Frank Bee Hive aren't married.
Will you come out to play tomorrow, Huw?

Huw
(Nar F): Yes, if Mam will let me.

Boy
(Nar M): Alright. Good night, now.

(Orchestral transition)

Scene 2 – Home

Boy
(Nar M): Dew, there's a nice smell coming from somewhere. Could it be coming from our house. Yes! It is too! Hello Mam. Dew, I'm hungry.

Mam
(Nar F): Come on then, cyw bach. You eat your fill.
Where did you get those potatoes that were under the stairs?
Are you sure you didn't steal them, are you, cyw bach?

Boy
(Nar M): Steal them? No, I got them from the lad at Gorlan Farm. Don't tell anybody, he said.
Dew, these mushrooms are good. I'll get a whole capful again tomorrow.
Did you have a hard wash to do today, Mam?

Mam
(Nar F): Just a bit tired, you know, cyw bach.
Go to bed quickly now so I can iron these clothes.
The Vicarage wants them first thing.

Boy
(Nar M): Mam thought the world of Canon, our vicar then. It was worth you seeing her ironing his surplice and his stole on our table. She did all the men's and boys' first, then his very slowly. No one would ever think that Can on was such a kind man by looking at his face; he'd had smallpox long ago and it left a scar on the side of his mouth.
(innocently) Mam, where did Canon get smallpox?

Mam
(Nar F): Don't ask foolish questions.

Boy
(Nar M): Will there be a scar on his head in Heaven?
Then Mam stopped ironing and started to cry..
Mam was always crying quietly about something. I was used to it.

Mam
(Nar F): No, there won't be, cyw bach. There'll not be one scar in heaven.

(Soprano stands near Female Narrator to make it clear she is the singing voice of Mam)

Soprano: *Y G r a fu gynt o dan hoelion Dros ddyn pechadurus fel fi,*

Boy
(Nar M): She had tears rolling down her cheek and was laughing at the same time,
till she stopped and went on with her ironing while singing:

Soprano &
Chorus; *A yfodd o'r cwpan I'r gwaelod*
Ei hunan ar ben Calfari;
Ffynhonnell y Cariad Tragwyddol,
Hen gartre meddyliau o hedd,
Dwg finnau I'r unrhyw gyfamod,
Na thorrir gan angau na'r bedd.

Boy
(Nar M): Dew, Mam had a good voice. And she could take people off really well too.
Is that Will Starch Collar's collar Mam?

Mam
(Nar F): No indeed. You know they're all Canon's.

Boy

(Nar M): Only a joke, Mam.

Mam
(Nar F): Don't joke about Will Collar Starch.
He was a bad old rascal long ago, drunk in the Blue Bell and out all night.

Boy
(Nar M): How did he get to be a good man?

Mam
(Nar F): He heard the Voice.
It was the time of the Revival, before you were born and lots of people were hearing the Voice. But Will Collar Starch was the only one who heard and saw the Voice.

Chorus: *Blow ye the trumpet, blow,*
The gladly solemn sound.
The year of jubilee is come,
Return ye ransom'd sinners home.

(Revival music continues under dialogue)

Mam
(Nar F): He was going home rolling drunk, and put his head over the bridge to be sick. And what did he see but a huge wheel of fire coming down the river. And a Voice came from the wheel of fire:

Chorus: *'Will, you old sinner, Don't you know you're going headfirst to eternal damnation?'*

Mam
(Nar F): And Will starts shouting 'Oh Dear Mam what shall do, what shall I do?'

Chorus: *Will, you old sinner,*
Turn back, sinner, turn back.
Don't you know you're going headfirst to eternal damnation,
Into the middle of the fire and brimstone?
Turn back, you old sinner!
Haven't you been saved yet?
Will, you old sinner,
Haven't you been saved?

Mam
(Nar F): *(roaring with laughter)* He never went to the Blue Bell again and had a clean collar every night. And where do you think they saw him next?

Boy
(Nar M): I don't know.

Mam
(Nar F): On his knees in the Sinner's Seat in Salem Chapel, shouting with all his might like a madman, "Salvation is like the sea, ever rolling to the shore!" *(They both laugh.)*

Boy
(Nar M): Dew, Mam was good that night and I was rolling about laughing in the chair.

(Mysterious music)

Though there was a night when Huw and I looked down from that bridge and the moon in the river looked just like a wheel of fire. Perhaps *that's* what Will Collar Starch saw when he was drunk.

(Oppressive music)

But Good Friday was miserable – until tea-time anyhow.
Mam, why do you always go to Church at midday and stay till after three?

Mam
(Nar F): To suffer with Him. He took three hours to die you know.

Boy
(Nar M): Then, after being in Church all afternoon she was laughing at everything I said to her and going around the house singing. But somehow she was never the same after Canon died. She never went to the Vicarage to wash for Huws the Parson who came after him.

Scene 3 – Church

(Bright, fresh orchestral transition)

Boy
(Nar M): I was the first to arrive in Church next morning.
Dew, it was a fine Sunday morning too.

Soprano &
Chorus: *Therefore with Angels and Archangels,*
and with all the company of heaven,
we laud and magnify thy glorious Name;
Holy, holy, holy,
God of power.
God of might.

Boy

(Nar M): Huws Parson was praying:

Chorus: *(chanting softly underneath the following narration):*
We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table.
Amen.
But thou art the same Lord Whose nature is always to have mercy.
Amen.
Grant us therefore gracious Lord So to eat the flesh of thy dear son Jesus Christ
And to drink his blood, That our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body,
And our souls washed through his most precious blood.

Boy
(Nar M): I peeped through my fingers and thought about the bags of crusts and buttered bread and leftover meat that Mam and me used to bring from the Vicarage when Canon was alive. By now the end of the queue was at the Altar. But who suddenly got up from her pew at the back and walked up, in reat style, with a white spotted veil?

Huw
(Nar F): Grace Ellen Shoe Shop. Do you remember seeing her in Sheep Field with Frank Bee Hive?

Boy
(Nar M): Yes, of course.

Huw
(Nar F): Well, she's had a baby And she won't tell anyone who the father is.

Chorus: (*muttering rhythmically*) *The body of our Lord Jesus Christ… The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ…*

(*Chorus continues under narration*)

Boy
(Nar M): There she was at the altar rail, with her head bowed.
Then Hughes the Curate gave Grace Ellen a piece of bread.
She cupped her hands and swallowed it. By now everyone was looking at Grace Ellen, there on her own, waiting for Huws Parson to turn 'round with the Cup. But he didn't… I'm sure Canon would never have refused her the wine.
Grace Ellen didn't get up either, for a long time, still waiting for the Cup.
In the end she got up and walked down, as proud as anyone in Church.
She walked down the middle of the church, then out through the door.

(Orchestra erupts in a frenzy)

Soprano:
(Queen of Yr Wyddfa)
The hurricanes roar above my paralysis,
And the rain saturates without cleansing;
But is there no mercy in the sun,
Nor pity in the spring breezes?
They amuse me with their petty vows,
Their empty promises grate upon my ears,

Come again, my Beautiful One,
Come again and take me
Before the sun rises from it's resting place.
And I shall again offer you my sacrifice;
And my sweet incense shall ascend to thy abode.

(Music becomes calmer – transition)

Boy

(Nar M): Are you coming to help me pump the organ for the English service this afternoon, Huw?

Huw
(Nar F): Yes. And afterwards we'll go to see Moi.

(Dissonant, threatening music)

Scene 4 – Moi

Boy
(Nar M): I got a shock when I saw Moi lying in his bed.

Moi
(Nar F): Hullo, lads, I'm OK, But Mam won't let me get up.

Boy
(Nar M): That's what you get for going to catch salmon with Little Owen The Coal. *(he tries to laugh)* But even as we were laughing with him, I couldn't take my eyes off Moi's face. His eyes were shiny like glass, and his face was white as chalk.

Moi
(Nar F): Pass me that pot from under the bed, will you. Hold it so I can spit in it.

Boy
(Nar M): Jesus, Moi, you're spitting blood! And that was the last time we saw old Moi. On Sunday night Huw called round.

Huw
(Nar F): Have you heard? Moi's died.

Boy
(Nar M): Moi? No he hasn't, you're telling a lie, Huw.
But I knew by his face that he was telling the truth.
Then I started to cry like a baby.

(Orchestral transition)

We both stood with the Choir at the graveside singing:

Chorus: *I raised my voice to the firmament…*
Even to the very joists of Heaven's floor;
And like comets did my voice come back to my lips.

(Music continues under narration)

Boy
(Nar M): When I went to bed, I could still see old Moi lying under the earth and then I started dreaming. There was Moi, lying in bed with a lot of angels aking his bed, flapping their wings with a terrible noise like pheasants, and Moi smiling at me till he went out of sight.

Chorus: *I raised my cry to the firmament…*
But then I took hold the baby's head,
Planting my red kiss on his cheeks,
Turning his spittle into an issue of blood.

(Orchestral transition, continuing under narration)

Scene 5 – Mam's Illness

Boy

(Nar M): It had been snowing all night. By school time, the Hill was like a glass floor between two big walls of snow. When it got to dinner time I was starving hungry, and thinking what Mam might have for dinner for us. But when I came through the door there was no cloth on the table, or anything, just Mam in the rocking chair. When she turned to face me I nearly had a fit. She couldn't speak, only lick her lips, and looking so oddly at me.

What's the matter, Mam?

Mam
(Nar F): *(weakly)* Go up to Pen Bryn to get Gran.

Boy
(Nar M): And I ran and slid for my life up to Pen Bryn.
And Gran lived with us for three months till Mam got better.

Scene 6 – The Choir From The South

Male Chorus
(a capella): Pwy sydd gyda'r wawr yn rhodio
Rhwng y blodau yn yr ardd?
Er i ddwylaw dyn Ei hoelio
Welwyd neb erioed mor hardd:

(*Male Chorus continues to sing under narration)*

Boy
(Nar M): It was there, on the hillside of Braich that they stood together, the choir hat came up from the South to beg for money because the coal mines had gone on

strike. And then the voices rising till everyone could hear them from the bottom of the Nant.

Male Chorus*:*
Iesu, Iesu

Boy
(Nar M): And then going very quiet to sing the last line.

Male Chorus:
Rhwn fu farw ar y pren;

Huw
(Nar F): Jesus, they're good singers. They're far better than our Temperance Choir. Do you know why?

Boy
(Nar M): No, I don't know.

Huw
(Nar F): It's the coal dust that gets in their throats. And that's what gives them good voices.

Boy
(Nar M): *(aggressively)* Quiet, you fool.

Huw
(Nar F): *(slightly indignantly)* Yes, it's true. That's what my Dad said anyway.

Boy
(Nar M): Suddenly our Temperance Choir struck up with their own chorus.

Then the South Choir's conductor turned to face us.
Then all the South Choir and all of us were singing.

Full Chorus &
Soprano: *Er i ddwylaw dyn Ei hoelio*
Welwyd neb erioed mor hardd:
Iesu, Iesu,
Hwn fu farw drosom ni!
Amen

Huw
(Nar F): That was the best singing I've ever heard. Do you know what I'd like?

Boy
(Nar M): No, I don't know.

Huw
(Nar F): To become a parson.

Boy
(Nar M): And me too.

Huw
(Nar F): Do nothing at all but singing and praying all day long.

Boy
(Nar M): You'd have to stop swearing.

Huw
(Nar F): Dew, I don't ever want to swear again.
But I don't want to be godly, just to be good

Boy
(Nar M): And me too.

(Orchestral transition)

And I was hurrying home to tell Mam.
I was going to say, "Mam, I've been converted!"
But when I opened the door and saw her face I stopped dead. She looked as if she'd been crying, with a wild look on her, and her eyes going through me like steel pins, like the time before.

What is it, Mam?

Mam
(Nar F): Your Uncle Will's been here.

Boy
(Nar M): Mam's brother, thrown out of the Quarry for drinking, he'd come before, drunk, at midnight, and Mam had shouted:
Mam
(Nar F): "You'll never set foot in this house".

Boy
(Nar M): Did he come into the house?

Mam
(Nar F): Yes.

Boy
(Nar M): Then I couldn't get any sense out of her.

She talked to herself, or to someone she thought was standing behind her.

Mam
(Nar F): *(violently)* You old scoundrels, it was you who sent that old devil here!

(Orchestral Storm Interlude)

Scene 7 – Huw's Departure

(Storm music dies down, continuing under dialogue)

Boy
(Nar M): The day started badly - the rain was pelting down all day; and lightning.
Mam wasn't in the house, so I looked for Huw.

(awkward pauses between the boys)

Huw
(Nar F): You know the two Cor Sowth men staying with us?
My Dad's going with them to the South to work in a coal mine.
He wants to take me with him.

Boy
(Nar M): You, Huw? Can you leave school?

Huw
(Nar F): Yes, Dad says.

Boy
(Nar M): Will you work in a coal mine, Huw?

Huw

(Nar F): Yes, of course

Boy
(Nar M): You'll talk South when you come back.

Huw
(Nar F): What?

Boy
(Nar M): I said you'll talk South when you come back.

Huw
(Nar F): I'm not coming back.

Boy
(Nar M): When are you going, Huw?

Huw
(Nar F): Tomorrow.

Boy
(Nar M): You won't be in School tomorrow then?

Huw
(Nar F): No.

Boy
(Nar M): I'll not see you again, then?

Huw
(Nar F): I'll write when I get there and start working.

Boy
(Nar M): Dew, now remember to.

Huw
(Nar F): Course I will. Goodbye, now.

Boy
(Nar M): What will I do now? Huw and Moi gone, And me all on my own.

Scene 8 – The Asylum

Boy
(Nar M): Mam wasn't at Gran's. So off we went, Gran and me, back home. There was Mam, still wearing her coat, soaking wet.

What is it Mam? Where have you been?

But she just looked through me with her steel pin eyes. Gran told me to go next door and ask Grace Evans to come straight away.

Is Mam very ill?

Mrs Evans
(Chorus altos):
Yes, she's quite poorly. They want to take her to the hospital.

Boy
(Nar M): Mrs Evans, why can't she go in an ambulance, her being so ill?

Mrs Evans

(Chorus altos):
She isn't ill in the way you mean love.

Ellis Evans
(Chorus tenors):
She has a weakness, you know

Boy
(Nar M): They want to take her away to Denbigh.
The Asylum, the Asylum, the Asylum.
Em came back from there in his coffin.

Boy
(Nar M): *(hesitantly)* I know… what to do… Mrs Evans.
(bravely) Mam, You and me are going for a ride in the Corner Shop motor. We're having a holiday.

And into the car we went, Davey Corner Shop, Little Will Policeman's Dad and a lady I'd never seen before. Mam talking to herself or as if to someone behind her.
Dew, I said, those singers from the South are good.
You should have heard them sing The Man Who Was Nailed To…

Mam
(Soprano
& Female Chorus):
Y G r a fu gynt o dan hoelion
Dros ddyn pechadurus fel fi,
A yfodd y cwpan i'r gwaelod
Ei hunan ar ben Calfari;

Boy

(Nar M): …By now the two in the front had stopped talking and the next thing I heard was the pair of them singing with us, with Little Will Policeman's Dad singing tenor, and then the lady too.

Soprano
& Full Chorus:

Fynhonell y cariad tragwyddol,
Hen gartre meddyliau o hedd
Dwg finnau i'r unrhyw gyfamod,
Na thorrir gan angau na'r bedd.

(The singing reaches a climax. Suddenly an ominous hush.)

Boy
(Nar M): At last we came to a big gate by the side of the road, up a gravel drive to the door of a huge building about four times as big as the Salem Chapel. Mam was shaking like a leaf as she got out of the car. The lady took Mam By the arm.

The Lady
(Chorus altos):

You come with me now, Everything will be alright.

Female Narrator looks around her, then slowly leaves the stage.

(Sombre music continues under narration.)

Boy
(Nar M): At last the lady came back, on her own. She put a little parcel, tied with tring, in my hand and said "These are your Mam's clothes". Then she said, "You need to take these too."

Boy
(Nar M): And now she's putting two rings in my other hand: Mam's wedding ring, and the other one that was always on her finger. I couldn't say anything – only look at the little parcel that was in my right hand and the rings in my left hand. And I'm trying to think how they'd got all Mam's clothes into such a small parcel.

Then I start crying. Not crying like I did years ago after falling and hurting myself, nor how I'd cry at some funerals. But crying like throwing up – crying as if it was the end of the world, and glad to be crying. Dew, I'd never cried like that before and I've never cried like that since.

Scene 9 – The Black Lake

(Reprise of opening lullaby music, but now more desolate.)

Boy
(Nar M): I'm at the Black Lake at last. Oh, my feet are sore.
I'll take off these old shoes for a minute.
The old lake is looking good too.
It's odd they call it a Black Lake 'cos I can see the sky in it.

(Wordless, humming chorus - soft and mysterious)

Soprano &
Chorus: *I am the Queen of the Black Lake.*
I knew the thrill of morning.
And did revel therein it till surfeiting.
I am learned in the chemistry of tears,

Momentum, without Magnitude was the task.
To win and to be vanquished was my lot.

Boy
(Nar M): Perhaps they're all down there: Huw and Moi and Em, Gran - and everyone.
Dew! It would be strange, a marvel, if I saw Mam rising from the Lake now and shouting:
"Come here, you little monkey. Been making mischief with that old Huw again?"

(Soft, murmuring music.)

I'll shout, just to see if there's an echo.
Mam-a-a-m.

Chorus: *Mam-a-a-m*

Boy
(Nar M): Mam-a-a-m.
Mam-a-a-m.
Is this the Voice, I wonder?
Yes, yes, it is.

Soprano &
Chorus: *My innocence sought the secrets of the trees.*
And like a prophet I interpreted
The murmuring of birds.
I hungered for the bread of life

And was satisfied.
Therefore with Angels and Archangels
and with all the Company of Heaven….
Gan hynny gydag Angylion ac Archangylion
A Holl Gwmpeini Nef…

For more information about the performers visit

Elizabeth Watts	www.maxinerobertson.com
David Hill	https://www.rayfieldallied.com/artists/david-hill
Stefan Rhodri	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steffan_Rhodri
Betsan Llwyd	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Betsan_Llwyd

The Black Lake was commissioned by the Three Choirs Festival,
associate commissioner Bournemouth Symphony Chorus
Scores and parts are available from Nimbus Music Publishing
wyastone.co.uk/nmp publishing@wyastone.co.uk

Recorded 27 July 2025 Live in Hereford Cathedral
Engineering Andrew Smillie & Simon Smith
Editing and Post Production Oscar Torres

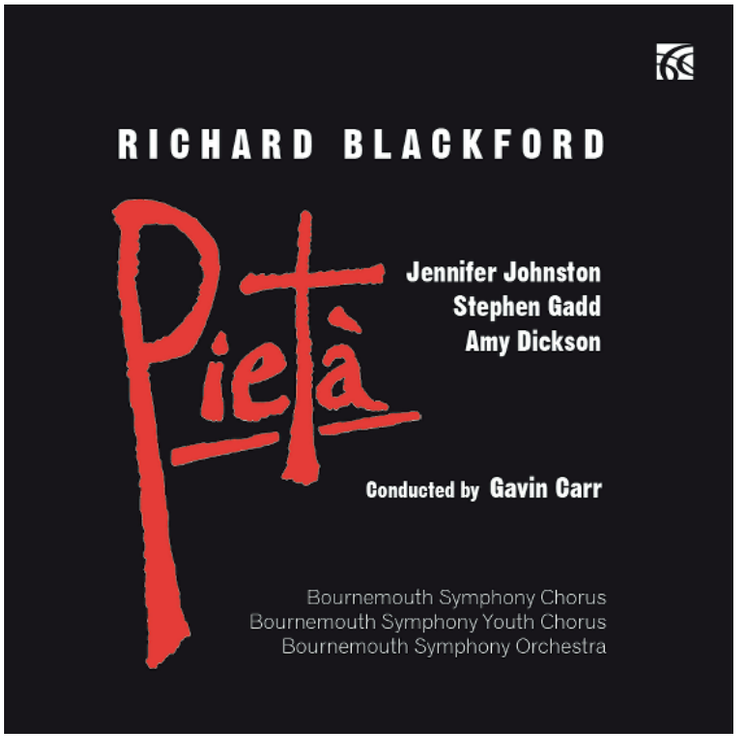
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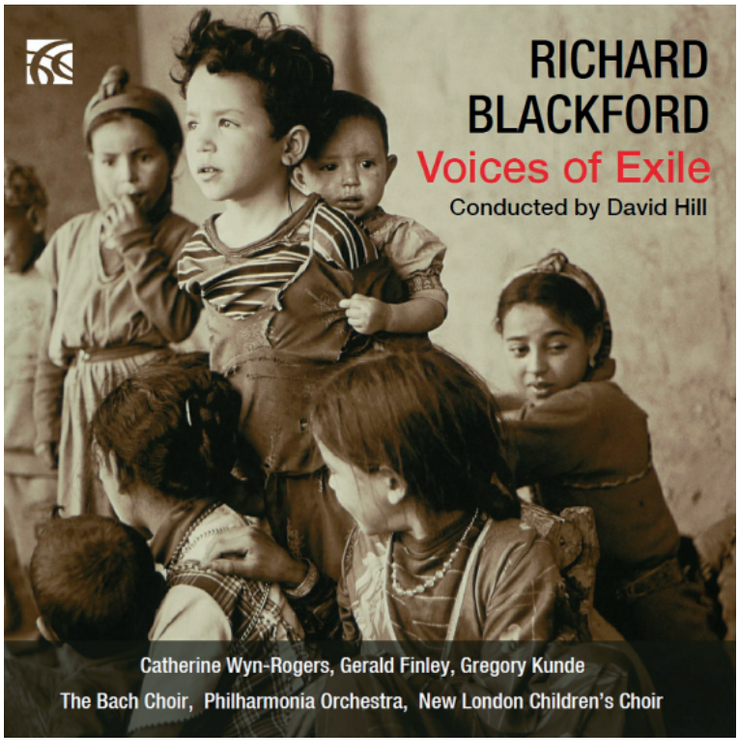
Richard Blackford is one of the most performed and recorded composers in Europe. He studied composition at the Royal College of Music with John Lambert, then with Hans Werner Henze in Rome. His music has been premiered at the BBC Proms, the Cheltenham Music Festival, Brighton Festival, Long Island Festival, the

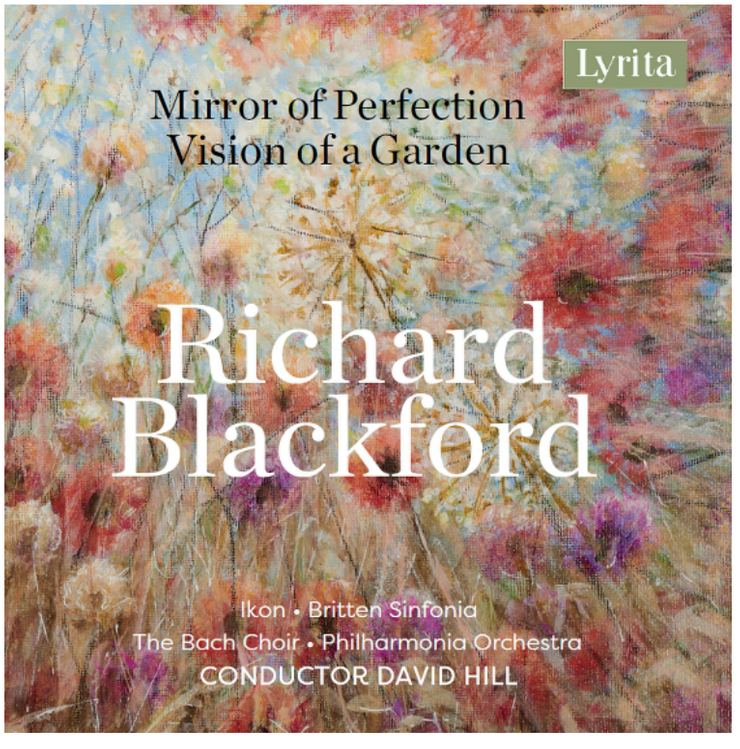
Montepulciano Cantiere d'Arte, the Berlin and Adelaide Festivals, amongst others. His work has been performed and broadcast by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the Czech Philharmonic, the Britten Sinfonia, the Philharmonia Orchestra, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Orchestra of the Hessicher Rundfunk. The sixteen discs of his music are recorded on the Decca, Sony Classical, Nimbus, Warner Classics, Signum and Pentatone labels. He was twice nominated for an Ivor Novello Composer Award and won in 2020 for his choral work *Pietá.* He has written three major commissions for the Czech Philharmonic, including his *Cello Concerto, The Recovery of Paradise* for Alisa Weilerstein, which received a five-star review in BBC Music Magazine. His *Songs of Nadia Anjuman* also received five-star reviews in both The Times and The Guardian, and was nominated for an Ivor Novello Award and a Sky Arts Award. His choral works, two of which have been the subject of television documentaries, have become part of the choral repertory, with *Mirror Of Perfection* achieving over 200 performances. His many awards include Die Goldene Deutschland for services to music in Germany, The Tagore Gold Medal and the Making Music Best Creator Award. He was nominated for an Emmy Award for Best Achievement in Music for his four-hour score for the BBC/CNN landmark series Millennium. Richard is published by Nimbus and Novello and is an exclusive Nimbus Records artist.

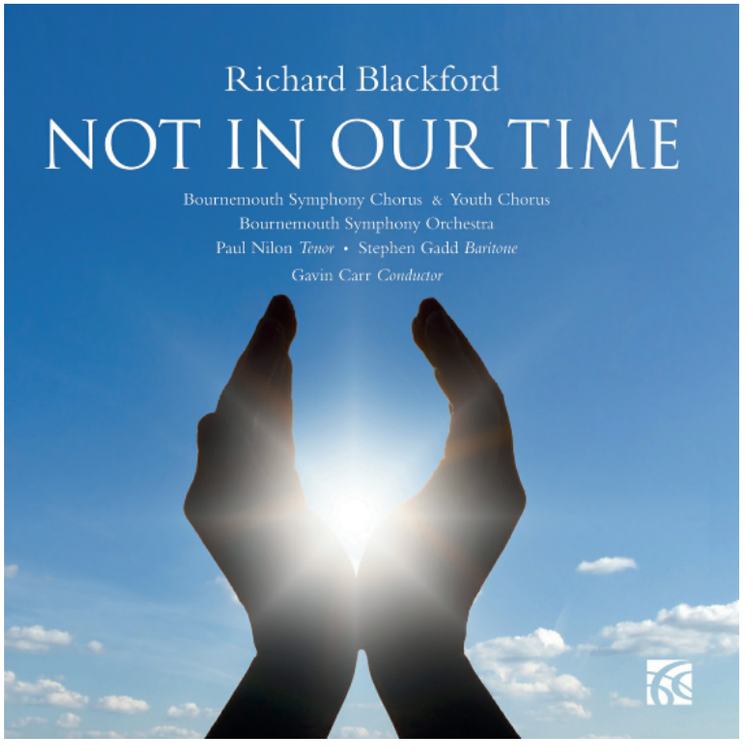
www.blackford.co.uk

For Information about the composer, his published works and recordings
for Nimbus and Lyrita visit www.wyastone.co.uk/nimbus-artists/richard-blackford


RICHARD BLACKFORD
Pietà
Jennifer Johnston
Stephen Gadd
Amy Dickson
Conducted by Gavin Carr
Bournemouth Symphony Chorus
Bournemouth Symphony Youth Chorus
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra


RICHARD
BLACKFORD
Voices of Exile
Conducted by David Hill
Catherine Wyn-Rogers, Gerald Finley, Gregory Kunde
The Bach Choir, Philharmonia Orchestra, New London Children's Choir


Lyrita
Mirror of Perfection
Vision of a Garden
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Ikon • Britten Sinfonia
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Richard Blackford
NOT IN OUR TIME
Bournemouth Symphony Chorus & Youth Chorus
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
Paul Nilon Tenor • Stephen Gadd Baritone
Gavin Carr Conductor

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