

AFRICAN- CARIBBEAN ELEGY

RICHARD PANTCHEFF

London Choral Sinfonia

Michael Waldron



Richard Pantcheff

African-Caribbean Elegy

1	There runs a dream	4.43
2	To those	3.04
3	Ancestor on the auction block	5.36

Total time **13.24**

London Choral Sinfonia

Michael Waldron, director

The **African Caribbean Elegy** (Opus 70) by Richard Pantcheff is a cycle of three part-songs for mixed choir written in 2009. The words are all by famous West Indian poets, reflecting on the nature of cultural and historical links between West Indian and African peoples. The work was premiered in Johannesburg in 2010.

The time that the composer was living in Barbados coincided with a significant increase in popular interest in exploring the ethnic and cultural connections between West Indian peoples, their traditions and history, and those of Africa (West Africa in particular). This trend was encapsulated in the book *'Tracing Ancestors in Barbados'* (Genealogical Press Co, Inc. 2006) by a friend of the composer, the late Geraldine Lane.

By 2009, the composer had moved to South Africa, and was able to consider the African – West Indian cultural connections from the other end of that continuum. It proved to be a fascinating subject, and one which caught the interest of Michael Dingaen, a key figure in the South African musical world. Michael commissioned the composer to write a new work for his Chamber Choir of South Africa, an ensemble of young black professional singers in Johannesburg.

The Elegy uses three of the most famous West Indian poems on the subject. First is *'There runs a dream'* by A.J. Seymour, a Guyanese writer and poet. This poem pays tribute to the heroism of those who drove back the jungle in order for the country of Guyana to be established, but even within its short two verses, it is acknowledged that the jungle is not so easily tamed, and grows back stealthily to cover the land. (*'Sic transit gloria mundi'*).

The second poem *'To Those'* by Harold Telemaque (b. Tobago, 1909) similarly acknowledges the bravery of those who fashioned some of the great wonders of Africa (e.g. the Sphinx, and the navigation of the Congo) as they are forced to settle in distant lands *'...left only with a sad song in their hearts...'*.

The final work in the cycle uses verses from the famous '*Ancestor on the auction block*' by Vera Bell (b. Jamaica, 1906). In this poem the author addresses those of previous generations brought to the West Indies against their will, and identifies with them on cultural and historical grounds as well as on the basis that all humanity should be seen as being made in the image of God.

African-Caribbean Elegy was first performed by the Chamber Choir of South Africa, directed by Michael Dingaan at the Standard Bank Gallery in Johannesburg on 27th October 2010, at which an exhibition of artistic works published by the Caversham Press was displayed, including works by such artists as Deborah Bell, Gabisile Nkosi, and William Kentridge.

LONDON CHORAL SINFONIA

Conductor

Michael Waldron

Soprano

Molly Alexander

Lucy Cronin

Rachel Ambrose Evans

Louise Prickett

Rebecca Lea

Zoë Brookshaw

Charlotte Ashley

Rosemary Galton

Emily Dickens

Alto

Amy Lyddon

Lucy Goddard

John Lattimore

Guy James

Simon Ponsford

Sarah Shorter

Clara Kanter

Tenor

Peter Harris

Hugo Hymas

Nick Pritchard

Matt Sandy

Gareth Treseder

Stefan Kennedy

Bass

Michael Craddock

Samuel Pantcheff

Christopher Dollins

Samuel Queen

Laurence Williams

Timothy Murphy

Dingle Yandell

Recorded: 6-9 January 2015 St Mark's Church, Regents Park, London
Producer: Adrian Peacock
Engineer: Andrew Mellor

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