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CLASSICS

I Am The Song

Choral Music by Bernard Hughes

BBC Singers

Paul Brough *conductor*



BBC SINGERS

I AM THE SONG

CHORAL MUSIC BY BERNARD HUGHES

Two Choral Fanfares

- | | | |
|---|---------------|--------|
| 1 | Everyone sang | [2.08] |
| 2 | I am the Song | [1.10] |

Three Swans

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|--------|
| 3 | The Bereaved Swan | [1.39] |
| 4 | The Silver Swan | [1.24] |
| 5 | Riddle | [3.30] |

Soloists: Helen Neeves (soprano) • Emma Tring (soprano)

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------|--------|
| 6 | The winter it is past | [4.02] |
|---|-----------------------|--------|

The Death of Balder

- | | | |
|----|-----------|---------|
| 7 | Prologue | [0.32] |
| 8 | Act One | [11.55] |
| 9 | Interlude | [3.08] |
| 10 | Act Two | [10.18] |

Soloists: Elizabeth Poole (soprano, *Frigg*) • Olivia Robinson (soprano, *Thokk*)
 Rebecca Lodge (mezzo-soprano, *Hel*) • Cherith Milburn-Fryer (alto, *Old Woman*)
 Edward Goater (tenor, *Balder*) • Stephen Jeffes (tenor, *Hermod*)
 Robert Johnston (tenor, *Hod*) • Charles Gibbs (bass, *Narrator*)
 Edward Price (bass, *Loki*)

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|--------|
| 11 | anyone lived in a pretty how town | [5.34] |
|----|-----------------------------------|--------|

Soloists: Helen Neeves (soprano) • Rebecca Lodge (mezzo-soprano),
 Robert Johnston (tenor) • Stephen Charlesworth (baritone), Edward Price (bass)

- | | | |
|----|-------------------|--------|
| 12 | Revelation Window | [5.27] |
|----|-------------------|--------|

A Medieval Bestiary

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------|--------|
| 13 | Prologue | [3.58] |
| 14 | The Beasts of the Land | [1.25] |
| 15 | The Panther | [4.20] |
| 16 | First Sermon | [0.51] |
| 17 | The Beasts of the Water | [1.23] |
| 18 | The Whale | [3.33] |
| 19 | Second Sermon | [0.49] |
| 20 | The Beasts of the Air | [0.58] |
| 21 | The Phoenix | [4.33] |
| 22 | Third Sermon | [2.38] |

Soloists: Olivia Robinson (soprano) • Elizabeth Poole (soprano)
 Margaret Cameron (mezzo-soprano) • Stephen Jeffes (tenor)
 Simon Grant (bass) • Edward Price (bass)

Total timings: [75.15]

BBC SINGERS
 PAUL BROUGH CONDUCTOR

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COMPOSER'S NOTE

This recording is the culmination of a collaboration with the BBC Singers dating back to 2002, when **Three Swans** was performed at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival. The two large-scale pieces, **The Death of Balder** and **A Medieval Bestiary**, were commissioned and premiered by the BBC Singers. They were both inspired by books, in fine Folio Society editions, bequeathed to me by my godfather, from which I adapted the texts. The other pieces have been written for a variety of choirs and occasions but not previously performed by the BBC Singers.

Two Choral Fanfares, composed in 2010 and 2011, are designed as short concert openers, setting poems by Seigfried Sassoon (1886-1967) and Charles Causley (1917-2003). **Everyone Sang** uses a poem written shortly after the Armistice in 1918. The text does not explicitly reference that event but describes a communal elation translated into spontaneous song. Charles Causley's work centres on ballads and folksong in the tradition of his native Cornwall. **I am the Song** is an anaphora, each line beginning with the same words. The rhythm of the music is irregular and syncopated, with

beats grouped mostly in sevens and fives, and, in contrast to the first fanfare, builds to a loud finish.

Swans have long held a fascination for poets and musicians, often taking on metaphorical meanings. The poems set in **Three Swans** are wide-ranging in tone and historical background, but are all linked by this most elegant of birds.

Stevie Smith (1902-71) was a true English eccentric, a poet and novelist whose work was illustrated with characteristic doodles and cartoons. **The Bereaved Swan** begins with the striking image of the swan as a floating cake of soap, opening out into an exploration of Smith's predominant theme: death.

The Silver Swan is well known as a madrigal by the English composer Orlando Gibbons, published in 1612, but my setting was made before I had heard this original. The words are unattributed, but possibly by Gibbons himself. The text deals with the legend that the swan, silent through life, sings a beautiful song before dying. In the final two lines, set to blazing cluster chords, the swan symbolises the wise, increasingly outnumbered, in Gibbons's day as in ours.

The oldest of the poems in the set, although presented in a modern adaptation, is a **Riddle** from the Exeter Book, for which the answer is 'swan'. The Exeter Book is a tenth-century codex and a major source of Anglo-Saxon poetry, which contains over 90 riddles. Its modern version is the work of poet and critic Geoffrey Grigson (1905-85). The poem itself does not contain the word 'swan', but the choir presents it as if in parentheses throughout the movement, announcing it decisively only at the end.

The winter it is past is a 2014 setting of a short, bleak poem by Robert Burns (1759-1796). Written in 1788 it equates the passing of the seasons with the end of a love affair. The music uses a melodic language borrowed from folksong in a prevailing 5/4 meter.

The stories of Norse mythology make up one of the most extraordinary narrative sequences in all literature. From the creation of the world in the chasm of Ginnungagap to the destruction of the gods at Ragnarök, the tales of Odin and the other gods have a resonance which rings across the centuries. The legend of the death of Balder comes from the *Prose Edda* of the great Icelandic historian and poet Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241), whose accounts of

the ancient tales were intended to preserve pre-Christian forms of Scandinavian story-telling.

The text of **The Death of Balder** was adapted by the composer from a modern telling of the myths by the poet and novelist Kevin Crossley-Holland. Probably the most famous of the Norse myths, **The Death of Balder** has been described by Crossley-Holland as 'one of the world's great tragic stories'. It is presented as a miniature 'radio opera': spoken narration linking solo arias and duets, against an 'orchestral' – but entirely sung – accompaniment.

Act One tells how the gods are fearful for the safety of the beautiful Balder. His mother gets reassurance from every object throughout the nine worlds that he will not be harmed, but she overlooks a small mistletoe bush. The malign god Loki creates a dart from this bush, which kills Balder. Amid widespread mourning Odin's son, Hermod, volunteers to journey to the world of the dead to negotiate with its ruler, Hel, for Balder's return.

In an Interlude, the gods and goddesses keep vigil by Balder's body through the endless night. In Act Two Balder is given a grand Norse funeral, put out to sea in his boat,

Ringhorn. Meanwhile, Hermod gains entry to the world of the dead. Hel agrees to release Balder if everything in the nine worlds shows his worth by weeping for him. Messengers go out, and everything weeps for Balder. But on their return to Asgard, the messengers come across a giantess, Thokk, who stonily refuses to weep for Balder, thereby committing him to remain in the land of the dead. The other gods are convinced Thokk is really Loki in disguise.

The Death of Balder was first broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in 2008, and subsequent performances have included the City of London and Bath festivals. It was runner-up in the British Composer Awards in 2009 and is dedicated to the composer Param Vir.

The text of **anyone lived in a pretty how town** is by the American poet E.E.Cummings (1894-1962), and was published in 1940 in the collection *50 Poems*. It tells the story of an anonymous man referred to as 'anyone', and features Cummings's customary games with syntax and semantics. The poem is childlike in its simplicity, but disrupted by unusual word order and opaque meaning. This choral arrangement, made in 2011, is based on a

setting for soprano, baritone and ensemble, written as a university graduation piece in 1995.

Revelation Window, for double choir, is based on the 1995 stained glass window of the same name in Manchester Cathedral, the work of the glass artist Antony Hollaway (1928-2000). The piece uses a wordless text whose syllables reference the words 'light', 'colour' and 'revelation' in a number of languages. The blocks of harmonic colour reflect the bold outlines of the window. **Revelation Window** was commissioned by the Seattle-based choir The Esoterics in 2010. The first performance was accompanied by a time-lapse film of light passing behind the window.

A Medieval Bestiary (2011) explores medieval man's relationship with the world of animals. The text intersperses colourful descriptions of animals – real and imaginary – from a 13th century bestiary now in the Bodleian library, with three Anglo-Saxon animal allegories. Ranging from the comical and the inspired to the downright peculiar, the animal descriptions offer a fascinating glimpse into the medieval mind. The text is based on translations of the bestiary by Richard Barber and of the allegorical poetry by Kevin Crossley-Holland.

The Folio Society facsimile Bestiary, its extraordinary illustrations interpolated into the text, gave a starting point for the piece: vivid musical colours to match vivid textual descriptions.

After the introduction, in which the animals of the world are given their names by Adam, sections introducing the beasts of the land, sea and air are each followed with longer passages devoted to the panther, the whale and the phoenix. These symbolically represent respectively Christ, Satan and the resurrection.

The medieval naturalists had didactic intent – to use the natural world to demonstrate how we can be better Christians – and so each of the three large panels ends with a sermon in which the choir instructs the audience on the lesson to be learnt. In the libretto the specific, and leaden, Christian explication of the original sources is removed to leave poetic but opaque moral instructions, for example the final words of the piece: 'O man, make your chrysalis, and clothe yourself in the new man.' The musical setting is extremely varied, from the plainchant-inspired opening, to the chorale-like sermons and the exhilarating chaos of the naming of the animals.

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Two Choral Fanfares

1 Everyone sang

Everyone suddenly burst out singing;
And I was filled with such delight
As prisoned birds must find in freedom,
Winging wildly across the white
Orchards and dark-green fields;
on — on — and out of sight.

Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted;
And beauty came like the setting sun:
My heart was shaken with tears; and horror
Drifted away... O, but Everyone
Was a bird; and the song was wordless;
the singing will never be done.

Everyone Sang by Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967), © the Estate of George Sassoon. Reproduced with permission.

2 I am the Song

I am the song that sings the bird.
I am the leaf that grows the land.
I am the tide that moves the moon.
I am the stream that halts the sand.
I am the cloud that drives the storm.
I am the earth that lights the sun.
I am the fire that strikes the stone.
I am the clay that shapes the hand.

I am the word that speaks the man.

I Am The Song by Charles Causley (1917-2003) from *Collected Poems* (1951-2000), published by Macmillan. Reproduced with permission.

Three Swans

3 The Bereaved Swan

Wan
Swan
On the lake
Like a cake
Of soap
Why is the swan
Wan
On the lake?
He has abandoned hope.
Wan
Swan
On the lake afloat
Bows his head:
O would that I were dead
For her sake that lies
Wrapped from my eyes
In a mantle of death,
The swan saith.

The Bereaved Swan by Stevie Smith (1902-1971), from *COLLECTED POEMS OF STEVIE SMITH*, copyright ©1972 by Stevie Smith. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp (US & Canada) and Faber and Faber Ltd.

4 The Silver Swan

The silver swan, who living had no note,
When death approached unlocked her
silent throat;
Leaning her breast against the reedy shore,
Thus sung her first and last, and sung no more:
Farewell, all joys; O death, come close mine eyes;
More geese than swans now live, more fools
than wise.

Anonymous

5 Riddle

Clothes make no sound when I tread ground
Or dwell in dwellings or disturb the flow.
And lofty air and gear at times
Above men's towns will lift me:
Brisk breezes bear me far, and then
My frettings loudly rush and ring
Above the people and most clearly sing
When I forth-fare on air
And feel and know
No fold, no flow.

Riddle by Geoffrey Grigson (1905-1985) from *Collected Poems* (1963-1980), published by Allison & Busby. Reproduced with permission.

6 The winter it is past

The winter it is past, and the summer comes
at last
And the small birds, they sing on ev'ry tree;
Now ev'ry thing is glad, while I am very sad,
Since my true love is parted from me.

The rose upon the breer, by the waters
running clear,
May have charms for the linnet or the bee;
Their little loves are blest, and their little hearts
at rest,
But my true love is parted from me.

Robert Burns (1759-1796)

The Death of Balder

7 Prologue

Narrator

Hail to the speaker and to him who listens! May
whoever learns these words prosper because of
them! Hail to those who listen!

Choir

Hail to those who listen! Ah!

8 Act One

Narrator

The gods and goddesses gathered in the shadow of Balder's terrible dreams, dreams that threatened to pitch him into the darkness forever. Not one of them doubted his life was in danger and for a long time they discussed how to protect him.

The gods and goddesses thought of all the ways in which one can die; then Balder's mother, Frigg, began to travel through the nine worlds and get each and every substance to swear an oath that it would not harm Balder.

Choir

Fire swore an oath.
Water swore an oath.
Iron and every metal swore an oath.
The stones swore oaths.
Earth swore an oath.
The trees swore oaths.
Every kind of illness swore an oath and so did every sidling snake: 'Balder is safe.'

Narrator

When the gods and goddesses heard what Frigg had done they decided to put it to the test. One threw a pebble which struck Balder's head.

Balder

I can feel nothing.

Narrator

Another tried, and another. The gods could not resist the sport. They tossed pebbles and sticks which struck Balder on the head and chest, but he remained unharmed.

Balder

I feel nothing. Nothing at all.

Narrator

The gods enjoyed the game hugely – all except Loki, the Sly One.

Loki

I am Loki
Sly, subtle sorcerer
Skilful shape-changer
Troublemaker. Trickster. Tormentor.
I celebrate suffering.
Balder's blitheness makes my blood boil
I play no part in these pastimes
And yet I cannot quite keep away.

Narrator

Slipping away, Loki the Shape Changer assumed the form of an old woman. He found Balder's mother, Frigg, alone.

Frigg

Greetings, old woman.

Old Woman

Where am I?

Frigg

This is Asgard.

Old Woman

I'm a long way from home.

Frigg

You are welcome in Asgard.

Old Woman

Over there! What a noise!
They are stoning a man.

Frigg

Don't worry, old woman.

Old Woman

Poor man! His face was white, so white...

Frigg

He's my son, but nothing can hurt him.

Old Woman

Poor man. Poor man.

Frigg

I've taken an oath. From everything.

Old Woman

Everything that is?

Frigg

Everything.

Old Woman

Alive or dead?

Frigg

Yes.

Old Woman

Everything?

Frigg

Yes.

Old Woman

Even a pinch of salt?

Frigg (irritated)

Yes. Everything. Except...
Except the little bush,
So small, so young,
That grows to the west of Valhalla: the mistletoe.

Narrator

Frigg looked round but the old woman was gone.
Loki had already re-assumed his own form and
was hurrying towards Valhalla and then west. In a
small grove he found, growing out of the trunk of
an oak, the spray of mistletoe.

Choir

Berries gleam like clusters of pale eyes,
Unmoving and strange in the half-light.

Narrator

Loki chose the straightest branch and formed an
arrow from it.

Choir

Leaves green and yellow-green
Stem green.

Narrator

He sharpened one end to a point.

Choir

Otherworldly and strange in the half-light.

Narrator

Loki returned to Gladsheim. The gods meanwhile
were so absorbed in their game that none had
missed Loki, or noticed his return. Loki sidled up
to Balder's blind brother, Hod, standing apart
from the others.

Loki

Helpless Hod,
Why don't you dare throw darts
At your beautiful brother, Balder,
Blind Hod,
Hopeless, helpless Hod?

Hod

I can't see where he is.
Another thing. I have no weapon.

Loki

Take this twig.
I'll stand behind you,
Steady your hand,
Steer it to strike.

Choir (chanting)

Eyes on fire. Body on fire.
Evil was in him.

Narrator

Guided by Loki, Hod aimed the dart at Balder. The
mistletoe flew...

Choir

...flew...

Narrator

It pierced Balder's body...

Choir

...pierced...

Narrator

The god fell on his face.

Choir

...fell...

Narrator

Dead.

Choir

[WORDLESS CHORUS. THE GODDESSES ARE
SEIZED BY WILD GRIEF.]

Frigg

Does anyone here...?
Will anyone...?
Who here will win all my love and favour?
Who will here ride the long road to Hel,
Offer Hel a ransom,
A ransom for my son Balder,
If she will met Balder home to Asgard again?

Hermod

I will...
I am Hermod, son of Odin.
Bold. Fearless. Admired.
I am ready to go!

Narrator

So Hermod mounted Sleipnir, Odin's own horse,
and galloped out under the moon and down
towards the always-dark.

And all through that endless night the gods and
goddesses kept silent vigil by Balder's body.

9 Interlude

Choir

Breathe no more.
Sleep no more.
Balder breathes no more.
Gladsheim sleeps no more.
Gladsheim: breathe again.

Narrator

All night the gods and goddesses kept silent vigil
by Balder's body and in the morning they began to
prepare for his funeral. A cortege laid his corpse
on a pyre in Ringhorn, Balder's own great boat
with its curved prow.

Gods came. Valkyries came. Elves, dwarves and
giants came to pay their tribute of grief. [sings]
The fire was lit, and the watchers wept as the
boat began to drift out, rocking, across the water.

Choir

Farewell Balder, most beautiful, most gentle,
most wise of them all. Farewell.

10 Act Two

Narrator

Meanwhile, for nine nights Hermod rode through
a valley so deep and dark he was unable to see
anything. The ground fell away from him and the
cold fingers of the underworld began to reach up
towards him.

At last he reached the massive gates and
towering walls that Hel had set up in front of
her hall, Eljudnir. With a great thrust of his back
legs, Sleipnir leaped clear of the iron gates, and
Hermod entered the hall.

Choir

Ah! Help me! Save me! Pity me!

[THE NEWLY DEAD ARE IN AGONY, OR RESIGNED,
SOME LEERING OR MURDEROUS, SPITTING OR
MOANING. THROUGH THIS WE HEAR BALDER'S
WORDS FROM EARLIER:]

Balder

I can feel nothing.

Narrator

Hel, mistress of Eljudnir, approached Hermod.

Hel

Who...? What... do you... want... here?

Hermod

I am Hermod!

I must tell you of the grief of the gods.

Asgard is caught in a storm of sorrow.

I ask you with love for most beautiful, most gentle

Balder:

Will you allow Odin's son to ride home with me?

Narrator

Hel, guardian of the underworld, considered.

Hel

Is Balder... truly... as loved... as you say?...

Let me... test.

If... everything in the... nine... worlds... dead

and alive,... weeps for Balder,

Let him return... to Asgard.

But if... anything... even one single thing... will

not weep...

Balder... remains... here... with me!

Narrator

Hermod returned to Asgard and told the gods all

that had happened. And messengers were sent
out to every corner of the nine worlds.

Messengers

Weep for Balder. Weep for dead Balder.

Let everything that is weep for Balder.

Choir

Fire wept. Water wept.

Iron and every metal wept.

The stones wept. Earth wept.

The trees wept. Every kind of illness wept and so

did every sidling snake.

'Weep for dead Balder'.

Narrator

The messengers were making their way back to
Asgard, feeling they had overlooked nothing, when
on the way they came across a giantess sitting
in a cave.

Messengers

What is your name?

Thokk

I am Thokk.

Messengers

Weep for Balder. Weep for dead Balder.

Let everything that is weep for Balder.

Thokk

I will weep no tears for Balder.

I care nothing for Balder.

Alive or dead, I have no use for him.

Let Hel hold what she has.

Messengers

Weep. Weep. Weep.

Narrator

But Thokk refused to say another word. She would
not recant, she would not weep.

The messengers left her and mournfully returned
to Asgard. And what they had to say was clear
from the manner of their coming.

Choir

The gods and goddesses ached;

They felt old, confused, weary;

Their hearts were heavy with sorrow.

Narrator

And not one of them doubted that Thokk, the
giantess in the cave, was also Loki.

Choir

Disturbed, dismayed, heartsick,

The gods awaited

The time at the end of time: Ragnarok.

Narrator

May whoever learns these words prosper because of them!

Hail to those who listen!

Choir

Hail to those who listen! Ah!

Text by Kevin Crossley-Holland (b.1941), adapted by Bernard Hughes

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[11] anyone lived in a pretty how town

E. E. Cummings (1894-1962). Text not reproduced here due to copyright restrictions.

A Medieval Bestiary

[13] Prologue

Beasts of the Land!

Beasts of the Water!

Beasts of the Air!

Adam, being the first man, gave to all living beings a name, a name in the tongue of all peoples before the Flood: Hebrew.

Later, after Babel, the heathens named each and every beast, each and every one, in their own languages: Greek and Latin and Arabic, the tongues of the Celts and Saxons and Germans, the Northmen, Tuscans and all the barbarian peoples.

And so the names multiplied:

Yana, Daga, Achbar, Livyatan, Dvora, Kelev, Aryeh, Hirra, Dubb, Booma, Charfaferet, Y'ela, Zikit, Ez, Nami, Thaalab, Barboor, Bichra, Antholops, Lupus, Delphinus, Apa, Barvaz, Canis, Camellus, Aquila, Bulbul, Basiliskos, Hafoc, Pelikan, Gos, Khamaileon, Hwael, Beo, Camel, Monokoros, Mus, Beofor, Rhomus, Aes, Ass, Korax, Fisc, Frogga, Asino, Bonnacon, Mul, Sirena, Api, Hors, Uxi, Hraefn, Catt, Gatto, Leon, Viper, Barnacle, Hedgehog, Leucrota, Igel, Wulf, Amphisbaena, Coccodrillo, Uglá, Night-owl, Gos, Snaca, Blaka, Serpent, Bee, Dufa, Coot, Tiger, Quail, Salamander, Charadrius, Mule, Hoopoe, Crow, Elephant, Fox, Horned Serpent, Eagle, Panther, Svala, Peacock, Sparrowhawk, Antelope, Laculus, Phoenix, Hyena, Cinnomolgus, Scorpion, Heron, Hawk, Bat, Partridge, Perindens, Pard, Serra, Beaver, Lizard, Water-ouzel, Gryphon, Magpie. Weasel, Seps, Sheep, Vulture, Wyrm, Crow, Tragelaphus, Kite, Hawk, Manticore, Dragon

Thus Adam named the animals,
all the creatures of the world.
Adam, the first man, named them all!

To the brink of the water encircling
the bright earth,
The swing of the waves in the roaring sea,
Both birds and beasts are scattered,
Multitudes moving all over the earth.

[14] The Beasts of the Land

Of the animals named by Adam most numerous
are those of the land.

In India there is a beast called the manticore.
It has a triple row of teeth, the face of a man, a lion's body and a pointed tail with a sting like a scorpion, and a hissing voice. It delights in eating human flesh.

The lion fears the noise of wheels.

The lynx's urine hardens into a valuable jewel.

A fox has supple feet and never runs in a straight line.

A sick bear will eat ants.

A parander can change its shape when it is frightened.

The weasel is very cunning. Some say it conceives through its ear and gives birth through its mouth.

If a unicorn sees a virgin girl it leaps into her lap and goes to sleep.

The amphisbaena has two heads, one in the right place, the other on its tail.

The gryphon has a face like an eagle, with the body of a lion; it hates the horse bitterly.

The monoceros is a monster with a horrible bray; it has the body of a horse, the feet of an elephant and a tail like that of a stag.

A dragon is larger than all other animals. It has a crest, a small mouth and narrow nostrils. Its homes are Ethiopia and India.

There is an animal called the hyena, which lives in the graves of dead men and feeds on their bodies.

In Ethiopia there are ants in the shape of dogs
which root out grains of gold with their feet and
guard them.

The panther is a mottled beast and very swift.

15 The Panther

There are marvellous things said
About the nature of a certain beast:
His name is Panther.

Fairest of creatures,
Glossy and bright.
Modest and meek,
Peaceful, kind,
Panther will not hurt anything –
Except the venomous dragon,
His oldest foe.

After eating,
He retires to his mountain cave.
The mighty warrior slumbers, heavy with
weariness;
Rising on the third day,
A sweet sound streams forth,
Stronger, more pleasing
Than any forest blossom,
The most lovely of songs.

From royal lodges and fortresses and towns,
Men hurry along earth's paths in company
Towards the music, drawn by the song.
That is a fair music.

16 First Sermon

Blush, wretched man, blush! Look at the example
of nature, which daily creates and brings forth
new creatures. The first generation came from
clay, the latest from wood. Nature imitates itself
and repeats the process.

17 The Beasts of the Water

In the submerged world of the sea
Is a darkness unknown on the land.

Dolphins gather in shoals when music is played.
The crocodile is so called from the colour
of crocuses.
There is a monster in the sea called the serra,
or flying fish.

18 The Whale

I will sing about a fish,
His name is Fastitocalon,
Fierce and savage to seafarers.
Proud whale, water-traveller,
Ocean monster, master of evil.

Hungry, the warden of the ocean
Opens his mouth,
Parts his vast lips.
A sweet scent streams out.
Fish of all sorts are seduced:
They swim to the source of the scent
And crowd in, a thoughtless throng,
Until that huge maw is full;
Suddenly the grim jaws snap around their prey.
At once Fastitocalon dives,
Dives to the depths of that bottomless swell,
Into the misty gloom.

For those who enter, there is no return, no escape.

19 Second Sermon

So you, O man, the eyes of whose heart are
darkened, should lift the eyes of your mind and
seek out the fount of justice; then you will
renew your youth, like an eagle that is restored
to full strength.

20 The Beasts of the Air

Of all the beasts, the flying creatures known to us
as birds, known to us as beasts of the air, are the
most noble.

Airborne, nearer to God,
Their movement free of constraint;
Gliding through the nothingness above the earth
The beasts of the air see further,
And feel deeper,
And know more.

Vultures conceive without mating. They can
predict the death of a man.
Cranes submit to a kind of military discipline.
The ostrich has feathers but does not fly;
its feet are like a camel's.
The jackdaw is the most talkative of birds,
with a grating voice.
The pelican loves its young excessively.
The partridge is a cunning and unclean bird.
No other creature can scent man so keenly
as the goose.
I have seen them myself, with my own eyes,
many times.

21 The Phoenix

Far from here,
Away to the east,
is a place without equal;
Endowed with earth's sweetest scents,
Spacious under the sky.

When the wind is asleep and the weather set fair,
When the clouds have dispersed
and the mighty deeps lie calm,
Then the phoenix fashions its nest.
When the scorching sun
Looks across the world,
The house of the phoenix
Swelters under the glowing sky.
The funeral pyre is kindled.
Furious the flames flicker,
The nest of the phoenix
Held in the fire's fierce embrace.
The age-old bird is burnt.

In time its corpse grows cold,
Its body breaks apart;
The flames die away.

In the ashes of the pyre,
Is found an apple
From which grows a wondrous worm.
In the shadow it grows
In great joy, until it is like

An eagle come to maturity:
Adorned with brilliant plumage,
As it was in the beginning.

22 Third Sermon

O man, make your chrysalis, and putting off the
old Adam, and all his deeds, clothe yourself in
the new man. Your chrysalis will protect you and
shelter you in the evil hour. Your chrysalis is faith;
fill it with the sweetness of your virtues, and enter
its depths, strengthened by your knowledge of
your good deeds. The end of your life should find
you clothed in this faith, your bones as full of sap
as a luxuriant garden. Know therefore the day of
your death.

O man, make your chrysalis, and clothe yourself in
the new man.

The text, adapted by the composer, uses two medieval sources. It is based partly on the Bestiary (Bodley 764), translated into English by Richard Barber (The Folio Society, 1992). The texts of 'The Panther', 'The Whale' and 'The Phoenix' are based on Kevin Crossley-Holland's translations in *The Anglo-Saxon World*. The translations of the animals names in the Prologue were provided by Kevin Crossley-Holland, Richard Barber, Raissa Kasolowsky and Michal Lyons.

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BERNARD HUGHES

Bernard Hughes (b.1974) grew up in London and studied music at St Catherine's College, Oxford; in 2009 he was awarded a PhD in composition by the University of London. His teachers have included Hugh Rice, Param Vir and Philip Cashian. Bernard Hughes's music has been performed by ensembles including the BBC Singers, Trinity Boys' Choir and Juice Vocal Ensemble at major venues including Symphony Hall, Birmingham and St Paul's Cathedral. He has won awards including the Polyphonos International Prize, the William Mathias Composition Prize and the Simon Carrington Singers Composition Prize. Recent premieres have included choral works for the Seattle Pro Musica, the Three Choirs Festival and for Crouch End Festival Chorus's 30th anniversary season. The orchestral work *ANAPHORA* has recently been recorded by the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra and Bernard wrote songs and incidental music for the British film comedy *Bill*, released in 2015. Bernard Hughes is Composer-in-Residence at St Paul's Girls' School in London. For more information visit www.bernardhughes.co.uk.



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* *The Death of Balder and A Medieval Bestiary only*



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PAUL BROUGH

Paul Brough has taught conducting and academic studies at the Royal Academy of Music since 2004. His own conducting has taken him to the BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, BBC Concert Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia, Manchester Camerata and St James's Baroque.

2016 sees him completing five years as Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Singers and conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra for the first time, as Guest Principal Conductor of the Oxford Bach Choir.

He attended the Royal College of Music and held organ scholarships at St Michael's College, Tenbury and Magdalen College, Oxford. He studied conducting with George Hurst and Colin Metters as a postgraduate and post-student Fellow at the Royal Academy of Music, also taking regular masterclasses with both Sir Colin Davis and Ilya Musin. He assisted Jeffrey Tate with the Venice *Ring* (2007-9) and conducted period orchestra The Hanover Band for seven seasons (Principal Conductor 2007-10). In his parallel activities as a church musician he has developed the musical traditions at All

Saints' Margaret Street, Sheffield Cathedral and Tewkesbury Abbey. He now directs the music at St Mary's Bourne Street in succession and tribute to the late David Trendell. He lectured for sixteen years in the music department of King's College, London and was made an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music in 2007 in recognition of "a significant contribution to the music profession".



Bernard Hughes (L) and Paul Brough (R).

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The BBC Singers recording at BBC Maida Vale, London.

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