

PREFACE

It was a huge privilege to be invited by Suzi Digby and her excellent Voce Chamber Choir to make an arrangement of Sir William Walton's mind-blowing setting of *Belshazzar's Feast*. It was a work I had come into contact with several times at the Three Choirs Festival, both as repetiteur and conductor. I was delighted when the William Walton Estate Trustees gave permission for this recasting of the full orchestral score, with the hope of opening the doors for a myriad of future performances—especially for choirs that have neither the necessary financial resources nor space for the extremely sizeable orchestra.

As a transcriber, you try to imagine for each bar what the composer would say if they were looking over your shoulder—you are truly acting as their ambassador. My intention when making organ transcriptions of sizeable orchestral scores (be it Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms, Mahler, Elgar, Strauss, Ravel, or Walton) is always to recast the raw material in a way that makes it ergonomically and musically efficient in its new guise. For this arrangement, three performers are charged with creating the same *frisson* as Walton's original 90. With the organ part, I ended up omitting some of the original figurations but adding others, in order to make it effective and equally vibrant in its new guise.

Much depends on the registration, and I usually leave this entirely to the discretion of the player because each organ and acoustic is different. Without doubt, the organ part is technically quite demanding, but perhaps no more so than those of Walton's *The Twelve* or *Jubilate Deo*. In practical terms, it is quite important that the organ isn't too distant from the choir—much of the music is extremely rhythmic and almost impossible when significant time-lags are involved.

Adrian Bending's brilliant percussion realizations are largely based on Walton's own score but, now and then, he incorporates other creative details to reflect specific orchestral instruments, thereby broadening the sonic palette of the work as a whole.

It is our sincere hope that Sir William would approve of our efforts and see this arrangement as a recasting, rather than a simplification, of his monumental piece.

DAVID BRIGGS

to Lord Berners

Belshazzar's Feast

WILLIAM WALTON

arr. DAVID BRIGGS

Maestoso ♩ = 54

Thus spake I - sai - ah: Thy sons that thou shalt be - get, They shall be ta-ken a-way

Sw. *f* Ch. Gt. *ff*

And be eu-nuchs In the pa-lace of the King of Ba-by-lon. Howl ye, howl ye there-fore: For the day of the Lord is at hand.

7

p *pp*

First performed by Voce Chamber Choir, Sir Willard White (bass-baritone), David Briggs (organ), Adrian Bending and Alex Neal (percussion), directed by Suzi Digby OBE, at Our Lady of Victories, London, on 9 March 2024.

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15 ♩ = 60

Con rubato

1 a tempo

By the wa - ters, _____ by the

2 poco rit. a tempo

yea, we wept, _____ yea,

3

wept _____ And hang - - - ed our harps up-on the wil - - - lows.

43 **Gt.** **Ch.** **Sw.** **4 Inquietamente***

f *f* *p*

49 **poco agitato** **Gt. f** **Sw.**

56 **molto agitato** **5 più mosso** $\text{♩} = c.112$ **Gt. ff** **f**

'sing us one of the songs of...'

*There is a graduated 'più mosso' from **4** where $\text{♩} = c.63$ to the eleventh bar after **5** where $\text{♩} = c.126$.

61 $\text{♩} = c.126$

ff

68 **6** **meno mosso poco a poco e con rubato**

How shall we sing

pp

76 **rall.** $\text{♩} = c.76$

the Lord's song, the Lord's song In a

pp

a tempo

rall.

85

strange land, in a strange land?

Sw. *pp* *f* *fz* Ch. *f*

Gt.

BARITONE SOLO

98

a tempo ♩ = 60

mp espress., rubato

If _____ I for - get thee, _____ for - get _____

Sw. *pp* Ch. *rubato*

poco rall.

8 a tempo poco più mosso ♩ = 69*

106 >

thee, O Je - ru - - - sa - lem, Let my right hand for-get her

Gt.

mp Sw.

113

cun-ning. If I do not re-mem - ber thee, Let my tongue cleave to the

cresc.

fz Gt.

*There is a graduated 'più mosso' from 8 where ♩ = c.69 to bar 139 where ♩ = c.80.

120

f

roof of my mouth; Yea, if I pre - fer - not Je - ru - sa - lem,

Sw.

127

rubato *a tempo* **9**

Je - ru - sa - lem a - bove my chief joy.

Gt. *f*