

The Hartford Chorale
2020-2021 *A Season of Well-Reasoned Alternatives*
Monday, April 12, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

The Chorale's Performance of Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*
With the Hartt School Choral and Instrumental Departments
The Choir of the Cathedral of St. Joseph
Connecticut Children's Chorus
Edward Bolkovac, co-chorus master
Jonita Lattimore, soprano
William Hite, tenor
David Murry, bass
Christopher Zimmerman, conductor

Sunday, May 2, 2010
A Hartt School Production
The Cathedral of St. Joseph, Hartford

There is no other work like this Requiem, commissioned by and composed for the dedication of the new Coventry Cathedral in 1962, destroyed during World War II. To this day, access to the gleaming, modern structure is achieved by walking through the remaining ruins of the magnificent gothic original. I have walked that path myself. The uniqueness of this Requiem, beyond its incomparable scope of musical forces, is that while it includes all of the traditional Latin texts of the *Missa Pro Defunctis*, these texts and juxtapositions are in response to poetry by World War I British soldier, Wilfred Owen, killed in battle at the age of twenty-five, just days before the end of the war. His preface to these poems: "My subject is War and the pity of War. The poetry is in the pity."

Many of us will remember the vast nature of that 2011 concert and its preparations in the cathedral, a "cast of thousands" impression, all captured by the cathedral's recording studio. At the end, the audience sat in stunned silence.

The Requiem's structure in three "battalions":

- The liturgical text (lots!) is sung by a large mixed chorus and soprano soloist, with full orchestra.
- Representing two soldiers from opposing sides in the war and singing Owen's words are tenor and baritone soloists, with chamber orchestra.
- A children's choir is a detachment, placed at a distance in the gallery, singing portions of the Latin texts, described by annotator Nick Jones: "their innocence a disturbing reminder that such children are the fodder of the next generation's wars."

We of the Chorale were honored to have been invited to participate in this historic presentation, and now, eleven years later, we can in some measure revisit the power and poignancy of that occasion.

Rick Coffey