

Iain Bell

CONCERT WORKS

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BEOWULF

NARRATOR, DRAMATIC TENOR, CHORUS & ORCHESTRA

World Premiere: March 2023 | Barbican Hall, London
Ruth Wilson, Charles Styles, BBC Symphony & Chorus
Martyn Brabbins (cond.)
c.45-mins

This quasi-operatic adaptation of the Beowulf legend calls upon the full forces of a symphony orchestra and chorus, alongside a spoken narrator and dramatic tenor to bring this epic and elemental story to life. Throughout its four movements, the chorus and narrator set the scene and atmosphere throughout, passing the baton to the tenor soloist at moments of peak intensity.

AURORA

COLORATURA SOPRANO & ORCHESTRA

World Premiere: Aug 2018 | BBC Proms

Adela Zaharia & RLPO

Vasily Petrenko (cond.)

c.18-mins

Inspired by the technicolour majesty of the Northern Lights, this concerto for coloratura soprano is a beguiling feast for the ears as timbres shift from second to second, with the orchestra and soprano engaged in a musical game of chase.





MOLL'S A' COLD

Mad-scene from opera 'A Harlot's Progress'
(Theater an der Wien | 2013)

COLORATURA SOPRANO & ORCHESTRA

World Premiere (in concert): Sep 2017 | Enescu Festival

Adela Zaharia & Enescu Festival Orchestra

Dmitry Sitkovetsky (cond.)

c.15-mins

Taken from Bell's first opera 'A Harlot's Progress', this mad-scene charts the final mental and emotional descent of Moll Hackabout (the titular harlot). In the final stages of syphilis, Moll journeys through varied states of mental anguish, first fixating on her sores, then singing a lullaby to her absent child. Deep melancholy gives way to fits of rage as she recalls the violence with which she was forced into prostitution. She is so overcome by this intense outburst that she is greatly weakened in body and spirit and calls down the night to take her away. Wrapping herself in a sheet, she sings herself to sleep. Finally, at peace, she dies...

HOW MAY I CALL MY LOVE?

LYRIC TENOR & STRING ORCHESTRA

World Premiere: March 2021 | Czechia TV Broadcast

Petr Nekoranec & Pardubice Filharmonie

Petr Popelka (cond.)

c.13-mins

This is a setting of five gay sonnets by Elizabethan poet Richard Barnfield, drawn together to tell the story of a young man burning with love for a male friend, in whom he eventually musters the courage to confide. Both volcanic and gossamer-light, the tenor sings of his emotional epiphany bolstered by atmospheric and dramatic narration from the string orchestra.





THE HIDDEN PLACE

SOPRANO & ORCHESTRA

World Premiere: Sep 2019 | Enescu Festival

Diana Damrau & LSO

Gianandrea Noseda (cond.)

c.15-mins

This cycle of four poems for soprano and orchestra depicts two lovers sharing their most intimate moments in a secret outdoors location, known only to them, during the four seasons. The soprano passionately soars over an orchestra delicately conveying each of the seasons, from the gentle mists of Spring through to the icicles of Winter-time; burning passion fades to a bitter-sweet nostalgia for times passed.

STONEWALL '69

A SYMPHONIC SUITE

World Premiere: Jun 2023

Hartford Symphony Orchestra

Carolyn Kuan (cond.)

c.25-mins

Stonewall '69 is an orchestral suite based on melodic material from Bell's fifth opera 'Stonewall' (New York City Opera | 2019) commissioned to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising. Its three movements track those of the opera, the first of which is a kaleidoscopic musical portrait of the characters on their way to the bar, the second - the outbreak and violence of the uprising itself. The final movement is the 'morning after the night before' as the previous night's events are contemplated alongside the hopeful possibilities of what the future may hold.

