

CRI SD 280

IAIN HAMILTON

EPITAPH FOR THIS WORLD AND TIME (1970)

**with the choirs of the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, New York City (Alec Wyton, organist and master of choristers); Trinity Church, Princeton, N. J. (James W. Litton, organist and choirmaster); Trinity Church, New York City (Larry King, organist and music director). Larry King, David Agler and Jack Jones, organists
Conducted by ALEC WYTON**

VOYAGE for French horn and chamber orchestra (1970)

**BARRY TUCKWELL, horn
The London Sinfonietta
DAVID ATHERTON, conductor**

The two new works on this record display different aspects of Iain Hamilton's talents, sharing only a certain apocalyptic spirit that drives the performers to extremes of their abilities.

EPITAPH is an evocation of the more awesome portions of the Book of Revelation. VOYAGE is a trip through a sometimes violent, sometimes familiar musical landscape, in the form of a concerto for French horn.

The text of EPITAPH is based-upon passages from the Revelation of St. John the Divine, relating to the seven plagues: the destruction of Babylon, the first earth and the first heaven, and finally, the descent of the celestial city of jasper, gold and glass. Dominating the conception is the vast enigma posed by the line, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending."

To capture the terrible sense of the words, three choirs and three organs are called for, with the organs delivering many eerie effects while the singers shout, scream and whisper as well as sing. The composition ends as it begins, raising the possibility of a never-ending performance — another enigma. The text follows:

I PROLOGUE:

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, which was and which is to come.
I, John, was in the spirit of the Lord's Day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet saying: I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.

II THE SEVEN PLAGUES:

The first poured out his vial upon the earth and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast and upon them which worshiped his image.

The second poured out his vial upon the sea and it became as the blood of a dead man; and every living soul died in the sea. The third poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say: Thou art righteous, O Lord, for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink.

The fourth poured out his vial upon the sun and men were scorched with the great heat and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues and they repented not to give him glory.

The fifth poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast, and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain and repented not of their deeds.

The sixth poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates and the water thereof was dried up.

The seventh poured out his vial into the air and there came a great voice out of the temple of Heaven from the throne saying:

It is done. And there were voices of thunders and lightnings and there was a great earthquake such as was not since men were upon the earth, and the cities of the nations fell and great Babylon came in remembrance before God to give unto her the cup of wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away and the mountains were not found.

III THE FALL OF BABYLON:

And another angel came down and the earth was lightened with his glory and he cried mightily: Babylon the Great is fallen, is fallen and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit. Come out of her, my people, that ye receive not of her plagues.

Alas, alas, the great city of Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour is thy judgment come.

Alas, alas, the great city that was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls. Alas, alas, the great city wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! For in one hour is she made desolate.

And a mighty angel took up a stone like a millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying: Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. The voice of musicians shall be heard no more at all in thee. The sound of the millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee. The light of the candle shall shine no more at all in thee. The voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee.

For by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. In Babylon was found the blood of all that were slain upon the earth.

IV THE END OF HEAVEN AND EARTH:

And the sea and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. The first heaven and the first earth were passed away and there was no more sea. And a voice said: It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

V THE DESCENT OF THE CELESTIAL CITY

And he showed me a great city descending out of heaven from God. The wall of it was of jasper and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And in the midst was there the tree of life which bear twelve manner of fruits and the leaves were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle neither light of the sun, for the Lord giveth them light and they shall reign for ever and ever.

EPILOGUE:

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last and the bright and morning star. Behold, I come quickly.

VOYAGE is, the composer says, related to Baudelaire's poems, *Le Voyage*, and *Un Voyage à Cythère* and Rimbaud's *Le Bateau ivre*, all of which refer to far off places and the sea, although the voyage is an inner one. "In the music, these references to certain places and the sea are mirrored in passages from Debussy's music," specifically *L'isle joyeuse* and *La Mer*. There are nine sections, with the horn dominating all but four short interludes. The music requires the players to use microtones, to improvise and to play simultaneously in different tempos.

VOYAGE was commissioned by the LONDON SINFONIETTA which gave it its first performance to great public and critical acclaim in March 1971. In the three short years of its existence, the SINFONIETTA has become a major entity on London's musical scene, and DAVID ATHERTON, its musical director, a leading personage. BARRY TUCKWELL, for whom the solo part was written, has emerged as one of the world's finest horn players.

The performers are:

Sebastian Bell, flute and piccolo; Janet Craxton, oboe; Antony Pay, clarinet and E flat clarinet; Elgar Howarth, trumpet I; Howard Snail, trumpet II; Denis Wick, trombone; James Holland, percussion; Harold Lester, piano; Nona Liddell, violin I; Joan Atherton, violin II; Frederick Riddle, viola; Jennifer Ward-Clarke, cello; Robin McGee, double bass.

IAIN HAMILTON was born in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1922. He started out to become an engineer, but switched to music and entered the Royal Academy of Music where he is now a Fellow. His talent was quickly recognized and he began winning numerous prizes and commissions, and then accepted important teaching positions, lectureships and memberships on committees in furtherance of music. Moving to New York in 1961, he continued to appear in prominent posts, including a composer-in-residenceship at Tanglewood (1962) and the Mary Duke Biddle Professorship of Music at Duke University.

EPITAPH was commissioned by Dr. and Mrs. James H. Semans for the Duke Chapel. It was premiered in Trinity Church, N. Y., on March 30, 1971, where this recording was later made.

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(Original Liner Notes from CRI LP Jacket)