

PASTORAL VS VISCERAL

Evocations of war in words and music



**November 2008 marks the 90th commemoration of the Armistice.
We are still at war.**

*But still he died
Nobly, so cover him over
With violets of pride
Purple from Severn side.*

*Cover him, cover him soon!
And with thick-set
Masses of memoried flowers –
Hide that red wet
Thing I must somehow forget.*

(From *To His Love* by Ivor Gurney featured on *The Dark Pastoral* CD (Altara) with Andrew Kennedy, Julius Drake and Simon Russell-Beale)

*Somehow somehow something hit the mines
The mine was armed somehow I mean
I remember seeing it hit the ground and just
The flash come right at me*

After a while after a while after a while

*And it...it launched me
I mean yards way up in the air back
When I realized 'man, I just got blew up by about 20 mines
I was like, wow*

(From *'I was like, Wow!* composed by Jacob ter Veldhuis featured on solo CD *'I was like, Wow'* (Channel Classics) with Dutch trombonist Jörgen van Rijen.

English tenor **Andrew Kennedy** and Dutch trombonist **Jörgen van Rijen** both received Borletti-Buitoni Trust awards in 2006 and both used part of their monies (£20,000 each award) towards music projects that come to

fruition this year, 2008. Both projects happen to address the issues of war; the so called **Great War** of 1914-18 and the so called **War Against Terror** of the 21st century.

The magnitude and global scope of both wars inspire awesome feelings of loss and helplessness even though the practical and physical nature of warfare has changed in the intervening years. *Terror* has taken on a different meaning - but destruction, pain and loss are still the same. Our individual lives today are not personally distorted by war even though media coverage brings it relentlessly to our attention. Reporting of wars is graphic and brutally real, but have we become inured to the violence we see on TV screens? Was it more *real* in 1914 or 1944 when it was actually in our own back yard and the home front casualties of war were a daily fact of life for everyone?

These two BBT projects both deal with the horror of war, but in extremely different ways. What makes more of an emotional impact?: the hauntingly sad poems and songs that vividly invoke the pastoral idyll in contrast to the stench of the battlefield? Or the unshielded reality of brutally graphic descriptions of destruction and injury? Would the former way make an impact at all nowadays?

Andrew Kennedy's CD, *The Dark Pastoral*, explores new territory and new perspectives in the music and poetry of World War I. He has chosen previously unheard or unpublished songs of three composers – **William Denis Browne, Ivor Gurney** and **Eugene Goossens** – and juxtaposed them with works from poets and writers mostly eclipsed by the more famous war poets such as Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen. These selected works are commentaries on war that are shocking because the writers and composers cling to ideals: searingly beautiful and tender memories of former lives and landscapes proclaim all the more emphatically the intensity of loss – loss of beauty, of love, of friendship and of life.

May, 1915 (Ivor Gurney)

*Let us remember Spring will come again
To the scorched, blackened woods, where the wounded trees
Wait with their old wise patience for the heavenly rain,
Sure of the sky: sure of the sea to send its healing breeze,
Sure of the sun. And even as to these
Surely the Spring, when God shall please,
Will come again like a divine surprise
To those who sit today with the great Dead, hands in their
hands, eyes in their eyes,
At one with Love, at one with Grief: blind to the scattered things
and changing skies.*

In the 21st century Dutch composer **Jacob ter Veldhuis'** expression of war is equally shocking with a poignant musical score that echoes both the valedictory notes of war and the staccato rhythms of battle matched with words that are almost prosaic in their direct descriptions and visceral imagery. Ter Veldhuis, who is renowned for his commentary on social and political issues, has manipulated a recording of two American veterans interviewed about their experiences in Iraq alongside a score for solo trombone and taped trombone. The mundane and loveless family background of the Iraq war veteran that led him voluntarily to the army and the thrill of adventure is a depressing reversal of the first world war experiences of soldiers mourning the loss of their homelife:

" I have shrapnel in pretty much every part of my body. Got my finger blown off. It don't work right. I had a whole blown through my right leg. Had three skin grafts to try and repair it. It's not too bad right now. It hurts a lot. That's about it. You know, not really anything major. Just little things. I get headaches...I don't have any regrets. No not at all. It was the best experience of my life... I have one brother and one sister. Couldn't tell you where they live. For a while we grew up together. Mother? Father? Well, they both exist. They're both alive, but circumstances regarding the relationship are kind of complicated."

Dutch trombonist Jörgen van Rijen has chosen this work (specially written for him) as the title track of an eclectic mix of repertoire – all pieces that have the personal 'wow' factor and that, collectively, demonstrate the versatility of the trombone as a solo instrument.

CD Releases: *The Dark Pastoral* was released earlier this year on the Altara label and also features Julius Drake (piano) and Simon Russell-Beale (reading the poems).

I was like, Wow is released in November. Jörgen van Rijen gives a showcase performance at 22 Mansfield Street, London W1 on 1 December.

Audio visual extracts to view: Visit www.bbtrust.com to view short film interview with Jörgen van Rijen about this project and visit YouTube for extract of van Rijen's performance and accompanying film of the Iraq war veterans <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=Qs3HAAjTDp8>.

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Biographies:

Andrew Kennedy *tenor*

Andrew Kennedy studied at King's College, Cambridge and the Royal College of Music in London. He was also a member of the Young Artists Programme at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden. Andrew Kennedy has won numerous prizes and awards including the 2005 BBC Singer of the World Rosenblatt Recital Prize and the Royal Philharmonic Society Young Artists' Award and Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award in 2006. He was also a member of Radio 3's New Generation Artists Scheme. He has performed Vere *Billy Budd*, Houston Grand Opera, Tamino *The Magic Flute*, English National Opera, Flute *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Royal Opera House, Jaquino *Fidelio*, Glyndebourne Festival, Ferrando *Così fan tutte*, Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Nemorino *L'elisir d'amore*, Opera North and Tom Rakewell *The Rake's Progress*, La Monnaie and Opéra de Lyon. Concert engagements include numerous performances with the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO) and Sir Colin Davis, Mozart Requiem, London Philharmonic Orchestra/Jurowski, Mozart Mass in C Minor, Hallé Orchestra/Elder, Berlioz Grande Messe de Morts, LSO/Tortelier, *Oedipus Rex*, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra at the Edinburgh International Festival and Novice *Billy Budd*, LSO/Harding as well as many orchestral performances of Britten with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. Andrew Kennedy sang Elgar *Spirit of England* at the 2007 Last Night of the Proms. He gives numerous recitals around Europe and the UK most recently appearing at the Wigmore Hall, Cadogan Hall, Concertgebouw, Amsterdam and the Cheltenham Festival. His fast growing discography includes Vaughan Williams *On Wenlock Edge* and in 2008 he releases Gurney *Ludlow and Teme*, Strauss Songs with Roger Vignoles and Liszt songs with Iain Burnside and *The Dark Pastoral* with Julius Drake and Simon Russell Beale.

Jörgen van Rijen *trombone*

Besides his work as principal trombonist of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Jörgen van Rijen has become a frequently requested soloist with a special commitment to promote his instrument and develop new repertoire for the trombone. He has played recitals in most European countries, as well as the United States, Japan and Australia and has appeared as a soloist with various orchestras, including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra (which commissioned a Trombone Concerto for him by the leading Dutch composer Theo Verbey last year), the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra and performances of the trombone solo of Mahler's 3rd symphony with the Luzern Festival Orchestra under Claudio Abbado in Luzern, London and New York. In 2004 he was awarded the prestigious Netherlands Music Prize, the highest distinction in the field of music from the Dutch Ministry of Culture. He won several other prizes, including first prizes at the international trombone competitions of Toulon and Guebwiller and a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award in 2006. In a review for his first CD (Channel Classics), music magazine 'Luister' wrote: '*Van Rijen is a real ambassador of his instrument, which is still not often used as a virtuosic brass instrument among composers. But there are not that many trombonists that reach the brilliant level of Van Rijen. In sound, dynamic, color, musical understanding and expressiveness Van Rijen is unequalled...*' Jörgen also teaches at the Rotterdam Conservatory and is an active chamber musician. He was one of the founders of the New Trombone Collective and the RCO Brass and is artistic leader of both of these ensembles.

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