

# **From Blake's 'Milton'**

Paul Burnell

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text: William Blake

Composed 1995

Duration 3:40 approx.

### Instrumentation:

mixed voices

piano - 2 players

sustaining instrument

cymbal

### Text:

And did those feet in ancient time  
Walk upon England's mountains green?  
And was the holy Lamb of God  
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine  
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?  
And was Jerusalem builded here  
Among these dark satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!  
Bring me my arrows of desire!  
Bring me my spear! O clouds unfold!  
Bring me my chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight,  
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In England's green and pleasant land.

### Programme note:

From Blake's 'Milton' was written in response to a COMA newsletter article which suggested that members may wish to write vocal pieces for the various COMA ensembles throughout the country.

It was first performed by COMA in May 1996 at the Brighton Festival Fringe

In this setting of William Blake's words (from the preface to his book 'Milton' ca. 1804-08) the composer imagines the performers in a time before Britain was an Empire - in a landscape which, although it may be green, is also mountainous, overcast and cold enough for the air to become visible when breathing out.

# From Blake's 'Milton'

(mixed voices, piano - 2 players, sustaining instrument, cymbal)

William Blake

Paul Burnell

**Adagio** ♩ = 80 approx

Voices

Piano 2 players

Sustaining inst (clarinet or violin for example)

*f*

*f*

The first system of the score is divided into three staves. The top staff is for 'Voices' in 4/4 time, showing a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes and a long note. The middle staff is for 'Piano 2 players' in 4/4 time, featuring a bass line with a triplet of eighth notes and a long note. The bottom staff is for 'Sustaining inst (clarinet or violin for example)' in 4/4 time, with a long note. Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *f* (forte).

[making the sound "hoar"]  
(breathe out, as if making breath visible on a frosty morning) (breathe in)

*dim.* *dim.* *dim.* *An(d)*

*dim.*

The second system continues the musical score. The top staff has lyrics: "[making the sound 'hoar'] (breathe out, as if making breath visible on a frosty morning) (breathe in)". The music includes a change in time signature from 4/4 to 5/4 and then to 3/4. Dynamics include *dim.* (diminuendo) and *An(d)* (Andante). A cymbal symbol (\*) is present in the piano part.

audible whisper

6

did those feet in anc- ient

The third system shows a change in time signature to 3/4. The lyrics are: "audible whisper" above the staff and "6 did those feet in anc- ient" below. The music consists of a series of quarter notes.

9 *(snap)* *(rub hands...)*  
time Walk u- pon Eng- land's moun- tains green?  
*mp*  
Ped. \* Ped.

13 *as if warming them* *(snap)*  
And was the ho- ly lamb of God On  
*mp*  
Ped. \*

17 *(blow into hands)*  
Eng- land's pleas- ant pas- tures seen?  
*mp*  
Ped. r l r l

20  
*mp*  
Ped. \*

23 Half sung/half whispered - as if hoarse. Sing in any octave

And did the Coun-ten-ance Di-vine Shine forth

26

u-pon our cloud-ed hills? And was Je-ru-sa-lem build-ed

*pp*

*dim.*

*pp* soft sticks

sus. cymbal

30

here A-mong these dark Sa-tan-ic mills?

*cresc.*

*Red.*

*Red.*

33 (clap) Sung *f* Bring me my bow of burn- ing

*ff* bowed cymbal *f* *f* soft sticks (not too much)

36 gold! Bring me my ar- rows of de- si- re! Bring me my

39 rit. A tempo spear! O clouds un- fold! Bring me my cha- ri- ot of

**meno mosso (intense)**

42

Musical score for measures 42-46. The score is in 2/4 time and features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "fi- re!" and continues with "I will not cease from men- tal". The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings such as *mp*, *dim.*, *molto*, and *ff*. The score is divided into two systems, with the first system covering measures 42-45 and the second system covering measures 46-47.

47

Musical score for measures 47-51. The score is in 3/4 time and features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "fight," and continues with "Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand Till we have". The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings such as *mp* and *ff*. The score is divided into two systems, with the first system covering measures 47-50 and the second system covering measures 51-52.

52

built Je-ru-sa-le- mmm...

(snap) Audible whisper  
In Eng-land's green and

Ped. \*  
> *pp*

56

pleas-ant land.

(blow into hands)