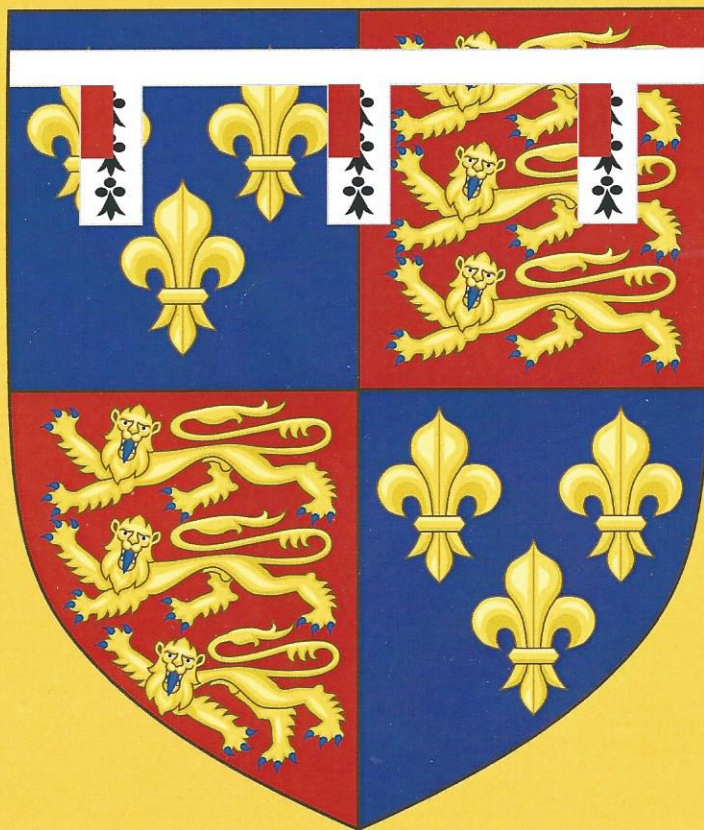




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PRESENTS

A CONCERT OF
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RICHÆRD III

AT THE TEMPLE CHURCH, LONDON · EC4Y 7BB

WORKS BY

PAUL CARR · PAUL LEWIS

RICHARD PANTCHEFF

FRANCIS POTT · LIONEL SAINSBURY

RUPERT MARSHALL-LUCK · VIOLIN

EM MARSHALL-LUCK · RECITER

7 pm · 25 FEBRUARY 2016

£3

FRANCIS POTT (b.1957)

Tenebrae

In a preface to his brilliantly unsettling sonnet sequence on the Wars of the Roses, *Funeral Music*, Geoffrey Hill cited a comment by the late Ian Nairn about an 'ornate heartlessness' sometimes detectable in the grander examples of our surviving mediaeval architecture. Hill applied this to his sonnets, where he had wished to create a dark tapestry of ghostly voices: as he memorably put it, a 'florid grim music ... punctuated by grunts, shrieks and cries for help'. I considered appropriating *Funeral Music* before realising that the title of Hill's next collection, *Tenebrae*, was actually more apposite to the solo violin work at hand, even though the music has something similar to his earlier intent in mind.

I appear to be the only composer in today's programme to have turned to Shakespeare for a viable subtext. Mindful not only of recent historiography surrounding King Richard III, but also of such questioning voices as Josephine Tey's in her 1951 novel, *The Daughter of Time*, I hasten to assure members of the Richard III Society that my intent has been to extrapolate a viably abstract 'what if...?' meditation in sound from Shakespeare's conjectural character study, rather than to nail a would-be historian's colours to the Shakespearean mast and denounce Richard as the 'dreadful minister of hell'. Any journalist will tell you that bad news makes better copy, and so it is sometimes with composition!



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Francis Pott

Hill's composite voice in *Funeral Music* guided me to some degree: the Shakespearean superscriptions to the first, second and fourth sections in my *Tenebrae* are spoken by Richard (or, as he is to begin with, Gloster); but the third, although actually uttered by the dead Edward IV's Queen, Elizabeth, could equally have fallen from the lips of Henry VI's Queen, Margaret of Anjou, or from those of the doomed Lady Anne, impotent in her loathing of Gloster (murderer of her husband) as he first forces her into a marriage of political convenience and then has her killed. (By the way, the extent of Shakespeare's imaginative fabrication is exemplified by the fact that Margaret had actually died in France in 1482; I am writing these lines on the exact 533rd anniversary of her demise.)

The titles and superscriptions of the four sections in *Tenebrae* appear below. *Hiems Acris* ('bitter winter') refers obliquely to the famous 'winter of discontent' lines, heard so often out of context that their tone of black misanthropy is regularly overlooked. This recitative-like music evolves from the recurrent rising and falling semitone heard at its outset.

Hubris seeks to convey the vindictively febrile imagination of a scheming mind discerning only its own ingenuity in the trail of human destruction which it engineers. The phrase 'vaulting ambition' from *Macbeth* lodged itself in my own mind during the writing of this section.

Lachrimae provides contrast in a lyrical lament speaking for all those whose perdition Gloster devises on his own Shakespearean path to destruction. Cast in the form of a free chaconne, this lengthier section evolves as a series of increasingly discursive variations making much use of double-stopping. The sense of a counterpoint of voices is largely illusory, presenting not only the performer but also the composer with many challenges. My already boundless veneration of Bach's unassailable achievements in this sphere grew yet further as (poor non-violinist that I am) I wrestled to steer my ideas in the right direction.

Nemesis returns fairly obviously to the semitonal motif of *Hiems Acris*, but this has by now taken on a note of sinister portent rather than of dark purpose. The quoted lines of soliloquy, uttered after the several ghostly visitations of Richard's victims, conjure a timelessly macabre vision ('The lights burn blue. – It is now dead midnight'). The music is a form of tarantella: one characterised less by headlong flight than by a dourly, almost mechanically inexorable momentum as events carry this most chilling of human literary creations towards his doom. Midway through the movement the *Lachrimae* section returns, by now seeming to embody the bleak emptiness of Richard's self-epitaph ('There is no creature loves me; / And if I die no soul shall pity me'). Thereafter the treadmill grinds back into action, and this time there is no stopping it.

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I *Hiems Acris*

[Lento tenebroso]

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York...
...Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
Into this breathing world scarce half made up,
...I am determinèd to prove a villain...
Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous...

II *Hubris*

[In modo arrogante –
con moto ma non troppo presto]

...And, if I fail not in my deep intent,
Clarence hath not another day to live:
Which done, God take King Edward to his mercy,
And leave the world for me to bustle in...

III *Lachrimae*

[Adagietto sognando, sconcolato]

Ah me, I see the ruin of my house!
The tiger now hath seiz'd the gentle hind;
Insulting tyranny begins to jet
Upon the innocent and awless throne: –
Welcome, destruction, blood, and massacre!
I see, as in a map, the end of all.

IV *Nemesis*

[Allegro barbaro ma non troppo –
Adagietto – Allegro barbaro]

The lights burn blue. – It is now dead midnight.
...What, do I fear myself? There's none else by...
...My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.
...I shall despair. There is no creature loves me;
And if I die no soul shall pity me.