

SIX ESSENTIAL LLOYD WEBBER WORKS



PET SOUNDS:
Lloyd Webber
with feline friend

**Philip Dukes (viola),
Sophia Rahman
(piano)** ASV CD DCA 961
(download from iTunes)

**Missa sanctae
Mariae Magdalenae**
A choral setting of the
Mass demonstrating
this avowed romantic
was capable, late in life,
of adapting his style for
more modern tastes.
**Richard Hickox
Singers, Ian Watson
(organ)/Hickox**
ASV CD DCA 961
(download from iTunes)

Aurora The central work in William Lloyd Webber's output. A short work of varying moods – ravishingly orchestrated, utterly assured. Is it a love song? Who can tell?
City of London Sinfonia/Richard Hickox
Chandos CHAN 9595 £12.99

Three Spring Miniatures Lloyd Webber the light music composer, demonstrating his skills as a miniaturist, making every note count.
City of London Sinfonia/Richard Hickox
Chandos CHAN 9595 £12.99

Sonatina for viola and piano Three short, beautifully crafted movements give the lie to the idea of Lloyd Webber as just 'a light music composer'. Wistful and bitter-sweet by turns.

Prelude on Winchester New; Barcarolle
Here are organ pieces in different moods showcasing Lloyd Webber the organist/organ composer. Jane Watts studied with him and plays his music in recitals worldwide.
Jane Watts (the organ of Salisbury Cathedral Priory) PRCD 616 £15.99

I Looked Out into the Morning
Lloyd Webber was a gifted songwriter. Hear John Mark Ainsley's account of this nature/love song that builds to an abandoned climax.
**John Mark Ainsley (tenor),
Ian Brown (piano)**
Hyperion CDA 67008 £12.99

foremost he saw himself as a composer,' says Julian. And from the early 1930s into the 1950s, the emergence of his music developed into a steady stream, from the likes of the oratorio *St Francis of Assisi* and piano pieces commissioned by the BBC, to the Sonatina for viola and piano, *Aurora* and a string of songs, including a personal favourite, the ravishing *I Looked Out into the Morning*.

Yet Lloyd Webber was aware that he was swimming against tides of fashion, and acquiring two sons either side of 1950 brought new financial responsibilities. Barring the occasional work, he gave up composing. By 1964 he was the (non-teaching) director of a down-at-heel London College of Music, which he restored to health, perhaps at the expense of his own. He was one of life's worriers.

'There was a sense in the family of this unspoken tragedy and sorrow that my father hadn't done what he wanted with his life,' says Julian Lloyd Webber. 'The careers Andrew and I have enjoyed left him feeling ambivalent. He

was delighted with Andrew's success, but got fed up with people saying "Aren't you proud of Andrew?". Then it was "Aren't you proud of your sons?" It reinforced the belief that he hadn't achieved what he should have done.'

Pianist John Lill saw two sides to 'Billy' Lloyd Webber. 'He had a great and very individual sense of humour... And there was the great delight taken in family pets – not just cats, but a monkey at one time. But I also saw Billy very depressed, very tearful. I could tell he was getting more introverted as he got older.'

And yet, in Lloyd Webber's final years he was inspired to write from the heart again by a young student soprano, Justine Bax. In a BBC interview she insisted there was never an affair: rather, they were 'soul mates, kindred spirits. I was his muse'. Bax's name appears over the score of a *Romance* for organ. The late song *A Rent for Love* with its first line 'If she meets me I will make/Hymns in praise of stolen kisses' surely bespeaks the muse.

The old flame was rekindled in a number of late works, only to be snuffed out by the

composer's relatively early death, apparently from a blood clot, after a prostate operation. 'He phoned from the hospital to say he was having a bath before coming home,' Julian recalls. 'Ten minutes later we were rung to say what had happened.'

What might a more bold and confident William Lloyd Webber have achieved? Andrew Lloyd Webber once told me his father's romanticism, combined with his craftsmanship, could have made him a brilliant composer for films or theatre.

Julian disagrees. 'Some say that *Aurora* is light music, but I don't hear that. It's a classical piece, and ultimately I think my father wanted to be accepted in the classical music world. Late works like the *Missa sanctae Mariae Magdalenae* suggest this was where his heart lay.'

As things stand, is the Lloyd Webber corpus worth exploring? 'Of course it is,' says Keener. 'We've been through that period when the dogma was that music must of necessity be progressive and edgy. Now, anything of quality can be seen to deserve respect.'

But unnecessarily, William Lloyd Webber suffered his neglect and 'failure' in silent solitude. Except once. He happened to slip into an orchestral rehearsal at the London College of Music. Suddenly he interrupted, shouting that the student playing was a disgrace – the worst he'd ever heard. And stormed out. The work he felt so strongly about? *Aurora*. ■

