

Lyrta Records released a premiere recording of Richard Blackford's *Vision of a Garden* with The Bach Choir



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**The Bach Choir**  
**David Hill** conductor

Lyrta Records released a premiere recording of Richard Blackford's *Vision of a Garden* with baritone Stephen Gadd, **The Bach Choir** and the strings of the Philharmonia Orchestra. The recording features *Mirror of Perfection* with soprano Elizabeth Watts, baritone Roderick Williams, the IKON Singers and Britten Sinfonia, both conducted by David Hill on 6 May 2022 (SRCD.406 Dolby Atmos recording).

*Vision of a Garden* is a covid-inspired cantata written by Richard Blackford. *Vision of a Garden* is based on the COVID diaries of the Choir member Peter Johnstone, who spent three months in intensive care with the virus in Spring 2020.



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Professor Peter Johnstone, a tenor with The Bach Choir and a fellow of St John's College, Cambridge, contracted coronavirus at the start of the pandemic. Johnstone was admitted to Addenbrooke's Hospital on 19 March 2020 and was put on a ventilator. He remained in intensive care until June 2020 and his recovery has since continued.

This recording provides an important lasting musical legacy from the time of the pandemic. Setting moving words by Johnstone himself, Ivor Novello

award-winner Richard Blackford's *Vision of a Garden* incorporates text from the COVID diaries filled out by NHS staff at Addenbrooke's Hospital while Johnstone was sedated on a ventilator. The diaries, which explained that the medical team played music to him while he was sedated, helped Johnstone to separate out fact from delirium and to come to terms with his harrowing experiences:

***"A nurse gives me diaries of my time in ICU.  
Reading them, I am overwhelmed with love  
For these people I never knew,  
Who only knew me as a bundle of symptoms."***



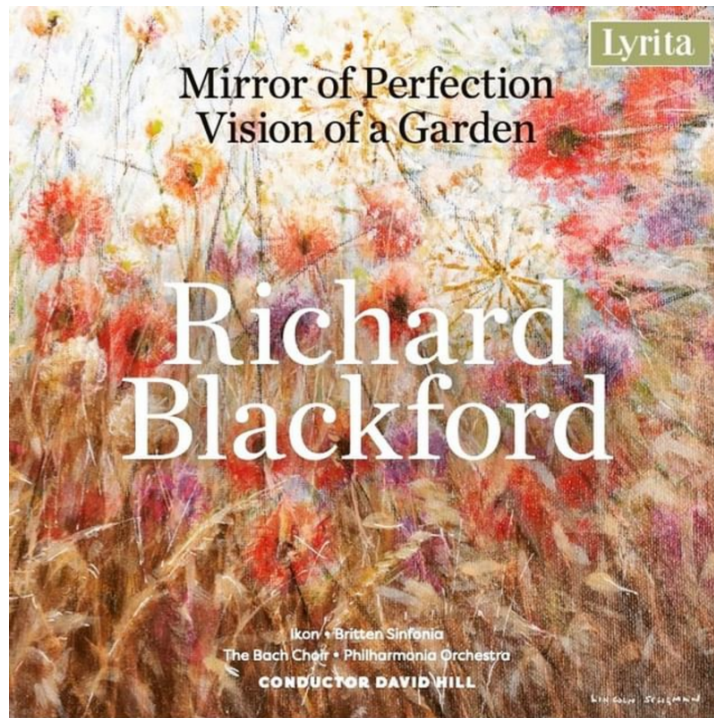
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composed by a Choir member especially for the performance.

On 24 October 2021, *Vision of a Garden* premiered at the Royal Festival Hall as part of a programme of music for reflection and hope that included Fauré's *Requiem* and Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*. The Bach Choir was joined by the NHS Chorus-19, set up at Addenbrooke's Hospital during the pandemic by Anna Lapwood, to sing the original theme by Tallis to new words,

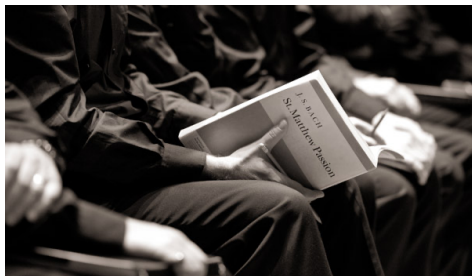
The conductor of The Bach Choir David Hill shared this quote about the premiere of *Vision of a Garden*:

***"Richard's handling of the text is supremely well-crafted  
and very moving whilst avoiding sentimentality... The sight  
of 250 beaming faces on the stage of the Festival Hall was a  
hugely emotional moment."***



\*Click on the album cover to listen to CD

## The Bach Choir



From the first performance in Britain of Bach's *Mass in B minor* 145 years ago to the soundtrack for Ridley Scott's epic *Prometheus*, the Choir's musical heritage is as rich as it is diverse. Directed by David Hill, one of the country's most eminent conductors and choir trainers, the Choir regularly performs and records across

London and the UK in prestigious venues, from the Royal Albert Hall to Abbey Road Studios.

Described by the London Evening Standard as 'probably the finest independent choir in the world', The Bach Choir values the freedom that its independence brings, allowing it to work with the very best orchestras and soloists, and to choose the music it performs. To date the Choir has sung over 400 works in more than 120 venues, and continues to share its work with audiences around the world. Following an invitation from the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, the Choir gave two performances of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* in Hong Kong's Cultural Centre just before Easter 2014, and it gave further concerts in Shanghai and Hangzhou. In October 2017, the Choir gave six concerts in the Netherlands of *a cappella* music and works for choir and organ, one of which was broadcast on Dutch radio. A five-city concert tour of the USA in March 2020 was cancelled at very short notice due to COVID-19.

With a strong commitment to new music, The Bach Choir has commissioned works from some of the world's leading composers including the late Sir John Tavener, Bob Chilcott, Jonathan Dove, Will Todd and Carl Rütli. In June 2017 the Choir gave the world premiere performance of James MacMillan's *Blow the trumpet in the new moon*, and commissioned Roxanna Panufnik to complete her *Four Choral Seasons*, which was premiered by the Choir in October 2019. This commitment continues over the 2021/22 season with the premiere of ten new pieces written for The Bach Choir.

The Bach Choir has always been characterised by the commitment of its members. With over 250 talented singers coming from all walks of life, an international touring schedule, and a pioneering participation programme, *Vocalise!*, that takes its passion for music into inner-city schools and dementia care homes, the Choir takes pride in performing, recording and sharing music for all to enjoy.

[thebachchoir.org.uk](http://thebachchoir.org.uk)

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