

in affectionate memory of Alan Hedges,
chairman of the Little Missenden Festival (2010-2022)

I. Leaves

Ted Hughes (1930-1998)

Julian Philips (2021)

Brisk
(♩ = c.130)

Children's Voices

Soprano

Baritone

Piano

f marcato

Ch.

1 *f marcato*

Who's _____ killed _____ the

IV. There came a day

Brisk
(♩ = c.90)

1

Ch. 


S. 


Bar. 




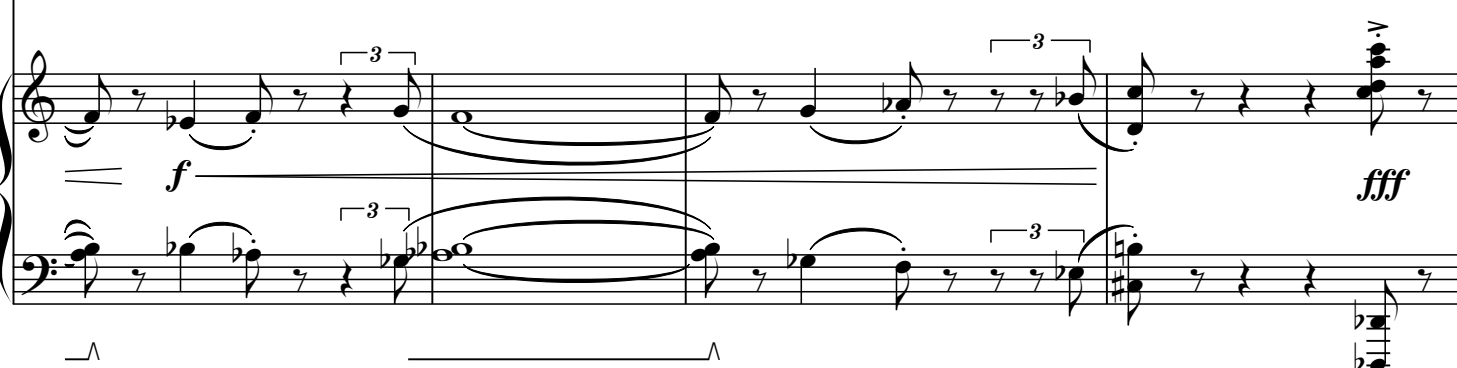
p *mf*

5

Ch. *f* 
There came a day that caught the sum-mer

S. *f* 
There came a day that caught the sum-mer

Bar. *f* 
There came a day that caught the sum-mer



f *fff*

PROGRAMME NOTE

In 1968, the Little Missenden Festival commissioned Ted Hughes to write a sequence of five poems for children, to be chanted at Harvest Festival by children from the village infant school. Hughes' response - Five Autumn Songs - are wonderfully varied in tone, register and style, uncompromising in their poetic topics and imagery, while bridging the worlds of children and adults.

Ted Hughes attended the session in 1968, and came again in 1973 and 1978 to the festival to speak about children's poetry and read some of his other work. Over fifty years later, composer Julian Philips was approached to create a musical setting of Hughes' poems to be performed in the 2020 Little Missenden Festival.

Philips response to the variegated nature of Hughes' poems and their shifts between children's rhymes and more elaborate poetic text, was to conceive his Autumn Songs as a hybrid work, fusing a song cycle for solo soprano and baritone, with interwoven children's songs. The relationship between these worlds of adults and children shifts across the piece - in the opening song, 'Leaves', the children pose a series of questions with ever increasing urgency, soprano and baritone responding with highly characterised replies. In 'There came a day', roles are reversed - soprano and baritone pose the day's questions, and the children answer in playful rhymes. 'The Defenders' is a more collective number, a battle song exploring how autumnal plenty can be deployed against all winter's armour.

The second and fifth songs are perhaps the most complex - 'The Seven Sorrows' explores deep autumnal melancholy, in a flowing setting for just soprano and baritone. 'The Stag' is the most substantial of the five texts - a dramatic scena that explores the hunting of a stag across a wet Exmoor landscape. The baritone narrates the scene, the soprano embodies the spirit of the stag, and at the close of work, children's voices sing an epilogue that distils the stag's dying cries into a wordless lament.

Autumn Songs is dedicated in affectionate memory to Alan Hedges, chairman of the Little Missenden Festival from 2010-22, without whom the work would never have come to fruition. It was premiered on the 9th October 2021, with soprano Elizabeth Atherton, baritone Dominic Sedgwick, pianist Iain Burnside and a children's choir from Great Missenden Primary School, prepared by composer John Webb.

Duration: 30 minutes

*Commissioned by the Little Missenden Festival
with the generous support of the Festival Friends*

*Premiered on the 9th October 2021, by Elizabeth Atherton (soprano),
Dominic Sedgwick (baritone) and Iain Burnside (piano)*