



Saturday 21st October 2000

CATHEDRAL NAVE

7.30pm

# Becket

## The Kiss of Peace

First Performance

**DAVID REEVES**

In the beginning

**Aaron Copland**

Chichester Psalms

**Leonard Bernstein**



Sponsored by  
**J.W. Hudleston**

*World Première*

**Becket ~ The Kiss of Peace**

*by David Reeves*

1. *Introduction*

Orchestra

**The Plot**

2. *Recit:* MY LORD, THE KING IN HIS WISDOM Herbert

3. *Chorale:* CANTERBURY, HOLY SEE Herbert, Chorister, Choir

4. *Recit:* MY LORD, I MUST SEE YOU"  
(Becket's plea from exile) Becket

5. *Chorus:* THE PEOPLE'S LAMENT  
(The Congregation in Canterbury) Herbert, Matilda  
Choir

6. *Recit:* SO PROUD YOU ARE  
(The King's Response) Henry, Becket

7. *Chorale:* CANTERBURY, HOLY SEE Herbert, Chorister, Choir

**Exile ~ The Resolution**

8. *Recit:* PEACE AT LAST  
(The King and Becket appear to  
resolve their differences) Henry  
Becket

9. *Aria:* THE KISS OF PEACE Becket, Choir

10. *Chorus:* HOSANNA  
(The holy one has landed) Choir

11. *Duet:* FOR THOU ART WITH HIM TO THE END Matilda, Becket
12. *Solo:* TRANSIENT SOUL Herbert, Matilda
13. *Fugue:* TRANSIENT SOUL Herbert, Matilda, Choir

### **Christmas Day, 1170 at Canterbury Cathedral**

14. *Chorus:* WELCOME Matilda, Mary, Herbert, Choir
15. *Aria & Chorus:* THE LORD'S PRAYER Matilda, Choir
16. *Hymn:* IN THE NAME OF THE CHURCH Herbert, Choir  
IN ENGLAND Soloists minus Becket
17. *Duet:* HOLY DAY Chorister, Matilda, Choir

### **The Murder**

18. *Recit:* BUT WHO WILL MAKE SILENT Henry  
THIS RECALCITRANT FROCK?

### **The Sermon**

19. *Solo & Chorus:* PEACE, PEACE, WHAT DOES IT MEAN? Becket  
Choristers, Choir

### **The Archbishop's Warning**

20. *Solo:* ALL OF US MUST DIE Becket  
(Becket speaks to the congregation)

- |                                   |   |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Solo &amp; Chorus:</i>      | ALL OF US MUST DIE<br>(The congregation responds) | Becket, Choir                     |
| 2. <i>Prayer:</i>                 | GOD'S WILL BE DONE                                | Becket, Choir                     |
| 3. <i>Chorus:</i>                 | COME DOWN TRAITOR                                 | The Four Knights<br>Becket, Choir |
| 4. <i>Solo:</i>                   | NOW TO ALMIGHTY GOD<br>(Becket's final Prayer)    | Becket                            |
| 5. <i>Organ &amp; Percussion:</i> | MURDER  |                                   |

### The Outcome (The King's Remorse)

- |                    |                   |       |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------|
| 26. <i>Aria:</i>   | CLARENDON SLEEPS  | Henry |
| 27. <i>Chorus:</i> | CLARENDON STAINED |       |

### The King's Penance

- |                               |                                       |   |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 28. <i>Chorus:</i>            | SCOURGE                               | Four Knights, Henry, Herbert, Choir               |
| 29. <i>Solo &amp; Chorus:</i> | THOMAS, I GRANT YOU THE KISS OF PEACE | Henry<br>Soloists, Choir                          |
| 30. <i>Chorus:</i>            | THE KISS OF PEACE                     | Herbert, Mary, Matilda<br>Henry, Chorister, Choir |
| 31. <i>Chorus:</i>            | AMEN                                  | All   |



## Becket ~ The Kiss of Peace

### *Notes on the text*

The murder of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury was carried out on 29th December, 1170. Four knights, Reginald Fitzurse, William de Traci, Hugh de Morville and Richard Brito, in an attempt to gain favour with their King, Henry II, slaughtered the Archbishop in the very heart of Canterbury Cathedral (refer nos. 23, 23, 25). Did Henry order them or indeed even ask them to do it? He certainly suggested it in general terms and with considerable passion amongst these who had his ear (refer no 18 - "But who will make silent this recalcitrant frock?")

The facts as to Henry's direct involvement in the murder remain unclear, but records show that upon hearing the news of Becket's death at the hands of the four knights, the King went into a period of sincere repentance and genuine soul searching (refer nos. 26, 27, 28 and 29). His resolve to seek forgiveness for whatever role he may have played was no doubt in part politically motivated.(there were significant ramifications pending from the Pope as a result of what had happened). However, his repentance appears to be heartfelt and genuine. The King humbled himself and voluntarily journeyed to Canterbury in an act of penance, there submitting himself to scourging (refer no. 28). The King certainly needed to appease the Pope to whom his hostility to the stance made by Becket was ultimately directed, and to whom he finally expressed full allegiance and contrition. Whatever the confusion over the King's motives and actions in the tragedy, he submitted himself to full humility and apology to his one time friend Thomas, in death, and relented on all the vexatious matters arising from the obnoxious clauses in the Constitutions of Clarendon that drove the initial conflict. (refer no. 26 sung before the shrine of Thomas Becket).

*"Clarendon sleeps. Clarendon weeps no more. Witness my pledge, this promise to God I keep. Lonely this heart that gave opportunity. Humble this King that cometh to Canterbury. Here is my Friend, unwittingly sent to me. Time has stood still, awaiting my pilgrimage. Well earned your rest, suffer no more dear friend. Witness my pledge. This promise to God I keep."*

These were times as ever when the boundaries of domination by the Christian Church were being constantly tested and redefined within Europe. In England, King Henry II had made considerable progress in the further development of order and stability after the Norman invasion and much of this good work was due to his Chancellor and then trusted friend, Thomas Becket. So successful in fact was Thomas, that Henry wished to appoint him to the dual roles of Chancellor and Archbishop, in a desired attempt to muddy the waters between Church and State and eventually to place the Church of England under the control of the State. Thomas warned his King that the new appointment was unwise, but this warning fell upon friendly deaf ears and Thomas Becket was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. Thomas immediately resigned the role of Chancellor because his appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury made him fully accountable to a higher being than any person or institution on earth, a commitment which the King found to be absolutely without compromise.

The tussle between Archbishop and King is well known. Initially it centred around the clauses forming the "Constitution of Clarendon debated" at Clarendon Lodge and which sought to define clearly a relationship between Church and State among other matters (refer no. 2). Some of the clauses represented a deliberate attempt by the King to manoeuvre the compliant within the Church to compromise its independence.

History has always shown that few lead and most of us follow. (refer nos.3 & 4).

*"Canterbury, Holy see,  
In a thousand years, still will it be?  
And people watching as they perform treachery?"*

The reference being suggested in this verse is that the apathy of people of all ages leads to corruption by the few who abuse the privilege of leadership. In the 12th century, life was obviously harsh and the Church represented the focus of the community. The people looked to the Church and its leaders for hope, guidance and encouragement (refer no.5).

Thomas was a very popular Archbishop, loved and respected by his people. As Chancellor, he had not exploited his position and had shown the capacity to be firm but compassionate in all his dealings. As Archbishop, he was a true custodian of the Church and its pastoral responsibilities. He

despised his own comfort, showing extreme self discipline in the conduct of his personal life. In fact, when he was undressed after the murder, he was found to be wearing a 'hair shirt', a most uncomfortable garment to which he apparently subjected himself regularly.

However, Thomas also appears sometimes to have been a little colourful of manner and deliberately provocative. He stood resolutely for that in which he believed and when faced with his final assignation, did not flinch (refer no.23).

*"Take me, my body is yours.  
I am here, I won't leave."*

In fact, Thomas told his protractors: *"It is useless to threaten me. If all the swords of England were over my head, your threats would not shift me from God's justice and obedience to the Pope."* Upon his return from exile he was warned by Matilda, one of his most humble followers as she called from the crowd while he processed in splendour to the Church of the Canons of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Southward (now Southwark Cathedral): *"Archbishop, beware of the knife!"*

When confronting John of Salisbury, Thomas said to him: *"We must all die, Master John"* (refer nos.20 & 21). John replied: *"It is all very well for you to say that, but the rest of us are sinners and not so ready for death."* Thomas added: *"God's will be done"* (refer no.22). What followed was the mocking and humiliation of Thomas and his murder by the four knights (refer nos.23, 24 & 25).

The "Kiss of Peace" was given as the symbol of a binding agreement between two or more parties. Thomas always knew that his return from exile in France was fraught with danger. *"Why are you in such a hurry?"* he said to his clerks as they stepped once again upon English soil. *"Within forty days of your landing you will wish you were anywhere else in the world but in England."*

Thomas sought the granting of the "Kiss of Peace" from his King upon reaching the agreement that led to Thomas' return. It was probably to the King's credit that he refused to grant it (refer no.8). He knew that treachery was afoot, either from the King's own vassals or indeed the King himself.

On Christmas Day, 1170, Thomas preached his last sermon, warning of what was to come. He showed courage, leadership and compassion - even to those who were plotting against him (refer no.19).

Life is obviously very different for us today. But is it really? The Church has been replaced by the shopping centre as the focus of community life. The pulpit has been replaced by the media and its often ill-considered interpretation of its responsibilities. Do we, the people, stand up when "wrong" needs to be made "right"? Do we, the people - even in the most free and democratic of countries - have any more real say today in the overall control of our lives than those living in Becket's time?

Perhaps the most significant event to come from the martyrdom of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, was that the then king, Henry II, the highest soul living in the land, repented fully and offered himself in penance for his part in the murder - whatever that part may have been. The King's example would seem still to be very rare at the end of the second millennium of Christendom.

In many ways Thomas Becket and the late Diana, Princess of Wales were victims of their enormous presence. The controversy which followed them both is a reflection of the statement made by them. It is entirely coincidental that Sir David Willcocks, the celebrated organist for our recording, directed the music for the wedding of Charles and Diana at St. Paul's Cathedral, whilst Dr. Martin Neary directed the music for the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales at Westminster Abbey, possibly the most memorable public event of all time in terms of world participation.

*"The Kiss of Peace"* symbolises the bonding between us all as human beings (refer nos.9, 28 & 29). Love and allegiance were what Becket believed in and he expressed this in an unswerving belief in Christianity. That same love is now interpreted more widely and encompasses many and all beliefs. Perhaps he would say today that love will always be there if we believe in something.

*David Reeves*