

## James MacMillan



James MacMillan Photo © Eric Richmond / ArenaPAL

### OPERAS

#### Búsqueda

1988

29 min

Music Theatre work for speaker, actors, soprano and ensemble

Text: Text from Latin Mass and Poems by the Argentinian Mothers of the Disappeared, translated by Gilbert Markus O.P. (L-E)

8 actors, 3 sopranos, speaker

1(=af), 0.3(II=bcl), 0-0.3.3(III=ttrbn/btrbn), 0-perc(2):l=vib/2tam-t/drum kit/wdbl/2spring coils/sleighbells;

II=lg tam-t/drum kit/maracas/wdbl/2spring coils/sleighbells/claves-2harps-2vlc.db

*"...music of shattering directness, clearly defined emotion and angry idealism... It is hard to think of another contemporary figure who is so lyrical and dramatic, and yet so thoroughly in command of his material."*

*The Independent*

**World Premiere: 06 Dec 1988**

Queen's Hall, Edinburgh, United Kingdom  
John Shedden, speaker; ECAT Ensemble

Conductor: James MacMillan

#### Clemency

2009-10

45 min

Opera for 5 singers and string orchestra

Text: Anon; Michael Symmons Roberts (E); glossolalia

S.2T.2Bar  
strings

**World Premiere: 06 May 2011**

Linbury Studio Theatre, Royal Opera House, London, United Kingdom  
Katie Mitchell, director; ROH2 / Britten Sinfonia  
Conductor: Clark Rundell

OPERAS 1

#### Inés de Castro

1991-95

2 hr 4 min

an opera in two acts

Text: Libretto after the play 'Inés de Castro' by John Clifford (E)

S,2M,T,BBar,B; chorus

2(II=picc).2(II=corA).2(II=Ebcl,bcl).2(II=dbn)-4.3.3.1-timp.perc(4):  
BD/2tam-t(bowed)/2cowbells/2wdbl/log dr/vib(bowed)/crot/t.bells/2lg  
handbells/sizzle cym/mark tree/clash cyms/gong/susp.cym/thundersheet  
with superball/finger cyms/anvil/xyl/flexatone/SD/2bongos/  
4tom-t/5tpl.bl/gisp/tgl/bass lion's roar/metal sheet or plate-harp-pft  
(=cel)-strings

*"...a classic example of the fusion of a brilliant musical score with gut wrenching theatre... It is gripping from start to finish... Underpinning it all is music that has everything - floating lyricism, overpowering emotion, and a fundamental Wagnerian concept of encapsulating and driving the narrative."*

*The Scotsman*

*"Inés de Castro is a complex, ambitious work, a modern attempt at grand opera in the tradition of Verdi and Mussorgsky... Mr MacMillan is a serious gifted composer with a public that cares deeply about his work - the first such creature in Britain since the death of Benjamin Britten."*

*The Wall Street Journal*

9790060104831 Libretto

**World Premiere: 23 Aug 1996**

Edinburgh Festival, United Kingdom

Jonathan Moore, director; Helen Field/Jeffrey Lawton/Stafford Dean/Scottish Opera

Conductor: Richard Armstrong CBE

#### Parthenogenesis

2000

50 min

Scena for soprano, baritone, actress and chamber ensemble

Text: Libretto by Michael Symmons Roberts (E)

1.1.1(=bcl).dbn-2.0.0.0-perc(1):gisp/vib/tuned  
gongs/2wdbl/5tom-t/2bongos/SD/BD/susp.cym/sizzle cym/2tam-t(sm,lg)  
-harp-pft-strings(1.1.1.1.1 or string orch)-2tapes

*"...rhapsodically lyrical music, soaring phrases floridly decorated at their end, together with flawlessly atmospheric orchestration and lacerating rhythmic drive..."*

*Glasgow Herald*

**World Premiere: 12 Sep 2000**

Corn Exchange, Cambridge, United Kingdom

Lisa Milne/Christopher Purves/John Fulljames, dir; Britten Sinfonia

Conductor: James MacMillan

OPERAS 1

## The Sacrifice

2005-06

2 hr 10 min

Opera in three acts

Text: Libretto by Michael Symmons Roberts, based on a story from the Mabinogion (E)

Main roles: 2S, T, 2Bar; 'The Birds' of Rhiannon: 2S, M; Dressers: 2S, M; plus chorus ('The Birds' and Dressers may be sung by same three singers)

2(I, II=picc). 2(II=corA). 2(II=bcl). 2(II=dbn)

-4. 3. 3. 1-timp. perc(3): glsp/vib/tgl/whistle/rainstick/whip/tamb/bodhrán/BD/2Peking gongs/t.bells/5wdbl (graded)/anvil/SD/susp.cym/crot/tuned gongs/guio/vibraslap/metal bar/TD/crash cyms/tam-t-harp-strings

*"The Sacrifice offers as many thrills as Tosca, as much agony as Peter Grimes, more violence than Elektra and Salome combined and a suspense quotient to rival Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk. MacMillan's expertly crafted music has easy-to-identify theme tunes and gut-wrenching climaxes, with a closing tableau of which Verdi himself would have been proud... Michael Symmons Roberts has furnished an excellent libretto, built in half-rhymed couplets that leave acres of space for the music. MacMillan sets the words gratefully, with a central duet for soprano and baritone ("Your heart is my homeland") that is more beautiful than anything in modern opera."*

*Financial Times*

*"Here is something rare, a new opera with instant appeal... Michael Symmons Roberts' libretto is verbally crisp and narratively lucid - even without surtitles it would be easy to grasp the basics. MacMillan's score respects the text and is refreshingly well written for the voice."*

*Daily Telegraph*

*"...a score of real brilliance... His trump card is that he knows how to write for the voice, and - no less vital - how to accompany it; his ear for balance and texture is superb, and there are many pages in The Sacrifice that were plainly being sung with delight - I'm thinking of the passionate Act II duet for the daughter and her discarded lover, and the delicately ornate soprano aria at the very end, a gem... He uses uncomplicated ingredients - simple chords, long, eloquent string lines - working them into dense combinations or leaving them open. He has great sustaining powers; his polyphonies really work through and take the ear with them."*

*The Independent*

*"...the applause at the end was as warm as any I've heard for a new commission. For MacMillan has created a modern opera for people who dislike modern opera... Few operas enjoy premieres as well-executed as this."*

*Independent on Sunday*

*"...there are wonderful passages: a ravishing love duet underpinned by gorgeously folksy orchestration; Verdi-like declamations for the warlords; a choral threnody that summons the anguished modes of Eastern Europe to haunting effect; and a breathtakingly sonorous choral finale."*

*The Times*

**World Premiere: 22 Sep 2007**

Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff, United Kingdom

Katie Mitchell, director; Welsh National Opera

Conductor: James MacMillan

## Visitatio Sepulchri

1992-93

45 min

for 7 solo singers or 7-part chorus and chamber orchestra

Text: Texts from a 14th century Easter Day liturgical drama and the Te Deum (L)

2S, A, 2T, B, male speaker (Sprechstimme)

2(II=picc). 2(II=corA). 2(II=bcl). 2(II=dbn)-2. 2. 2(II=btrbn). 0-timp.

perc(1): 2cowbells/2wdbl/2bongos/2timbales/SD/2tam-t/5tom-t/

5tpl.bl/glsp/t.bells/BD/cyms/bell tree-strings(min: 8.6.4.4.2)

NB: this work is available both as a music theatre piece and for concert performance

*"This work is quintessential MacMillan. It progresses relentlessly from spaciouly looming towers of string tone to outbursts of terror... the strength of feeling is irresistible; bursting with love, pain and tenderness..."*

*Opera*

**World Premiere: 20 May 1993**

Tramway, Glasgow, United Kingdom

Francisco Negrin, director; Scottish Chamber Orchestra

Conductor: Ivor Bolton