



The Richard III Society

Promoting research into the life and times of Richard III since 1924

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Bringing you the latest important news and events about Richard III.

The Middleham Requiem – a unique opportunity

Members are reminded that during the reinterment week on the evening of the 26 March 2015 the Society is organising a performance of Geoffrey Davidson's *Middleham Requiem* at the church of St James the Greater, London Road, Leicester. There will be a 21-piece orchestra, a choir of 50, 12 choristers, three soloists and a narrator. Ticket prices will be £35, £25 and £15 depending upon proximity to the stage and will include wine and soft drinks. The lowest price tickets are for places in the Lady Chapel where only a very few seats will have sight of the performance. However it should be noted that the acoustics in all areas of the church are splendid.

We are pleased to announce that the narrator for the Leicester performance of the requiem will be Sir Timothy Ackroyd, the actor, writer and director. His acting debut was in 1976 when he was nominated as 'Most Promising Newcomer' in the West End Theatre Awards for his performance as Clytemnestra in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*. His London debut was in Brian Forbes' controversial and hugely successful *Macbeth* at The Old Vic. He has appeared in the television movies *Jeffrey Barnard is Unwell* and *Lost in Africa*.

In 1989 he helped found the *Tusk Trust*, a charity dedicated to conserving and protecting African wildlife. The trust is recognized as a leading wildlife conservation body both in the UK and the United States.

For more information about Sir Timothy and the Tusk Trust visit: www.sirtimothyackroyd.com and www.tusk.org

The *Middleham Requiem* had its premiere 21 years ago at the church of St Mary and All Saints, Fotheringhay, the birthplace of King Richard III. Long standing members will remember the requiem and the poignant impact it made all those

years ago, however more recent members will not be so familiar. To give them some background and appreciation of the requiem we reproduce below part of a review written by our Chairman, Phil Stone, which first appeared in the December 1993 issue of the *Ricardian Bulletin*.

'This Requiem is not strictly a mass, but rather a retelling of the story of Richard's later life, interspersed with the Latin text of the mass. As Geoffrey Davidson writes, this is 'a stand for truth' that 'refutes the lie of time'. After the prologue and fanfare, we learn of Richard's intention to establish the College of Middleham. Then came the opening sections of the mass, before the Battle of Barnet and the return of the victorious Edward IV to London. Richard is rewarded by Edward (the tenor soloist), but after the death of their brother George, he retires to his beloved Middleham. There, Richard (the baritone) sings a touching duet with Anne (the soprano). After the death of Edward IV, and the proclamation of the princes' bastardy, Richard is crowned and the orchestra celebrates with a Danse Royale. The first part of the Requiem ends with the choir singing, 'Rex tremendae', quietly at first, but then in full voice, while the populace gives thanks.

Part Two of the Middleham Requiem opens with the death of the young Edward and the grief of his parents, who sing a children's song of the time, 'Hollin, green Hollin'. Richard is further grief-stricken by the death of Anne and as the story reaches towards its climax, there is the cry of 'Libera me' and he sings the words we know as his prayer. With appropriate martial sounds, Richard goes to meet with the Tudor, giving an oration to his troops, the words taken from the account by Holinshed. Then, in a most effective sequence, wherein one can almost see the battle being fought, against the words of the 'Dies Irae', Richard falls alone, and is slain, 'to the great heaviness' of the citizens of York. Finally, the 'Requiem aeternam' is sung, ending so quietly and so effectively that one knows Richard has to be at peace.'

We asked the requiem's composer, Geoffrey Davidson, for his thoughts about the performance that is to take place during the evening of the day when King Richard III will be reinterred with honour and dignity in Leicester.

'These days, for a composer to hear his work performed is a luxury indeed, but to have his Requiem for Richard III performed in Leicester on the day that the King's

body is actually reinterred is the incredible highlight of a composing life. My grateful thanks to the Richard III Society therefore for their generosity in supporting a performance. As Beethoven wrote on the autograph of his Missa Solemnis – “From the heart, may it go to the heart” and that is really my emotional response to the short and tragic life of a much-maligned figure who, for one evening in March at least, will be remembered as a courageous hero”.

Places are still available for the performance on the 26 March. Even if you've already sent off your ballot papers you can still apply for seats by writing to the Joint Secretaries and quoting your membership number. Their address is: The Secretaries, Richard III Society, 23 Ash Rise, Halstead, Essex, CO9 1RD. Ticket allocations for the performance are limited to two per member. Requests should be with the Secretary by 7th January 2015.

This will be a unique opportunity to hear the *Middleham Requiem* during a week of historic significance for all Ricardians.

The Executive Committee

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