



BBC PROMS COMMISSION : THE WANDERER : NARESH SOHAL

The BBC commissioned Naresh Sohal in May 1981 to write a work for the 1982 Proms. "The Wanderer", for bass-baritone, chorus and orchestra, is the largest-scale work yet undertaken by the composer.

Sohal, who was born in India, has lived in the United Kingdom since 1962, and has had works performed at the Royal Festival Hall, and the English Bach and Portsmouth Festivals. The BBC has regularly broadcast his music. Sohal originally studied physics and maths in India, but took composition 'as a whim' whilst teaching himself music by ear. He now supports himself entirely from composition, and his music has been performed in many countries.

"The Wanderer" is based on an Anglo-Saxon poem, questioning man's place and purpose in the universe. Sohal says: "I discovered the poem "The Wanderer" in a Modern English translation by Michael Alexander from the original Anglo-Saxon. I was immediately struck by the poet's quest for answers to exactly the same questions, though in an entirely different setting of an exceptionally cold and bleak background. The poem has a built-in sense of heightening and releasing of tension. This naturally lends itself to the construction of a large-scale musical work. The narrative has been given to the soloist, and the questions and conclusions to the chorus. There is a thematic reiteration by the poet of the original atmosphere and setting, and consequently in my work that reiteration appears from time to time. This gives the piece a certain form which is exactly that of the poem, although I have added a comment of my own, which brings the work to its end."

David Wilson-Johnson, with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, under Andrew Davis, will give the premiere of "The Wanderer" on Monday 23 August at the Royal Albert Hall at 7.30 pm. Holst's "The Planets" forms the second part of this concert.

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