



## Allan Clayton • Prom 72

BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist, 2007–9

‘It’s a completely heartbreaking part, and utterly rooted in Britten’s natural sense of theatre.’ So British tenor Allan Clayton describes his role in Britten’s hugely powerful *War Requiem*, whose Proms performance in Prom 72 is all the more poignant in the centenary year of the First World War armistice. It’s a role, he feels, that falls somewhere between that of traditional concert soloist and an operatic portrayal, matching Britten’s own blending of texts from the Mass for the Dead with the poetry of Wilfred Owen, who was himself killed in action just a week before the armistice. ‘It’s Britten’s setting of the Owen texts that makes this piece connect so instantly with listeners. I’m kind of a not-uninvolved narrator, with my own painful sense of despair.’

‘Britten’s never afraid to pare his enormous forces down to the bare bones – to expose the pity, the tragedy and the hopelessness of war,’ continues Clayton. ‘It’s easy to admire his orchestration: the shrieking and wailing of bombs in the woodwind; the flashes of fire in the brass; the ingenious use of such a large chorus in the traditional Requiem Mass texts. In a space like the Royal Albert Hall, the contrast between the loudest passages in the *Dies irae* and the quiet conversation between a soldier and his dead enemy should be spine-tingling. For me, my final “It seemed that out of battle” monologue is one of the most powerful things in all music to sing.’