



O D E F O R M U S I C .

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G R A F T O N , C H A N C E L L O R o f t h e U n i v e r s i t y .

Blake, illustrations to Gray's *Poems*, c. 1797–98, "Ode for Music," page 1. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B1992.8.11(47). Image courtesy of the *William Blake Archive*.

Blake and Music, 2017

BY JASON WHITTAKER

Jason Whittaker (jwhittaker@lincoln.ac.uk) is head of the School of English and Journalism at the University of Lincoln. He is the author of several works on William Blake, including *William Blake and the Myths of Britain* (Palgrave, 1999), *Radical Blake: Influence and Afterlife from 1827* (with Shirley Dent, Palgrave, 2002), and *Blake 2.0: William Blake in Twentieth-Century Art, Music and Culture* (with Steve Clark and Tristanne Connolly, Palgrave, 2012). His main research interests in Blake deal with the reception of the poet and artist, and he is currently completing a book on the first hundred years of the hymn “Jerusalem.”

- 1 **W**ILLIAM Blake has long been a favorite of a number of composers and songwriters, and when Donald Fitch published *Blake Set to Music: A Bibliography of Musical Settings of the Poems and Prose of William Blake* in 1990, he listed 1412 pieces that had been composed by 1988. This was then expanded by his “*Blake Set to Music: Supplement 2001*” in *Blake* 35.2 (fall 2001) and Ashanka Kumari’s “Adding to *Blake Set to Music*” in *Blake* 49.4 (spring 2016).
- 2 The original *Blake Set to Music* had largely concentrated on classical settings of Blake’s works; Fitch’s supplement, as well as incorporating additional classical compositions that had appeared since the end of the 1980s, also included a significant number of pop songs that had been produced earlier. Kumari continued with both classical and popular additions, and my list of entries adheres to the format established by Fitch and followed by Kumari. As Kumari’s piece concluded with 2013 releases, the entries here concentrate on those that have been released since 2013, although some earlier ones, not included by either her or Fitch, also appear below. There is one significant difference between this list and those produced by both previous authors: while they generally avoided songs that simply mentioned Blake and instead concentrated on settings of Blake’s poetry, this list also includes songs that are *about* Blake in some shape or form. I have avoided the substantial number of albums that make some passing—usually superficial—reference to the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, although two albums by U2 are listed because critics have ob-

served that they are significantly, if somewhat obliquely, influenced by Blake’s poetry.

- 3 Wherever possible, the originating country of the artist(s) is listed, as well as instrumentation, copyright dates, publisher, and genres. Each source list also includes at least one link to a recording, usually *Amazon*, *Apple*, *Spotify*, or *YouTube*.

Agnes and Aubrey — UK

From *Artsongs: Ten Songs about Artists*; for voice, piano, guitar, percussion. Duration: 31:22. Tate, © 2006. Rock/pop.

Contents: 9. William Blake. (Quirky song about Blake’s life to match similar tracks about Frida Kahlo, Jackson Pollock, and Wassily Kandinsky.)

Links: *AllMusic*, *Amazon*, *Apple*, *Spotify*, *YouTube*.

Ashman, Howard, and Alan Menken — USA

From *Kurt Vonnegut’s God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*; for voices, variously accompanied. Duration: 53:57. Menken Music, © 2017. Musical.

Contents: 11. A Poem by William Blake.

Links: *Amazon*, *Apple*, *Spotify*.

Beeler, Alan — USA

From *The Real Beeler: Symphonic Music of Alan Beeler*; for symphony orchestra. Duration: 1:13:12. Navona Records, © 2014. Classical.

Contents: 22. Mad Song after William Blake.

Links: *AllMusic*, *Amazon*, *Apple*, *Spotify*.

Bottegasonora — Italy

From *Disco naïf*; for voice, keyboards, percussion. Duration: 34:00. Bottegasonora, © 2009. Rock/pop.

Contents: 5. The Chimney Sweeper (feat. William Blake).

Links: *Amazon*, *Apple*, *Spotify*, *YouTube*.

Burnett, Matt — USA

From *Wildflower*; for piano. Duration: 30:01. Walnut Tree Music, © 2005. Classical.

Contents: 3. Jerusalem (William Blake and H. H. Parry).

Links: *Amazon*, *Spotify*.

Burnside, Alan — UK

From *Corridors of Memory*; for voice, guitar, harmonica. Duration: 35:01. Alan Burnside, © 2017. Folk.

Contents: 2. William Blake.

Links: *SoundCloud, Spotify, YouTube.*

Caestles — USA

From *A Treatise on Human Combustion*; for voice, guitars, bass, percussion. Duration: 20:20. Caestles, © 2010. Rock/pop.

Contents: 2. William Blake.

Links: *Amazon, Apple, Spotify.*

The Cleavers — USA

From *Television Mind*; for voice, guitars, bass, percussion, strings. Duration: 42:56. Allright Records, © 2004. Folk.

Contents: 4. William Blake.

Links: *Apple, Spotify.*

Dave Taylor Octet — USA

From *The Atomic Bomb Blues* (Live); for brass octet. Duration: 1:02:54. Composers Concordance Records, © 2015. Classical/jazz.

Contents: 1. Five Songs from William Blake: No. 2, Tiger! Tiger!; 14. Five Songs from William Blake: No. 1, The Divine Image. (New arrangements of compositions by Virgil Thomson.)

Links: *Amazon, Apple, Spotify.*

Earth — USA

Hex; or Printing in the Infernal Method; for guitars, percussion, keyboards. Duration: 46:26. Southern Lord, © 2005. Rock/pop.

Contents: 1. Mirage; 2. Land of Some Other Order; 3. The Dire and Ever Circling Wolves; 4. Left in the Desert; 5. Lens of Unrectified Night; 6. An Inquest Concerning Teeth; 7. Raiford (The Felon Wind); 8. The Dry Lake; 9. Tethered to the Polestar. (A concept album loosely based on Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.)

Links: *AllMusic, Amazon, Apple, Spotify, YouTube.*

Echo, Erin — USA

From various artists, *When Worlds Collide: A Tribute to Daniel Amos and the Music of Terry Scott Taylor*; for voice, variously accompanied. Duration: 1:10:35. Ferris Wheel, © 2000. Rock/pop.

Contents: 2. William Blake. (Draws upon "The Tyger" and "The Lamb.")

Links: *Amazon, Apple, Spotify, YouTube.*

Escombe, Luke — Australia

From *Skeleton Blues*; for voice, guitar. Duration: 47:46. Fog-songs, © 2017. Rock/pop.

Contents: 11. William Blake.

Links: *Apple, Spotify, YouTube.*

Fang — Spain

From *Monster*; for voice, keyboard, percussion. Duration: 46:08. K. Industria Cultural, © 2001. Rock/pop.

Contents: 8. William Blake's Flowers; 11. Remix William Blake's Flowers.

Links: *Apple, Spotify.*

Ginsberg, Allen — USA

Songs of Innocence and Experience; for voice, variously accompanied. Duration: 1:47:19. Omnivore Recordings, © 2017. Avant garde/folk.

Contents: Disc 1: *Songs of Innocence*: 1. (a) Introduction (b) The Shepherd; 2. The Echoing Green; 3. The Lamb; 4. The Little Black Boy; 5. The Blossom; 6. The Chimney Sweeper; 7. (a) The Little Boy Lost (b) The Little Boy Found; 8. Laughing Song; 9. Holy Thursday; 10. Night. *Songs of Experience*: 11. Introduction; 12. Nurses Song; 13. The Sick Rose; 14. Ah! Sun-Flower; 15. The Garden of Love; 16. London; 17. The Human Abstract; 18. To Tirzah; 19. The Grey Monk. Bonus Tracks: 20. The Grey Monk (alternate take, previously unissued); 21. Brothels of Paris (previously unissued).

Disc 2: Blake Songs: 1. A Cradle Song; 2. The Divine Image (previously unissued); 3. Spring (previously unissued); 4. Nurses Song (previously unissued); 5. Infant Joy; 6. A Dream; 7. On Another[s] Sorrow; 8. Holy Thursday (previously unissued); 9. The Fly; 10. The School Boy; 11. The Voice of the Ancient Bard. (This compilation brings together several items listed under Finch [1990] #495.)

Links: *AllMusic, Amazon, Apple, Spotify.*

Grave Closure — UK

From *Dark Lane*; for voice, keyboard, guitars, percussion. Duration: 1:16:02. 624353 Records, © 2016. Rock/pop.

Contents: 4. The Garden of Love; 5. The Human Abstract; 7. The Echoing Green by William Blake.

Links: *Amazon, Apple, Spotify.*

The Great Veil — Denmark

From *Aldrig Mere Elske*; for voice, guitars, bass, percussion. Duration: 42:22. Repo Man Records, © 2016. Rock/pop.

Contents: 3. Love's Secret (Poem by William Blake).

Links: *Amazon, Apple, Spotify, YouTube.*

The Groundsmen — USA

From *Livelif*; for voice, guitars, percussion. Duration: 31:09. Spat! Records, © 2008. Rock/pop.

Contents: 1. William Blake.

Links: *Apple, Spotify, YouTube.*

Gunthorpe, Zac — Australia

From *Long Lost Love Lies*; for voice, guitars, percussion. Soul Arch Recordings, © 2012. Alternative country.

Contents: 3. William Blake.

Links: *Amazon, Apple, Spotify, YouTube.*

Harle, John, and Marc Almond — UK

From *The Tyburn Tree: Dark London*; for voice, variously accompanied. Duration: 53:50. Sospiro Music Ltd., © 2013. Avant garde/classical.

Contents: 12. Jerusalem. (Incorporates lines from *Milton a Poem* and *Jerusalem the Emanation of the Giant Albion.*)

Links: *AllMusic, Amazon, Apple, Spotify, YouTube.*

Kidane, Daniel — UK

Songs of Illumination; for voice and piano. Daniel Kidane, © 2018. Classical. (Three pieces based on “A Dream,” “The Land of Dreams,” and “The Little Black Boy.”)

Link: *Web site.*

Krylov, Andrei — Russia

From *Gothic Music Fantasy for Renaissance Celtic Lute and Classical Guitar*; for lute and classical guitar. Duration: 1:24:48. Andrei Krylov, © 2015. Classical.

Contents: 28. Lute Ballad Dedicated to William Blake.

Link: *Spotify.*

Lawler, Kevin, and Nevada Jones — USA

Stranger from Paradise; for voices, variously accompanied. Kevin Lawler and Nevada Jones, © 2017. Classical. (Opera drawing upon the life and works of Blake.)

Link: *Web site.*

Leo, Lou — USA

From *Lou Leo Sings the Electric Poet (George Pereny)*; for voice, guitar, bass, percussion. Duration: 1:13:43. Pompton Turtle, © 2000. Country.

Contents: 11. William Blake.

Links: *AllMusic, Amazon, Apple, Spotify.*

Like a Stuntman — Germany

From *Original Bedouin Culture*; for voice, variously accompanied. Duration: 40:43. Bureau B, © 2009. Alternative/indie.

Contents: 1. Wake Up William Blake.

Links: *AllMusic, Amazon, Apple, Spotify, YouTube.*

Lovenstein, Jonathan — USA

Blake Songs and Other Works; for voice, piano. Duration: 1:12:27. Titanic, © 1994. Classical.

Contents: 2. The Lamb; 3. Morning; 8. Love to Faults Is Always Blind; 12. A Divine Image; 13. London; 14. A Poison Tree; 17. Song; 18. Infant Sorrow.

Links: *AllMusic, Apple, Spotify.*

Lovenstein, Jonathan — USA

Blake Songs and Other Works, volume 2; for voice, piano. Duration: 46:14. Titanic, © 1999. Classical.

Contents: 1. Introduction to *Songs of Innocence*; 3. A Cradle Song; 8. Laughing Song; 11. The Fly.

Links: *Apple, Spotify.*

Ndesandjo, Mark Obama — USA/China

The Divine Comedy: Reflections on William Blake; for piano. Duration: 1:06:25. Mark O. Ndesandjo, © 2017. Classical.

Contents: 1. Aria; 2-28. Cantos 1-27. (Composed and performed by the paternal half-brother of former President Obama.)

Links: *Amazon, Apple, Spotify.*

Noisy Minority — Switzerland

From *First Silence*; for voice, variously accompanied. Duration: 53:02. Unit Records, © 2001. Jazz.

Contents: 11. Poem: Little Fly (William Blake).

Links: *AllMusic, Amazon, Apple, Spotify, YouTube.*

Fernand Pena — France

Ode to William Blake; for voice, variously accompanied. Duration: 1:10:04. Fernand Pena, © 2011. Rock/pop.

Contents: 1. Song of Innocence; 2. The Little Vagabond; 3. The Little Boy Found—Lost; 4. The Chimney Sweeper; 5. The Little Black Boy; 6. Infant Sorrow; 7. The Human Abstract; 8. To Tirzah; 9. Laughing Song; 10. London; 11. The School Boy; 12. A Poison Tree; 13. Little Girl Lost; 14. O, I Say You Joe; 15. Holy Thursday; 16. William Bond; 17. The Mother Said; 18. Get Thee Away.

Link: *YouTube.*

Fernand Pena — France

Ode to William Blake, volume 2; for voice, variously accompanied. Duration: 1:19:43. Fernand Pena, © 2016. Rock/pop.

Contents: 1. Never Pain to Tell Thy Love; 2. Mary; 3. The Land of Dream[s]; 4. A Fairy Skip'd upon My Knee; 5. My Spectre around Me Night & Day; 6. Night; 7. The Little Girl Lost; 8. The Little Girl Found; 9. The Ecchoing-Green; 10. The Cristal [*sic*] Cabinet; 11. The Tyger; 12. Fayette; 13. Earth's Answer; 14. When Klopstock England Defied; 15. Long John Brown & Little Mary Bell; 16. You Don't Believe; 17. The Fly; 18. On Another's Sorrow.

Link: [Web site](#).

Quatre Bouches and Eisler Trio — Holland

The William Blake Experience; for voices, guitar, cello. Duration: 59:50. Quatre Bouches Productions, © 2014. Classical.

Contents: 1. Introduction *Innocence*; 2. The Ecchoing Green; 3. The Lamb; 4. The Little Black Boy; 5. The Blossom; 6. Laughing Song; 7. A Cradle Song; 8. The Divine Image; 9. Night; 10. Infant Joy; 11. A Dream; 12. Introduction *Experience*; 13. Earth's Answer; 14. The Sick Rose; 15. The Tyger; 16. The Garden of Love; 17. London; 18. The Human Abstract; 19. The School Boy; 20. The Voice of the Ancient Bard.

Links: [Amazon](#), [Apple](#), [Spotify](#).

Sanders, Ed — USA

From *Poems for New Orleans*; for voice, variously accompanied. Duration: 1:17:42. Paris Records, © 2007. Jazz.

Contents: 3. What If William Blake Had Gone to New Orleans?

Links: [AllMusic](#), [Amazon](#), [Spotify](#).

Shasta — USA

From *The Outsider*; for voice, guitar, percussion. Duration: 52:00. E. "Shasta" Bates and Mountain Thunder Music, © 2009. Country.

Contents: 4. One-Eyed Jacks with William Blake.

Links: [Amazon](#), [Spotify](#).

Silent Religion — Italy

From *Absence*; songs for voice, keyboards, electronic instruments, percussion. Duration: 23:73. Silent Realm, © 2016. Rock/pop.

Contents: 3. Homage to William Blake. (Based on Blake's "The Fly.")

Links: [SoundCloud](#), [YouTube](#).

Sky, Ananda

From *For You*; for voice, guitar. Duration: 37:51. Ananda Sky, © 2001. Folk.

Contents: 5. Two Poems by William Blake. (Based on "Eternity" and "Auguries of Innocence.")

Links: [Apple](#), [Spotify](#).

Sophya Baccini's Aradia — Italy

From *Big Red Dragon (William Blake's Visions)*; songs for voice, guitar, bass, keyboards, percussion. Duration: 1:08:30. Black Widow Records, © 2013. Rock/pop.

Contents: 1. William; 2. Angel of the Revelation; 3. Satan; 4. Love of Hecate; 5. La porta dell'inferno; 6. The Number; 7. Just; 8. Cerberus; 9. While He's Sleeping; 10. Au premier matin du jour; 11. Beatrice; 12. Big Red Dragon; 13. Jerusalem. (A concept album drawing widely upon Blake's poetry and art for its inspiration.)

Links: [Amazon](#), [Apple](#), [Spotify](#), [YouTube](#).

Thaur, Simon — Austria

William Blakes Songs of Innocence and Experience; for voice, electronic instruments, percussion. Duration: 1:02:49. Platyn Records, © 2011. Techno/electonica.

Contents: 1. The Tyger; 2. Garden of Love; 3. Children of the Future Age; 4. The Divine Image; 5. A Poison Tree; 6. The Fly; 7. About the Angel in My Dreams; 8. The Little Black Boy; 9. The Chimney Sweeper; 10. London; 11. The Little Girl Lost and Found; 12. Introduction.

Links: [Amazon](#), [Spotify](#).

Tiger Tooth — USA

From *Tiger Tooth*; for voice, electronic instruments, percussion. Duration: 1:12:39. Baby Tooth, © 2016. Techno/electonica.

Contents: 13. William Blake. (A version of "The Tyger.")

Links: [Apple](#), [Spotify](#), [YouTube](#).

Treacher, Graham — UK

Divine Madness: The Visions of Albion; for voice, viol consort. Duration: 56:00. Graham Treacher, © 2016. Classical. (Based on *Milton a Poem* and other writings of Blake.)

Link: [Vimeo](#).

Turn Off Your Television — Sweden

From *Humble Waves*; for voice, variously accompanied. Duration: 31:58. Turn Off Your Television, © 2012. Rock/pop.

Contents: 3. My Apple Tree (Thank You William Blake).
Links: [Apple](#), [Spotify](#).

Tyler, Alan — UK

William Blake's Songs of Innocence; for voice, guitars, violin, percussion. Duration: 38:48. Littlefield, © 2015. Folk.

Contents: 1. Introduction; 2. The Shepherd; 3. The Echoing Green; 4. The Lamb; 5. The Little Black Boy; 6. The Blossom; 7. The Chimney Sweeper; 8. The Little Boy Lost and The Little Boy Found; 9. Laughing Song; 10. A Cradle Song; 11. The Divine Image; 12. Holy Thursday; 13. Night; 14. Spring; 15. Nurse's Song; 16. Infant Joy; 17. A Dream; 18. On Another's Sorrow.

Links: [Amazon](#), [Apple](#), [Spotify](#).

U2 — Ireland¹

Songs of Innocence; for voice, variously accompanied. Duration: 48:06. Island Records, © 2014. Rock/pop.

Contents: 1. The Miracle (of Joey Ramone); 2. Every Breaking Wave; 3. California (There Is No End to Love); 4. Song for Someone; 5. Iris (Hold Me Close); 6. Volcano; 7. Raised by Wolves; 8. Cedarwood Road; 9. Sleep Like a Baby Tonight; 10. This Is Where You Can Reach Me Now; 11. The Troubles.

Links: [AllMusic](#), [Amazon](#), [Apple](#), [Spotify](#).

U2 — Ireland

Songs of Experience; for voice, variously accompanied. Duration: 1:07:38. Island Records, © 2017. Rock/pop.

Contents: 1. Love Is All We Have Left; 2. Lights of Home; 3. You're the Best Thing about Me; 4. Get Out of Your Own Way; 5. American Soul; 6. Summer of Love; 7. Red Flag

1. This is the most contentious addition here, as U2 neither directly reference Blake nor set his poetry to music, but the parallels between their two albums and Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* have been recognized by a number of music critics. As such, their *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* are listed, along with Walter Zimmermann's *Songs of Innocence & Experience*, which includes a series of ritornels directly drawn from Blake's poetry.

Variant titles of the *Songs* are always popular, including the following list of albums that do not particularly invoke Blake's work in any other way: Adequate Seven — *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (2003); Augustus & the Emperors — *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (2011); Danielle Buonaiuto, Bethany Pietroniro — *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (2014); Caprice — *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (2006); J. J. Crown — *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (2011); The Echoing Green — *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (2006); Fitz — *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (2008); Lisa Howard — *Songs of Innocence & Experience* (2011); Love Syndicate — *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (2002); Paul McDowell — *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (2012); Anda Al Sinaia — *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (2005); Jasper Steverlinck — *Songs of Innocence* (2004).

Day; 8. The Showman (Little More Better); 9. The Little Things That Give You Away; 10. Landlady; 11. The Blackout; 12. Love Is Bigger Than Anything in Its Way; 13. 13 (There Is a Light); 14. Ordinary Love; 15. Book of Your Heart; 16. Lights of Home (St. Peter's string version); 17. You're the Best Thing about Me (U2 vs. Kygo).

Links: [AllMusic](#), [Amazon](#), [Apple](#), [Spotify](#).

Vesper Land — France

A Folk Tribute to William Blake; for voice, guitars. Duration: 20:51. Lco Art, © 2012. Folk/country.

Contents: 1. A Dream; 2. The Sick Rose; 3. I Laid Me Down upon a Bank; 4. Why Was Cupid a Boy; 5. I Asked a Thief to Steal Me a Peach; 6. A Divine Image.

Links: [Apple](#), [Spotify](#).

Walcott, Christopher

From *Relaxation*; for voices, variously accompanied. Duration: 53:00. Discmedi, © 2011. New age.

Contents: 2. Le livre de Thel (D'après un poème de William Blake).

Links: [Amazon](#), [Apple](#), [Spotify](#).

Wilson, Dan, and Mark Huggett Project — South Africa/UK

From *Max Roach Park*; for voices, variously accompanied. Duration: 1:15:22. Musketeer Records, © 2007. Jazz.

Contents: 6. William Blake.

Links: [Amazon](#), [Apple](#), [Spotify](#).

Woerner, Danielle, and Sylvia Buccelli — USA

From *She Walks in Beauty: The Songs of Otto Luening and Robert Starer*; for voice, piano. Duration: 1:17:10. Parnasus, © 2013. Classical.

Contents: 22. Selected Songs to Poems of William Blake: Love's Secret; 23. Selected Songs to Poems of William Blake: Ah! Sun-flower; 24. Selected Songs to Poems of William Blake: The Little Vagabond.

Links: [Amazon](#), [Apple](#), [Spotify](#).

Zimmermann, Walter, and Sonar Quartett — Germany

Songs of Innocence & Experience; for string quartet. Duration: 02:23:11. Mode, © 2012. Classical.

Contents: Disc 1: 1-10. Fränkische Tänze, sublimated for string quartet with drone quartet, parts 1-10; 11. Keuper, for string quartet; 12. Patientia; 13. Occasio; 14. Poenitentia; 15. Regressus in Infinitum; 16. Songs of Innocence & Experience, 23 ritornels for string quartet and tape.

Disc 2: 1-2. Die Sorge geht über den Fluß, for violin solo,

parts 1-2; 3. Taula; 4. Novo Ben; 5-14. Fränkische Tänze, sublimated for string quartet without drone quartet, parts 1-10. (Zimmermann wrote that the original inspiration for the ritornels was hearing Ginsberg's recordings of Blake while traveling through the USA.)

Link: *AllMusic*.