



Songs of Innocence and Experience

William Blake (1757 - 1827)

Read by:	D. S. Harvey	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
Length:	52 minutes	Catalog:	DB-1132
Language:	English	UPC:	0683422134500
Style:	Solo	MSLP:	\$9.99
Genre:	Poetry		

Songs of Innocence and of Experience is a collection of 45 poems by English poet William Blake. *Songs of Innocence* is the first part of the collection and appeared in 1789 with engraved illustrations by Blake. The second part, *Songs of Experience*, also illustrated, was added in 1794 when Blake published the whole under the full title of *Songs of Innocence and Experience Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul*. The categories of innocence and experience are states of mind and ways of seeing that roughly correspond to the classical model of “paradise” and “fall”, as in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. Blake helped formulate the then contemporary Romantic notion of childhood as a state of innocence, without fear, inhibition,

or corruption; and adulthood as a contrary and fallen state of original sin prey to oppression, corruption, and power. The opposition is reinforced by poems with like titles and contrasting themes in each part. The poems are short, simple, and acutely sensitive to both joys of life and the harsh realities of class and poverty in the emerging Industrial Revolution.

William Blake (November 28, 1757 – August 12, 1827) was an English poet, printmaker and painter who achieved scant recognition in his lifetime but is now regarded as seminal to the Romantic Age in both poetry and the visual arts. His work in both disciplines was highly expressive, original and singular, with undertones of prophecy and mysticism as well as a private mythology with complex symbols that make it difficult to classify. The visionary dimension of his vision is well captured in William Rossetti’s description of him as a glorious luminary. He was born in London to a family of some means; his father, a hosier, provided copies of drawings of Greek antiquities which Blake copied as a child. He was apprenticed to an engraver at age 14 and then enrolled at the Royal Academy at age 21. In 1784 he opened a print shop with fellow apprentice James Parker and began working with publisher Joseph Johnson, activity which led him to associate with leading intellectual dissidents of the day such as theologian Joseph Priestly, artist John Henry Fuseli, feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, and revolutionary Thomas Paine. He was considered somewhat mad by some, owing to his radical beliefs, which combine a deep reverence for the Bible but animosity towards organized religion. In addition to his own verse, he is known for his illustrations of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. He was ranked 38th by the BBC in 2002 on its list of the 100 Greatest Britons.