

ENGLISH TOURING OPERA

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LYRIC SOLITUDE

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POULENC | ARGENTO



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A WATER BIRD TALK

Music and Text I
Dominick Argento

Julien Van Mellaerts *Baritone*
Ella O'Neill *Pianist*
Susan Bickley *Director*

LA VOIX HUMAINE

Poulenc I Cocteau

Paula Sides *Soprano*
Sergey Rybin *Pianist*
James Conway *Director*

TEL JOUR, TELLE NUIT

Poulenc I Éluard

Jenny Stafford *Soprano*
Julien Van Mellaerts *Baritone*
James Conway *Director*

BOYHOOD'S END

Tippett I W.H. Hudson

Thomas Elwin *Tenor*
Ian Tindale *Pianist*
Paul Chantry *Dancer*
Rae Piper and Paul Chantry
Choreography

THE HEART'S ASSURANCE

Tippett I Lewis & Keyes

Thomas Elwin *Tenor*
Ian Tindale *Pianist*
Richard Dowling *Actor*
Bernadette Iglich *Choreography*

POEMS OF MARINA TSVETAEVA

Shostakovich I Tsvetaeva

Katie Stevenson *Mezzo-soprano*
Ian Tindale *Pianist*
Bernadette Iglich *Dancer*
Rahel Vonmoos *Director*

HOLY SONNETS OF JOHN DONNE

Britten I Donne

Richard Dowling *Tenor*
Ian Tindale *Pianist*
Bernadette Iglich *Choreography & Dancer*

CHARM OF LULLABIES

Britten I Blake, Burns, Greene, Randolph, Phillip

Katie Stevenson *Mezzo-soprano*
Ian Tindale *Pianist*
James Conway *Director*

SONGS AND PROVERBS OF WILLIAM BLAKE

Britten I Blake

Julien Van Mellaerts *Baritone*
Ella O'Neill *Pianist*
John Savournin *Director*

SIX ROMANCES ON BRITISH POETS

Shostakovich I Raleigh, Burns, Shakespeare

Edward Hawkins *Bass*
Sergey Rybin *Pianist*
James Conway *Director*

THE POET'S ECHO

Britten I Pushkin

Jenny Stafford *Soprano*
Sergey Rybin *Pianist*
James Conway *Director*



Welcome

In these extraordinary times, we are pleased to offer this programme to you for free.

A number of our friends and supporters have offered to donate to ETO to cover the costs of producing this programme. If you enjoy reading it and would like to donate, we would be grateful for your support.

We have usually sold programmes for £4.

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Online until January 26th 2021



Four friends fail in their hare-brained schemes to catch a beautiful birdy.

The littlest of them knows that a bit of kindness can go a long way. Will his friends follow his gentle lead or will they get themselves into even more trouble?

The team behind the hugely successful 2020 digital & puppetry adaption of I Want My Hat Back return in style with a short film of Chris Haughton's much loved modern-classic Shh! We Have a Plan.



A Water Bird Talk

Music and Text | Dominick Argento

Julien Van Mellaerts
Baritone

Ella O'Neill
Pianist

Susan Bickley
Director

**Q&A with
Susan Bickley**

**Dominik Argento
- A biography**

 **Harmful effects
of tobacco** the Chekhov
Play on which Argento
bases A Water Bird Talk

Q&A with Susan Bickley

Director, James Conway speaks with mezzo-soprano Susan Bickley about the difference between performing and directing and how this has influenced her direction of Argento's A Water Bird Talk.

JC: As a performer, what have you come to value in a director?

SB: As a performer I've been extremely fortunate to work with some truly inspirational directors... my favourites being those who regularly choose to work in theatre as well as opera. Before ending up studying music and singing I had always wanted to be an actress and so being involved in opera has ticked all boxes! Directors who also understand the nature of the music are very valuable... it's surprising how many come with a CD booklet of text but haven't really taken the integration of both art forms into consideration!

JC: What was it like directing another singer?

SB: What a very interesting situation to be in... to be on the other side of the table! I hadn't really planned to do any directing but was delighted to be asked by James Conway... and perhaps starting with a one person opera is a good idea! My first reaction was to think '..oh I'm not sure I'd be up to that..' but frankly, in these times when singing work is virtually nonexistent, it seemed the perfect time to take on a challenge. I was very lucky to be working with such a talented and receptive singer as Julien. We had fun, along with our wonderful pianist Ella and I think I was able to use some techniques learnt from directors I have worked with... obviously in a very simple way, given my newness to the role!

JC: You are used to learning pieces from the perspective of the role you are singing — did you come to know A Waterbird Talk in a different sort of way?

SB: I did approach working on 'Waterbird' differently to something I would be singing. The text was my first job...to work out what Argento was meaning, to read the play it was based on and to then listen to it and get a grip of what was happening musically. Then to imagine what 'the lecturer' would be doing and where and how on the stage. If it was a role I was singing I would have probably done things the other way round... getting to know the notes and studying the text second. Singers all have different ways of getting to know what they are having to learn. As a performer who has learnt the skill of interpreting someone else's ideas... composer, librettist, director or conductor it was most interesting to be suggesting my ideas to someone else for a change!

JC: What do you like best about A Waterbird Talk? When does it speak to your heart?

SB: It's an interesting piece... Waterbird... a rather good vehicle for an actor/singer to show a wide variety of emotions. There is some humour and some great sadness as well as anger and frustration. The music isn't easy to learn but actually sounds very lyrical at times as well as dramatic. The offstage role of

the harridan wife could be seen as a bit of a misogynistic cliché, she's clearly made this man's life a misery... but I have to say I have come across marriages that are not dissimilar in nature so there is definitely an element of reality! Fortunately Julien is also an excellent pianist and as the score requires 'the lecturer' to play, if he possibly can, that has been a real bonus.

JC: I know you have recently done your own one-person show, based on music of Berio. What do you reckon to be the particular challenges of a one-person show?

SB: I have had several experiences of being the sole singer in a piece, the most recent of which was to perform Berio's Recital for Cathy. It is scored for a singer and accompanist and chamber orchestra who are offstage and was written for his wife Cathy Berberian. It's a piece of music theatre...a monologue from a singer giving a recital in which she gradually loses her mind while singing about 42 very short extracts from her past repertoire. What a piece! Very tricky to learn but covering the full gamut of emotion. We last performed it in the British Museum amongst the Elgin Marbles! I loved doing it... but when you're on your own there certainly is a responsibility to keep the audience engaged... you can't relax for a moment!

JC: How has this period of relative silence been for you? Has it clarified for you why you are a performer, for example? Is there anything you would like to say about the community of freelance artists, if you perceive that there is a community?

SB: Well this year has been the most extraordinary time for everyone in the arts. Freelancers, in particular, have really suffered as there has been little or no financial support and many have had to take other jobs to survive. That is all very well... but when you have trained for years and spent a fortune on study it is heartbreaking not to be able to use those very particular skills. And they are skills that need to be nurtured and practised... a difficult thing to maintain while working for Amazon, say, on night shifts. I count my blessings... I had a lot of work cancelled, here and abroad, but I have a husband who works full time so we are not on the breadline. However, many young artists, some married to other performers and with families to support, have really suffered. So those companies, like ETO, who are now managing to mount some performances, albeit in compromised ways, will be the saviours for those young singers, actors, technicians etc starting out. It will be the future for the time being, I suspect. And while it might make us more resourceful and imaginative, the fact that the industry that is art and performance has been neglected for the most part is devastating for those that work in it.

Photo Credit: Leon Hargreaves



Image: John J. Audubon

Dominick Argento — A biography

Dominick Argento, considered to be America's pre-eminent composer of lyric opera, was born in York, Pennsylvania in 1927. He earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees at Peabody Conservatory and his Ph.D. from the Eastman School of Music. Fulbright and Guggenheim Fellowships allowed him to study in Italy and following his Fulbright, Argento became music director of Hilltop Opera in Baltimore, and taught theory and composition at the Eastman School. In 1958, he joined the faculty of the Department of Music at the University of Minnesota, where he taught until 1997 and later held the rank of Professor Emeritus.

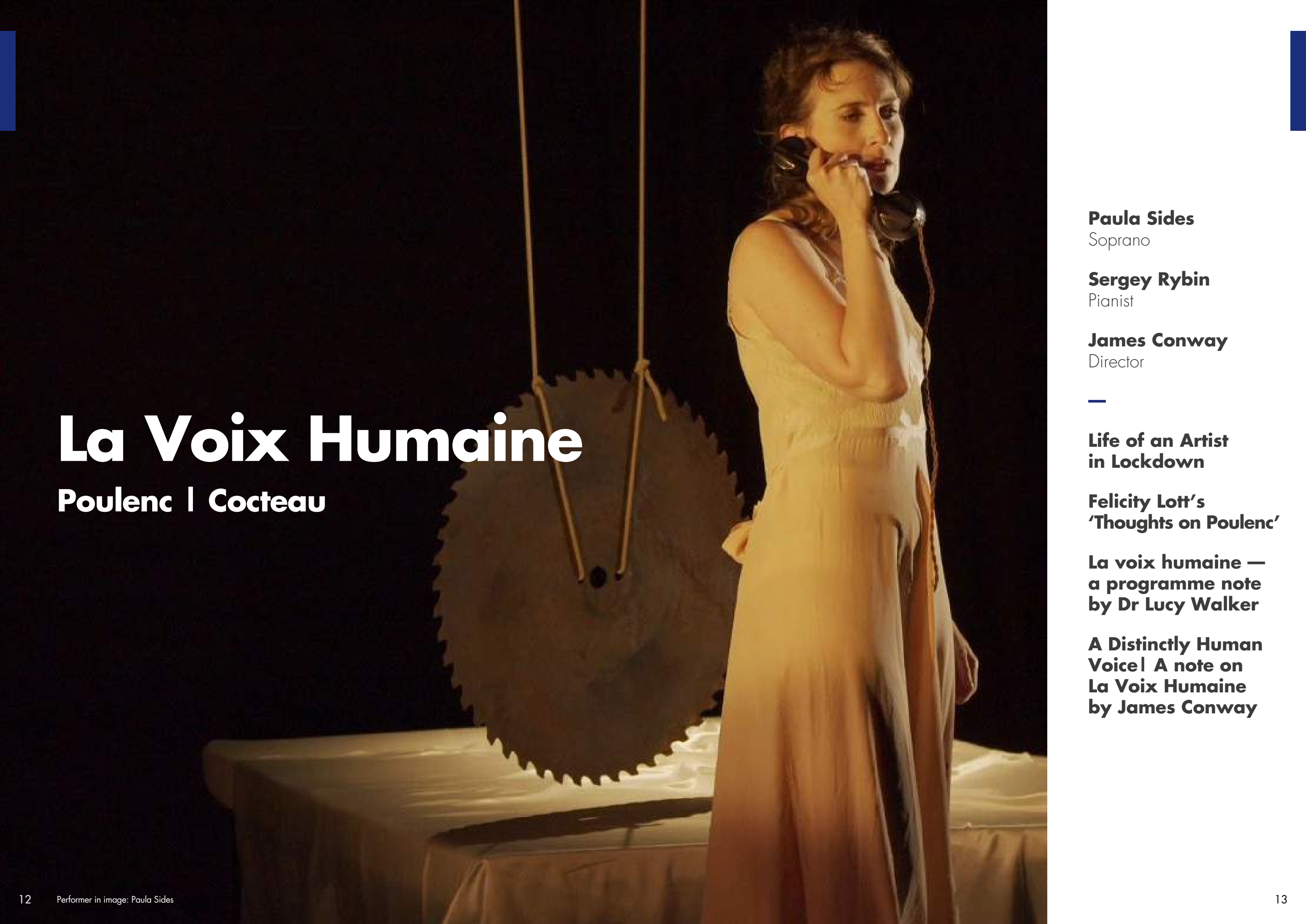
During his years at Eastman, Argento composed his opera, *The Boor* (1957), of which John Rockwell of *The New York Times* stated: "[it] taps deep currents of sentiment and passion." Following his arrival in Minnesota, Argento accepted commissions from the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Civic Orchestra of Minneapolis.

Since the early 1970s Argento's operas were heard with increasing frequency abroad. Among these are *The Voyage of Edgar Allan Poe* (1976), *Dream of Valentino* (1993), and *Casanova's Homecoming* (1984), which Robert Jacobson of *Opera News* hailed as "a masterpiece."

Dominick Argento received the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 1975 for his song cycle *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf*. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1979, and in 1997 was honored with the title of Composer Laureate to the Minnesota Orchestra, a lifetime appointment.

— February 2019

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La Voix Humaine

Poulenc | Cocteau

Paula Sides

Soprano

Sergey Rybin

Pianist

James Conway

Director

**Life of an Artist
in Lockdown**

**Felicity Lott's
'Thoughts on Poulenc'**

**La voix humaine —
a programme note
by Dr Lucy Walker**

**A Distinctly Human
Voice! A note on
La Voix Humaine
by James Conway**

Life of an Artist in Lockdown

I am a classical musician that had the stark reality of life taking a very drastic shift in March along with everyone else in the world because of COVID 19. All of my work was cancelled in very quick succession, and I was left with the question, "What do I do now?"

I never imagined this would happen and was not prepared for it, but I shifted my focus from being a musician to having the luxury of spending time with my children in a way I had not been able to before. Of course the stress of not knowing how to earn a living loomed over us, and my husband and I started studying neuroscience remotely for fun. It seemed bizarre, but what else could we do? We were both musicians and were now teaching our voice students online, but we felt as if we didn't have a direction anymore to move towards....static.... and at the same time feeling the ground shift beneath our feet.

Now things are becoming oddly normal. We both teach from home and are recording music from home, which we probably never would have done were it not for COVID. I was asked by James Conway (ETO general Director) to prepare *La Voix Humaine* (Poulenc), a piece that I find fascinating and the music intoxicatingly good. I dove into the Poulenc with a hunger for the study of it and joy of the focus that I could give to it. I became a bit obsessed and have greatly enjoyed it. The first socially distanced rehearsal felt like I was coming out of a cave into the light of my life as a musician. It is incredibly difficult to know that this artistic world is lacking the support that it needs and feeling the tragic sadness of so many friend and colleagues, beautiful artists, which are at the mercy of such uncertainty. My sincere hope is that there is a way forward for more companies to do what ETO are doing this season with socially distanced live performances.

Paula Sides



Thoughts on Poulenc

I've loved Poulenc's music since my student days, when Graham Johnson and I performed "La courte paille" in a recital at the Royal Academy of Music. We went to Paris to work with Pierre Bernac on "Tel Jour, telle nuit" which was a wonderful experience, almost as good as studying the songs with Poulenc himself. The recording they made together tells you almost all you need to know about how to perform the cycle; Bernac finds such an array of colours in his voice and every word is crystal clear. I think the last song, "Nous avons fait la nuit" is one of the great songs in all the repertoire, in its expression of love, wonder and quiet contentment: the piano postlude always moved me to tears.

I have written a few thoughts on singing 'La Voix Humaine' in a book I wrote with Olivier Bellamy 'Il nous faut de l'amour' - but it's in French! So...

I first sang "La Voix Humaine" with Glyndebourne Touring Company in 1977 in a double-bill with "The cunning little vixen"! It was SO hard to learn because it's non-stop, 45 minutes on the end of the

phone and no-one to give you a cue- there have been stories of singers having a prompter on the other end of the phone but I don't know if that's true! Each time the call is cut off and Elle answers the ring again, 'allo, allo' is at a different pitch and leads off in a different direction: if you go the wrong way you can cut pages of script! There are comparatively few lyrical passages when you can really sing and enjoy Poulenc's beautiful writing for the voice, so when they come they are precious. As it's a conversation, the work is broken by silences while the lover speaks and the singer and accompanist, or conductor, have to work out what is being said so that the pauses are the right duration: too short and you don't have time to react and change, too long and you can't sustain the emotion and the whole piece sags. The first conductor I worked with on the piece said he spent more time on it than on preparing a Wagner opera.

La Voix Humaine is all about lying, about not seeing the other person and not knowing the reality of the situation. 'Elle' is lying when she says she is well and happy, that she's wearing her pink dress, that she's just back from shopping with Marthe etc, and he is lying by saying he's at home. She catches him out, literally, but doesn't say so; she admits her lie and tells him that she would understand if he had told her he was at home alone so as not to hurt her any more. The accompaniment here is like a slowly turning screw, boring into her. She hopes that he will 'own up' so that this relationship of 5 years doesn't end in a lie, but he won't do it. And then he tells her that he and his new wife will be going to Marseilles, where Elle had spent so many happy times with him. I think that finally breaks something inside her and she begs him to hang up. It's a devastating piece to perform because you just have to live through it every time.

I have performed it a lot since the Glyndebourne Tour, mainly semi-staged as part of an orchestral concert, but with chaise-longue, table, rug, and telephone (telephone supplied by myself!) Two performances stand out in my memory: in Madrid it was staged as a double-bill with the play, and 'Elle' was played by one of Almodovar's favourite actresses, Cecilia Roth. She performed the play in Spanish and while the orchestra filed

into the pit a recording of the slow movement of Poulenc's flute sonata was played and we went straight into Poulenc's operatic version. (The director wisely said that if they had an interval, all Cecilia's fans would go home...) It was a very beautiful production and Almodovar came to see it; we were invited to watch him filming in the middle of the night in a Madrid suburb. He was filming 'Volver' and we all had pizza at about 2am with Penelope Cruz in her winnebago.

The other occasion was at the Proms with Sir Andrew Davis on the hottest August night ever recorded (at that time, anyway) We had a small stage area in front of the orchestra and very powerful lighting which contributed to the overheating. I was wearing a burgundy-coloured silk dress which after 45 minutes was rather damp. Andrew gave me a huge hug and conducted the rest of his concert in a pink tuxedo.

My Poulenc credentials are good: Graham and I were given permission by Poulenc's heirs to record the version with piano on DVD; before that they had only allowed performances with orchestra; we made a film at Poulenc's house in Noizay- I slept in his room- and I am very proud to be the President of Les Amis de Francis Poulenc in France! I just wish that I had known him...

Felicity Lott



La Voix humaine — a programme note by Lucy Walker

Online ‘Discovery Session’
([click here](#)) on La Voix humaine
with Lucy Walker:

Originally a programme note
for the 2017 Aldeburgh Festival,
by Lucy Walker

In 1880, American satirist Mark Twain published a short story called ‘A Telephonic Conversation’, in which he remarked: ‘a conversation by telephone — when you are simply sitting by and not taking part in that conversation — is one of the solemnest curiosities of this modern life.’ It was written barely two years after the invention of the telephone and thus indicates how swiftly the phenomenon of ‘telephonic conversations’ had become observable in everyday life. His story in fact evolves as a satirical observation on the flighty nature of female conversations in particular; and the cliché of a woman waiting by the telephone was so common as to form the entire material of a Dorothy Parker’s short story written in 1924 (it begins ‘Please, God, let him telephone me now. Dear God, let him call me now. . . If I didn’t think about it, maybe the telephone might ring.’)

The premise of Poulenc’s *La Voix humaine* (1958) belongs to both these conventions: the curiosity of hearing just one half of a phone conversation, and the woman trapped in her apartment, desperately waiting for a man to ring her — further amplified in this case by an erratic network that keeps cutting her off. The scenario is, then, mundane. In Cocteau’s original drama on which *La Voix* is based, the heroine (simply known as ‘Elle’) is described by the author as a ‘femme médiocre’, an ordinary woman in an ordinary situation. But Poulenc’s treatment of her and her situation is very far from ‘mediocre’.

Purely on a practical level, in his adaptation Elle’s world is a musical one: in the original orchestral version, the phone’s ring sounds like a xylophone. Elle’s utterances, while initially quasi-spoken and ‘realistic’ in their telephonic context, gain in song-like momentum throughout the work, culminating in a glorious ‘Je t’aime’ at full operatic throttle in the final bars. In common with many of Poulenc’s works, it is ‘modern’ yet not in terms of its harmonic language. Rather, it is modern

in its appropriation of an utterly contemporary device within a traditionally operatic scenario — a jilted woman — and also modern in how the telephonic and the operatic intersect throughout.

Its inception was fantastically operatic as Poulenc recounted in a letter to a friend:

I was at La Scala, with my publisher Hervé Dugardin, and Madame Callas had been singing. And Madame Callas was pushing aside tenors and baritones to take her bows before the deservedly wild applause. At that point Hervé Dugardin turned to me and said: ‘But what you ought to set for her is *La Voix humaine*, since it’s written for just one woman, and then she could have all the applause.’

Maria Callas did not, in the event, take part in any production of the work, chiefly because, as Poulenc continued, ‘it didn’t interest her in the slightest.’ However, Elle undoubtedly channels Callas’s spirit in some of her more passionate outpourings, most notably an ‘aria’, lasting some five minutes, in which she recounts the previous night’s suicide attempt, and her outburst

of ‘Je devenais folle!’ (‘I was going crazy’) launching up to a high C, and accompanied by a similar motif as to her later ‘Je t’aime’.

The telephonic or technological qualities of the work are embodied in Elle’s vocal style at the start (her repeated ‘Allô’, usually on a questioning raised minor third), but mainly in the interjections of the accompaniment. At the start, it is uneasy, jittery and highly-caffeinated — representing Elle’s anxiety as she paces her room. Its doubling and tripling of bars and insistent repetitions ‘break all the rules’ as Poulenc put it, yet the effect is deliberate. Furthermore, it is a heightened, technological version of Poulenc’s characteristically restless and eclectic style — here suggesting not only a telephonic scenario, but someone twiddling a radio dial, attempting to find a station to settle onto.

In the first third of the piece Elle is often singing into silence, or alternating with fragments of sound and it is not clear whether the accompaniment represents her lover’s voice at the other end of the line, or her troubled spirit. In one instance — slightly

later on in the work — a burst of jazz down the line causes Elle to confront the fact that her lover isn’t at home alone, although she pretends the jazz comes from his noisy neighbours. Increasingly, though, as her voice gains in ‘operatic’ style, the accompaniment becomes ever more present, bathing Elle’s voice in sound. This is particularly so in a theme that often accompanies Elle’s reminiscences, first heard under her words ‘Souviens-toi du dimanche de Versailles. . .’ (‘Do you remember that Sunday at Versailles. . .’), and later on when she remembers a hotel they used to visit together.

In the final section of the work, despite its unconventional structure otherwise, there is a series of perfect cadences onto A minor, the key of the conclusion. *La Voix humaine* moves, then, from a position of fragmentary, technological isolation into the world of harmonic regularity and operatic tradition. It plays out a connection between an operatic diva and a solitary, isolated ‘woman on the telephone’ and in fact makes this figure a single entity. If the opera can seem occasionally ludicrous at the same time as it is pitiful, it is

because the absolutely stylised tones of the beautiful operatic voice are employed down the telephone wires expressing the most banal, ‘mediocre’ phrases.

Coming hot on the heels of Poulenc’s second opera, the anguished, religious-themed *Dialogues des Carmélites*, *La Voix humaine* is sometimes seen as its ‘secular appendix’, a 45-minute shriek of pain, and perhaps yet another example of a (male) composer using a (female) operatic voice through which to express his own personal hurt. The scenario is certainly painful to witness and highly challenging to perform. However, it is worth remembering Maria Callas and her seizing of ‘all the applause’, and the fact that Poulenc eventually channels Elle’s disillusionment into sensuous, operatic forms. If there is any consolation to be taken it is that Elle’s voice is ultimately a triumph of mastery over telephonic isolation, and of increasing musical control over a situation which has, like the telephone in the final bars, slipped from her grasp.

A Distinctly Human Voice

A note on *La Voix Humaine* by James Conway

I have been lucky enough to work on this opera three times now, and to see it many more times. It is a major feat for the solo performer, not least from the point of view of memory, because Poulenc's repetitions-with-difference make it so very hard, but it is a real joy for a director. All you really have to do is care about this woman, to work out exactly what the unheard man is saying down the phone, and to find what is beautiful and strong in her response to this appalling, commonplace situation.

For a while I intended to deny myself the privilege of working on this with Paula Sides and Sergey Rybin, two artists I esteem highly. I spoke to a number of other directors, especially women. I just couldn't find anyone skilled who liked the protagonist enough! There seemed to be an embarrassment about her attachment to this man, to the fact that she still loves him even though he has 'moved on', to her desire to prolong the conversation rather than read him his rights, to her humility and her apologies in her last moments with his voice. I got an impression that she was not an appropriate role model for women, at least as described by the men who created her.

I don't pretend to know much about theatre and role models, though I expect I should brush up. I have a common and garden acquaintance with abandonment, of caring 'too much', of losing love. Some memories, like some of her remarks, do make me cringe. I reckon cringing can be instructive, and we should be a bit generous in our response to people who are in pain. I sense, too, that Cocteau's character — who seems to me more like a man than a woman — is less loved by her creator than Poulenc's heroine, just as Mozart's women are all infinitely more loved than DaPonte's originals.

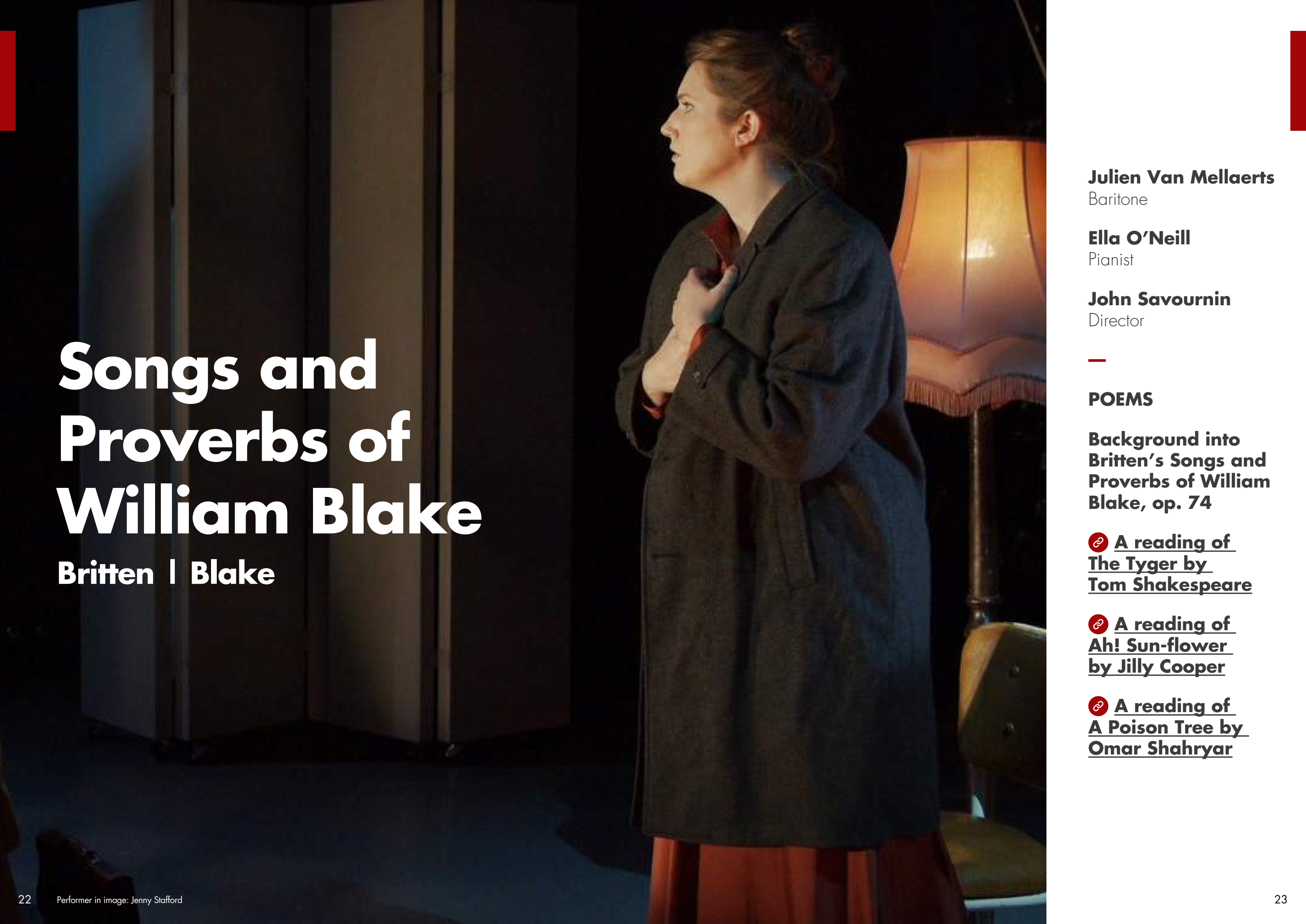
Poulenc and Cocteau are both clear that although she is having a terrible day, she will live to fight another. She has attempted suicide and called a friend in plenty of time to save her; that friend left only at her insistence, because she expected a final phone call from the man who had already broken up with her, in a way that they pretended was mutually agreed. Her initial objective seems to be to speak with him again, to have a chance to get him back. She learns in the course of the call that his objective is to obtain from her all the letters they exchanged (remember, he is a lawyer!), that he lies about

being at home (he is in a bar or restaurant with a band), that he lies about being single (he is with the next one, and plans to a weekend break with her to Marseilles, where they used to go), and that she is already alone, even as they speak.

Her response to this is what I would call noble. I will love her for it, forever. She tells him the truth, and she tries to enable him to tell her the truth. She is driven to end the deception; what she wants now is some assurance they really did love, that their five year relationship meant something important to each, even if now it only means pain. Paula Sides and I shared this love for her — which was very helpful, since I spent much of our rehearsal supplying his voice!

Finding the terrible and the beautiful in the apparently banal seems to me an estimable, humbling pursuit. I resisted naturalism in the production, and hope that the poetic landscape will 'read'. I am living with different pages of the score on a sort of loop in my head every day — I can only imagine the great shapes that are spinning for Sergey and for Paula. I hope that we can manage to get some of it spinning in your minds, too!



A woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a dark grey coat over a red dress, stands in profile looking out a window. The room is dimly lit, with a warm lamp visible in the background.

Songs and Proverbs of William Blake

Britten | Blake

Julien Van Mellaerts
Baritone

Ella O'Neill
Pianist

John Savournin
Director

POEMS

**Background into
Britten's Songs and
Proverbs of William
Blake, op. 74**

 **A reading of
The Tyger by
Tom Shakespeare**

 **A reading of
Ah! Sun-flower
by Jilly Cooper**

 **A reading of
A Poison Tree by
Omar Shahryar**

Songs and Proverbs of William Blake

“Proverb 1”

The pride of the peacock is the glory of God.
The lust of the goat is the bounty of God.
The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God.
The nakedness of woman is the work of God.

“London”

I wander thro’ each charter’d street,
Near where the charter’d Thames does flow.
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban,
The mind-forg’d manacles I hear

How the Chimney-sweepers cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls

But most thro’ midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

“Proverb 2”

Prisons are built with stones of Law,
Brothels with bricks of Religion.

“The Chimney Sweeper”

A little black thing among the snow:
Crying weep, weep, in notes of woe!
Where are thy father & mother? say?
They are both gone up to the church to pray.

Because I was happy upon the heath,
And smil’d among the winters snow:
They clothed me in the clothes of death,
And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

And because I am happy, & dance and sing,
They think they have done me no injury:
And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King
Who make up a heaven of our misery

“Proverb 3”

The bird a nest, the spider a web, man friendship.

“A Poison Tree”

I was angry with my friend;
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.
And I waterd it in fears,
Night & morning with my tears:
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night.
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine.

And into my garden stole,
When the night had veild the pole;
In the morning glad I see;
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

“Proverb 4”

Think in the morning.
Act in the noon.
Eat in the evening.
Sleep in the night.

“The Tyger”

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!

When the stars threw down their spears
And water’d heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

"Proverb 5"

The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction.
If the fool would persist in his folly he would become wise.
If others had not been foolish, we should be so.

"The Fly"

Little Fly
Thy summers play,
My thoughtless hand
Has brush'd away.

Am not I
A fly like thee?
Or art not thou
A man like me?

For I dance
And drink & sing:
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing.

If thought is life
And strength & breath:
And the want
Of thought is death;

Then am I
A happy fly,
If I live,
Or if I die.

"Proverb 6"

The hours of folly are measur'd by the clock;
But of wisdom, no clock can measure.
The busy bee has no time for sorrow.
Eternity is in love with the productions of time.

"Ah! Sun-flower"

Ah Sun-flower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the Sun:
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the travellers journey is done.
Where the Youth pined away with desire,
And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow:
Arise from their graves and aspire,
Where my Sun-flower wishes to go.
When the Soul Slept in Beams of Light.

"Proverb 7"

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.

"Every Night and Every Morn"
Every Night and every Morn
Some to Misery are born.
Every Morn and every Night
Some are born to Sweet Delight,
Some are born to Endless Night.

We are led to Believe a Lie
When we see not Thro' the Eye
Which was Born in a Night to perish in a Night
God appears and God is Light,
To those poor Souls who dwell in Night;
But does a Human Form Display
To those who Dwell in Realms of day

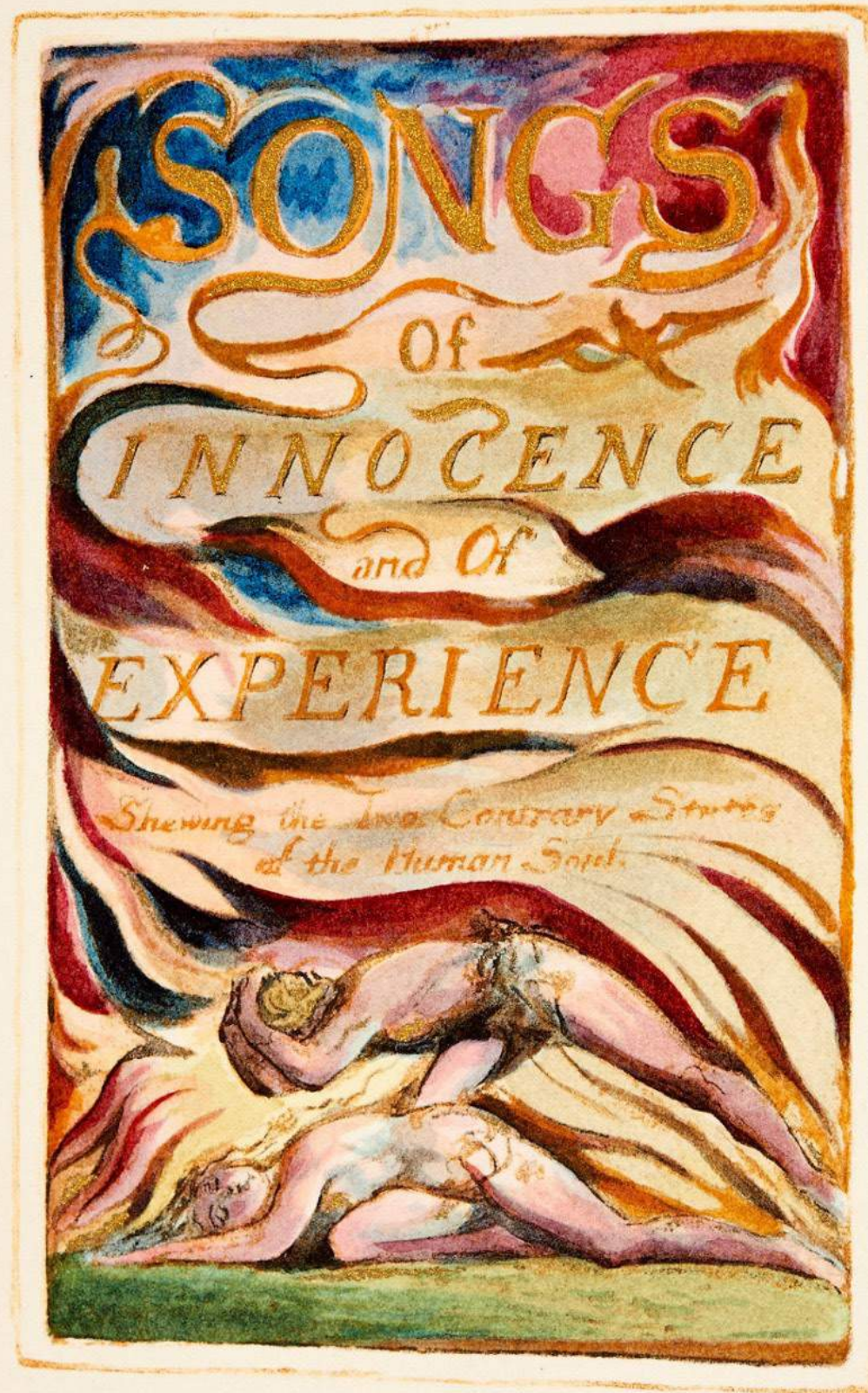


Image: Courtesy of Britten Pears Arts

Background into Britten's Songs and Proverbs of William Blake, op. 74

Britten composed his only song cycle for baritone and piano in 1965. It was written specifically for the German singer Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, who had sung so memorably in the premiere of War Requiem three years earlier, and sets the words of a poet Britten had long been attached to — the texts selected by Peter Pears. It is a lengthy cycle, very dark in character for the most part, with the gravity of the baritone voice reinforced by the piano part, which often inhabits the lower register. However, there are moments of extraordinary lyrical beauty, such as "Ah! Sunflower!" which appears towards the end of the set. Throughout, 'songs' and the much shorter 'proverbs' alternate — the latter containing some similarities of musical material, such as a recurring figure in the piano, rising up from the very bottom of the keyboard. One of Blake's most famous poems, 'The Tyger', sits in the middle of the cycle and is a disconcerting, growly version in an off-beat time signature.

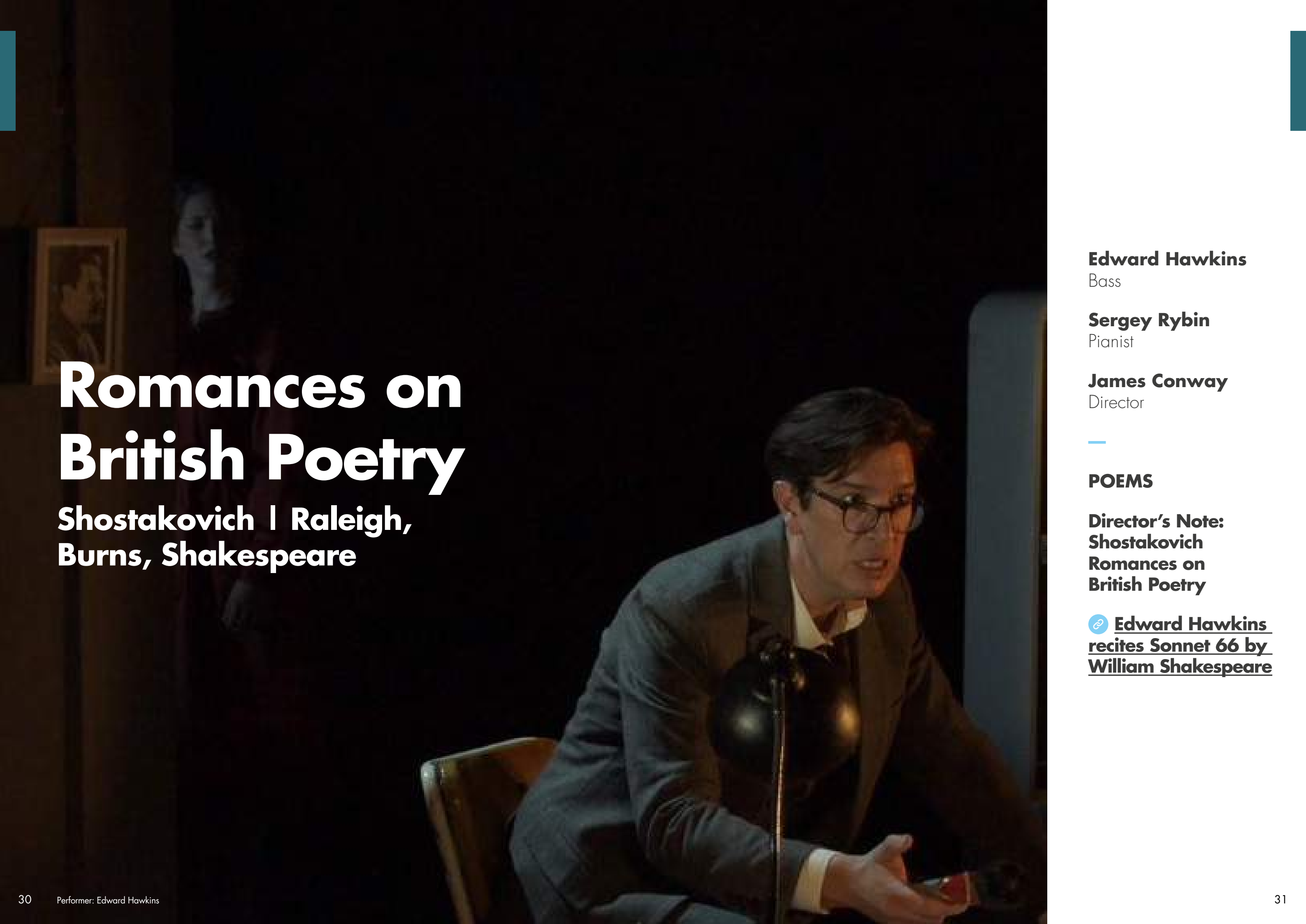
And his setting of 'A Poison Tree' was the second time he used this poem, having once before tackled it in 1935 at a time when his musical language was considerably different. This dramatic cycle, full of intense imagery and a strain of cruelty in the words, was infused with the vocal qualities of its first performer. Fischer-Dieskau's remarkable vocal quality, lyrical yet profoundly serious, is brought out perfectly in Britten's writing which is markedly different from the cycles he wrote for tenor voice.

Further reading:

Paul Kildea gives a fascinating insight into this piece in his biography of Britten, on pages 479–482 (hardback version, 2013).

Further resources:

[Exhibition at Tate Britain](#) (earlier in 2020) with some useful background information to the poet's artistic works



Romances on British Poetry

Shostakovich | Raleigh,
Burns, Shakespeare

Edward Hawkins

Bass

Sergey Rybin

Pianist

James Conway

Director

POEMS

**Director's Note:
Shostakovich
Romances on
British Poetry**

 **Edward Hawkins
recites Sonnet 66 by
William Shakespeare**

Romances on British Poetry

To a Son (Sir Water Raleigh)

Three things there be that prosper all aspace,
And flourish, while they grow asunder far,
But on a day, they meet all in a place,
And when they meet, they one another mar;
And they be these: the wood, the weed, the wag.

The wood is that which makes the gallow tree;
The weed is that which strings the hangman's bag;
The wag, my pretty knave, betokeneth thee.

Now mark, dear boy, whilst these assemble not,
Green springs the tree, hemp grows, the wag is wild,
But when they meet, it makes the timber rot,
It frets the halter, and it chokes the child.

Then bless thee, and beware, and let us pray
We part not with thee at this meeting day.

In the Fields (Robert Burns)

O wert thou in the cauld blast,
On yonder lea, on yonder lea,
My plaidie to the angry airt,
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee.

Or did Misfortune's bitter storms
Around thee blaw, around thee blaw,
Thy bield should be my bosom,
To share it a', to share it a'.

Or were I in the wildest waste,
Sae black and bare, sae black and bare,
The desert were a Paradise,
If thou wert there, if thou wert there.

Or were I Monarch o' the globe,
Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign,
The brightest jewel in my Crown
Wad be my Queen, wad be my Queen.

MacPherson before his Execution

(Robert Burns)

Sae rantingly, sae wantonly
Sae dauntingly gaed he.
He played a spring and danced it round
Below the gallows tree.

Farewell, ye dungeons dark and strong
The wretched destinie!
MacPherson's time will not be long
On yonder gallows tree.

Oh what is death but parting breath?
On many a bloody plain,
I've dared his face, and in this place
I scorn him yet again!

Untie these bands from off my hands,
And bring to me my sword,
And there's no a man in all Scotland
But I'll brave him at a word.
I've lived a life of sturt and strife;
I die by treacherie:
It burns my heart I must depart
And not avenged be.

Now farewell light, the sunshine bright,
And all beneath the sky!
May coward shame disdain his name,
The wretch that dares not die.

Sae rantingly, sae wantonly
Sae dauntingly gaed he.
He played a spring and danced it round
Below the gallows tree.

Jeannie coming through the Rye

(Robert Burns)

Comin thro' the rye, poor body,
Comin thro' the rye,
She draigl't a' her petticoatie,
Comin thro' the rye!

Jenny's a' weet, poor body,
Jenny's seldom dry:
She draigl't a' her petticoatie,
Comin thro' the rye!

Gin a body meet a body
Comin thro' the rye,
Gin a body kiss a body,
Need a body cry?
Gin a body meet a body

Comin thro' the glen,
Gin a body kiss a body,
Need the warld ken?

Sonnet 66 (Shakespeare)

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,
As to behold desert a beggar born,
And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
And gilded honour shamefully misplaced,
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,
And strength by limping sway disabled,
And art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly, doctor-like, controlling skill,
And simple truth miscalled simplicity,
And captive good attending captain ill:
Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone.

6 The King's Procession (traditional)

The King of France went up the hill
with twenty thousand men,
The King of France went down the hill
and ne'er went up a- gain.

Director's Note: Shostakovich Romances on British Poetry

Dmitri Shostakovich composed the *Six Romances on British Poets* in 1942–3. It was, of course, a time of inconceivable suffering and silence in Russia. Those who had survived the Great Terror and the Winter War in Finland then witnessed the German invasion of 1941: artists like Shostakovich were on the anvil hammered by brutal, totalitarian forces.

At the time, Shostakovich was studying English language and literature. His choices of material for this extraordinary, seething song cycle are surprising and careful. Sir Walter Raleigh (1552–1618) was not quite a silver poet, but a man falsely accused, imprisoned for 13 years, released and then executed. He knew the senseless vanities of favour and reputation, the sliminess of loyalty and fortune, the irony of brief reprieve. His poem takes the form of a letter to his son — a message to future generations, then — unseasoned by sentiment. “The Wood, the Weed and the Wag” proposes that the tree’s wood, the hemp’s fibre and a man’s youth are all fine things on their own, but when they come together they are gallows, rope and hanged man. Be careful, keep elements apart, and keep silent... or die in misery.

The first of the two poems of Robert Burns (1759–1796) in the cycle is similarly rough hewn. “O, wert thou in the could blast” is dedicated to his first wife, Nina Varzar, pianist and astrophysicist, and in it there are striking resemblances to the “Anne Frank” movement of the Thirteenth Symphony, “Babi Yar”, setting poems of Yevtushenko. In the Anne Frank movement, as here, the poet calls on the spirit of the victim Anne to come out of the ravine of death so that he can protect her; in the austere, haunting setting of the Burns poem the speaker promises to abide and shelter the said in the pitiless storm that is their life.

“MacPherson’s Farewell” is written by Burns in the voice of a musically gifted pirate defiantly playing and singing at the gallows a song of farewell written in prison, beginning with a daring dance and ending by breaking his violin upon his knee. MacPherson’s life may have been rough and bad, but he dies “by treacherie”, taunting those who live on. How can those watching Shostakovich failed to see the reckless courage of this setting?

This setting, too, is connected to the “Babi Yar” symphony; it is quoted directly in the movement entitled “Humour”.

Strange, erotic, and ambiguous, “Jenny, coming through the rye” hides itself as all these romances do. Shostakovich made a lifelong habit of hiding his meaning, preserving his life and the lives of his family, while shouting loud and singing eloquently in code of the suffering of those around him, of the night terrors of Stalin’s terrifying, unpredictable telephone calls and messages, and the guilt of the survivor.

Shakespeare’s Sonnet 66 numbers the indignities and futilities of that survival, with refined bitterness — always “remembering that thoughts seal up the mouth”. Then, unexpectedly, there is a small light — the love that warrants survival, flickering and vital. Shostakovich’s elegy is on a grand scale, with simple means — and is immediately chopped off at the knees by the final, anonymous lyric, “The King of France Went up the Hill”,

composed when the war was turning, and therefore at its worst for civilians — a lilting, barely concealed threat to totalitarians in the guise of a nursery rhyme.

In preparing for this piece, we considered the composer himself, disgraced and honoured in bewildering sequence, terrorised by Stalin and his minions, waiting for the telephone call, preparing his ‘elevator bag’ — the small bag he would bring if he were taken by night for interrogation and imprisonment (for a good read, you might consider Julian Barnes’ novel *The Noise of Time*, or Elizabeth Wilson’s memorable biography, or Volkov’s memoir *Testimony*). We also spoke of Vasily Grossman, whose magnificent *Life and Fate* charts so eloquently the intellectual and spiritual landscape of these years.

James Conway
Director, ETO



The Poet's Echo

Britten | Pushkin

Jenny Stafford

Soprano

Sergey Rybin

Pianist

James Conway

Director

POEMS AND TRANSLATION

**Preparing to stage
A Poet's Echo
(Britten/ Pushkin)**

**Background on
Britten's The Poet's
Echo, op 76 (1965)**

The Poet's Echo

Эхо

Ревёт ли зверь в лесу глухом,
Трубят ли рог, гремит ли гром,
Поёт ли дева за холмом -
На всякий звук
Свой отклик в воздухе пустом
Родишь ты вдруг.
Ты внимлешь грохоту громов,
И гласу бури и валов,
И крику сельских пастухов -
И шлешь ответ;
Тебе ж нет отзыва... Таков
И ты, поэт!

Я думал, сердце позабыло

Я думал, сердце позабыло
Способность легкую страдать,
Я говорил: тому, что было,
Уж не бывать! уж не бывать!
Прошли восторги, и печали,
И лежковерные мечты...
Но вот опять затрепетали
Пред мощной властью красоты.

Ангел

В дверях Эдема ангел нежный
Главой поникшею сиял,
А демон мрачный и мятежный
Над адской бездною летал.

Дух отрицанья, дух сомненья
На духа чистого взирал
И жар невольный умиленья
Впервые смутно познавал.

«Прости,» он рёк, «тебя я видел,
И ты недаром мне сиял:
Не всё я в [небе]1 ненавидел,
Не всё я в мире презирал.»

Echo

From leafy woods the savage howl,
A distant horn, the thunder's roll,
A maiden singing up the hill,
To every sound
Your answering cry the air doth fill
In quick rebound.
You listen for the thunder's voice,
The ocean wave's wild stormy noise,
The distant mountain-shepherd's cries
You answer free;
To you comes no reply. Likewise,
O poet, to thee!

My heart...

My heart, I fancied it was over,
That road of suffering and pain,
And I resolved: Tis gone forever,
Never again! Never again!
That ancient rapture and its yearning,
The dreams, the credulous desire...
But now old wounds have started burning
Inflamed by beauty and her fire.

Angel

At Eden's gate a gentle angel
With lowered head stood shining bright,
While Satan sullen and rebellious
O'grady Hell's abysses took his flight.

Soul of negation, soul of envy,
He gazed at that angelic light,
And warm and tender glowed within him
A strange confusion at the sight.

'Forgive', he said, 'now I have seen thee,
Not vainly didst thou shine so bright:
Not all in heaven have I hated,
Not all things human can earn my spite.'

Соловей и роза

В безмолвии садов, весной, во мгле ночей,
Поёт над розою восточный соловей.
Но роза милая не чувствует, не внимлет,
И под влюбленный гимн колеблется и дремлет.
Не так ли ты поёшь для хладной красоты?
Опомнись, о поэт, к чему стремишься ты?
Она [не слушает, не чувствует]1 поэта;
Глядишь, она цветет; взываешь -- нет ответа.

Эпиграмма

Полу-милорд, полу-купец,
Полу-мудрец, полу-невежда,
Полу-подлец, но есть надежда,
Что будет полным наконец.

Стихи, сочинённые ночью во время бессонницы

Мне не спится, нет огня;
Всюду мрак и сон докучный.
Ход часов лишь однозвучный
Раздаётся близ меня.
Парки бабье лепетанье,
Спящей ночи трепетанье,
Жизни мышья беготня...
Что тревожишь ты меня?
Что ты значишь, скучный шопот?
Укоризна, или ропот
Мной утраченного дня?
От меня чего ты хочешь?
Ты зовёшь или пророчишь?
Я понять тебя хочу,
Смысла я в тебе ищу..

The Nightingale and the Rose

The garden's dark and still; 'tis spring; no night wind blows.
He sings! The nightingale, his love song to the rose.
She does not hearken, his rose beloved, disdainful,
And to his amorous hymn, she dozes, nodding and swaying.
With such words would you melt cold beauty into fire?
O poet, beware how far you would aspire!
She is not listening, no poems can entrance her;
You gaze; she only flowers; you call her; there's no answer.

Epigram

Half a milord, half of a boss,
Half of a sage, half of a baby,
Half of a cheat; there's hope that maybe
He'll be a whole one by and by.

Lines written during a sleepless night

Sleep forsakes me with the light;
Shadowy gloom and haunting darkness;
Time ticks on its way relentless
And its sound invades the night.
Fateful crones are at their mumbling,
Set the sleepy night a-trembling,
Scurrying mouse-like, life slips by...
Why do you disturb me, say?
What's your purpose, tedious whispers?
Do you breathe reproachful murmurs
At my lost and wasted day?
What is this you want to tell me?
Do you prophesy or call me?
Answer me, I long to hear!
Voices, make your meaning clear...

Preparing to stage A Poet's Echo (Britten/ Pushkin)

Until a few years ago I knew little of this song cycle. I guess it was when I was preparing to direct Tchaikovsky's opera Eugene Onegin that I set out to read everything I could of Pushkin in translation, and I came across these poems, selected by cellist and conductor Mstislav Rostropovich and set to music by Benjamin Britten. I am ashamed to admit that they made little impression on me, musically, and that only in preparing these programmes over the last few months did I decide to listen to them with more attention. Now I cannot imagine feeling cool toward them; I think they are my favourite Britten songs!

They were written in 1965, when Britten and his partner Peter Pears holidayed in Armenia, guests at the Composers' Village in Dilijan, in the company of their friends Rostropovich and his wife Galina Vishnevskaya. The anecdotes of the holiday are frequently re-told, and the photographs reproduced — the sort of Pushkin's clock chiming in sympathy with the accompaniment during the last song, when Britten played it in Leningrad on Pushkin's piano,

the excellent holiday snapshots of these two power couples. I was interested to learn in the fine Red House film that the 4th song features Armenian harmonies, and that Britten was influenced by Armenian composers to whose work he would have been introduced.

What is of more particular interest to me is the selection and setting of the poetry. Apparently Britten set the Russian pronunciation of Rostropovich, working from a translation in a two language edition; at the same time Pears prepared an estimable English language singing version, no mean task. We were lucky enough to work in the room with Sergey Rybin, who pointed out the precise and other meanings of the Russian.

I have heard it said that the poems are not alike, and that there is no unifying theme in the selection. I do not find this to be true. Four of the six meditate on the poet's craft and calling — the artist's craft, more generally. The poet it is obsessively explained, reflects the world back to the world, having found in it all that is most beautiful and base; thus sacrificing him or herself to this

solitary vocation, like a lonely shepherd the poet or composer answers nature, freely. But what is the reply? Nothing. Thus the artist examines, listens, creates — and the poem goes unread, the song unheard, the truth of that creation unrecognised.

This case, stated in the first song, 'Echo', is refined in the rapturous second song, depicting the heart awakened to passion, unexpressed, and then in the ironic depiction of the gentle angel of creation and the subtle, envious angel of negation. In this case the artist ponders, with prudent ambivalence, the nature of artistic inspiration: is it the voice of an angel that speaks, or the toad at the ear of Eve? Britten's serpentine piano figures contrast with the luminous chords associated with the warm light of creation — and even Lucifer acknowledges there must be some beauty, after all, in human kind. I certainly see method in Rostropovich's selection, just a decade before his exile, recalling that as a student Rostropovich had quit the Leningrad Conservatory when Shostakovich was dismissed, that in 1970 he sheltered the disgraced Solzhenitsyn. The ironic, narcissistic, withering gaze on art and artists had taken its toll, even though great artists were trained and masterpieces were created, lights in darkness.

The wonderful fourth song describes the power of the nightingale's song of love for the rose, depicted in the strange, dissonant chords punctuating the garden's hushed stillness, and then in the ecstatic outbursts of the voice. The rose merely sways, unintelligent, beautiful, heedless. The poet should beware, sacrificing like a nightingale on a thorn for love of beauty — the rose flowers, merely, and the poet's call the rose will never answer.

Over and over again, the poet complains that there is no answer, no understanding. In the ingenious setting of 'Lines written during a sleepless night' there are voices, but they have no meaning, and they merely torture — scratching of mice, mumbling fates, whispers of waste (suggesting possibly the voices of critics!). "Answer me, I long to hear!" — but no sound comes back but the meaningless ticking, the chronicle of loss.

Rostropovich was daring in his selection of the outrageous, short fifth poem, the 'Epigram' relating to Pushkin's chief in Odessa, the corrupt Count Vorontsov. More a howl than a song, it calls out authority based on ignorance and rank, utterly inadequate to responding to the work of an artist — as Shostakovich set in the climax of his version of Shakespeare's Sonnet 66 (the line that his students looked forward to hearing) "...art made tongue tied by authority".

As we rehearsed this piece we thought over and over again of the poet's reflection, of the poet's lonely, vain anticipation of a response. We talked about the silenced artists, the coding that goes on in making art, the good and the bad angels in each artist. For some reason it sent me back to read Akhmatova (celebrated in the last of Shostakovich's Tsvetaeva songs), derided as nun and as whore by totalitarian toadies, steely bidding in Leningrad, and then to recall the misery of dandy Pushkin, plaything of the Tsar (Alexander I, brother of the "poet-murderer" Tsar Nicholas I, nightmarishly decried in the fourth of those songs).

James Conway
Director, ETO



Image: Courtesy of Britten Pears Arts

Background on Britten's 'The Poet's Echo', op 76 (1965)

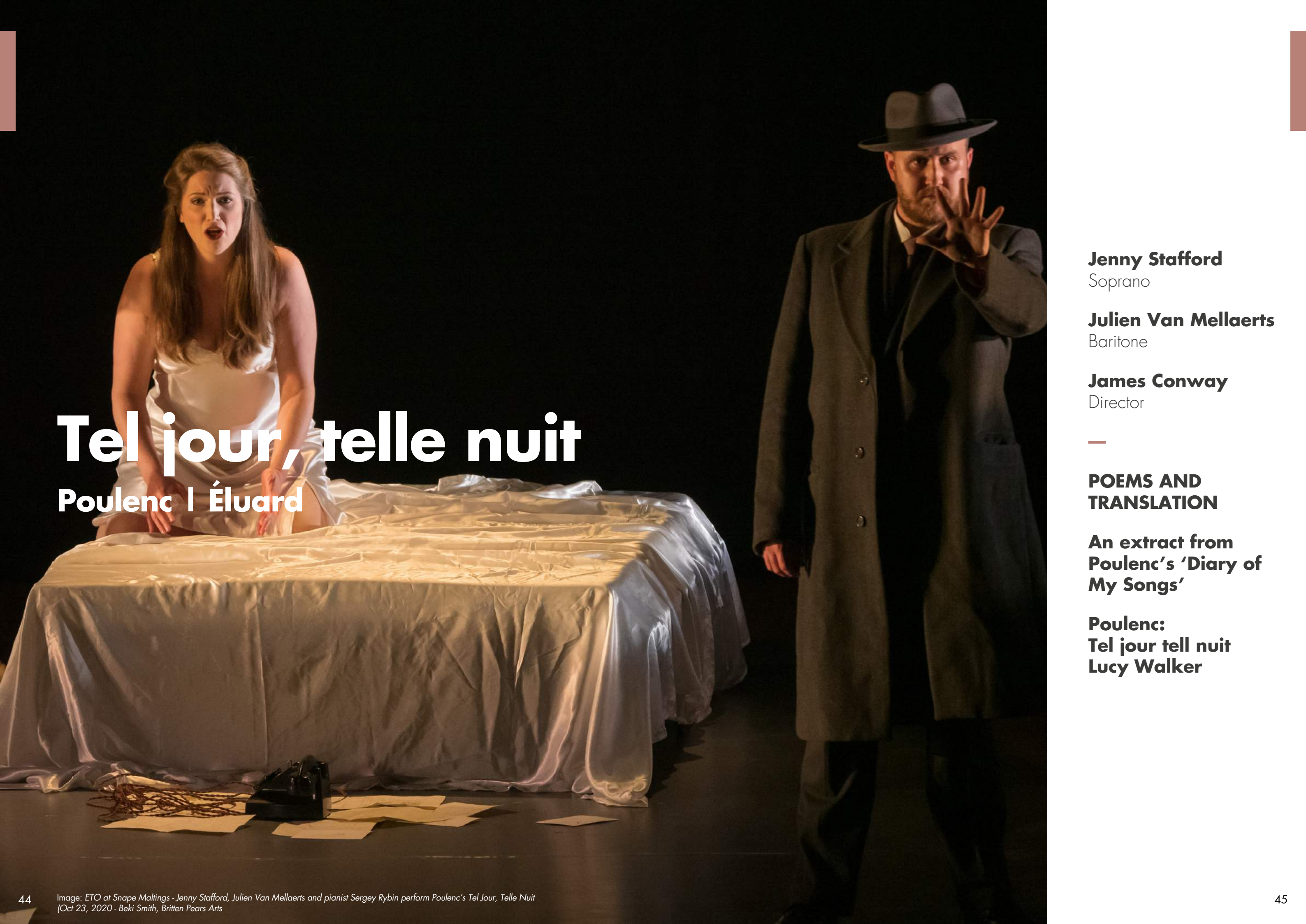
This atmospheric song cycle was composed at a composer's retreat in Armenia, only a few months after *The Songs and Proverbs of William Blake*, and again for a performer associated with the *War Requiem*. It was written for the Russian soprano Galina Vishnevskaya, and for her cellist husband Mstislav Rostropovich (showing his versatility on the piano), and sets the poetry of Pushkin. In this first cycle for the female voice since *A Charm of Lullabies* nearly 20 years earlier, Britten exploits the full drama of Vishnevskaya's voice, composing dramatic leaps (even in the first two notes) and a fusion of power and tenderness throughout. The piano part is enigmatic and nuanced, beautifully written as ever, and sympathetic to the higher register of the voice.

The cycle is not as lengthy as some, only around 15 minutes, and 'Epigram' barely lasting a minute. The two longest songs are perhaps the most haunting: 'The Nightingale and the Rose', with its echoes of birdsong, and the insomniac ticking of the piano in 'Lines Written During a Sleepless Night'. But the cycle as a whole is highly memorable, getting under the skin long after hearing.

Further Resources:

[Work of the Week, with Ziazan](#)

[From the Britten Opus Number project](#)



Tel jour, telle nuit

Poulenc | Éluard

Jenny Stafford
Soprano

Julien Van Mellaerts
Baritone

James Conway
Director

POEMS AND TRANSLATION

**An extract from
Poulenc's 'Diary of
My Songs'**

**Poulenc:
Tel jour tell nuit
Lucy Walker**

Tel Jour, Telle Nuit – Poulenc/Eluard

Bonne journée j'ai revu qui je n'oublie pas

Qui je n'oublierai jamais
Et des femmes fugaces dont les yeux
Me faisaient une haie d'honneur
Elles s'enveloppèrent dans leurs sourires
Bonne journée j'ai vu mes amis sans soucis
Les hommes ne pesaient pas lourd
Un qui passait
Son ombre changée en souris
Fuyait dans le ruisseau
J'ai vu le ciel très grand
Le beau regard des gens privés de tout
Plage distante où personne n'aborde
Bonne journée qui commença mélancolique
Noire sous les arbres verts
Mais qui soudain trempée d'aurore
M'entra dans le cœur par surprise.

Une ruine coquille vide

Pleure dans son tablier
Les enfants qui jouent autour d'elle
Font moins de bruit que des mouches
La ruine s'en va à tâtons
Chercher ses vaches dans un pré
J'ai vu le jour je vois cela
Sans en avoir honte
Il est minuit comme une flèche
Dans un cœur à la portée
Des folâtres lueurs nocturnes
Qui contredisent le sommeil.

A good day: I have seen again whom I do not forget

whom I shall never forget
And fleeing women whose eyes
formed for me a hedge of honour
they wrapped themselves in their smiles
A good day: I saw my friends carefree
the men were light -
the shadow of one who passed by
turned into a mouse
fleeing in the gutter
I saw the great, wide sky
the beautiful gaze of those deprived of all
a distant beach on which nobody lands
A good day which began melancholy
dark beneath the green trees
but which suddenly dawn-drenched
invaded my surprised heart.

A ruin an empty shell

weeps into its apron
children who play around it
quieter than flies
the ruin gropes
after its cows in a meadow
I have seen the day
I see this without shame
It is midnight like an arrow
within a heart close by
the playful night-time gleaming
which prevents sleep.

Le front comme un drapeau perdu

Je te traîne quand je suis seul
Dans des rues froides
Des chambres noires
En criant misère
Je ne veux pas les lâcher
Tes mains claires et compliquées
Nées dans le miroir clos des miennes
Tout le reste est parfait
Tout le reste est encore plus inutile
Que la vie
Creuse la terre sous ton ombre
Une nappe d'eau près des seins
Où se noyer
Comme une pierre.

Une roulotte couverte en tuiles

Le cheval mort un enfant maître
Pensant le front bleu de haine
À deux seins s'abattant sur lui
Comme deux poings
Ce mélodrame nous arrache
La raison du cœur.

À toutes brides toi dont le fantôme

Piaffe la nuit sur un violon
Viens régner dans les bois
Les verges de l'ouragan
Cherchent leur chemin par chez toi
Tu n'es pas de celles
Dont on invente les désirs
Viens boire un baiser par ici
Cède au feu qui te désespère.

Une herbe pauvre

Sauvage
Apparut dans la neige
C'était la santé
Ma bouche fut émerveillée
Du gout d'air pur qu'elle avait
Elle était fanée.

The brow like a lost flag

I drag you when I am alone
in cold streets,
in dark rooms
crying misery
all the rest is perfect
all the rest is even more useless
I do not want to let them go
your clear and complicated hands
born in the enclosed mirror of my own
than life
Hollow the earth beneath your shadow
water lapping near the breasts
in which to drown
like a stone.

A gypsy wagon roofed with tiles

the horse dead...a child master
thinking his brow blue with hatred
of two breasts beating upon him
like two fists
this melodrama tears from us
the reason of the heart.

At full tilt you whose phantom

paws nightly on a violin
comes to rule the woods
The hurricane yards
search for their way through you
your desires are not
to be invented
Come and drink a kiss here
give in to the fire, which drives you to despair

meagre

wild grass
appeared in the snow
it was health
my mouth wondered
at its taste of pure air
it was withered.

Je n'ai envie que de t'aimer

Un orage emplît la vallée
Un poisson la rivière
Je t'ai faite à la taille de ma solitude
Le monde entier pour se cacher
Des jours des nuits pour se comprendre
Pour ne plus rien voir dans tes yeux
Que ce que je pense de toi
Et d'un monde à ton image
Et des jours et des nuits réglés par tes paupières.

Figure de force brûlante et farouche

Cheveux noirs où l'or coule vers le sud
Aux nuits corrompues
Or englouti étoile impure
Dans un lit jamais partagé
Aux veines des temples
Comme au bouts des seins
La vie se refuse
Les yeux nul ne peut les crever
Boire leur éclat ni leurs larmes
Le sang au-dessus d'eux triomphe pour lui seul
Intraitable démesurée
Inutile
Cette santé bâtit une prison.

I want only to love you

a storm fills the valley
a fish the river
I made you to fit my loneliness
a whole world in which to hide
days and nights in which
to know one another
To see in your eyes
only what I think of you
and a world made in your likeness

Face of wild and burning strength

black hair in which gold flows south
on corrupted nights
Gold-swallowed impure star
in a bed never shared
At the veins of the temples
as at the the breasts' tips
Life denies itself
No one can crush the eyes
nor drink their brilliance nor their tears
alone above them the blood triumphs
Intractable boundless
useless
this vitality builds a prison.

Nous avons fait la nuit je tiens ta main je veille

Je te soutiens de toutes mes forces
Je grave sur un roc l'étoile de tes forces
Sillons profonds où la bonté de ton corps germera
Je me répète ta voix cachée ta voix publique
Je ris encore de l'orgueilleuse
Que tu traites comme une mendicante
Des fous que tu respectes des simples où tu te baignes
Et dans ma tête qui se met doucement d'accord avec
la tienne avec la nuit
Je m'émerveille de l'inconnue que tu deviens
Une inconnue semblable
à toi semblable à tout ce que j'aime
Qui est toujours nouveau.

We have turned off the light I hold your hand

I keep watch, I sustain you with all my strength
I carve the star of your strengths on a rock
deep furrows in which the goodness of your body will seed
I repeat to myself, your secret voice your public voice
I laugh still at the haughty woman
whom you treat like a beggar
of the fools you respect of the simple folk
among whom you live and in my head which gently blends
in thought with yours with the night
I marvel at the unknown woman you become
an unknown woman resembling you
resembling all that I love
who is always new.

Poulenc discussing Tel jour, telle nuit

People will never know how much I owe to Éluard, how much I owe to Bernac. It is due to them that lyricism has entered my vocal works.

When I remain for weeks working far away from Paris it is indeed with a heart full of love that I return to "my town". One Sunday in November 1936, I was feeling perfectly happy strolling towards the Bastille. I began to repeat the poem from 'Les yeux fertiles: Bonne journée'. In the evening the music came itself.

In my estimation a song in a cycle must have a special colour and architecture.

A number of various songs by Fauré (even of the same period) will never have the unity of La Bonne chanson; for example.

This is why I have opened and closed *Tel jour telle nuit* with two songs in similar keys and tempi.

'Bonne journée' should be sung with very peaceful joy.

'Und ruine' must be sung with a sense of complete unreality. 'Je mommerai ton front', 'Une Roulette' and 'A toutes brides' are strictly songs from a cycle and, it seems to me, could not possibly be sung separately. I believe I saw the child or the gypsy wagon somewhere late one afternoon in November at Ménilmontant.

'A toutes brides' has no other pretension than to heighten the effect of 'Une Herbe pauvre'. This poem of Éluard has for me a divine savour. It recalls for me the invigorating bitterness of a flower I once plucked and munched in the surroundings of the Grande Chartreuse.

'Je n'ai envie que de t'aimer'. To be sung in one single curve, one single impulse.

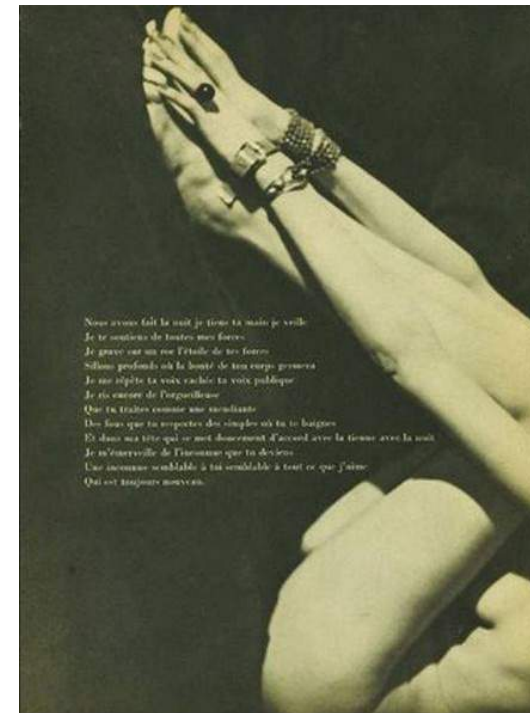
'Figure de force' is equally a song to make one hear the kind of silence that is the opening of 'Nous avons fait la nuit'.

I was deeply moved when I wrote this song, and I hope that this will be apparent. The pianistic coda is essential. Play it in strict time without hurrying (to make sure of applause for the singer).

The last bars look back to 'Bonne journée'. It is very difficult to make interpreters understand that calmness in a love poem can alone give intensity.

All the rest is nothing more than nurses' kisses.

*An extract from Poulenc's
'Diary of My Songs'*



Poulenc: Tel jour telle nuit

Poulenc's remarkable song cycle *Tel jour telle nuit* emerged triumphantly from the ashes of an abandoned work. In December 1936, Poulenc had been working on some settings of Jean Cocteau's collection of poetry *Plain-Chant*, but was not happy with them; neither was Pierre Bernac, Poulenc's regular vocal collaborator, much impressed. Dramatically, Poulenc threw the songs into the fire, writing afterwards: 'I was happy, relieved, and confident that I still had enough time to compose a new cycle for our February recital because for the past three weeks I had been possessed, working secretly — hiding them even from myself — on a group of new poems by Eluard.'

The poems in this new cycle, premiered by Bernac and Poulenc on 3 February 1937, came from Paul Eluard's collection *Les Yeux fertiles*, published in October the previous year. They emerged from a deeply romantic period of Eluard's life, inspired by his second wife Nusch whom he married in 1934 (his first wife had been Gala, who later married the artist Salvador Dalí).

As Sidney Buckland writes, 'during his years with Nusch, Eluard's concept of love defines and redefines itself in poems of astonishing beauty. Love, for Eluard, becomes not only a link between two beings but a unifying force, a principle of comprehension and of re-creation of the world...through her, he finds his unity with all things.' Poulenc's nuanced, sensitive, and thematically interlinked cycle is a beautiful musical counterpart to these texts.

Eluard and Poulenc had known each other for a number of years by the mid-1930s — a perhaps unlikely pairing. Buckland, in a chapter on their relationship in *Francis Poulenc: Music, Art and Literature* (1999), draws attention to their differences in terms of outlook and social personality. She shows a photograph of Poulenc in the summer of 1936, dressed as was his custom in a formal, heavy suit, standing next to Bernac, similarly formal and in a self-consciously stiff pose.



The following summer, Eluard was captured at a picnic with Nusch, along with Man Ray and his partner Adrienne and the English Surrealist Roland Penrose — lounging around a low table, the women naked to the waist. The photos represent the artists seemingly from different worlds; yet not only did they find much common ground, but both appreciated what the writer Jean Burgos has termed 'the coherence of opposites'.

As a Surrealist, the jarring juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory or absurd items was integral to Eluard's aesthetic approach. Andre Breton, a key figure in the artistic movement, wrote 'Everything leads one to believe that there exists a certain point of the mind in which life and death, real and imaginary, past and present, communicable and incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived contradictorily.' The poems used in *Tel jour telle nuit* are full of apparent contradictions which, in the world of the poem, combine to create a powerful and coherent whole, full of energy (such as "Riding full tilt you whose phantom/prances at night on a violin/come and reign in the woods", from 'A toutes brides').

Poulenc's own inner 'duality' — he has famously been referred to as 'half monk, half guttersnipe' — can be interpreted not so much as a division but as a demonstration of Guillaume Apollinaire's dictum that paradoxes are not necessarily opposites.

One of Poulenc's own remarks, sometimes quoted as exemplifying his doubleness, does in fact reinforce his preference for inclusivity. In a letter to Simone Girard, Poulenc writes 'I have plunged into my Carmelites, and I no longer sleep. Be so good as to send me your recipe for courgette purée.' Here, then, is a melodramatic 'plunge' into artistic endeavour juxtaposed with homely domesticity, but Poulenc is nonetheless articulating two equally pressing concerns. In his music, Poulenc's 'two sides' express themselves in the same way and often at the same time. As Rorem points out, his secular and sacred styles are more or less identical; Poulenc himself instructed an American choir to sing his Gloria 'like Maurice Chevalier'; and thus Poulenc's idiom overall is a remarkably elastic thing, capable of being stretched over a wide number of cultural spheres, articulating difference yet simultaneously incorporating difference within the same musical language.

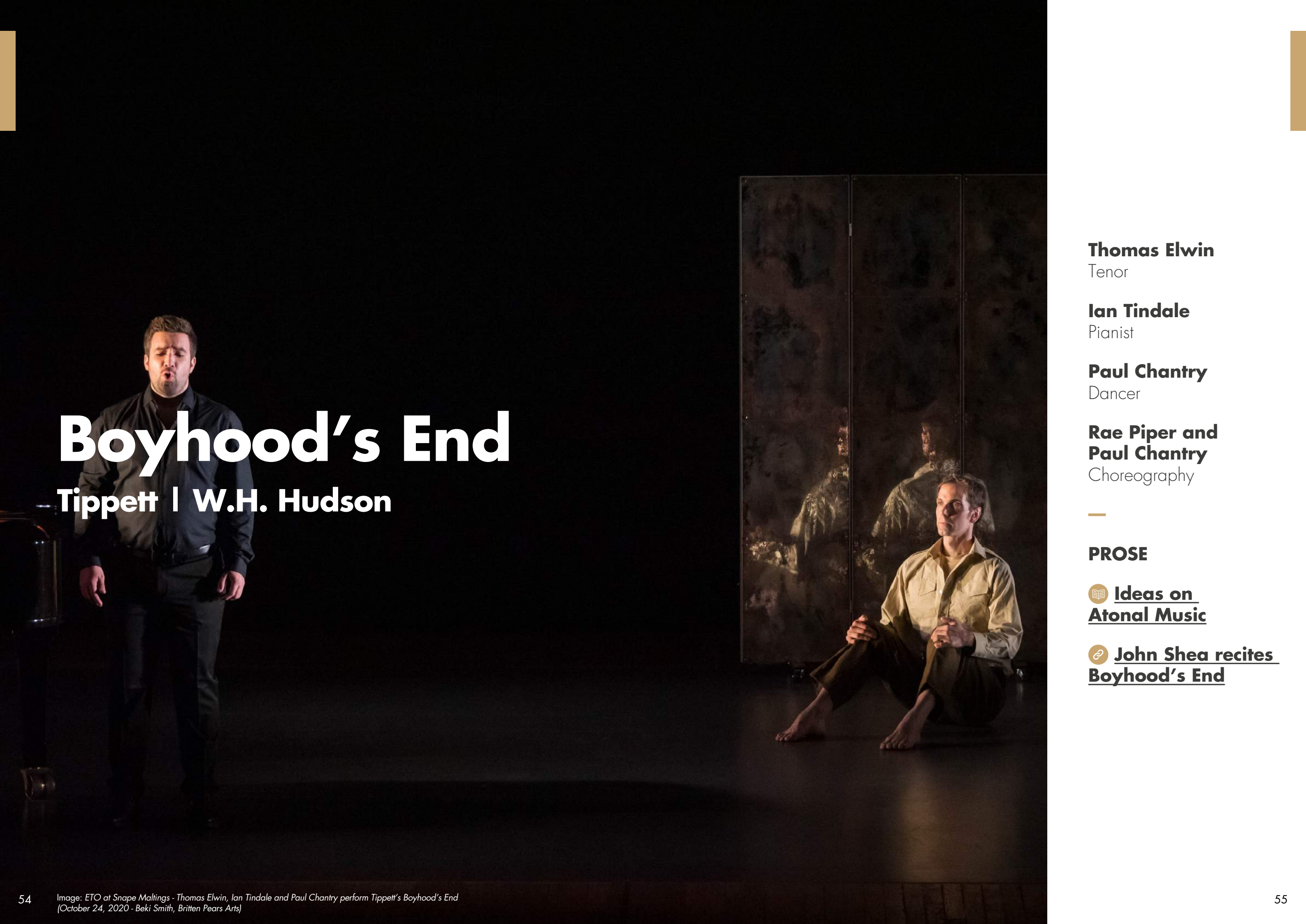
As such, the dramatic language, and embracing spirit of Eluard's poetry held no challenge for him. He was most comfortable setting the words of his contemporaries, or near contemporaries (such as Cocteau, or the slightly earlier Apollinaire) and created flowing, sensual musical forms from their extraordinary texts. *Tel jour telle nuit* is perhaps Poulenc's most purely beautiful cycle, and is musically very much part of a whole. While employing his usual habit of

juxtaposing slower settings with briskly rapid ones, there is more structure at play here than in other works. The first two songs are melancholy (yet also ravishing — especially 'Une ruine coquille vide', with its melting piano part), then follows the short, rapid 'Le front', leading into the drama of 'Une roulotte'. There are other quick-fire settings, but even within 'Figure de force' there is a passage marked *lento*, and a startlingly intense close. The final song is simply stunning, one of Poulenc's finest and setting some of Eluard's most purely romantic words. It concludes with a piano postlude echoing the cycle's beginning.

Eluard was remarkably generous to Poulenc over the years, quite comfortable allowing for the fact that poetic titles do not always make sense for musical movements, and in fact suggesting the title *Tel jour telle nuit* himself, rather than the original *Les yeux fertiles*. He was also somewhat rare in the Surrealist world in appreciating music, which was generally considered something of a secondary art. Poulenc was, of course immeasurably grateful to him, and also to his long-term 'muse' Pierre Bernac, as he wrote in his song diary:

People will never know how much I owe to Éluard, how much I owe to Bernac, It is due to them that lyricism has entered my vocal works'.

Lucy Walker



Boyhood's End

Tippett | W.H. Hudson

Thomas Elwin
Tenor

Ian Tindale
Pianist

Paul Chantry
Dancer

**Rae Piper and
Paul Chantry**
Choreography

PROSE

 [Ideas on
Atonal Music](#)

 [John Shea recites
Boyhood's End](#)

Boyhood's End

What, then, did I want? What did I ask to have? If the question had been put to me then, and if I had been capable of expressing what was in me, I should have replied: I want only to keep what I have;

To rise each morning and look out on the sky and the grassy dew-wet earth from day to day, from year to year.

To watch each June and July for spring, to feel the same old sweet surprise and delight at the appearance of each familiar flower, every new-born insect, every bird returned once more from the north.

To listen in a trance of delight to the wild notes of the golden plover coming once more to the great plain, flying, flying south, flock succeeding flock the whole day long. Oh, those wild beautiful cries of the golden plover! I could exclaim with Hafiz, with but one word changed: "If after a thousand years that sound should float o'er my tomb, my bone surprising in their gladness would dance in the sepulchre!"

To climb trees and put my hand down in the deep hot nest of the Bienteveo and feel the hot eggs - the five long pointed cream-coloured eggs with chocolate spots and splashes at the larger end.

To lie on a grassy bank with the blue water between me and beds of tall bulrushes, listening to the mysterious sounds of the wind and of hidden rails and coots and Courlands conversing together in strange human-like tones; to let my sight dwell and feast on the camaloté flower amid its floating masses of moist vivid green leaves - the large almanda-like flower of a purest divine yellow that when plucked, leaves you with nothing but a green stem in your hand.

To ride at noon on the hottest days, when the whole earth is a-glitter with illusory water, and see the cattle and horses in thousands, covering the plain at their watering-places; to visit some haunt of large birds at that still, hot hour and see storks, ibises, grey herons, egrets of a dazzling whiteness, and rose-coloured spoonbills and flamingos, standing in the shallow water in which their motionless forms are reflected. To lie on my back on the rust-brown grass in January and gaze up at the wide hot whitey-blue sky, peopled with millions and myriads of glistening balls of thistle-down, ever, ever floating by; to gaze and gaze until they are to me living things and I, in an ecstasy, am with them, floating in that immense shining void!

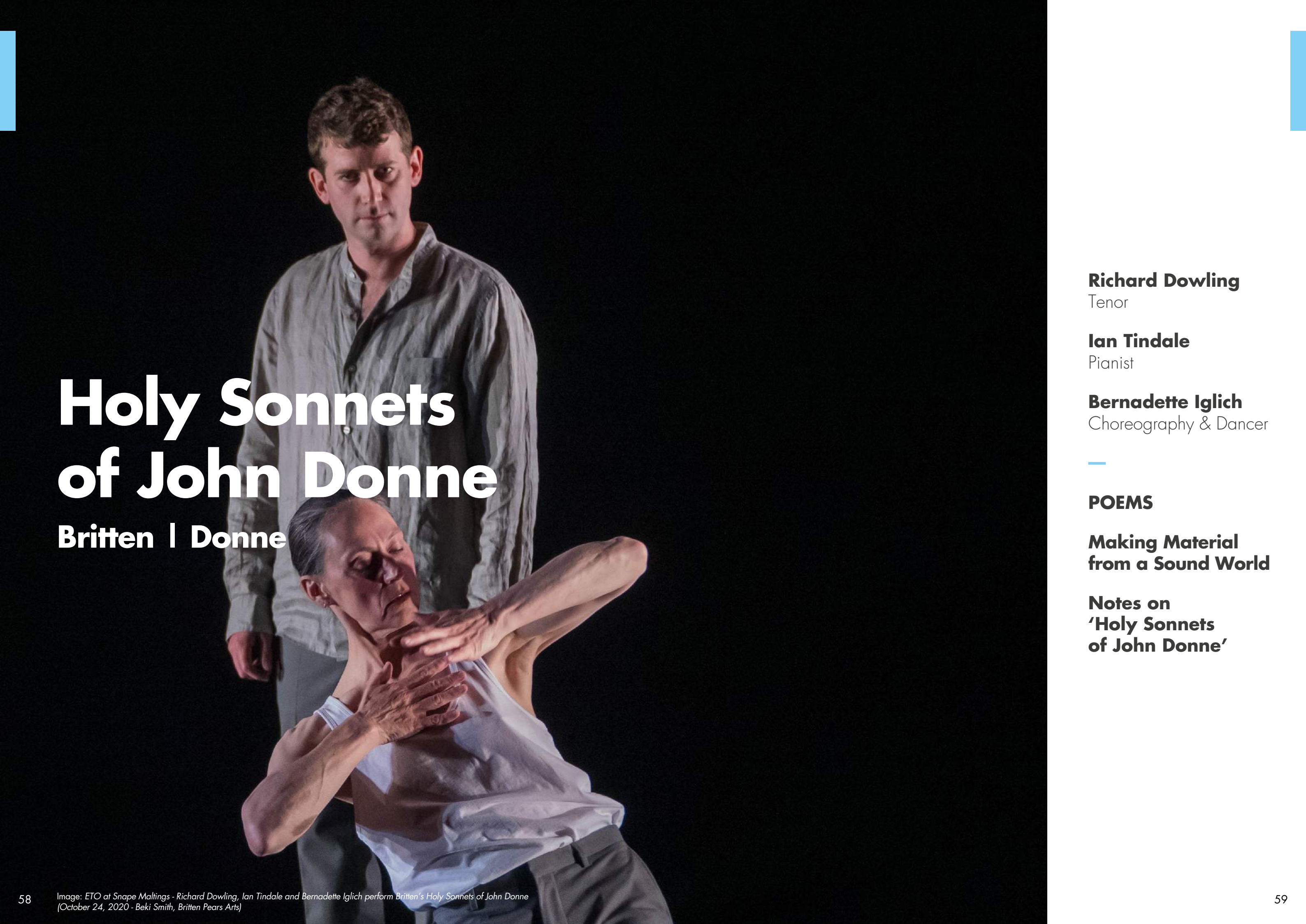
Ideas on atonal music

The compositional world of the twentieth century can be defined as an exploration of post-tonal techniques. The assault on tonality (when music has a central, 'home' key) in Western classical music starts with Wagner's *Tristan* and finds different routes away from this in Scriabin, Ives and Janáček, and the increasing demands of heightened chromaticism, distant modulation and prolonged dissonances had reduced the feeling of a pull back to 'home'.

This programme shows three twentieth century composers exploring a post-tonal language. Britten remains the closest to maintaining the feeling of a 'home' key in each song and the sequence of these tonal centres from song to song is always highly considered: for example, there is tonal symmetry in the movements of *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne* which begins and ends in B minor and major respectively, and in the centre we find the song furthest from a sense of any tonality, 'What if this present'. Tippett's tonality often results from his polyphonic textures, with vertical harmonies developing as a result of interweaving but independent horizontal lines; tonal or modal areas morph from one to the

other, with tiny inflections and minuscule alterations in the smallest details shifting our perception of home. Equally often as these gradual shifts, Tippett will find places to colour the texts with sudden, arresting changes of harmony built on scales of five or seven notes outside the normal pattern of Western classical music. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the sparsely textured world of late Shostakovich is populated by something closer to dissonant atonality. The composer finds order and structure in close motivic imitation between voice and piano rather than tension of tonality. The final bars of several songs in the cycle seem to resolve, but often onto unexpected keys that could hardly be classed as a tonal centre. Moments of intense beauty come from chords built on sequences of unusual intervals such as fourths; conversely the bitterness and anger of song four is coloured almost entirely with chords of thirds — the bedrock of tonal Western music now subverted and reclothed by a genius at the height of his power.

Ian Tindale



Holy Sonnets of John Donne

Britten | Donne

Richard Dowling
Tenor

Ian Tindale
Pianist

Bernadette Iglich
Choreography & Dancer

POEMS

**Making Material
from a Sound World**

**Notes on
'Holy Sonnets
of John Donne'**

Holy Sonnets of John Donne

1 O my blacke soul

Oh my blacke Soule! now thou art summoned
By sicknesse, death's herald, and champion;
Thou art like a pilgrim, which abroad hath done
Treason, and durst not turne to whence hee is fled,
Or like a thiefe, which till death's doome be read,
Wisheth himselfe deliver'd from prison;
But dam'd and hal'd to execution,
Wisheth that still he might be imprisoned.
Yet grace, if thou repent, thou canst not lacke;
But who shall give thee that grace to beginne?
Oh make thyselfe with holy mourning blacke,
And red with blushing, as thou are with sinne;
Or wash thee in Christ's blood, which hath this might
That being red, it dyes red soules to white.

2 Batter my heart

Batter my heart, three person'd God; for you
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new.
I, like an usurpt towne, to another due,
Labour to admit you, but Oh, to no end,
Reason your viceroy in mee, mee should defend
But is captiv'd, and proves weake or untrue.
Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved faine,
But am betroth'd unto your enemye:
Divorce mee, untie, or breake that knot againe,
Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
Except you enthrall mee, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish mee.

3 O might those sighs and teares return againe

Oh might those sighes and teares return againe
Into my breast and eyes, which I have spent,
That I might in this holy discontent
Mourne with some fruit, as I have mourn'd in vaine;
In mine Idolatry what show'rs of rain
Mine eyes did waste? What griefs my heart did rent?
That sufferance was my sinne; now I repent
'Cause I did suffer, I must suffer paine.
Th'hydroptique drunkard, and night scouting thief,
The itchy lecher and self-tickling proud
Have the remembrance of past joyes, for relief
Of coming ills. To poore me is allow'd
No ease; for long, yet vehement grieve hath been
Th'effect and cause, the punishment and sinne.

4 Oh, to vex me

Oh, to vex me, contraries meet in one:
In constancy unnaturally hath begott
A constant habit; that when I would not
I change in vowes, and in devotione.
As humorous is my contritione
As my profane Love and as soone forgott:
As ridlingly distemper'd, cold and hott,
As praying, as mute; as infinite, as none.
I durst not view Heav'n yesterday; and today
In prayers, and flatt'ring speeches I court God:
Tomorrow I quake with true feare of his rod.
So my devout fitts come and go away,
Like a fantastique Ague: save that here
Those are my best dayes, when I shake with feare.

5 What if this present were the world's last night?

What if this present were the world's last night?
Marke in my heart, O Soule, where thou dost dwell,
The picture of Christ crucified, and tell
Whether that countenance can thee affright,
Teares in his eyes quench the amazing light,
Blood fills his frownes, which from his pierc'd head fell.
And can that tongue adjudge thee into hell,
Which pray'd forgiveness for his foes fierce spight?
No, no; but as in my Idolatrie
I said to all my profane mistresses,
Beauty, of pity, foulness onely is
A sign of rigour: so I say to thee,
To wicked spirits are horrid shapes assign'd,
This beauteous forme assures a piteous minde.

6 Since she whom I lov'd hath pay'd her last debt

Since she whom I lov'd hath pay'd her last debt
To Nature, and to hers, and my good is dead,
And her Soule early into Heaven ravished,
Wholly on heavenly things my mind is sett.
Here the admyring her my mind did whett
To seeke thee God; so streams do shew their head;
But though I have found thee and thou my thirst hast fed,
A holy thirsty dropsy melts mee yett,
But why should I begg more love, when as thou
Dost wooe my soul for hers: off'ring all thine:
And dost not only feare lest I allow
My love to Saints and Angels, things divine,
But in thy tender jealousy dost doubt
Lest the world, Fleshe, yea, Devill putt thee out.

7 At the round earth's imagin'd corners

At the round earth's imagined corners, blew
Your trumpets, angels, and arise
From death, you numberless infinities
Of souls, and to your scattered bodies go,
All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow
All whom war, death, age, agues, tyrannies,
Despair, law, chance hath slain; and you whose eyes
Shall behold God and never taste death's woe,
But let them sleep, Lord, and me mourn a space,
For, if above all these my sins abound,
'Tis late to ask abundance of Thy grace,
When we are there. Here on this lowly ground,
Teach me how to repent, for that's as good
As if Thou hadst seal'd my pardon with Thy blood.

8 Thou hast made me

Thou hast made me, and shall thy work decay?
Repaire me now, for now mine end doth haste,
I runne to death, and death meets me as fast,
And all my pleasures are like yesterday;
I dare not move my dim eyes anyway,
Despaire behind, and death before doth cast
Such terror, and my feeble flesh doth waste
By sinne in it, which it t'wards Hell doth weigh;
Onely thou art above, and when t'wards thee
By thy leave I can looke, I rise againe;
But our old subtle foe so tempteth me,
That not one houre myselfe can I sustaine;
Thy Grace may wing me to prevent his art,
And thou like Adamant draw mine iron heart.

9 Death, be not proud

Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadfull, for thou art not soe,
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poore death, nor yet canst thou kill mee.
From rest and sleepe, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee, much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do goe,
Rest of their bones, and souls deliverie.
Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings and desperate men,
And dost with poyson, warre, and sickness dwell,
And poppie, or charmes can make us sleepe as well
And better than thy stroake; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleepe past, wee wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

Making material from a sound world

Notes by Bernadette Iglich on her interpretation and performance based on *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne*, song cycle by Benjamin Britten.

In writing the following I attempt to give an insight into my thought, actions and process to create this dramatic representation. Three facts were the foundation.

1:

November 1945 a song cycle was created through the layering of the words of a 16th century priest poet with the musical composition of a 20th Century pacifist composer.

2:

On the 15th April 1945 the British army entered Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Reports give account of bodies, dead, dying and those just about living.

3:

The summer of 1945 Benjamin Britten toured Germany with Yehudi Menuhin to give concert performances. A concert was given to those survivors at Bergen-Belsen concentration camp waiting to be given back a country, a home, a place; the Displaced Persons as they were termed.

Dramatic representation of the song cycle intends to make visible the conflict embedded in the text and the language of the music, to create a third layer. With it comes a responsibility not to overload, through representation, the already present inner workings of an individual's turmoil and doubt in the nine of Donne's Sonnets. The responsibility becomes to express an essence of that conflict. Facts 2 and 3 become a source in the process. Not to represent in any way, that being neither appropriate nor justified, but to give an insight into the possible why of this response by Benjamin Britten. A response that performs questions of doubt in duty, belief, ideology and knowledge.

That moment of entry to the Belsen Camp by the allied soldiers in April 1945, and Britten in a later different context, brought them within touching distance of the bodily archive of how duty, belief and ideology can make an unrecognisable world. What does being human and a good human signify if it includes the ability to create, do and be such to others? What is my part in it?



More than one body present on stage will always create a tension. They are always in relationship to each other. A performing moving body being non-verbal gives the presence in that relationship of a process of disappearing. It is the subject of decay, it has the ability to be broken, lost. It is seen to move but in that seeing the movement instantly disappears. The bodies performing that which can be heard are an archive of the text and the music, that which can be repeated. They perform a memorial, a permanent presence, a record not to be forgotten.

The duality of those acting bodies forms the idea to embody the essence of *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne* by Benjamin Britten — as I see it of conflict of right and wrong and purpose, of permanence and impermanence.

[Click here for: 75 years on Richard Dimbleby's BBC report on the liberation of Belsen Concentration Camp](#)

Image: Courtesy of the Imperial War Museum archive

Notes on 'The Holy Sonnets of John Donne'

The Holy Sonnets of John Donne was composed in August 1945 at a feverish pace — literally, in that Britten was ill at the time, and completed in about a fortnight. He had not long returned from a visit to Belsen with the violinist Yehudi Menuhin and was, understandably, shaken to his core by what he had seen. The anger and anguish of this cycle is his musical response. As with the William Blake cycle, however, there are moments of beauty and repose, particularly in 'Since She Whom I Loved'. But more often to the fore is the hammering piano writing, and forceful declamatory tenor line, notably in the first two songs of the cycle. The final song, 'Death be not Proud', builds over a repeated piano figure (a favourite device of Britten's) to a kind of resolution, but it is a hard-won triumph. The cycle is in stark contrast to the beautiful *Serenade*, composed only two years earlier, and seems to bear some of the tortured soul of the recently-premiered *Peter Grimes*.

Lucy Walker

Further Resources:

[Work of the Week, with Dr Nicholas Clark \(Britten Pears Arts\)](#)

[From the Britten Opus Number project](#)



Poems of Marina Tsvetaeva

Shostakovich | Tsvetaeva

Katie Stevenson

Mezzo-soprano

Ian Tindale

Pianist

Bernadette Iglich

Dancer

Rahel Vonmoos

Director

**Poems of
Marina Tsvetaeva**

**Marina Tsvetaeva:
A Note from
James Conway**

**A Short Biography
of Marina Tsvetaeva**

[!\[\]\(d3c0ac196a7028bdb8e733ac3df8a588_img.jpg\) **A reading of
My Poems by
Holly Mathieson**](#)

Poems of Marina Tsvetaeva

Мои стихи

Моим стихам, написанным так рано,
Что и не знала я, что я -- поэт,
Сорвавшимся, как брызги из фонтана,
Как искры из ракет,
Ворвавшимся, как маленькие черти,
В святилище, где сон и фимиам,
Моим стихам о юности и смерти,
- Нечитанным стихам! --
Разбросанным в пыли по магазинам
(Где их никто не брал и не берёт!)
Моим стихам, как драгоценным винам,
Настанет свой черёд!

Откуда такая нежность?

Откуда такая нежность?
Не первые -- эти кудри
Разглаживаю, и губы
Знавала темней твоих.
Всходили и гасли звёзды
-- Откуда такая нежность? --
Всходили и гасли очи
У самых моих очей.
Ещё не такие песни
Я слушала ночью темной
[Венчаемая -- о нежность! --]1
На самой груди певца.
Откуда такая нежность,
И что с нею делать, отрок
Лукавый, певец захожий,
С ресницами -- нет длинней?

My Poems

For my poems, written so early
That I didn't even know yet, that I am - a poet,
Which erupted like splashes out of a fountain,
like sparks from a rocket,
Which burst in like little devils into to a
sanctuary, where slumber and incense,
For my poems about youth and death,
Never-before-read poems! -
Scattered around in the dust in the shops,
(Where no-one is buying them still),
For my poems, like for precious wines,
Will come a high time!

Why such tenderness?

Why such tenderness?
Not for the first time -- such locks I stroke,
And I knew lips -- darker than yours.
The stars have risen and burn out,
(why such tenderness?),
The eyes have risen and burn out
Close to my very eyes.
Much better songs
I have heard in the dark of night,
(why such tenderness?),
Lying upon the very chest of the singer.
Why such tenderness?
And what do I do with it,
Wily lad, wandering singer,
With eye lashes -- the longest I've ever seen?

Диалог Гамлета с совестью

-- На дне она, где ил
И водоросли ... спать в них
Ушла, -- но сна и там нет!
-- Но я её любил,
Как сорок тысяч братьев
Любит не могут!
-- Гамлет!
На дне она, где ил:
Ил! . . . И последний венчик
Всплыл на приречных бревнах . . .
-- Но я её любил,
Как сорок тысяч ...
-- Меньше
Всё ж, чем один любовник.
На дне она, где ил.
-- Но я её --
Лыбил?

Поэт и Царь

Потусторонним
Залом царей.
-- [Кто]1 непреклонный
Мраморный се

Столь величавый
В золоте барм?
-- Пушкинской славы

Жалкий жандарм.

Автора -- хаял,
Рукопись -- стриг.
Польского края --
Зверский мясник.

Зорче взглядись!
Не забывай:
Певтсоубийтсья
Царь Николай
Первый!

Dialogue of Hamlet with his conscience

-She is at the bottom, where mud and weed...
She went to sleep there, -
But even there she can't find sleep!
-But I loved her, like forty thousand brothers
cannot love!
-Hamlet! She is at the bottom, where mud:
mud!.,
And the last wreath has washed up upon the
riverside decking...
-But I loved her, like forty thousand...
-Still less than one lover. She is at the bottom,
where mud.
-But I loved her...

The Poet and the Tsar

I walked through a gallery
of deceased Tsars.
Who is this unbending
proud statue?

So majestic in gold
of the regalia. -

A pitiful gendarme of Pushkin's glory.

He bad-mouthed the author
and chopped up his manuscripts,
A savage butcher
of the Polish land.

Look at him
with a watchful eye!
Don't forget -- the Poet's murderer is
Tsar Nicholas the First.

Нет, бил барабан перед смутным полком

Нет, бил барабан перед смутным полком,
Когда мы вождя хоронили:
То зубы царёвы над мёртвым певцом
Почётную дробь выводили.

Такой уж почёт, что ближайшим друзьям —
Нет места. В изглавы, в изножи,
И справа, и слева — ручищи по швам —
Жандармские груди и рожи.

Не диво ли — и на тишайшем из лож
Пребыть поднадзорным мальчишкой?
На что-то, на что-то, на что-то похож
Почёт сей, почётно — да слишком!

Гляди, мол, страна, как, молве вопреки,
Монарх о поэте печётся!
Почётно — почётно — почётно — архи-
почётно, — почётно — до чёрту!

Кого ж это так — точно воры вора
Пристреленного — выносили?
Изменника? Нет. С проходного двора —
Умнейшего мужа России.

No, the drum was drumming...

No, the drum was drumming
In front of a gloomy regiment
When we were burying the leader.
That sound was the teeth of the Tsar
Above the dead poet
Sounding an honorary drum roll.
Such a huge honour, that even for closest friends
There was no space to be found.
By the bedhead, at the feet,
To the right and left -
Hands to the seams- only chests and mugs of gendarmes.
What a wonder — even upon the quietest of beds
To remain under surveillance like a little boy?
Something, something, something
this honour reminds me of,
Honourable — but a little too much!
Look, subjects, how against all rumours,
The Monarch is caring about the Poet!
Honourable, honourable, honourable,
Super honourable, honourable — cursedly so!
So whom — like thieves another thief,
Shot with a gun — did they carry out?
A traitor? No. Through the back door -
The cleverest man of all Russia.

Анне Ахматовой

О Муза плача, прекраснейшая из муз!
О ты, шальное исчадие ночи белой!
Ты чёрную насылаешь метель на Русь,
И вопли твои вонзаются в нас, как стрелы.

И мы шарахаемся, и глухое: ох!
Стотысячное -- тебе присягает. Анна
Ахматова! Это имя -- огромный вздох,
И в глубь он падает, которая безымянна.

Мы коронованы тем, что одну с тобой
Мы землю топчем, что небо над нами-то же!
И тот, кто ранен смертельной твоей судьбой,

Уже бессмертным на смертное сходит ложе.
В певучем граде моём купола горят,
и Спаса светлого славит слепец бродячий . . .
И я дарю свой колокольный град,
- Ахматова! - И сердце свое в придачу.

To Anna Akhmatova

Oh muse of lamentation, the finest of all muses!
Oh you, fierce fiend of the white night!
You summon a black snowstorm upon Russia,
And your cries thrust into us, like arrows.
And we stumble aside, and a stifled; "oh!"- of a hundred thousand
Sounds like a pledge of allegiance to you.
Anna Akhmatova! This name is a colossal sigh,
Which falls inside, into to the nameless depth.
We are crowned by the fact that we trample the same earth as you,
And that the sky above us is the same!
And he, who is wounded by your deadly misfortune
As an Immortal descends upon his death bed.

In my all-singing town the domes are shining bright,
And The Holy Redeemer is glorified by a vagrant holy fool.
I gift to you my bell-ringing town, Anna Akhmatova,
And my own heart in addition

Marina Tsvetaeva: A Note from James Conway

Almost anything you say about Marina Tsvetaeva will be corrected by someone else pretty quickly. She contained many contradictions, certainly. As far as I know, she is unlike any other poet, and I suspect she is about as untranslatable as Emily Dickinson (Mary Jane White writes appealingly of the challenges of translating Tsvetaeva's verse).

Nonetheless, I think everyone should have a copy of her *Selected Works* in the translation of Elaine Feinstein. I know that I did for at least 20 years until I loaned it to someone who did not return it — and I might put it on record here that the offence is not forgiven!

Everything Tsvetaeva did made her unappealing to totalitarian authority. She was a very dangerous friend or lover, and she could not be silenced. Her vocation as a poet, whatever misfortunes or insecurities ravaged her, was unquestioned — and the authenticity of her voice is unquestionable.

Shostakovich's late setting of Tsvetaeva are challenging, certainly; when I first heard them in the orchestral version in mid 1970's recording with Irina Bogacheva singing, I find the searching, elusive writing

almost impenetrable — but in time this very "in-dwelling" work came to mean as much to me as his deeply personal string quartets, and it was clear to me that he understood Tsvetaeva's poetry and life in ways he might scarcely admit. I hope that many who hear these works now for the first time will return to them, and live with them for years to come.

Here is the biography of the poet from the Poetry Foundation (www.poetryfoundation.org):

Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva (also Marina Cvetaeva and Marina Tsvetayeva) was born in Moscow. Her father was a professor and founder of the Museum of Fine Arts, and her mother, who died of tuberculosis when Marina was 14, was a concert pianist. At the age of 18 Tsvetaeva published her first collection of poems, *Evening Album*. During her lifetime she wrote poems, verse plays, and prose pieces; she is considered one of the most renowned poets of 20th-century Russia.

Tsvetaeva's life coincided with turbulent years in Russian history. She married Sergei Efron in 1912; they had two daughters and later one son. Efron joined the White Army, and Tsvetaeva was separated from him during the Civil War. She had a brief love affair with Osip Mandelstam, and a longer relationship with Sofia Parnok. During the Moscow famine, Tsvetaeva was forced to place her daughters in a state orphanage, where the younger, Irina, died of hunger in 1919. In 1922 she emigrated with her family to Berlin, then to Prague, settling in Paris in 1925. In Paris, the family lived in poverty. Sergei Efron worked for the Soviet secret police, and Tsvetaeva was shunned by the Russian expatriate community of Paris. Through the years of privation and exile, poetry and contact with poets sustained Tsvetaeva. She corresponded with Rainer Maria Rilke and Boris Pasternak, and she dedicated work to Anna Akhmatova.

In 1939 Tsvetaeva returned to the Soviet Union. Efron was executed, and her surviving daughter was sent to a labor camp. When the German army invaded the USSR, Tsvetaeva was evacuated to Yelabuga with her son. She hanged herself on August 31, 1941.

Critics and translators of Tsvetaeva's work often comment on the passion in her poems, their swift shifts and unusual syntax, and the influence of folk songs. She is also known for her portrayal of a woman's experiences during the "terrible years" (as the period in Russian history was described by Aleksandr Blok).

Collections of Tsvetaeva's poetry translated into English include *Selected Poems of Marina Tsvetaeva*, translated by Elaine Feinstein (1971, 1994). She is the subject of several biographies as well as the collected memoirs *No Love Without Poetry* (2009), by her daughter Ariadna Efron (1912–1975).

James Conway
Director, ETO



Image Credit: Pyotr Ivanovich Shumov

A Short Biography of Marina Tsvetaeva

Born and raised in a condition of material and cultural privilege in a dilapidated former slave state (the emancipation of the serfs took place only in 1861), Marina Tsvetaeva lived through world wars, the collapse of Tsarism, the Russian revolution and a civil war in which she and her husband were on the losing side. Subsequently she lost one child to famine; her husband, having been a White officer, worked for the NKVD but was then, during the Nazi invasion, purged and shot; another child was sent to her death in the labour camps and a third, who survived Marina's suicide in 1941, died in the defence of Stalingrad.

Throughout this life framed by the actions of ideologues who sought to reshape society for the benefit of Mankind, regardless of the cost to the individual lives being re-shaped, Marina Tsvetaeva spoke of and for the value of a human life. Her own. Mine. Yours.

Richard Grace

The Heart's Assurance

Tippett | Lewis & Keyes



Thomas Elwin
Tenor

Ian Tindale
Pianist

Richard Dowling
Actor

Bernadette Iglich
Choreography

POEMS

 **Ideas on**
Atonal Music

Notes on 'The
Heart's Assurance'

The Heart's Assurance

1 Song (Lewis)

Oh journeyman, Oh journeyman
before this endless belt began
Its cruel revolutions, you and thee
Naked in Eden, shook the apple tree.

Oh soldier lad, oh soldier lad,
Before the soul of things turned bad
She offered you so modestly
A shining apple from the tree.

Oh lonely wife, oh lonely wife,
Before your lover left this life
He took you in his gentle arms.
How trivial then were life's alarms.

And though death taps down every street
Familiar as the postman on his beat
Remember this, remember this,
That life has trembled in a kiss
From genesis to genesis
And what's transfigured will live on
Long after death has come and gone.

2 The Heart's Assurance (Keyes)

O never trust the heart's assurance
Trust only the heart's fear,
And what I'm saying is, Go back, my lovely
Though you will never hear.

O never trust your pride of =
Trust only pride's distress.
The only holy limbs are the broken fingers
Still raised to praise and bless.

For the careless heart is bound in chains
And terribly cast down:
The beast of pride is hunted our
And baited throughout the town.

3 Compassion (Lewis)

She in the hurling night
With lucid simple hands,
Stoked away his fright
Loosed his blood-soaked bands.

And seriously aware
Of the terror she caressed
Drew his matted hair
Gladly to her breast.

And he who babbled Death
Shivered and drew still
In the meadows of her breath,
Restoring his dark will.

Nor did she ever stir
In the storm's calm centre
To feel the tail, hooves, fur
Of the god-faced centaur.

4 The Dancer (Lewis)

'He's in his grave and on his head
I dance,' the lovely dancer said,
'My feet like fireflies illumine
The choking blackness of his tomb.'

'Had he not died we would have wed,
And still I'd dance,' the dancer said,
'To keep the creeping sterile doom
Out of the darkness of my womb.'

'Our love was always ringed with dread
Of death,' the lovely dancer said'
'And so I danced for his delight
And scorched the blackened core of night
With passion bright,' the dancer said –
'And now I dance to earn my bread.'

5 Remember Your Lovers (Keyes)

Young men walking the open streets
Of death's republic, remember your lovers
When you foresaw with vision prescient
The planet pain rising across your sky
We fused your sight in our soft burning beauty:
We laid you down in meadows drunk with cowslips
And led you in the ways of our bright city.

Young men who wander death's vague meadows,
Remember your lovers who gave you more than flowers.

When you woke grave-chilled at midnight
To pace the pavement of your bitter dream
We brought you back to bed and brought you home.
From the dark antechamber of desire
Into our lust as bright as candle-flame.

Young men who lie in the carven beds of death,
Remember your lovers who gave you more than
dreams.

From the sun shelt'ring your careless head
Or from the painted devil your quick eye.
We led you out of terror tenderly
And fooled you into peace with our soft words
And gave you all we had and let you die.

Young men drunk with death's unquenchable wisdom,
Remember your lovers who gave you more than love.



Alun Lewis



Sidney Keyes

A note on 'The Heart's Assurance'

The Heart's Assurance, a Song
Cycle on Poems by Sidney
Keyes and Alun Lewis.
By Michael Tippet

Sidney Keyes and Alun Lewis,
both young poets served as
soldiers in the British army during
WWII. Both died on active duty.
Both were established poets
before being soldiers.

A dedication on the first page
of the score reads "To the
memory of Francesca Allinson
(1902–1945)".

Thread through this song cycle,
in its creation and composition,
is the conjunction of love and
war. Both bearing elements
of excitement, danger, fear,
stimulation: The beauty of life
made more enticing by the
permanent shadow of loss.

Beginning with the first poem,
Song, and its declaration 'from
genesis to genesis' through
to the final poem pleading to
Remember your Lovers, the
sequence of the song cycle
creates a personal narrative.
One mans journey through
remembered lovers. Lovers who
never stayed or were lost. A song
cycle of a remembered past.

Bernadette Iglich

Charm Of Lullabies

Music and Text | Dominick Argento

Katie Stevenson
Mezzo-soprano

Ian Tindale
Pianist

James Conway
Director

POEMS

**Notes on A Charm
of Lullabies**

**Britten's cycle
of 'A Charm
of Lullabies'**



A Charm of Lullabies

1 A Cradle Song (William Blake 1757-1827)

Sleep, sleep, beauty bright,
Dreaming o'er the joys of night;
Sleep, sleep, in thy sleep
Little sorrows sit and weep.
Sweet babe, in thy face
Soft desires I can trace,
Secret joys and secret smiles,
Little pretty infant wiles.
O! the cunning wiles that creep
In thy little heart asleep.
When thy little heart does wake
Then the dreadful lightnings break,
From thy cheek and from thy eye,
O'er the youthful harvests nigh.
Infant wiles and infant smiles
Heaven and Earth of peace beguiles.

2 A Highland Balou (Robert Burns 1759-96)

Hee Balou, my sweet wee Donald,
Picture o' the great Clanronald!
Brawlie kens our wanton Chief
What gat my young Highland thief.
Leeze me on thy bonnie craigie!
And thou live, thou'll steal a naigie,
Travel the country thro' and thro' ,
and bring hame a Carlisle cow!
Thro' the Lawlands, o'er the Border,
Weel, my babie, may thou funder!
Herry the louns o' the laigh Countrie,
Syne to the Highlands hame to me!

3 Sephestia's Lullaby (Robert Green 1558-92)

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee;
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.
Mother's wag, pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy;
When thy father first did see
Such a boy by [him] and me,
He was glad, I was woe;
Fortune changèd made him so,
When he left his pretty boy,
Last his sorrow, first his joy.
Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee;
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.
The wanton smiled, father wept,
Mother cried, baby leapt;
More he crow'd, more we cried,
Nature could not sorrow hide:
He must go, he must kiss
Child and mother, baby bliss,
For he left his pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy.
Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.

4 A Charm (Thomas Randolph 1605-35)

Quiet!
Sleep! or I will make
Erinnys whip thee with a snake,
And cruel Rhadamanthus take
Thy body to the boiling lake,
Where fire and brimstones never slake;
Thy heart shall burn, thy head shall ache,
And ev'ry joint about thee quake;
And therefor dare not yet to wake!
Quiet, sleep!
Quiet, sleep!
Quiet!
Sleep! or thou shalt see
The horrid hags of Tartary,
Whose tresses ugly serpents be,
And Cerberus shall bark at thee,
And all the Furies that are three
The worst is called Tisiphone,
Shall lash thee to eternity;
And therefor sleep thou peacefully
Quiet, sleep!
Quiet, sleep!
Quiet!

5 The Nurse's Song (John Philip flourished 1561)

Lullaby baby,
Lullaby baby,
Thy nurse will tend thee as duly as may be.
Lullaby baby!
Be still, my sweett sweeting, no longer do cry;
Sing lullaby baby, lullaby baby.
Let dolours be fleeting, I fancy thee, I ...
To rock and to lull thee I will not delay me.
Lullaby baby,
Lullabylabylaby baby,
Thy nurse will tend thee as duly as may be
Lullabylabylaby baby
The gods be thy shield and comfort in need!
The gods be thy shield and comfort in need!
Sing Lullaby baby,
Lullabylaby baby
They give thee good fortune and well for to speed,
And this to desire ... I will not delay me.
This to desire ... I will not delay me.
Lullaby lullaby
Lullaby baby,
Thy nurse will tend thee as duly as may be.
Lullabylabylabylaby baby.

Notes on A Charm of Lullabies

Britten's 1947 song cycle written for contralto Nancy Evans, *A Charm of Lullabies*, has long been a recital hall favourite. I expect that is because, in the context of his other song cycles, it is relatively easy on the ear. The title, too, suggests something pleasant, soothing, and, frankly, sentimental. It conjures up nurseries in the days of dedicated servants, whose own domestic lives were irrelevant.

Characteristically, Britten up-ends such expectation. He chose seven poems from an anthology of lullabies that is now held in the archives at Snape, and later trimmed that to five. A number of the texts are on the scary side, and not one is what you'd call sentimental.

The Cradle Song of poet, painter and prophet William Blake (1757–1827) testifies not only to the smiles, joys and beauties on infancy, but more insistently to "soft desires", "cunning wiles", "little sorrows" and "dreadful lightnings". This lullaby singer knows innocence and experience are one life, viewed from two perspectives — and there is a strong sense that the singer longs for rest herself, which the infant's liveliness prevents.

Although Blake had no children of his own, he was the third of seven children of a hosier, largely home-schooled by his mother, so he had an intense experience of family life.

The Highland Balou of Robert Burns (1759–1796) is an altogether heartier affair, and scarcely conducive to sleep. It seems more like a villain's blessing, wishing on the baby a successful career as a horse thief, profiting highland rogues by harrying the lowland fools. It is well matched in energy by the central piece, called Sephestia's Lullaby, taken from the prose poem *Menaphon* by Robert Greene (1558–1592). Greene was a popular pamphleteer, novelist and playwright, a graduate of Cambridge and a celebrated scapegrace; by his own account he married a well-heeled woman, spent her dowry, and abandoned her when she gave birth to his child; by the accounts of others he kept a mistress who was the sister of a notorious gangster at Shoreditch, and abandoned her and their child, called Fortunatus (or Happy). It seems at least likely he had little softness toward infants.

This lullaby is the most complex of the five, and the only one with a narrative; the singer of the lullaby tries to quiet a child she did not want, though the father did, at least at first. Then the father left, and she was left with the "wanton", who she warns "When thou art old, there's grief enough for thee". It reminded me of a highly effective childhood warning from my own kind mother, who had five children before me: "Stop crying or I'll give you something to cry for".

A Charm, by Thomas Randolph (1605–1639) is an extended and elaborate threat, extended in this song from the hypothetical child to the audience. "Quiet, sleep!" we are warned, or all the hounds and furies of hell will be set loose on us, and every sort of malady afflict us. We are far from the repetitive, tuneful softness of what we normally think of as lullabies, and in the world of the charm, or spell! It is a particular thing, isn't it — a song that is sung in order to achieve (or enforce) silence? Perhaps with his ten siblings and half siblings knew about noisy houses; he seems to have avoided having children of his own.

The haunting *Nurse's Song*, setting a poem taken from Elizabethan dramatist John Philip's *The Play of Patient Grisell*, is much treasured by British mezzo sopranos. It is hard to imagine anything more lonely, or more poignant (except perhaps the final setting of Pushkin in the same composer's *A Poet's Echo!*). It calls to mind the exhaustion of those attending infants in the middle of the night, the insecurities and premonitions of early morning hours, the costs that accompany the pleasures of care.

I confess that my idea for staging this song cycle came from a dream that was succeeded by sleepless imaginings. I thought about a person who wanted, very much — wanted silence, wanted attention, wanted rest — and sang to exact it, but found that solitary dominion not quite what she anticipated.

To charm is to chant a verse with magic powers. From the time of the first Queen Elizabeth, a charm is "a blended noise, as of birds, school-children, etc"; in *Paradise Lost*, Milton refers to the morning "rising sweet with charm of earliest birds".

James Conway
Director, ETO

Britten's cycle of 'A Charm of Lullabies'

Britten's song cycles can rarely be described as simple, particularly in terms of the psychological complexity and ambiguity of his many song cycles, of which *Charm of Lullabies* (1947) is the seventh. The texts are all taken from *A Book of Lullabies 1300–1900* (edited by F E Budd, 1930) and in their various ways suggest to the listener that you're never too young to be told of life's dangers. Even after the first few lilting bars of 'Sleep, beauty bright', which at first seems to be a straightforward lullaby, the piano lets us know we are in uneasy and dreamlike territory. Britten is perhaps drawn to the poignancy of William Blake's implication that sorrow is to await the child in adulthood; and the lyrical and singable vocal line is accordingly undercut by the unsettling accompaniment. Even the cadence is irresolute, hanging questioningly at the top of a run of notes. 'Highland Balou' ('balou' is Scots for lullaby) has great charm, but while the child is being pacified his mother cherishes the rather forlorn hope that he may one day rise from poverty by stealing cattle. The narrator of 'Sephestia's lullaby' is no less aware of hardship.

'Weep not, my wanton', she sings to a sighing suspension, and a downward swoop on 'there's grief enough for thee'. It resembles a Purcellian scena in its declamatory style and changing moods. 'A Charm' is a terrifying 'lullaby' which would barely encourage 'Quiet! Sleep!', as sung by the frustrated mother or nanny threatening her charge with all manner of horrors if it won't pipe down. The cycle ends on a more soothing tone. 'The Nurse's Song' opens and (unusually) closes with unaccompanied singing, and when the piano joins in it represents a lilting, reassuring togetherness as the mezzo voice sinks to the velvety depths of its range. Some disconcerting flurries in the piano unsettle the calm flow towards the end, as do the insistently repeated phrases in the higher reaches of the voice, perhaps indicating that even in peaceful times disturbing visions are not far from the surface.

From a programme note by Lucy Walker, originally for the Aldeburgh Festival, June 2015

Further Resources:

[Work of the Week](#), with Sarah Connolly

[From the Britten Opus Number project](#)



Performer in image: Katie Stevenson

Biographies



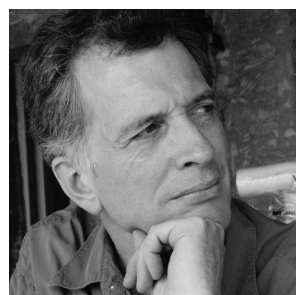
Susan Bickley Director, *A Waterbird Talk*

Susan Bickley is regarded as one of the most accomplished mezzo-sopranos of her generation, with a wide repertory encompassing the Baroque, the great 19th and 20th century dramatic roles, as well as contemporary repertoire. In May 2011 she received the prestigious Singer Award at the Royal Philharmonic Society Awards, the highest recognition for live classical music in the UK. Highlights of the 20/21 season include Mother in Hansel and Gretel at ROH, Fricka in Die Walkure at ENO and Kabanicha in Katya Kabanova at Rome Opera. She recently sang Marcellina in The Marriage of Figaro at ENO and recorded the role of Auntie in Peter Grimes with Ed Gardner and the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra.



Rae Piper & Paul Chantry Choreography, *Boyhood's End* (dance: Paul Chantry)

Rae Piper and Paul Chantry are a choreographic duo with extensive performance careers, including at The Royal Opera House, Sadler's Wells, and London's West End. They've choreographed Opera and Operetta work for The Royal Opera House, Teatro Dell'Opera Di Roma, and the Royal Festival Hall. Other shows include Anyone For Tea (Les Enfants Terribles), Shadowbox (BESIX and the Prince of Belgium), and Birmingham Stage Company's Horrible Histories, and David Walliams' award-winning, Olivier-nominated Gangsta Granny and Billionaire Boy. Paul and Rae are Co-Artistic Directors of Chantry Dance, whose creations include Chinese Calligraphy Concert (Sadler's Wells), and multiple UK tours.



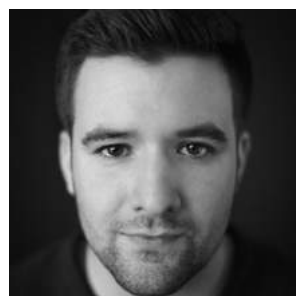
James Conway Director, *La voix humaine*; *Tel jour, telle nuit*; *Charm of Lullabies*; *Romances on British Poetry*; *The Poet's Echo*

As Director of ETO for 17 years, James Conway has directed productions of operas by Monteverdi, Handel, Mozart, Donizetti, Janáček, Puccini, Debussy, Ullmann, Britten and Tippett, as well as a world premiere by Alexander Goehr. Before coming to ETO he was General Director of Opera Theatre Company in Dublin; his productions for that company travelled to New York (Brooklyn Academy of Music), and to festivals in Melbourne, London, Buxton, Paris, Dusseldorf, Prague, Brno, Lisbon and Porto. Notable among his freelance directing is the long-running production of The Cunning Little Vixen at the Janáček Theatre, Brno.



Richard Dowling Tenor, *Holy Sonnets of John Donne*; *The Heart's Assurance* (Actor)

Richard is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music's Opera Course and is now generously supported by Opera Prelude. Richard returns here for his second season, having played an Evangelist in their productions of Bach's St Matthew Passion and roles in their triple Bill of Purcell, Carissimi and Gesualdo. More recently he travelled to Tokyo with 'Diva Opera' to perform as 'Pedrillo' in their production of Mozart's 'Entführung aus dem Serail'. Richard originally studied Chemical Engineering at The University of Manchester, where he completed a PhD in the field of crystallisation.



Thomas Elwin Tenor, *Boyhood's End*; *The Heart's Assurance*

Thomas Elwin returns following his company debut at this year's spring tour, in which he performed the roles of Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* ("the outstanding voice" – Rupert Christiansen, Telegraph) and Tenor soloist in Bach's John Passion. A former young artist at Oper Stuttgart, Thomas has sung lead roles across Europe including Belmonte/Die Entführung in Bregenz, Ferrando/Così fan tutte in Stuttgart, Sam Kaplan/Street Scene in Cologne, and Don Ottavio/Don Giovanni at English National Opera. Thomas was recently appointed an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music, and lives in Herefordshire with his wife, Amy, and 2 year old Labrador, Lyra.



Edward Hawkins Bass, *Romances on British Poetry*

Edward read music at King's College, London, studying trumpet at the Royal Academy of Music. Having begun singing in his late twenties, Edward quickly began to develop a professional career, studying privately with Russell Smythe and Gary Coward. From 2015 to 2018, Edward sang in the Glyndebourne Chorus in various productions, including performances at the BBC Proms and worldwide cinema broadcasts. In 2019 Edward covered and performed the role of Banquo in Verdi's Macbeth, and performed the role of the doctor, for ETO. He subsequently appeared as Banquo at the Minack Theatre, before covering Sparafucile in Rigoletto for Glyndebourne.



Bernadette Iglich Choreography & Dancer, *Holy Sonnets of John Donne*; *The Heart's Assurance*; *Poems of Marina Tsvetaeva* (Dancer)

As a dance artist and performer Bernadette has worked with various international and UK based choreographers, directors and dance companies. Her performances included devised, improvised and site specific theatre. She has choreographed and created commissioned works for students within vocational colleges and universities, as well as choreographing and facilitating movement and physical embodiment for opera and theatre with various productions and companies. From 2001 to 2016 Bernadette was a Lecturer on BA (hons) Contemporary Dance courses in the UK. With ETO, Bernadette has been director, assistant director and movement co-coordinator on a number of productions since 2002.



Ella O'Neill Pianist, *A Waterbird Talk*; *Songs and Proverbs of William Blake*

Ella O'Neill graduated from the Royal College of Music last year, where she studied with Simon Lepper. During her final year there she won the Accompanist Prize in the Kathleen Ferrier Awards at Wigmore Hall, as well as multiple college competitions. Recent recital venues include the Royal Opera House Crush Room, Cadogan Hall, St Martin-in-the-Fields, the Sage Gateshead and Buxton Festival. Ella is a Samling Artist. Away from the concert platform, she has worked as a répétiteur for Grange Park Opera, Tête à Tête Festival, Mid Wales Opera and will next year join Waterperry Festival for their postponed 2020 season.



Sergey Rybin Pianist, *La voix humaine*; *Romances on British Poetry*; *The Poet's Echo*; *Tel Jour, telle nuit*

Since completing his studies the Royal Academy of Music in London under tutelage of Malcolm Martineau, Sergey has worked extensively for City of Birmingham Opera, English Touring Opera, Garsington Opera, Opera Holland Park and Grange Park Opera. Sergey has been elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music, London and joined the coaching staff at Jette Parker Young Artists Programme at ROH, Covent Garden. After working as a chef repetiteur on the Royal Opera House's production of Eugene Onegin he joined the music staff team for the productions of Lucia di Lammermoor, Nabucco, The Nose, Les Contes d'Hoffmann and Der Rosenkavalier. Maintaining various coaching commitments throughout the year, Sergey has traveled to La Monnaie in Brussels for Rimsky-Korsakov's Tale of Tsar Saltan and will return and to Glyndebourne in 2021.

Biographies



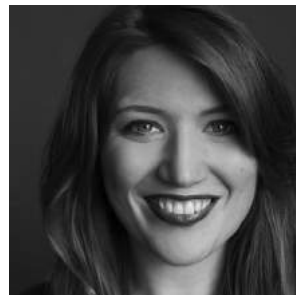
John Savournin Director, *Songs and Proverbs of William Blake*

John enjoys a varied career as a director and singer. As a director, he has created productions for companies including Opera North, Opera Holland Park, Iford Arts, the National G&S Opera Company and Charles Court Opera, of which he is the Artistic Director. He has devised and delivered a broad range of Education/Outreach projects for the Royal Opera, Opera North and Opera Holland Park, CBBC and for BBC's Opera Passion. As a performer, he has sung roles for companies including English National Opera, Opera North, Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera and Opera Holland Park.



Paula Sides Soprano, *La voix humaine*

Paula Sides was awarded the Tagor Gold Medal from the Royal College of Music and was the winner of the Karavoitis Prize in the Les Azures International Competition. Recent highlights include Donna Anna (Longborough Festival Opera) and a recital for the Royal Opera House, broadcast by Classic FM. Other roles include Thais (Chelsea Opera Group), Tosca and many other lead roles for English Touring Opera, Cunegonde (Iford Opera). and Sombra, The Arcadians (Opera Della Luna). Concert work includes Mahler 8, Britten's War Requiem, Rutter's Requiem, Dona Nobis Pacem, Vaughan Williams, Beethoven 9, Dvorak's 9th Symphony. Upcoming engagement: Eurydice from Orphée et Eurydice by Gluck, a feature film to be streamed online by the Washington DC based opera company IN Series.



Jenny Stafford Soprano, *Tel jour, telle nuit; The Poet's Echo*

Jenny Stafford was born in Yorkshire and trained at the Royal Academy of Music (where she won the Isabel Jay Operatic Prize and Dame Eva Turner Operatic Award), at ENO Opera Works and at the Georg Solti Accademia di Bel Canto. Opera highlights include: Sarah MacMillan's Clemency (Dutch National Opera), Tisbe Isouard's Cendrillon and Eginia Storace's Gli sposi malcontenti (Bampton Classical Opera), Pied Piper Willcocks' The Pied Piper of Hamelin (Opera North), Micaëla (North Aldborough Festival), Vitellia (Cadogan Hall), Fiordiligi (Bury Court Opera), Sāvitri Holst's Sāvitri and Alison in Holst's Wandering Scholar (Grimeborn Festival) and Adina and Mimì (Woodhouse Opera).



Katie Stevenson Mezzo-Soprano, *Poems of Marina Tsvetaeva; Charm of Lullabies*

As a Harewood Artist with English National Opera, Katie Stevenson has appeared in Harrison Birtwistle's The Mask of Orpheus, as Kate Pinkerton in Madam Butterfly, and as Nefertiti in Akhnaten. This season she sings her first Grimmerde for the company in The Valkyrie, as well as for Longborough Festival Opera. On the concert platform, Katie made her BBC Proms debut in Vaughan Williams' Serenade to Music, and joined Orquesta Sinfónica Del Principado De Asturias for Kindertotenlieder. In competition, she won all three prizes at the Wagner Society Singing Competition, culminating in an invitation to attend the Bayreuth Young Scholars Programme.



Ian Tindale Pianist, *Boyhood's End; Holy Sonnets of John Donne; The Heart's Assurance; Poems of Marina Tsvetaeva, Charm of Lullabies*

British pianist and song specialist Ian Tindale was awarded the Pianist's Prize in the Wigmore Hall/Kohn Foundation Song Competition in 2017, following studies at Selwyn College, Cambridge and the Royal College of Music. Ian is a Samling Artist and a Britten Pears Young Artist. Ian has performed across the UK and Europe, at venues including the Wigmore Hall, London with Soraya Mafi, and with baritone Josep-Ramon Olivé in Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and Palau de la Música in Barcelona. Other recent highlights include giving the world premiere of Daniel Kidane's cycle Songs of Illumination with Nick Pritchard at the Leeds Lieder Festival, and a 'Rising Star' recital with Harriet Burns in the International Lied Festival Zeist.



Julien Van Mellaerts Baritone, *A Waterbird Talk; Tel jour, telle nuit; Songs and Proverbs of William Blake*

Winner of the 2017 Wigmore Hall / Kohn Foundation International Song Competition, the 2017 Kathleen Ferrier Awards and the Maureen Forrester Prize at the 2018 Concours musical international de Montréal, Julien Van Mellaerts represented New Zealand at Cardiff Singer of the World 2019. Career highlights include Figaro Le nozze di Figaro (Salzburg MozartWoche), Papageno Die Zauberflöte (Verbier Festival), Schaunard La bohème (New Zealand Opera) and Elizabeth (Royal Ballet). Recital engagements include touring for Chamber Music New Zealand; London's Wigmore Hall; Berlin's Pierre Boulez Saal; the Juan March Foundation, Madrid; LIFE Victoria, Barcelona; and NI Opera's Glenarm Festival of Voice.



Rachel Vonmoos Director, *Poems of Marina Tsvetaeva*

Swiss-British independent dance, performance and film maker Rahel Vonmoos has created a substantial body of work for theatres, galleries, festivals and site-specific venues nationally and internationally, including the Hayward Gallery and Dance Umbrella. She has worked collaboratively with dancer/choreographer Wally Cardona and filmmaker Ruth Schlaepfer amongst others, and has worked with Rosemary Butcher, Iztok Kovac (for film), Philippe Gehmacher, Charles Linehan, and Philippe Saire. Rahel has been commissioned by Tanzhaus Zurich, CH and Joyce SoHo, US and was a Compass Commission recipient in 2015 for to find a place which was performed in UK and abroad.



Louie Whitmore Design Consultant

Offie Nominated for Best Costume Designer for The Daughter-in-Law at the Arcola Theatre and Best Set Designer for Tonight at 8.30 at Jermyn Street. Associate Designer to Jermyn Street Theatre. Credits include Messiah (Danish opera, Frankfurt opera); Banished (Blackheath Halls); Serse / Der Kaiser (RSC Glasgow); The Magic Flute, Carmen, La Bohème, Albert Herring, The Marriage of Figaro (costume design for Co Opera Co). Nora (English National Ballet); Egle (Lithuania National Ballet); Beckett Triple Bill, (Jermyn Street Theatre); Handbagged, Single Spies, Miss Julie, Creditors, Lady Killers, Little Voice, Dear Uncle, (Theatre by the Lake); The Last Temptation of Boris Johnson (The Park Theatre, UK Tour); Three Birds (Bush Theatre/ Royal Exchange Manchester); The Daughter-In-Law, The Dog, the Night and the Knife (Arcola Theatre).

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5 - 7 Nov	Hackney Empire
15 Nov	Assembly Hall - Tunbridge Wells
20 - 22 Nov	Altrincham Garrick
27 - 28 Nov	Poole Lighthouse
29 Nov	Saffron Hall - Saffron Walden
6 Dec	Assembly Hall - Tunbridge Wells
12 Dec	Lancaster Priory

