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isolation songbook

Helen Charlston *mezzo-soprano*

Michael Craddock *baritone*

Alexander Soares *piano*

Helen, Michael, and Alexander would like to thank all our sponsors who donated to make this CD a reality. Particular thanks go to the City Music Foundation, and to David Rogers, Denys Firth, William Newsom, Galt Wilson, Anna O'Connor, Ian Wood, Christopher Hancock and Ben Charlston for their generous support.

Recorded on 3-5 September 2020
in The Queen's Hall, Edinburgh
Producer/Engineer: Paul Baxter
24-bit digital editing: Paul Baxter
24-bit digital mastering: Paul Baxter
Design: Drew Padrutt
Booklet editor: Henry Howard

Piano: Steinway, Model D,
serialNo. 599478 (2015)
Piano technician: Norman Motion
Photography: Calum McMillan
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*All tracks were commissioned for the Isolation Songbook and are premiere recordings.
The texts for tracks 2, 4 and 9 and the translation for tracks 12-13 were commissioned for the Isolation Songbook.*

Isolation Songbook

To be a musician is to be a social creature. We need each other to express, connect and make music. As the UK went into lockdown at the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic in March 2020, those avenues of connection were torn away from us. We were told to stay in our homes and wait. *Isolation Songbook* is a collaborative outcome of this period: without normal outlets for creative expression, I sought a new way of making music and connecting with artists. Through an open call for scores I reached four poets and fifteen composers looking for that impetus to turn their creativity into something tangible. Together we have created a set of songs which are by turns witty and melancholic, brash and joyful.

Isolation Songbook began as a way for me to deal with the reality of the lockdown both professionally and personally. It has been an extraordinary privilege to be invited into the composers' and poets' own experience through these songs. The *Songbook* will remain a positive creative history of this time of chaos and change.

The first and (at the time of writing) only live performance of these songs was in the City

Music Foundation Clock Tower Livestream Series on 29 July 2020. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the City Music Foundation for all they did to facilitate that series of concerts so early in the emergence from lockdown. I am particularly grateful that they not only wanted me to give a concert, but backed this ambitious project from the outset, never giving away any sense of concern that commissioning, learning and performing fifteen new commissions in under two months seemed like a ridiculous task (something that only dawned on me a few days before the premiere). I would also like to thank Michael Craddock and Alexander Soares for their inspiring musicianship and extraordinary readiness to join me in this enterprise. To the composers, some of whom I already had the joy to know and others I have met through these commissions: thank you for your support, insight, and exquisite creations.

Art, love, joy and friendship are all around us: in the everyday as well as in celebration and loss. That is what I hope we have captured in these songs.

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Notes on the music

It all began with a wedding, or at least the plans for one: Helen and Michael were due to be married on 18 April 2020. As the pandemic gathered pace in Europe and talk of a UK-wide lockdown intensified, Helen, realising the wedding would not be going ahead as planned, wrote a poem for Michael and sent it to their friend Owain Park for him to set to music. As Helen describes it, **18th April** is a reminder of the purpose of music and poetry. 'Art, love, joy and friendship are all around us,' she writes: in the everyday as well as the big days of celebration. So, while there's a hint of distant church bells in the winding piano figures that recur throughout the piece, the words themselves turn from the idea of life-changing ceremony to the 'quiet communion' of those fortunate enough to be locked down with someone they love, celebrating the unremarkable but intimate rhythms of shared daily life.

Spending so much more time at home meant we often began to look afresh at things in our immediate vicinity. Héloïse Werner – also known as the vocalist with the boundary-pushing ensemble The Hermes Experiment – wrote **The Orange Vendor** as a duet to a brand-new poem by Ali Lewis which interrogates a print hanging on the poet's wall: *Orange Vendor, Spain* (1916) by Natalia Goncharova. It's as if he's surprised to see it: what is this picture doing here? The lines are sometimes wondering, sometimes

abrupt, drawing our mind's eye to and fro between the woman's hands and head and the improbably balanced oranges. What will happen if one is taken away?

The focus of Andrew Brixey-Williams's **Abat-jour** is not on the object of the title – a lampshade (the French translates literally as 'kill the day') – but on the pool of light it creates on the table, which seems to hold together the family sitting quietly around it. The words, in Mary Ann Caws's translation, are by Pierre Reverdy – poet, French Resistance fighter, friend of Coco Chanel – who lived in near seclusion with his wife for the last 34 years of his life. Brixey-Williams sets them as a contemplative solo for mezzo-soprano, with the piano combining very low and very high sonorities in a way that captures the almost spiritual stillness of the moment.

A less peaceful vignette of home life is offered in **Melancholy (and Buttercream)**, with music by Kerensa Briggs and words by Gareth Matthey that will resonate with those who took up baking during lockdown. In a duet that's half flippant, half tragic, the broken eggs are symbolic of a relationship that might be past saving. The woman takes out her frustrations on the slapdash creation of a cake for her partner, who offers pointed, sometimes bitter narration; by the time the piano is imitating the beeps of the oven timer there has been a subtle shift in power.

Notes on the music

The house becomes a metaphor in Katharine Towers's poem **the way we go**, set by Nathan James Dearden: our daily existence has us pacing uncertainly around a house full of empty rooms, until suddenly a glimpse of sky through a window ignites our sense of being alive and sets the spirit free. Dearden uses extremes of register at the beginning – the piano very high, the voice low – then builds up the intensity as the vision of beauty takes hold, and sends the music soaring out through that window and into the world beyond.

For many during lockdown, our relationship with that outside world shifted too. As we took our mandated daily exercise we were finally looking closely at our immediate neighbourhoods, and seeing details of the kind that Ian McMillan has long been tweeting in miniature poems inspired by his early morning walks. The composer Richard Barnard, who had previously set McMillan's tweets to music in 2016, turned to them again as lockdown started in **Three Early Stroll Songs**. There's a levity to the first song, with its imagery of 'unusually well-tended gardens', counterbalanced in the second by the concentration with which a bird 'delicately unwraps a parcel of song'; the third, a duet written especially for this Songbook, marks a day beginning in a more uneasy mood, its music worrying around a single note.

'The days are long, but the months are short.' Sophie Rashbrook's words for **Nature**

is Returning examine, in her words, 'the unsettling and at times oddly peaceful' aspects of lockdown, captured in Joshua Borin's gentle yet restless piano writing and the sustained, wistful melodies for the singer. Her musings on the unruffled tenacity of the natural world, her joy at hearing an owl on London's Blackheath and her concern at the cost in human relationships are interrupted only by her merciless campaign against the moths demonstrating their tenacity in her house.

The King's Breakfast, by the composer and singer Ben Rowarth, is less a song, more a mini-opera, with the two singers voicing the four characters of A.A. Milne's beloved poem – king, queen, dairymaid (here the baritone is instructed to think of Brian's mother from *Monty Python's Life of Brian*), cow – as they deal with a perilous butter shortage. At the centre point there's a tongue-in-cheek snippet of the national anthem as the queen tries to suggest the king change his breakfast habits. This is a light-footed musical melodrama, the singers often setting the pace of the words.

Elliott Park's **Skysong** gives the musicians even more freedom. A performance can last anything from five to twenty-four minutes, depending on their choices of which of the six sections to include; they can be sung in any order, as solos or as dialogues, the only stipulation being that the wordless refrain is heard at the beginning and end. The pre-recorded track

heard alongside the piano and voice is a kind of auditory time-lapse of sounds recorded from Park's patio between April and June 2020 – birdsong, mainly, and fainter-than-usual traffic noise – beginning and ending at midnight. If the birdsong and compositional techniques bring Messiaen to mind, then Park's choice of Torquato Tasso's *Ecco mormorar l'onde* as text (in Harry Cochrane's English translation) echoes Monteverdi. This performance includes two of the more meditative episodes, which together convey a quietly heightened awareness of the world around.

By contrast, a single fleeting point in time is preserved in **A Moment**, which the composer Derri Joseph Lewis describes as a kind of musical haiku in which two characters speak, perhaps at once: 'The first voice is lost in nature, the second voice yearns unnoticed for the first.' The words are by Mary Elizabeth Coleridge, whose poetry was set by composers including Bridge, Parry and Stanford (famously in the part-song *The Blue Bird*). While the piano weaves a kind of lullaby, punctuated by brittle flourishes that might be birdsong, the poem's two stanzas are heard at once, one in each voice. In the Middle Ages a 'moment' was a unit of time, lasting 90 seconds; Lewis's song comes out a little longer, but only just.

The idea of shared solitude also infuses the **Three Duets** by Terence Charlston, Helen's

father, a teacher at the Royal College of Music specialising in historical keyboard instruments. For the first and third of them he wrote his own texts with, respectively, Keats's 'O Solitude' and Robert Lowry's American folksong hymn 'How can I keep from singing' as jumping-off points; the piano accompaniment in 'Endless Song' is optional. In between, 'Hurried Letter' is a nifty canon evoking the pace of everyday life pre-lockdown, setting a poem by his former teacher Alexander Kelly.

Nothing else in the *Songbook* is quite as succinct as **Concerning Cows**: three songs lasting less than a minute each, their words paraphrasing William Topaz McGonagall (often claimed as the World's Worst Poet), from Ogden Nash and Eddie Braben, joke-writer for Morecambe and Wise. The composer Matthew Ward, better known as an authority on medieval chant, instructs that they should be sung 'sympathetically', 'informatively' and then 'majestically', before finally turning 'conspiratorial'.

Also humorous – and also conspiratorial – Emily Dickinson's poem **I'm Nobody** celebrates two introverts' delight at finding each other. Set to music by the Canadian composer and educator Gerda Blok-Wilson, it accumulated extra resonance at a time when so many of us were being forced to try on an introvert's lifestyle.

Notes on the music

That lifestyle left many more attuned to the themes of 'dreams, memory, distance and emotion' that drew James Davy – the organist of Chelmsford Cathedral, and also a big-band pianist – to choose words by the South African musician and writer Barry Smith. Davy's duet **Dreams** is underpinned by a gently rocking figure in the piano that's somehow simultaneously uneasy and reassuring. The voices finally intertwine in their evocation of 'one unending gaze', and the piano, always vacillating between major and minor, finally decides to settle on an optimistic turn.

At the opening of the final song, **On His Blindness**, the piano is instructed to play 'quasi liuto' (like a lute), an apt approach to a timeless piece woven through with reminiscences of Tallis's 'Third Mode Melody'.

Stephen Bick chose to set John Milton's sonnet in which he laments his loss of sight and asks whether he can still be of use to God if he cannot see. Lockdown left us prey to such existential questions – something Milton, who lived through more than one plague outbreak, would have understood. The certainty of Milton's final line, 'they also serve who only stand and wait', and the steadfastness of Bick's setting of it will speak to anyone who will look back on 2020 as a year of waiting, experiencing in their own way the isolation of which this *Songbook* offers such a vivid and varied souvenir.

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Erica Jeal is a music critic for The Guardian and the Deputy Editor of Opera magazine.

Texts

1 18th April

Suppose they had chosen another date,
Suppose it had gone ahead as planned,
Celebration, commitment, hand in hand.

Satin in silence hangs, hidden for now.
Vows unreached yet lived out in delight.
In their cushioned box the golden spheres
Hibernate patiently, untouched.

Today they sit in quiet communion
Sharing looks and books and cups of coffee.
Foreheads brush through unkempt hair
The smallest smile, the deepest care.

For in love's light they have dared
Its reflection will be their glory.

Helen Charlston (b. 1992)

2 The Orange Vendor

(after Natalia Goncharova)

Oranges on her head and oranges in her
hand,
flowers on a yellow poncho.
She's so much smaller than her clothes.
I don't know why she's in my house
apart from I put her there.
Is it the one free hand,
or the way she stacks so many things

the wrong shape for balancing?
Or how she shifts her weight when she makes
a sale
and an orange, or many oranges, are taken
away?

Ali Lewis (b. 1990)

3 Abat-jour

Around the table
On the shadow's edge
Each one of them quite motionless
And someone abruptly speaks
It's cold outside but here it's peaceful
And the light holds them together
The fire crackles
A spark
The hands have come to rest
Bluer on top of the tablecloth
Behind the beam of light, a head reads
Nearly holding its breath
Everything's falling asleep
The silence drags on
But still it is not time to go
The windowpane mirrors the scene, the
family
From a distance the lips all seem to be
fervent and praying

Pierre Reverdy (1889–1960), trans. Mary Ann Caws (b. 1933)



Texts

5 the way we go

the way we go about our lives
trying out each empty room
like houses we might own
eavesdropping for clues in corridors until

standing at a gate or attic window
seeing beauty in a flag of sky
we're gone, leaving the doors open
all the lights burning

Katharine Towers (b. 1961)

Three Early Stroll Songs

6 I. Early Stroll 28.3.20

Early stroll.
The sky has put weight on overnight. Tapestries
of unusually well-tended gardens. Those
pigeons on a rooftop date seem very well
suited. Spilled paint outside the paint shop,
as if it were trying to find its way home.

7 II. Early Stroll 29/30.3.20

The Strong breeze is standing far too close.
A thin branch seems to be tapping on a lit
bedroom window.
A bird delicately unwraps a parcel of song.

8 III. Early Stroll 31.5.20

Early Stroll. A tiny islet of eggshell. Telephone
wires are lines on the sky's notebook
pages. I'm sure my shadow walked this way
yesterday. The valley: anglescape, roofscape,
treescape. A hissed and rhythmic argument
behind curtains.

Ian McMillan (b. 1956)

9 Nature is Returning

The days are long
but the months are short

On our walk last night,
We saw a man playing frisbee on his own
Then, on our way home
9 pm, Blackheath Park
We were dodging joggers,
dancing the pavement tango, when ...

Did you hear that?

It can't be ...

There it is again

It's an owl

An owl in Blackheath!

Hooo-hooo-hoooo!

It's a miracle!

Did I get it?

No

I've seen sparrows, blue tits, long-tailed tits,
All manner of tits

Collared doves, pigeons,
bubbling nonsense on our window-sill
And the less said about the news, the better

New neighbours downstairs,
their stories unspoken
New babies, uncuddled
Final goodbyes, unbidden
But my house plants, cherished, thriving,
like never before
Goldfinches! Woodpeckers!
Mother nature is returning to our cities

It's there!

By the window! Get it!

Kill the bastard! Quick!

Oh, bloody moths!

They're cleverer than they look

They know where to hide

They are watching us

as we carry on our new lives

our new, gentler lives

An empty bus rolls by

And through the window

Spring turns to summer ...

Moth! Moth! I see you!

Got you! Ha!

High five!

The months are short

but the days are long ...

Sophie Rashbrook (b. 1987)

10 The King's Breakfast

'The King's Breakfast':
The King asked
The Queen, and
The Queen asked
The Dairymaid:
'Could we have some butter for
The Royal slice of bread?'
The Queen asked the Dairymaid,
The Dairymaid
Said, 'Certainly,
I'll go and tell the cow
Now
Before she goes to bed.'

The Dairymaid

She curtsied,

And went and told

The Alderney:

'Don't forget the butter for

The Royal slice of bread.'

The Alderney

Said sleepily:

'You'd better tell

His Majesty

That many people nowadays

Like marmalade

Instead.'

The Dairymaid

Said, 'Fancy!'

And went to

Texts

Her Majesty.
She curtsied to the Queen, and
She turned a little red:
'Excuse me,
Your Majesty,
For taking of
The liberty,
But marmalade is tasty, if
It's very
Thickly
Spread.'

The Queen said
'Oh!':
And went to
His Majesty:
'Talking of the butter for
The Royal slice of bread,
Many people
Think that
Marmalade
Is nicer.
Would you like to try a little
Marmalade
Instead?'

The King said,
'Bother!'
And then he said,
'Oh, deary me!'
The King sobbed, 'Oh, deary me!'
And went back to bed.
'Nobody,'

He whimpered,
'Could call me
A fussy man;
I only want
A little bit
Of butter for
My bread!'

The Queen said,
'There, there!'
And went to
The Dairymaid.
The Dairymaid
Said, 'There, there!'
And went to the shed.
The cow said,
'There, there!
I didn't really
Mean it;
Here's milk for his porringer,
And butter for his bread.'

The Queen took
The butter
And brought it to
His Majesty;
The King said,
'Butter, eh?'
And bounced out of bed.
'Nobody,' he said,
As he kissed her
Tenderly,
'Nobody,' he said,

As he slid down the banisters,
'Nobody,
My darling,
Could call me
A fussy man –
BUT
I do like a little bit of butter to my bread!'

A.A. Milne (1882–1956)

Skysong – extracts

- 12 **dawn**
Dawn is unfolding
to gaze at herself in the sea.
- 13 **soothe**
So soothe ev'ry hurt,
burnt, blackened, charred, heart.

Harry Cochrane (b. 1994),
after Torquato Tasso (1544–1595)

- 15 **A Moment**
The clouds had made a crimson crown
About the mountains high.
The stormy sun was going down
In a stormy sky.
Why did you let your eyes so rest on me,
And hold your breath between?

In all the ages this can never be
As if it had not been.

Mary Elizabeth Coleridge (1861–1907)

Three Duets

- 16 **I. O Solitude**
Elusive disconnect,
Ineluctable cataract.
In true solitude we find
Our inspiration
Secluded together.

Terence Charlston (b. 1962)

- 17 **II. Hurried Letter**
On your last visit,
Life here, as ever, was hectic,
The telephone rang and rang.
People came and went

Nevertheless there was the old
Familiar fierce affection that always was

What was, still is,
What used to be, remains,
What was shared, is still there,
Always.

Alexander Kelly (1929–1996)

Texts

18 **III. Endless Song**

Why keep from singing?
My life also is an 'endless song',
A tumult of calm,
Bejewelled and fragrant.
Hear me above the dull din of fear.
Listen to my bitter-sweet, sanguine elegy.
Join me, unceasing!
Join my unending flow of time!
Why keep from singing?

Terence Charlston

Concerning Cows: A Rural Song Cycle

19 **I.**

The chicken is a noble beast.
The cow is much forlorn,
Standing in the pouring rain,
A leg at every corner.

William Topaz McGonagall (1825–1902),
slightly altered

20 **II.**

The Cow is of the bovine ilk:
One part 'Moo!'
The other milk.

Ogden Nash (1902–1971), slightly altered

21 **III.**

I saw three cows
On a warm sunny hillock.
I thought, 'Tomorrow
That grass'll be millock.'

Eddie Braben (1930–2013), for *The Morecambe &
Wise Show*, slightly altered

22 **I'm Nobody**

I'm nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody, too?
Then there's a pair of us – don't tell!
They'd banish us, you know.

How dreary to be somebody!
How public, like a frog
To tell your name the livelong day
To an admiring bog!

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)

23 **Dreams**

When once again we see the old, familiar
things,
The creaking gate, the sleeping cat,
The fire in the grate,
What dreams can come to ambush us by
night?
The fierce, fierce, hot sun,
The thundering smoke,
Moon upside down,
Orion on his head?
Or maybe gentler things –
The almost unseen smile – or tears,
Or eyes that meet in one unending gaze.

Barry Smith (b. 1939)

24 **On His Blindness**

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul
more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide;
'Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?'
I fondly ask. But patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His
state
Is kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait.'

John Milton (1608–1674), Sonnet 19

Biographies



Acclaimed for her musical interpretation, presence and 'warmly distinctive tone' (*The Telegraph*), **Helen Charlston** won first prize in the 2018 Handel Singing Competition and was a finalist in the 2020 Grange

Opera International Singing Competition. She was a Rising Star of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and a 2018 City Music Foundation Artist. Recent highlights include solo recitals at Wigmore Hall with Ensemble Marsyas and Fretwork and as part of the Oxford Lieder Festival; touring Bach *St Matthew Passion* (Gabieli Consort and Players/ Paul McCreesh), and debuts with Queensland Symphony Orchestra and the Academy of Ancient Music. In 2021/2 Helen becomes a member of the tenth edition of Jardin des Voix, the Young Artist Programme of Les Arts Florissants, singing Rosmira in Handel *Partenope* in performances across Europe and USA.

Helen has recorded Bach *B Minor Mass* (OAE/Trinity College Choir), and Bach *Actus Tragicus* and *Himmelskönig sei willkommen* (Amici Voices) on Hyperion. Her 'mesmerising delivery' was the highlight of the Amici Voices recording for *Gramophone*. Upcoming releases include Juno in John Eccles *Semele* with Cambridge Handel Opera Company and Vivaldi arias with London Handel Players.

Helen began singing in the St Albans Abbey Girls Choir, where she was head chorister; she studied music at Trinity College, Cambridge with a choral scholarship and was a scholar on the Pembroke College Lieder Scheme, led by Joseph Middleton.



Having started his musical education with the choir of Trinity College, Cambridge, **Michael Craddock** now works as a freelance solo and ensemble singer, principally with the vocal sextet The Gesualdo Six.

With the group he has recorded numerous CDs on the Hyperion label and toured internationally, and in August 2020 gave two digital concerts from St Leonard's Church in Hythe. Other frequent collaborators include the Marian Consort, Gabieli and Vox Luminis. He has great affinity with the sacred works of J.S. Bach, recording a CD of cantatas as a founder member of the ensemble Amici Voices, also on Hyperion. He has performed arias in Bach's Passions in Australia and New Zealand, conducted by Stephen Layton. He has performed in recital with pianists Anna Tilbrook, Michael Dussek and Johan Ullén, and his most recent dramatic role was the Usher in a concert performance of Sullivan's *Trial by Jury* with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, conducted by John Wilson.



Following his London debut at the Royal Festival Hall, **Alexander Soares** has garnered a reputation as a pianist who combines 'huge intensity' (*The Telegraph*) with 'diamond clarity and authority' (BBC

Radio 3). Rising to international attention in 2015 after winning the Gold Medal in the prestigious Royal Overseas League Competition – and subsequent selection as a solo artist by City Music Foundation – he has performed in major venues and festivals across the UK, Europe and United States, with regular broadcasts on BBC Radio 3, FranceMusique and SWR2, Germany. Current and recent highlights include solo performances at London's Wigmore Hall, St John's Smith Square, and the Barbican.

Alexander has established himself as a leading exponent of contemporary French

repertoire. In 2019 he signed with Rubicon Classics to release his debut solo album *Notations & Sketches*. Praised for its captivating programme – the solo piano works of Boulez, Dutilleux and Messiaen – the disc was selected as 'Editor's Choice' by *Gramophone* (May 2019) and received widespread critical acclaim as 'a stunning album' (FranceMusique) with playing of 'style and sophistication' (*BBC Music Magazine*). Alexander has also recorded for KAIROS in 2020, performing solo piano works by the Portuguese composer Gonçalo Gato.

Alexander holds a doctorate from Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where he studied with Richard Goode, Stephen Kovacevich, Steven Osborne, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson and his mentor Ronan O'Hora. His research investigated memorisation strategies in atonal piano music, and he combines a busy and varied performing schedule with lecturing, research and doctoral supervision at Guildhall.

Also available on Delphian



HERE WE ARE

The Hermes Experiment
DCD34244

With over sixty commissions to its credit after just six years of existence, The Hermes Experiment has already proved itself a force to be reckoned with in the creation and advocacy of new music. Now, ten of those commissions are brought together on the ensemble's debut album release, showcasing its idiosyncratic line-up of harp, clarinet, soprano and double bass in a compelling survey of styles and individual voices.

'A most enticing calling card, advertising the skills of individual musicians and the liveliness and variety of Britain's composing scene ... [Track 1] immediately shows off the ensemble's frontline asset: the vivacious soprano voice of Héloïse Werner, who pounces on individual notes and words with a tiger's tenacity and a kitten's glee. The other musicians are equally crucial in the album's tapestry of sounds'
—The Times, August 2020



Calen-o: Songs from the North of Ireland

Carolyn Dobbin, Iain Burnside
DCD34187

A passionate advocate for the art music of her native Northern Ireland, mezzo-soprano Carolyn Dobbin has put together this programme that attests to a rich yet little-known tradition. Who knew that doyen of Anglican church music Charles Wood was in fact an Ulsterman, and a fine composer of art song? Premiere recordings of Wood and of the forward-looking Hamilton Harty are interleaved with songs by Joan Trimble and Howard Ferguson in a journey of delightful discovery.

'With her rich palette of tone and colour, Dobbin knows how to communicate text and music, while Iain Burnside's accompaniments are beautifully managed. Both voice and piano are finely captured and well balanced'
— BBC Music Magazine, May 2018



Luminate: Live Music Now Scotland celebrates 30 years

Emma Versteeg *soprano* & Maryam Sherhan *piano*; Laura Margaret Smith *mezzo-soprano* & Geoffrey Tanti *piano*; Spencer–Strachan Duo; Astrid String Quartet; Wildings
DCD34153

In 2014, Live Music Now Scotland – an organisation devoted to giving the work of Scottish performers and composers a place in the broader community – marked its thirtieth birthday. In celebration, Delphian has taken a snapshot of the organisation's activity: a picture which represents in miniature much of the wider cultural endeavours taking place in Scotland. Some of the nation's brightest young stars have recorded vibrantly communicative new work commissioned from four Scottish composers. Parallel concert tours and recital activity have embedded this work in innovative community outreach projects.

'The sheer quality of the work produced in the name of LMNS rings through this CD, with music from Eddie McGuire, William Sweeney, Alasdair Nicolson and John Maxwell Geddes, and committed playing from Wildings, the Astrid Quartet and others' —The Herald, April 2015



Insomnia: a nocturnal voyage in song

William Berger, Iain Burnside
DCD34116

For his solo debut on disc, baritone William Berger has devised an ingenious sequence of seventeen songs describing a sleepless night experienced by a man who reflects on his love for an unnamed woman. From Viennese classicism to fin-de-siècle Romanticism, shadowy English pastoral to the contemporary worlds of Richard Rodney Bennett and Raymond Yiu, this wide-ranging programme is brought to nuanced life by an outstanding young singer.

'plays out its chronological narrative ... with logical and psychological inevitability. Berger sustains a magnetic affection throughout the varied sequence, aided by Burnside's deft pianism'
—The Scotsman, July 2012

