



BRITTEN

Songs
Volume I

Malcolm Martineau

Andrew Tortise

James Geer

Ben Johnson

Caryl Hughes

Philip Smith

Nicky Spence

Katherine Broderick

Robin Tritschler

onyx

BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913–1976)

CD 1

75.06

from **'Fish in the unruffled lakes'**

1	To lie flat on the back	2.27
2	Night covers up the rigid land	2.35
3	A Dirge	1.14
4	Virtue in Deeds not Words	1.11
5	Prithee	1.52
6	Lucy	1.25
7	Canticle I	7.46
8	Um Mitternacht	4.07
	Sechs Hölderlin-Fragmente	
9	Menschenbeifall	1.22
10	Die Heimat	2.19
11	Sokrates und Alcibiades	2.09
12	Die Jugend	1.59
13	Hälfte des Lebens	2.06
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15	Oh my blacke soule!	3.43
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17	O might those sighes and teares	3.38
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19	What if this present	3.08
20	Since she whom I loved	3.08
21	At the round earth's imagined corners	2.46
22	Thou hast made me	1.23
23	Death, be not proud	4.04

Cabaret songs

24	Calypso	2.13
25	Tell me the truth about love	5.23
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CD 2

56.31

Tit for Tat

1	A song of enchantment	2.39
2	Autumn	1.33
3	Silver	1.54
4	Vigil	2.24
5	Tit for tat	1.58

Beware!

6	Beware!	1.07
7	O that I had ne'er been married	1.26
8	Epitaph: The Clerk	1.13

9	Lilian	3.00
10	The Joy of Grief	1.08

The Poet's Echo

11	Echo	2.54
12	My heart	1.49
13	Angel	2.36
14	The nightingale and the rose	4.11
15	Epigram	0.49
16	Lines written during a sleepless night	4.10

Winter Words

17	At Day-close in November	1.52
18	Midnight on the Great Western	4.49
19	Wagtail and Baby	2.03
20	The Little Old Table	1.18
21	The Choirmaster's Burial	4.09
22	Proud Songsters	1.07
23	At the Railway Station	3.09
24	Before Life and After	3.00

Andrew Tortise tenor (CD1 5, 7)

James Geer tenor (CD1 1-3, 8-14)

Ben Johnson tenor (CD1 6, 15-23)

Caryl Hughes mezzo-soprano (CD1 4, 24-27)

Philip Smith baritone (CD2 1-6, 8-9)

Nicky Spence tenor (CD2 7)

Katherine Broderick soprano (CD2 10-16)

Robin Tritschler tenor (CD2 17-24)

Malcolm Martineau piano

Britten: A lifetime of song

Performing and writing songs was integral to Britten's musical life from the outset. As a child in the 1920s, he wrote for, and accompanied, his mother, who was a gifted amateur singer; and for over 30 years he composed for the voice of his life's partner, the tenor Peter Pears (1910–1986), with whom he formed one of the most celebrated and influential musical partnerships of the last century. Britten's songs and song cycles for voice and piano retain a significant position in the song repertoire, quite the equal of any of the great lieder composers of the 19th century, of whose repertoire Pears and Britten were leading exponents.

The earliest songs on the present disc date from 1922 and 1923 respectively: 'O that I had ne'er been married' (Burns) and 'Beware!' (Longfellow, after a German original). The incongruity between the young age of the composer (he was nine or ten years old) and the nature of their subject matter helped to establish them within his family circle as firm favourites, and there are several manuscript copies of each. Britten refurbished the songs in 1968 around the period when he was revising some of his early De la Mare. The Burns and Longfellow settings were posthumously published as **Beware! Three Early Songs** in 1985, together with a third song, 'Epitaph: The Clerk' (1926), which Britten had revised in the mistaken belief that it was a De la Mare setting. (The poem is, in fact, by Herbert Asquith (1881–1947).)

Also dating from 1926 are five unpublished settings from Britten's boyhood: Shelley's 'A Dirge'; and four songs composed during three consecutive days (3–5 December 1926), 'Prithee' (Sir John Suckling), 'The Joy of Grief' (Tennyson), 'Virtue in deeds not words' (P.J. Bailey) and 'Lucy' (Wordsworth). A further unpublished Tennyson setting – 'Lilian' (15–19 February 1929) – is also included. While none of these songs could be described as an undiscovered masterpiece, each of them does reveal Britten's growing sophistication as a song composer, in particular his skill at reaching to the heart of a poem's meaning and conveying that in musically satisfying structures. They are recorded here just as the teenage Britten left them.

Tit for Tat, five settings of poems by Walter de la Mare, was composed between 1928 and 1931, and revised during the summer of 1968. In his prefatory note, Britten explained that: 'Most of the settings are, of course, very naive, but I have chosen those which seem to me to be as complete an expression as is possible from a composer in his early teens. Once or twice when the fumbblings were too obvious, the experienced middle-aged composer has come to the aid of the beginner ... I hold no claims for the songs' importance or originality.' It is hardly surprising that Britten should have been attracted to De la Mare's verse, for both men shared a remarkable insight into the child's mind and could express not only the innocent happiness of childhood but, as revealed in the final song, also some of its more sinister aspects.

Britten first encountered the poet W.H. Auden in July 1935 when working for the GPO Film Unit. But it was not only in the film studio that these two prodigiously gifted youthful creators were to collaborate: they worked together in the

theatre, radio and concert hall over the next few years and Britten followed him to the United States in 1939, where they wrote their operetta *Paul Bunyan* (1941).

In the autumn of 1936, Britten purchased a copy of Auden's newly published collection *Look, Stranger!*, noting in his diary for that it 'has some splendid things in it. He has written two for me included in it.' The poems Auden dedicated to Britten were '**Night covers up the rigid land**' and 'Underneath the abject willow', and he immediately set the latter as a vocal duet. It was not until the following May that he returned to the collection and began to set several poems that would eventually form his song cycle *On This Island*. But there were several Auden that were not included in the cycle, which was published in 1938 as 'Vol. 1'. Among those held over for the second volume were '**To lie flat on the back**' and 'Night covers up the rigid land', composed in October 1937. The second volume of *On This Island* never materialized, and these two Auden settings were not to be performed in public until 1985.

At the beginning of 1937 Britten had been busy composing incidental music for *The Ascent of F6*, the play by W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, one of whose most striking numbers was a blues, a setting of Auden's 'Stop all the clocks'. The cabaret singer Hedli Anderson was a member of the original cast. Later in 1937, when Britten was visiting Auden at the prep school at Colwall (near Malvern) where the poet was then teaching, he not only wrote a new version of the *F6* blues ('Funeral Blues') – Hedli Anderson, too, was at Colwall on this occasion and the solo version was tried out on the boys with great success – but also busied himself with what he described as cabaret songs, though not naming them individually, as he did in the case of the 'Funeral Blues'.

We know from Britten's 1937 diary that 'Johnny' had already been composed on 5 May and that three further unnamed cabaret songs were sketched over the next few days. On 10 May Britten went through the songs with Anderson and her regular accompanist: 'they are going to be hits, I feel', wrote the composer. The composer's successive diary entries would seem to indicate that at least *five* cabaret songs should exist from this time, including, that is, the new version of the *F6* blues, but excluding 'O tell me the truth about love' and 'Calypso', the first of which belongs to January 1938 and the second to 1939 – the poem belongs to May or early June 1939, by which time both poet and composer were in North America, Britten in Canada, Auden in the United States (hence the geography of 'Calypso').

The four surviving **Cabaret Songs** were posthumously published in 1980. They are splendid examples of the genre, which not only provide ample evidence of the composer's and poet's wit and high spirits but also are wholly characteristic of a particular type of vernacular music that resulted from the collaboration between these two brilliantly gifted young men in the 1930s, both of whom were passionate admirers of Cole Porter. They were also partners in another kind of music, of course, and it is important to remember that Britten's other settings of Auden poems, *On This Island*, 'Fish in the unruffled lakes' and the others, belong to precisely the same period. The two contrasting styles mirror the world and the times in and through which Britten and Auden moved.

The Holy Sonnets of John Donne were completed in August 1945, a few weeks after Britten's return from Germany, where he and Yehudi Menuhin had toured at the end of July. On 27 July they visited Belsen to give a pair of concerts to the liberated survivors. It proved to be a harrowing experience for Britten, which undoubtedly coloured the sequence of nine settings of Donne's profound religious meditations, all of which are concerned with the themes of death and repentance. Although the cycle was composed in the emotional aftermath of the visit, Britten had been reading Donne's poetry at least two years earlier. Pears told a friend in February 1943, 'Ben and I have been re-reading Donne lately – those wonderful holy sonnets, and especially the Hymn to God the Father'; and two years earlier, Britten had made an incomplete setting of Donne's 'Stay, O Sweet, and do not rise'.

By setting Donne in the wake of the recent success of *Peter Grimes*, Britten continued the remarkable sequence of works which had commenced two years earlier with the Serenade op.31, in which the setting of his native language is made with an assurance that is derived from a complete understanding of the subtleties of Purcell's attitude to prosody, an appreciation heightened by Britten's practice of making realizations of Purcell's vocal music for himself and Pears to perform. While Purcell's *Divine Hymns* are undoubtedly the strongest influence on the *Donne Sonnets* – Pears and Britten gave the premiere of the cycle at a concert in November 1945 commemorating the 250th anniversary of Purcell's death – the close relationship between vocal line and accompaniment also suggests an understanding of Wolf's fluent techniques, while Britten's habit of hitting on a unifying *Ur*-motif for a song recalls his beloved Schubert. The opening pair of sonnets articulates a tonal conflict between B minor and C minor which is explored through the tonal scheme of the entire sequence of nine settings. The valedictory 'Death, be not proud' (in B major) is constructed on a five-bar ground bass, an obvious Purcellian inspiration.

Purcell's *Divine Hymns* were also the catalyst for **Canticle I: 'My beloved is mine'**, a setting of a poem by Francis Quarles (1592–1644). Composed in 1947, *Canticle I* was premiered on 1 November that year by Pears and the composer at a memorial concert for the Revd Dick Sheppard, founder of the Peace Pledge Union, the pacifist organization of which both composer and singer were staunch supporters. The canticle is a particularly concentrated and precise span divided into three principal sections. The piano-writing of the first section, marked *Andante alla barcarola*, encapsulates the imagery in the text before yielding to richer harmonic textures. A brief recitative leads into a harmonically ambiguous scherzo. The final, ecstatic *Lento* returns the work to the home tonality of G major, reiterated by alternating tonic and dominant chords. The piano postlude echoes the sparse counterpoint of the opening.

It was surely only a matter of time before Britten attempted a cycle of Hardy poems, for the composer's preoccupation with innocence corrupted finds an echo in both Hardy's verse and prose writings. There had been one earlier Britten–Hardy project prior to **Winter Words** of 1953: in 1940 Britten had composed incidental music (now lost) for a radio adaptation of Hardy's *The Dynasts*. After *Winter Words* there was to be one further Hardy setting, 'The Oxen', for two-part female chorus, composed in 1967 at the request of Pears's sister for her local branch of the Women's Institute.

Although Britten borrowed the title of Hardy's posthumously published final collection of verse, only one song – 'Proud Songsters' – originates from Hardy's *Winter Words*. 'At Day-close in November' uses the same D minor tonality of 'Gute Nacht' from Schubert's *Winterreise*. Britten encapsulates a tremendous sense of space in the song's introduction with a simultaneous combination of related major and minor chords, while the presentation of all 12 semitones achieves a high degree of instability. 'Midnight on the Great Western' is one of those inspired travel songs at which Britten excelled (the cabaret song 'Calypso' is another), with its mimicry of a train whistle. 'Wagtail and Baby' combines three related time signatures in an orderly pattern, which is only disrupted at the poem's denouement. In 'The Little Old Table' Britten plays with canonic imitations. 'The Choirmaster's Burial' is the dramatic centre of the cycle. Britten makes integral use of Milgrave's 'Mount Ephraim', named by Hardy's tenor man as the hymn tune requested by the late choirmaster. 'Proud Songsters' imitates collective birdsong. 'At the Railway Station, Upway' combines two ideas through careful dovetailing, one of which, heard on the piano, is entirely conceived within the compass limits of the violin belonging to the boy of Hardy's poem. 'Before Life and After' is one of Britten's profoundest songs and marks a return to the cycle's opening tonality now firmly rooted in the major mode. The inspiration for the succession of root-position chords in the piano's left hand is to be found in the primeval values at the heart of Hardy's poem. As the song progresses, the repeated chords become increasingly unrelated to the voice and the piano's right-hand, notably at the fourth stanza's 'But the disease of feeling germed'.

Having already composed song cycles with French and Italian texts (*Les Illuminations* (1939) and the *Michelangelo Sonnets* (1940)), Britten undertook a German cycle – **Sechs Hölderlin-Fragmente** – in 1958. The choice of German was logical, as the work was intended as a birthday present for his close friend – and translator of several of his operas – Prince Ludwig of Hesse and by Rhine, who, together with his wife, was a frequent travelling companion of Britten and Pears. The Hölderlin songs were first heard as a broadcast on 14 November 1958, and six days later Pears and Britten gave a private performance at Prince Ludwig's home near Darmstadt to celebrate the dedicatee's 50th birthday.

The poetry of Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843), with its blend of Lutheranism and ancient Greek philosophy, had largely been ignored by the 19th-century Lieder composers. His texts are often unorthodox in metre, and it is perhaps significant that Britten selected 'fragments' rather than extended poems. In any case, the shorter texts were well matched to the terse, rather economical musical style which characterizes the cycle and which was to become even more marked in Britten's output during the 1960s.

The setting of Goethe's **Um Mitternacht** was made in March 1962. Following the Hölderlin cycle, and perhaps to encourage Britten to set more German poetry, Prince Ludwig gave Britten an edition of Goethe's collected poems. Over 20 texts in the volume have been annotated by the composer, including 'Um Mitternacht', evidence that suggests Britten may have been contemplating a Goethe cycle. Britten's interest in setting Goethe in 1962 was also a consequence of his receiving the 1961 Hanseatic Goethe Prize, the presentation of which took place in May 1962. At

the ceremony he and Pears gave a short recital, which included some of Schubert's and Wolf's Goethe settings and his own Hölderlin cycle, and it's possible that 'Um Mitternacht' was intended for this occasion, as Britten's own tribute to the great writer. The song, however, remained unperformed in the composer's lifetime. Its subject matter allies it to Britten's other nocturnal pieces from this period (e.g. the orchestral song cycle *Nocturne* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). Goethe's text suggested to the composer the inclusion of 12 tolling bell-like chords in the piano's lower register, each of which is rooted on a different pitch of the chromatic scale.

In 1965 Britten added another foreign tongue to his repertoire when he made settings of six Pushkin poems in their original Russian, under the title **The Poet's Echo**. The songs were written while Britten and Pears stayed in Armenia in 1965 as the guests of Mstislav Rostropovich and his wife, the Russian prima donna Galina Vishnevskaya, and the cycle is dedicated to the couple. Britten bought a volume of Pushkin's poetry (in Russian with a parallel English translation) on the outward journey, though there is evidence that he had begun thinking about the possibility of setting Russian texts at least two years earlier.

In Pears's diary of their Armenian holiday, he gives an account of an impromptu late-night performance of the songs at Pushkin's birthplace museum:

'... our host begged to hear the Pushkin songs. We moved into the lamp-lit sitting room with an upright piano in the corner, and started on the songs. Galya sang her two and I hummed the others. The last song of the set is the marvellous poem of insomnia, the ticking clock, persistent night noises and the poet's cry for a meaning in them. Ben had started this with repeated staccato notes, high low, high low on the piano. Hardly had the old piano begun its dry tick tock, tick tock, than clear and silvery outside the window, a yard from our heads, came ding, ding, ding, not loud but distinct, Pushkin's clock joining in his song. It seemed to strike far more than midnight, to go on all through the song, and afterwards we sat spellbound. It was the most natural thing to have happened, and yet unique, astonishing, wonderful.'

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Malcolm Martineau was born in Edinburgh. He regularly appears with Sir Thomas Allen, Susan Graham, Simon Keenlyside, Magdalena Kožená, Dame Felicity Lott, Thomas Quasthoff, Michael Schade and Bryn Terfel. He has presented his own series at St John's, Smith Square, the Wigmore Hall and at the Edinburgh Festival. He accompanied in masterclasses at the Britten-Pears School, Aldeburgh for Dame Joan Sutherland, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Suzanne Danco and Ileana Cotrubas. His many recordings include Schubert, Schumann and English song recitals with Bryn Terfel, Schubert and Strauss recitals with Simon Keenlyside, recitals with Angela Gheorghiu, Barbara Bonney, Susan Graham and Magdalena Kožená, and the complete folk songs of Beethoven and Britten. He was given an honorary doctorate at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in 2004 and appointed International Fellow of Accompaniment in 2009.

James Geer (tenor) was an Academical Clerk at Magdalen College, Oxford University and continued his studies at the RSAMD. He is both a Samling Scholar and a Britten/Pears School Alumnus. He encompasses a wide repertoire, from baroque to contemporary music, in the opera house, on the concert platform and in recital. He has performed with many of the leading orchestras in the UK, including the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Philharmonia and his many festival appearances include the BBC Proms, Edinburgh and Aldeburgh. Opera roles include Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Grimoaldo (*Rodelinda*), Male Chorus (*The Rape of Lucretia*), Gonzalve (*L'Heure espagnole*), Frederic (*The Pirates of Penzance*) and Acis (*Acis and Galatea*).

Caryl Hughes (mezzo-soprano) studied at the Royal Academy of Music with Noelle Barker and Audrey Hyland and went on to study at the Cardiff International Academy of Voice, under the direction of Dennis O'Neill. She has performed with Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera, English Touring Opera, Clonter Opera, The Opera Group, OPRA Cymru, Armonico Consort, Iford Arts and Tête à Tête Festivals in roles including the title roles in *La Cenerentola* and *Carmen*, Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*, Varvara (*Kát'a Kabanová*), Teti (*Le nozze di Teti e di Peleo*), Irene (*Tamerlano*), Yniold (*Pelléas et Mélisande*), Eustazio (*Rinaldo*), Little Moon (*A Night at the Chinese Opera*), Rita the Rat (*Fantastic Mr Fox*), the title role in Neal Thornton's *Sonya's Story* and Flora in the world premiere of Jonathan Dove's *The Enchanted Pig*.

Tenor **Andrew Tortise** was a choral scholar at Wells Cathedral before graduating from Trinity College, Cambridge in 2002. He has a varied career in concert, recitals and opera and including productions with Netherlands Opera, Royal Opera House, Glyndebourne Festival Opera and Welsh National Opera (including a performance of the 2010 BBC Proms). In concert, he has appeared with the London Symphony Orchestra, Academy of Ancient Music, Le Concert Spirituel, The Hague Residentie Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic and Netherlands Bach Society with conductors including Sir Colin Davis, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Ivor Bolton, Richard Egarr, William Christie and Marc Minkowski.

Ben Johnson (tenor) studied at RCM and won First Prize at the 2008 Kathleen Ferrier Award. From 2010–12 he is a BBC New Generation Artist. Engagements include Berg's *Wozzeck* (Philharmonia, Salonen), Britten in *Les Illuminations* (Orchestra of Scottish Opera), the St Matthew Passion (Kristiansand Symphony, Kraemer) and Handel's *Samson* (BBC Proms, Bicket). In 2009–10 Ben made his operatic debuts at Opéra de Lyon and Glyndebourne. Conductors and accompanists with whom Ben has worked include Sir Charles Mackerras, Sir Mark Elder, Frans Brüggen, Jiří Bělohlávek, Roger Vignoles, Iain Burnside and Graham Johnson. Further ahead, Ben has engagements with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (Nelsons), the Philharmonia (Andrew Davis), the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Proms, Wigmore Hall, and Brighton and Three Choirs Festivals, as well as major roles for ENO, Opéra National de Bordeaux and Opera Oviedo.

One-time zoologist and National Otter Surveyor of England, **Philip Smith** (baritone) hung up his waders to study singing with Barbara Robotham at the Royal Northern College of Music graduating in 2008. He has appeared in concerts and recitals at the Aldeburgh and Leeds Lieder festivals and in concerts in Poland, France and Malta. His opera roles have included Sid in *Albert Herring* directed by Keith Warner at the Cantieri Internazionale d'Arte, Montepulciano. He has also performed with Longborough Festival Opera, Opera by Definition, Manchester Camerata, Ensemble 10/10, Edinburgh Studio Opera and Glyndebourne Touring Opera. Philip made his Wigmore Hall debut in December 2010. Future plans include a return to Montepulciano to sing Arlekin in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Sid in *Albert Herring* for the Royal Danish Opera, Copenhagen.

Hailed recently in the press as 'Scotland's Top Tenor', **Nicky Spence** is a young artist at English National Opera, having trained at the GSMD and the National Opera Studio under the tutelage of John Evans. Winner of the National Bruce Millar Opera Prize, Nicky sings in repertoire ranging from Handel and Mozart to Donizetti, Britten and Jonathan Dove. A Concordia Foundation Artist, Britten-Pears Young Artist, Georg Solti and Samling Scholar, his other awards include the Kathleen Ferrier Young Singers Award, the Concordia Barthel Prize, Sybil Tutton Award, Dewar Prize, a Young Classical Performer of the Year nomination at the Classical Brit Awards and a place in the final of the Gold Medal at the Guildhall School.

Katherine Broderick (soprano) studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the Hochschule in Leipzig. She won the Kathleen Ferrier Award in 2007 and completed her studies the following year at the National Opera Studio in London. On the concert platform she has appeared with the Mozarteum Orchestra, Singapore Symphony, Halle, Bournemouth and BBC Symphony Orchestras with conductors Donald Runnicles, Jiří Bělohlávek, Marin Alsop, Simon Young, Sir Mark Elder, Ivor Bolton, Sir Roger Norrington and Paul McCreesh. On the operatic stage, she has worked with English National Opera, Opera Leipzig, Opera North and Glyndebourne on tour. Katherine gives regular recitals throughout the UK.

Irish tenor **Robin Tritschler** graduated from the Royal Irish Academy of Music and the Royal Academy of Music, London. The recipient of many awards, he has worked regularly in recital with Simon Lepper, Roger Vignoles, Malcolm Martineau and Graham Johnson and has appeared with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, the RTÉ Concert Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hong Kong Philharmonic and at the Aldeburgh Festival. He appeared at La Monnaie, Brussels, sang in the world premiere of Roger Waters' *Ça Ira* in Poland and sang Rodrigo (*Otello*), Count Almaviva (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Marzio (*Mitridate*), Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*) and Narraboth (*Salome*) on contract with the Welsh National Opera. He returned to WNO as a guest for Jaquino (*Fidelio*) and Belmonte (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*). Robin's upcoming opera engagements include Ferrando (*Così fan tutte*) and Benedict (*Béatrice et Bénédict*) for the WNO, and he will appear in recital with Graham Johnson in Washington, Antwerp and at the Wigmore Hall.

CD 1

Fish in the unruffled lakes (1937–41)
W.H. Auden (1907–1973)

To lie flat on the back

- 1 To lie flat on the back with the knees flexed
and sunshine on the soft receptive belly,
or face down, the insolent spine relaxed,
no more compelled to cower or to bully,
is good; and good to see them passing by
below on the white sidewalk in the heat,
the dog, the lady with parcels, and the boy:
there is the casual life outside the heart.

Yes, we are out of sight and earshot here.
Are you aware what weapon you are loading,
to what that teasing talk is quietly leading?
Our pulses count but do not judge the hour.
Who are you with, from whom you turn away,
At whom you dare not look? Do you know why?

Night covers up the rigid land

- 2 Night covers up the rigid land
and ocean's quaking moor,
and shadows with a tolerant hand
the ugly and the poor.

The wounded pride for which I weep
you cannot staunch, nor I
control the moments of your sleep,
nor hear the name you cry,

Whose life is lucky in your eyes,
and precious is the bed
as to his utter fancy lies
the dark caressive head.

For each love to its aim is true,
and all kinds seek their own;
you love your life and I love you,
so I must lie alone.

A Dirge

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822)

- 3 Rough wind that moanest loud,
grief too sad for song;
wild wind when sullen cloud
knells all the night long;
sad storm, whose tears are vain,
bare woods whose branches strain,
deep caves and dreary main,
waill for the world's wrong,

Virtue in Deeds not Words

Philip Bailey (1816–1902)

- 4 We live in deeds, not years.
In thoughts not breaths.
In feelings not figures on a deal.
We should count time by heart-throbs.
He most lives, who thinks most;
feels the noblest, acts the best.

Prithee

Sir John Suckling (1606–1642)

- 5 Why so pale and wan, fond lover?
Prithee, why so pale? –
Will, when looking well can't move her,
Looking ail prevail?
Prithee, why so pale?

Why so dull and mute, young sinner?
Prithee, why so mute? –
Will, when speaking well can't win her,
Saying nothing do't?
Prithee, why so mute?

Quit, quit, for shame! this will not move,
this cannot take her –
if of herself she will not love,
nothing can make her:
The Devil take her!*

**Britten sets this line as 'Let who will take her'*

From 'Lucy'

William Wordsworth

- 6 I travell'd among unknown men,
in lands beyond the sea;
nor, England! did I know till then
what love I bore to thee.

'Tis past, that melancholy dream!
Nor will I quit again
a second time; for still I seem
to love thee more and more.

Among the mountains did I feel
the joy of my desire;
and she I cherish'd turn'd her wheel
beside an English fire.

Thy mornings show'd, thy nights conceal'd,
the bowers where Lucy play'd,
and thine too is the last green field
that Lucy's eyes survey'd.

Britten: Canticle I 'My beloved is mine'

Francis Quarles (1592–1644)

- 7 Ev'n like two little bank-divided brooks
that wash the pebbles with their wanton streams,
and having ranged and searched a thousand nooks
meet both at length at silver-breasted Thames
where in a greater current they conjoin,
so I my best beloved's am,
so he is mine!

Ev'n so we met and after long pursuit
ev'n so we joined. We both became entire.
No need for either to renew a suit
for I was flax, and he was flames of fire.
Our firm united souls did more than twine.
So I my best beloved's am,
so he is mine.

If all those glittering monarchs, that command
the servile quarters of this earthly ball
should tender in exchange their shares of land
I would not change my fortunes for them all;

their wealth is but a counter to my coin:
the world's but theirs;
but my beloved's mine.

Nor time, nor place, nor chance, nor death
can bow my least desires unto the least remove.
He's firmly mine by oath, I his by vow.
He's mine by faith and I am his by love,
he's mine by water, I am his by wine:
thus I my best beloved's am,
thus he is mine.

He is my altar, I his holy place,
I am his guest and he my living food.
I'm his by penitence, he mine by grace,
I'm his by purchase, he is mine by blood.
He's my supporting elm and I his vine:
thus I my best beloved's am,
thus he is mine.

He gives me wealth: I give him all my vows:
I give him songs, he gives me length of days.
With wreaths of grace he crowns my longing brows
and I his temples with a crown of praise,
which he accepts: an everlasting sign
that I my best beloved's am,
that he is mine.

Um Mitternacht

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832)

- 8 Um Mitternacht ging ich, nicht eben gerne,
klein, kleiner Knabe, jenen Kirchhof hin
zu Vaters Haus, des Pfarrers, Stern am Sterne,
sie leuchteten doch alle gar zu schön;
Um Mitternacht.

Wenn ich dann ferner, in des Lebens Weite
zur Liebsten mußte, mußte, weil sie zog,
Gestirn und Nordschein über mir im Streite,
ich gehend, kommend Seligkeiten sog;
Um Mitternacht.

Bis dann zuletzt des vollen Mondes Helle
so klar und deutlich mir ins Finstere drang,
auch der Gedanke willig, sinnig, schnelle
sich ums Vergang'ne wie ums Künftige schlang;
um Mitternacht.

Sechs Hölderlin-Fragmente

Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843)

Menschenbeifall

- 9 Ist nicht heilig mein Herz, schöneren Lebens voll,
seit ich liebe? Warum achtetet ihr mich mehr,
da ich stolzer und wilder,
wortreicher und leerer war?

Ahl der Menge gefällt, was auf den Markplatz taugt,
Und es ehret der Knecht nur den Gewaltsamen;
an das Göttliche glauben
die allein, die es selber sind.

Die Heimat

- 10 Froh kehrt der Schiffer heim an den stillen Strom
von fernen Inseln, wo er geerntet hat;
wohl möcht' auch ich zur Heimat wieder;
aber was hab' ich, wie Leid, geerntet? –

At midnight

At midnight I would walk, rather unwillingly,
as a very little boy, along past that churchyard,
to father's, to the parson's house; star upon star,
how beautifully they all shone;
at midnight.

Then, later, far back in life, when I was going
to my beloved, drawn by her compulsion,
the stars and the northern lights would be at war above me,
and as I went and as I came I sucked in
happiness with every breath – at midnight.

Until at last the full moon's radiance
penetrated my darkness so clearly and painfully,
and thought willingly, meaningfully, swiftly
embraced the past and the future;
at midnight.

Translated by David Luke

Six Hölderlin Fragments

The Applause of Men

Love has hallowed my heart, filled it with fairer life,
filled it with beauty. Why then did you esteem me more,
in my arrogant wilderness,
rich in empty resounding words?

Ah! the masses delight in ev'ry cheap device,
and the servile obey nought but a tyranny;
they acknowledge the godlike –
only they, who themselves are gods.

Home

With joy the fisher steers into quiet port
from distant islands, where he has harvested.
So too would I be turning homewards;
ah, but what have I, save grief, for harvest?

ihr holden Ufer, die ihr mich aufgezoget,
stillt ihr der Liebe Leiden? ach! gebt ihr mir,
ihr Wälder meiner Kindheit, wann ich komme,
Ruhe noch einmal wieder?

Sokrates und Alcibiades

- 11 Warum huldigst du, heiliger Sokrates,
diesem Jünglinge stets? Kennst du Großers nicht?
Warum siehet mit Liebe,
wie auf Götter, dein Aug' auf ihn?

Wer das Tiefste gedacht, liebt das Lebendigste,
Hohe Tugend versteht, wer in die Welt geblickt,
und es neigen die Weisen
oft am Ende zu Schönem sich.

Die Jugend

- 12 Da ich ein Knabe war,
rettet' ein Gott mich oft
vom Geschrei und der Rufe der Menschen,
da spielt' ich sicher und gut
mit den Blumen des Hains,
und die Lüftchen des Himmels
spielten mit mir.
Und wie du das Herz
der Pflanzen erfreust,
wenn sie entgegen dir
die zarten Arme strecken,
so hast du mein Herz erfreut,
Vater Helios! Und, wie Endymion,
war ich dein Liebling,
heilige Luna!
O all ihr treuen
freundlichen Götter!
Daß ihr wußtet,
wie euch meine Seele geliebt!
Mich erzog der Wohl laut
des säuselnden Hains,
und lieben lernt' ich
unter den Blumen.
Im Arme der Götter wuchs ich groß.

Ye blessed shores, the guardians of my youth,
can you not ease my longing? Then give me back,
you forests of my childhood, at my
coming, that peace which once you gave me!

Socrates and Alcibiades

And why farest thou, holy Socrates,
such a stripling as this? Know'st thou no higher things?
And why gazest upon him
like an immortal, with eyes of love?

Who most deeply enquires, loves what is liveliest,
and Virtue perceives, who has observed the world,
and at moments the sages
must be yielding to Beauty itself.

The Youth

When I was still a boy
I was saved by a god
from the noise and the bruises of mankind.
I played securely and free
with the flowers of the fields,
and the breezes of heaven
sporting with me.
And as you delight
the hearts of the flowers
when they incline to you,
their tender arms outstretching,
so you filled my heart with joy,
father Helios! And, like Endymion,
I was your darling,
heavenly Luna!
O all you friendly
faithful Immortals!
Could I tell you
how belov'd you were to my heart!
I was taught the songs
of the whispering trees
and amid the flowers
I learnt the art of love.
The arms of the gods made me a man.

Hälfte des Lebens

- 13 Mit gelben Birnen hänget
und voll mit wilden Rosen
das Land in den See,
ihr holden Schwäne,
und trunken von Küssen
tunkt ihr das Haupt
ins heilignüchterne Wasser.
Weh mir, wo nehm' ich, wenn
es Winter ist, die Blumen, und wo
den Sonnenschein,
und Schatten der Erde?
Die Mauern steh'n
sprachlos und kalt, im Winde
klirren die Fahnen.

Die Linien des Lebens

- 14 Die Linien des Lebens sind verschieden,
wie Wege sind, und wie der Berge Grenzen.
Was hier wir sind, kann dort ein Gott ergänzen
mit Harmonien und ewigen Lohn und Frieden.

The Middle of Life

With golden fruit it hangs there
and full of wild roses
the land into the lake,
ye gentle swans
and drunken with kissing
dip your heads
into the pure hallowed water.
Alas! where are they, in
the winter-time, the flowers, and where
the shining sun
and shadows of the Earth?
The walls stand there
speechless and cold; the wind sets
weathervanes clatt'ring.

Lines of Life

Each line of life is different from another,
as rivers are, or like the mountain ranges.
What we are here is there by God
with harmony, reward and peace eternal.

*Translated by Elizabeth Mayer and Peter Pears
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The Holy Sonnets of John Donne op.35 (1945)
John Donne (1572–1631)

Oh my blacke Soule!

- 15 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.

Batter my heart

- 16 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 usurt 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 enemy:
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.

Oh might those sighes and teares

- 17 Oh might those sighes and teares returne 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 ill. To poore me is allow'd
no ease; for long, yet vehement griefe hath been
th'effect and cause, the punishment and sinne.

Oh, to vex me

- 18 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.

What if this present

- 19 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, foulennesse onely is
a signe of rigour: so I say to thee,
to wicked spirits are horrid shapes assign'd,
this beauteous forme assures a piteous minde.

Since she whom I lov'd

- 20 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 admiring 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: offering 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
leaste the world, Fleshe, yea, Devill putt thee out.

At the round earth's imagined corners

- 21 At the round earth's imagined corners, blow
your trumpets, angels, and arise, arise
from death, you numberless infinities
of soules, and to your scatter'd bodies goe,
all whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow
all whom war, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies,
despair, law, chance, hath slain, and you whose eyes
shall behold God and never taste death's woe.
But let them sleepe, Lord, and mee mourne 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.

Thou hast made me

- 22 Thou hast made me, and shall thy work decay?
Repair 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.

Death, be not proud

- 23 Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not soe,
for, those, whom thou think'st, thou dost overthrow,

die not, poore death, nor yett canst thou kill mee.
from rest and sleepe, which but thy pictures bee
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.

Britten

Four Cabaret Songs

W.H. Auden

Calypso

- 24 Driver, drive faster and make a good run
down the Springfield Line under the shining sun.
Fly like the aeroplane, don't pull up short
till you brake for the Grand Central Station, New York.
For there in the middle of that waiting hall
should be standing the one that I love best of all.
If he's not there to meet me when I get to town,
I'll stand on the pavement with tears rolling down.
For he is the one that I love to look on,
the acme of kindness and perfection.
He presses my hand and he says he loves me
which I find an admirable peculiarity.
The woods are bright green on both sides of the line;
the trees have their loves though they're different from mine.
But the poor fat old banker in the sun-parlour car
has no one to love him except his sugar.
If I were the head of the Church or the State
I'd powder my nose and just tell them to wait.
For love's more important and powerful than
even a priest or a politician.

O tell me the truth about love

- 25 Some say that Love's a little boy
and some say it's a bird,
some say it makes the world go round
and some say that's absurd:
but when I asked the man next door

who looked as if he knew,
his wife was very cross indeed
and said it wouldn't do.
Does it look like a pair of pyjamas
or the ham in a temperance hotel,
does its odour remind one of llamas
or has it a comforting smell?
Is it prickly to touch as a hedge is
or soft as eiderdown fluff,
is it sharp or quite smooth at the edges?
O tell me the truth about love.
I looked inside the summer-house,
it wasn't ever there,
I've tried the Thames at Maidenhead
and Brighton's bracing air;
I don't know what the blackbird sang
or what the roses said,
but it wasn't in the chicken-run
or underneath the bed.
Can it pull extraordinary faces,
is it usually sick on a swing,
does it spend all its time at the races
or fiddling with pieces of string,
has it views of its own about money,
does it think Patriotism enough,
are its stories vulgar or funny?
O tell me the truth about love.
Your feelings when you meet it, I
am told you can't forget.
I've sought it since I was a child
but haven't found it yet;
I'm getting on for thirty-five,
and still I do not know
what kind of creature it can be
that bothers people so.
When it comes, will it come without warning
just as I'm picking my nose,
will it knock on my door in the morning
or tread in the bus on my toes,
will it come like a change in the weather,
will its greeting be courteous or bluff,
will it alter my life altogether?
O tell me the truth about love?

Funeral Blues

26 Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
silence the pianos and with muffled drum
bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead
scribbling on the sky the message He Is Dead,
tie crepe bands round the white necks of the public doves,
let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,
my working week and my Sunday rest,
my noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last for ever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now: put out ev'ry one,
pack up the moon and dismantle the sun,
pour away the ocean and sweep up the woods;
for nothing now can ever come to any good.

Johnny

27 O the valley in the summer where I and my John
beside the deep river would walk on and on
while the grass at our feet and the birds up above
whispered so soft in reciprocal love,
and I leaned on his shoulder; 'O Johnny, let's play':
but he frowned like thunder, and he went away.

O the evening near Christmas as I well recall
when we went to the Charity Matinee Ball,
the floor was so smooth and the band was so loud
and Johnny so handsome I felt so proud;
'Squeeze me tighter, dear Johnny, let's dance till day':
but he frowned like thunder and went away.

Shall I ever forget at the Grand Opera
when music poured out of each wonderful star?
Diamonds and pearls hung down like ivy
over each gold and silver gown;
'O Johnny I'm in heaven,' I whispered to say:
but he frowned like thunder and went away.

O but he was as fair as a garden in flower,
as slender and tall as the great Eiffel Tower,

when the waltz throbb'd out down the long promenade,
o his eyes and his smile went straight to my heart;
'O marry me, Johnny, I'll love and obey':
but he frowned like thunder and he went away.

O last night I dreamed of you, Johnny, my lover,
you'd the sun on one arm and the moon on the other,
the sea it was blue and the grass it was green,
ev'ry star rattled a round tambourine;
ten thousand miles deep in a pit there I lay:
but you went away.

CD 2

Tit for Tat [193; rev. 1968]
Walter de la Mare (1873–1956)

1. A song of enchantment

- 1 A song of enchantment I sang me there,
in a green-green wood, by waters fair,
just as the words came up to me
I sang it under the wild wood tree.

Widdershins turned I, singing it low,
watching the wild birds come and go;
no cloud in the deep dark blue to be seen
under the thick-thatched branches green.

Twilight came; silence came;
the planet of evening's silver flame;
by darkening paths I wandered through
thickets trembling with drops of dew.

But the music is lost and the words are gone
of the song I sang as I sat alone,
ages and ages have fallen on me –
on the wood and the pool and the elder tree.

2. Autumn

- 2 There is a wind where the rose was;
cold rain where sweet grass was;
and clouds like sheep
stream o'er the steep
grey skies where the lark was.

Nought gold where your hair was;
nought warm where your hand was;
but phantom, forlorn,
beneath the thorn,
your ghost where your face was.

Sad winds where your voice was;
tears, tears where my heart was;
and ever with me,
child, ever with me,
silence where hope was.

3. Silver

- 3 Slowly, silently, now the moon
walks the night in her silver shoon;
this way, and that, she peers and sees
silver fruit upon silver trees;
one by one the casements catch
her beams beneath the silvery thatch;
couched in his kennel, like a log,
with paws of silver sleeps the dog;
a harvest mouse goes scampering by,
with silver claws, and silver eye;
and moveless fish in the water gleam,
by silver reeds in a silver stream.

4. Vigil

- 4 Dark is the night,
the fire burns faint and low,
hours – days – years,
into grey ashes go;
I strive to read,
but sombre is the glow.

Thumbed are the pages,
and the print is small;
mocking the winds
that from the darkness call;
feeble the fire that lends
its light withal.

O ghost, draw nearer;
let thy shadowy hair
blot out the pages
that we cannot share;

be ours the one last leaf
by Fate left bare!

Let's Finis scrawl,
and then Life's book put by;
turn each to each
in all simplicity:
ere the last flame is gone
to warm us by.

5. Tit for tat

- 5 Have you been catching fish, Tom Noddy?
Have you snared a weeping hare?
Have you whistled 'No Nunny' and gunned a poor bunny,
or blinded a bird of the air?

Have you trod like a murderer through the green woods,
through the dewy deep dingles and glooms,
while every small creature screamed shrill to Dame Nature
'He comes – and he comes!'

Wonder I very much do, Tom Noddy,
if ever, when off you roam,
an Ogre from space will stoop a lean face,
and lug you home:

Lug you home over his fence, Tom Noddy,
of thorn-sticks nine yards high,
with your bent knees strung round his old iron gun
and your head a dan-dangling by:

and hung you up stiff on a hook, Tom Noddy,
from a stone-cold pantry shelf,
whence your eyes will glare in an empty stare,
till you are cooked yourself!

Beware!

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882)

- 6 I know a maiden fair to see,
take care!
She can both false and friendly be,
beware! beware!
Trust her not, she is fooling thee!
She has two eyes, so soft and brown,

take care!
She gives a side-glance and looks down,
beware! beware!
Trust her not, she is fooling thee!

And she has hair of a golden hue,
take care!
And what she says, it is not true,
beware! beware!
Trust her not, she is fooling thee!

She has a bosom as white as snow,
take care!
She knows how much it is best to show,
beware! beware!
Trust her not, she is fooling thee!

She gives thee a garland woven fair,
take care!
It is a fool's-cap for thee to wear,
beware! beware!
Trust her not, she is fooling thee!

Britten set stanzas 1–2

O that I had ne'er been married

Robert Burns (1759–1796)

- 7 O that I had ne'er been married,
I wad never had nae care,
now I've gotten wife an' weans,
an' they cry 'Crowdie' evermair.

Chorus:

Ance crowdie, twice crowdie,
three times crowdie in a day
gin ye crowdie ony mair,
ye'll crowdie a' my meal away.

Waefu' Want and Hunger fley me,
glowrin' by the hallan en';
Sair I fecht them at the door,
But aye I'm eerie they come ben.
Ance crowdie, &c.

Epitaph: The Clerk*Herbert Asquith (1881–1947)*

- 8 Here lies the clerk who half his life had spent
toiling at ledgers in a city grey,
thinking that so his days would drift away
with no lance broken in life's tournament:
yet ever 'twixt the books and his bright eyes
the gleaming eagles of the legions came,
and horsemen, charging under phantom skies,
went thundering past beneath the oriflamme.

And now those waiting dreams are satisfied;
from twilight to the halls of dawn he went;
his lance is broken; but he lies content
with that high hour, in which he lived and died.
And falling thus, he wants no recompense,
who found his battle in the last resort;
nor needs he any hearse to bear him hence,
who goes to join the men of Agincourt.

Lilian*Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892)*

- I
9 Airy, Fairy Lilian,
fitting, fairy Lilian,
when I ask her if she love me,
claps her tiny hands above me,
laughing all she can;
she'll not tell me if she love me,
cruel little Lilian.

II

When my passion seeks
pleasance in love-sighs,
she, looking thro' and thro' me
thoroughly to undo me,
smiling, never speaks:
so innocent-arch, so cunning-simple,
from beneath her gathered wimple
glancing with black-bearded eyes,
till the lightning laughers dimple
the baby-roses in her cheeks;
then away she flies.

III

Prythee weep, May Lilian!
Gaiety without eclipse
wearieth me, May Lilian;
thro' my very heart it thrilleth
when from crimson-threaded lips
silver-treble laughter trilleth:
prythee weep, May Lilian!

IV

Praying all I can,
if prayers will not hush thee,
airy Lilian,
like a rose-leaf I will crush thee,
fairy Lilian,
cruel little Lilian.

The Joy of Grief*from 'In Memoriam' (Tennyson)*

- 10 I hold it true, whate'er befall;
I feel it when I sorrow most;
'tis better to have loved and lost
than never to have loved at all.

'Ekho Po'eta

Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin (1799–1837)

'Ekho

- 11 Revjot li zver' v lesu glukhom,
trubit li rog, gremit li grom,
pajot li deva' za kholmom –
na vsjakij zvuk
svoj otklik v vozdukhke pustom
radish' ty vdrug.
Ty vnmesh' grokhotu gromov,
i glasu buri i valov,
i krikou sel'skikh pastukhov –
i shlesh' otvet;
tebe zh net otzyva... Takov
i ty, po'et!

Ja dupal, serdce pozabylo

- 12 Ja dupal, serdce pozabyla
spasobhas't legkuju stradat',
ja gavoril: tomu, chto byla,
uzh ne byvat'! uzh ne byvat'!
Prashli vastorgi, i pechali,
i legkovernyje mechty...
no vot opjat' zatrepetali
pred moshchnoj vlast' ju krasoty.

Angel

- 13 V dverjakh 'edema angel nezhnij
glavoj poniksheju sijal,
a demon mrachnij i mjatezhnyj
nad adskoj bezdnoju letal.
Dukh atrican'ja, dukh samieuj
na dukha chistova vziral
i zhar nevol'nyj umilen'ja
vpervyje smutno poznaval.
'Prasti,' on rjok, 'tebja ja videl,
i ty nedarom mne sijal:
ne vsjo ja v nebe nenavidel,
ne vsjo ja v mire preziral.'

Solovej i roza

- 14 V bezmolvij sadov, vesnoj, vo mgle nochej,
pajot nad rozoiu vostochnyj solovej.
No roza milaja ne chustvujet, ne vnmellet,
I pod vlyublennij gimn kolebletsja i dremlet.
Ne tak li ty pajosh' dlja khladnoj krasoty?

The Poet's Echo

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 for ever,
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'er 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.'

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?

Opomnis', o po'et, k chemu stremish'sja ty?
Ona ne slushajet, ne chuvstvujet po'eta;
gljadish' – ana cvetet; zyvajesh' – net avteta.

Epigramma

- 15 Polu-milord, polu-kupec,
polu-mudrec, polu-nevezhda,
polu-podlec, no jest' nadezhda,
chto budet polnym nakonec.

Stikhi, sochinennye noch'ju vo vremja bessonnicy

- 16 Mne ne spitsja, net ognja;
vsjudu mrak i son dokuchnyj.
Khod chasov lish' odnozvuchnyj
razdajotsja bliz menja,
parki bab' je lepetan'je,
spjashchej nochi trepetan'je,
zhizni mysh'ja begotnja...
chto trevozhish' ty menja?
Chto ty znachish', skuchnyj shopot?
Ukorizna, ili ropot
mnoj utrachennava dnja?
Ot menja chego ty khochesh'?
Ty zavjosh' ili prorochish'?
Ja ponjat' tebjja khochu,
smysla ja v tebe ischuu...

O poet, be aware 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.
*The subject of this epigram was Count M.S. Vorontsov,
Pushkin's chief in Odessa. He was brought up in England
(Half a milord) and had financial interests in Odessa
(half of a boss').*

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...

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Winter Words

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928)

At Day-close in November

- 17 The ten hours' light is abating,
and a late bird wings across,
where the pines, like waltzers waiting,
give their black heads a toss.

Beech leaves, that yellow the noon-time,
float past like specks in the eye;
I set ev'ry tree in my June time,
and now they obscure the sky.

And the children who ramble through here
conceive that there never has been
a time when no tall trees grew here,
that none will in time be seen.

Midnight on the Great Western

(or The Journeying Boy)

- 18 In the third-class seat sat the journeying boy,
and the roof-lamp's oily flame
Play'd down on his listless form and face,
bewrapt past knowing to what he was going,
or whence he came.

In the band of his hat the journeying boy
had a ticket stuck; and a string
around his neck bore the key of his box,
that twinkled gleams of the lamp's sad beams
like a living thing.

What past can be yours, o journeying boy
towards a world unknown,
who calmly, as if incurious quite
on all at stake, can undertake
this plunge alone?

Knows your soul a sphere, o journeying boy,
our rude realms far above,
whence with spacious vision you mark and mete
this region of sin that you find you in,
but are not of?

Wagtail and Baby (A Satire)

- 19 A baby watch'd a ford, whereto
a wagtail came for drinking;
a blaring bull went wading through,
the wagtail showed no shrinking,

A stallion splashed his way across,
the birdie nearly sinking;
he gave his plumes a twitch and toss,
and held his own unblinking.

Next saw the baby round the spot
a mongrel slowly slinking;
the wagtail gazed, but faltered not
in dip and sip and prinking.

A perfect gentleman then neared;
the wagtail, in a winking,
with terror rose and disappeared;
the baby fell a-thinking.

The Little Old Table

- 20 Creak, little wood thing, creak,
when I touch you with elbow or knee;
that is the way you speak
of one who gave you to me!

You, little table, she brought,
brought me with her own hand,
as she look'd at me with a thought
that I did not understand.

Whoever owns it anon,
and hears it, will never know
what a history hangs upon
this creak from long ago.

The Choirmaster's Burial

(or The Tenor Man's Story)

- 21 He often would ask us
that, when he died,
after playing so many
to their last rest,
if out of us any
should here abide,

and it would not task us,
we would with our lutes
play over him
by his grave-brim
the psalm he liked best.
The one whose sense suits
'Mount Ephraim' –
and perhaps we should seem
to him, in Death's dream,
like the seraphim.

As soon as I knew
that his spirit was gone
I thought this his due,
and spoke thereupon.
'I think,' said the vicar,
'a read service quicker
than viols out-of-doors
in these frosts and hoars.
That old-fashioned way
requires a fine day,
and it seems to me
it had better not be.'

Hence, that afternoon,
though never knew he
that his wish could not be,
to get through it faster
they buried the master
without any tune.

But 'twas said that, when
at the dead of next night
the vicar looked out,
there struck on his ken
thronged roundabout,
where the frost was graying
the headstoned grass,
a band all in white
like the saints in church-glass,
singing and playing
the ancient stave
by the choir-master's grave.

Such the tenor man told
when he had grown old.

Proud Songsters

(Thrushes, Finches & Nightingales)

- 22 The thrushes sing as the sun is going,
and the finches whistle in ones and pairs,
and as it gets dark loud nightingales
in bushes
pipe, as they can when April wears,
as if all Time were theirs.

These are brand-new birds of twelve-months' growing,
which a year ago, or less than twain,
no finches were, nor nightingales,
nor thrushes,
but only particles of grain,
and earth, and air, and rain.

At the Railway Station, Upway

(or The Convict and Boy with the Violin)

- 23 'There is not much that I can do,
for I've no money that's quite my own'
spoke up the pitying child –
a little boy with a violin
at the station before the train came in,
'but I can play my fiddle to you,
and a nice one 'tis, and good in tone!'

The man in the handcuffs smiled;
the constable looked, and he smiled, too,
as the fiddle began to twang;
and the man in the handcuffs suddenly sang
with grimful glee:
'This life so free
is the thing for me!'

And the constable smiled, and said no word,
as if unconscious of what he heard;
and so they went on till the train came in –
the convict, and boy with the violin.

Before Life and After

- 24 A time there was – as one may guess
and as, indeed, earth's testimonies tell –
before the birth of consciousness,
when all went well.

None suffered sickness, love, or loss,
none knew regret, starved hope, or heart-burnings;
None cared whatever crash or cross
brought wrack to things.

If something ceased, no tongue bewailed,
if something winced and waned, no heart was wrung;
if brightness dimmed, and dark prevailed,
no sense was stung.

But the disease of feeling germed,
and primal rightness took the tinct of wrong;
ere nescience shall be reaffirmed
how long, how long?

Texts supplied by Aldeburgh Music

This recording has been supported by Aldeburgh Music,
with the generous help of Alan & Judi Britten and David Heckels



Executive producer for Onyx: Matthew Cosgrove
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Recording location: Britten Studio, Snape Maltings, 14–17 January and 30–31 October 2010

Cover photo: © Britten-Pears Foundation

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