

THE WAGON OF LIFE

Songs of Nature, Life and Love in Time and Place



Mark Rowlinson

baritone

Peter Lawson

piano

THE WAGON OF LIFE

Thomas Pitfield (1903-1999):

- | | | |
|---|--|------|
| 1 | The Wagon of Life (Pushkin/Alice and Thomas Pitfield) | 2:08 |
| 2 | By the Dee at Night (Thomas Pitfield) | 2:33 |
| 3 | September Lovers (Thomas Pitfield) | 1:47 |

Stuart Scott (b.1949):

- | | | |
|---|--|------|
| 4 | Alderley (Thomas Pitfield) | 1:12 |
| 5 | Gawsworth (Thomas Pitfield) | 1:52 |
| 6 | Fall, Leaves, Fall (Emily Brontë) | 2:40 |
| 7 | Night Clouds (Amy Lowell) | 1:28 |

Geoffrey Kimpton(b.1927):

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 8 | Noah (Siegfried Sassoon) | 2:41 |
| 9 | Faintheart in a Railway Station (Thomas Hardy) | 1:56 |
| 10 | The Poor Man's Pig (Edmund Blunden) | 1:45 |

Joanna Treasure (b 1961):

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 11 | Tango [Do You Remember?] (Wilfrid Samuel Treasure) | 2:09 |
| 12 | I Saw the Girl (John Clare) | 6:29 |

John Ramsden Williamson (1929-2015):

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|----|--|------|
| 13 | The Recruit (A.E. Housman) | 2:57 |
| 14 | White in the Moon (A.E. Housman) | 4:06 |
| 15 | Think No More, Lad (A.E. Housman) | 1:01 |

Stephen Wilkinson (b.1919):

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 16 | The Sunlight on the Garden (Louis MacNiece) | 2:36 |
| 17 | The Garden (Andrew Marvell) | 1:58 |

Philip Wood (b.1972):

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 18 | Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal (Alfred, Lord Tennyson) | 4:42 |
|----|---|------|

Sacha Johnson Manning (b.1963):

19 My Song shall be of Mercy and Judgement (Psalm 101) 3:16

20 The Lord is King (Psalm 93) 2:46

Kevin George Brown (b.1959):

21 Dying Day (Philip Larkin) 4:28

22 Description of Spring (Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey) 2:20

David Golightly (b.1948):

Songs of the Clifftop (Steve Hobson)

23 Sea Bird 2:34

24 After the Kill 3:00

25 Puffin 2:13

David Forshaw (b.1938):

26 The Owl (Kathleen Collier) 2:22

27 Whale Song (Kathleen Collier) 3:21

28 Horse (Kathleen Collier) 4:33

Total Duration: 79:01

MARK ROWLINSON baritone | PETER LAWSON piano

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THE WAGON OF LIFE Songs of Nature, Life and Love in Time and Place

The 2003 celebrations marking the centenary of Thomas Pitfield's birth afforded the North West Composers' Association an opportunity of adding its tribute to a remarkable man of many talents. Fittingly, the opening songs are his words and music - the first, written in 1944, is a translation by Alice Pitfield from Pushkin, which the composer adapted. It compresses Life into a single day: Pushkin's horse-drawn wagon drives wildly through the morning without thought of the consequences; at midday more cautiously then, tired of the journey, Time arrives "at the bedchamber of night."

In 1964 Pitfield composed one of his most evocative songs of time and place, "By the Dee at Night", his text conveying the eeriness of this fascinating but dangerous estuary. The simple message of the third song, written in 1947, needs no explanation: the music of "September Lovers" is quintessential Pitfield.

Stuart Scott studied with Lennox Berkeley. Since winning a Stroud International Composers' Competition prize at the age of 21 his music has been performed and broadcast in the UK, USA, Europe and Japan. He continues to live and work near Manchester and he became a close colleague and friend of Alice and Tom Pitfield. His "Two Cheshire Verses" have words by Pitfield describing familiar and much-loved landmarks in the nearby countryside. They were composed in 1992 - a 90th birthday gift for the author. "Songs of the Night" were written for Margaret Bicknell in 1982 and first performed at a 1985 BMIC concert in London. An autumnal reflection on the approach of winter to words by Emily Bronte is followed by a setting of an Amy Lowell poem revelling in the sight of racing storm clouds against a moonlit sky.

Geoffrey Kimpton's three contributions betray his sense of gentle humour. "Noah" (Siegfried Sassoon) describes the sun-lit wastes and a rippling wind, but "...earth was saved and Noah danced a jig". His second song sets Thomas Hardy - a train journey which might have ended differently had the traveller not kept his seat on seeing the girl of his dreams on a station platform. Finally a setting of Edmund Blunden's words which describes a peaceful country scene of apple and plum blossom interrupted by an encounter with a lively and hungry pig dashing around the yard with grunts galore.

A career in pathology and a busy family life with two sons - she was the youngest of nine children - compete for time with her compositional talent, which was recognised whilst Joanna Treasure was still at school. A family affair finds Joanna setting the words of her father Wilfrid Samuel Treasure, which recall a 1940s dance-hall encounter with a young lady. The rhythm of the tango suggests more than a hint of nostalgia tinged with expectancy unfulfilled. The second song has verses by John Clare writing in despair of love remembered and lost.

The poems of A E Housman have been something of an obsession with John R Williamson: songs dominate his output. Here are just three from a list of almost a hundred: a touch of pastoral nostalgia is enfolded by two marching songs which remind us of the poet's sometimes satirical commentary on the futility of war and the fateful destiny of the soldier.

Stephen Wilkinson sets words, with seemingly similar subject matter, by Louis MacNeice and Andrew Marvell. The first is a virtuoso evocation of dark days in time of war, gently voicing feelings of gratitude for companionship, but warning that "soon my friend we shall have no time for dances" whilst the second is an expression of joy - a catalogue of horticultural delights by a poet glad to be away from it all, although he has by no means switched off his brain as he lies in the long grass.

One of the most famous of all lyrics tempted Philip Wood to follow in the footsteps of others who could not resist Tennyson's popular "Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal". It was sketched whilst the composer was on holiday in the Greek Islands - the atmosphere is that of a warm night with the moon shining on the calm waters of the Aegean.

The Holy Bible continues to be a source of inspiration for many composers. Verses from two psalms form the contribution from Sasha Johnson Manning: the first sings gently of mercy and judgement whilst, in the second, tolling bells joyously accompany a song of praise.

The choice of Kevin George Brown is ancient and modern for his texts: an evening lament to words by Philip Larkin changes to optimism as the gathering light of Spring turns into the glow of Summer - the poem is by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey.

Words by Steve Hobson and the music of David Golightly combine to confirm the potent reflection of Thomas Carlyle on the nature of the world and music - "see deep enough and you will see musically; the heart of nature being everywhere music, if you can only reach it". The composer says, "The imagery of these poems, with their strong reference to the natural order of life, mirrors past interest and research into the ancient mysticism of Hea. This old god of nature demanded nothing and gave nothing. His is the energy that spins the turning of the year - the core of the web of life. The poetic landscape of these words captures an essence that has an eternal logic".

Powerful imagery marks the words and the music of Kathleen Collier and David Forshaw. The almost-noiseless accompaniment for the flight of the owl in a moonlit landscape gives way to the "sweet seductive siren songs" of the whale "in deep liquidity submerged". In the final song, man's debt to the horse is catalogued, culminating in a reminder of the animal's promise "when first I took the rein I'll keep forever faithful still".

THE MUSICIANS

MARK ROWLINSON has been a singer, on and off, for around 50 years. He followed his Oxford Choral Scholarship with a busy singing career based in London and was a member of both Brompton Oratory and Westminster Abbey choirs during the 1970s. His developing solo career included a diverse range of engagements including performing the baritone solo part in 'War Requiem' performed at Britten's memorial concert.

The next 20 years were spent as the BBC Music Producer in Manchester during which time he produced some 3000 programmes, working with some of the world's greatest artists, as well as managing the BBC Northern Singers. He was able to maintain an international singing career as soloist with many leading European orchestras and has performed as a recitalist in concert halls and festivals throughout Europe.

He has also been a golf writer and wine writer, and most recently (2018) as the narrator in Rawsthorne's *Practical Cats* (Divine Art DDA 25169)

PETER LAWSON has appeared as soloist with most British orchestras, playing concertos from Mozart to Richard Rodney Bennett. Frequently broadcasting for Radio 3, Peter has given recitals throughout the UK as well as playing in Holland, France, Belgium, Italy, Denmark, Luxembourg, Japan and Russia.

With a repertoire stretching from the baroque to contemporary jazz, his many commercial recordings reflect a particular interest in more recent music and include Satie (EMI; awarded a Silver Disc), American Sonatas (2 CDs for Virgin Classics following a Churchill Fellowship to the USA) and Michael Nyman's concerto (with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra). Recent recordings include the Divine Art CD of commemorative pieces for the composer John McCabe. Other composers with whom he has worked include Oliver Knussen, Alexander Goehr, Anthony Gilbert, Hans Werner Henze and Elisabeth Lutyens. Peter also works with the Equivox Trio (featuring Rob Buckland, saxophone and Simone Rebello, percussion), Tango5 (recreating the tango quintets of Piazzolla) and the recorder player John Turner with whom he has collaborated on many recordings of British music.

Peter taught at Chetham's School of Music for 40 years and has been external examiner for many institutions including the Universities of Manchester, Sheffield, Huddersfield, Edinburgh-Napier and Birmingham Conservatoire. He continues as tutor in piano and tutor in contemporary piano at the RNCM, adjudicator and diploma examiner for the ABRSM.

SUPPORTERS

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Producer's note:

It is the policy of the Divine Art group to include in the booklet texts of vocal items. However this is becoming very expensive and complex, so we have followed the decision of Dunelm Records, as with the original issue, of not providing texts – however most of them should be readily accessible online.

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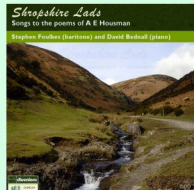


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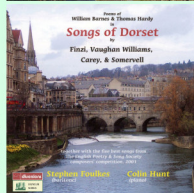
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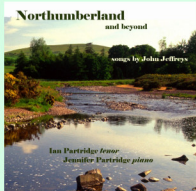
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