

Peripheral Visions

British works for voice and piano since 1970

Alison Smart - soprano
Katharine Durran - piano



METIER

James MacMillan (b. 1963) writes: William Soutar (1898-1943) was a Scottish poet who wrote in two languages, English and Scots. I have set a number of his Scots language poems ('The Tryst', set as *Scots Song*, and *Ballad*) in a style which relies on traditional folk song. *The Children* is an English language poem and was inspired by Soutar's anguish at the Spanish Civil War. This song for medium voice and piano is very simple but in a significantly different way from the other folk-inspired Soutar songs. The vocal line employs only a few basic intervals and is reminiscent of a child's song. As it progresses repetitively, the sparse piano accompaniment provides a more threatening contrast to the song's basic innocence and tranquility. Some of this material was also drawn upon in my opera, *In s de Castro*.

Dame **Elizabeth Maconchy** (1907-1994) is best known for her works for strings and for voice. Her distinctive style combines a Debussy-like impressionism with rhythmic intensity. In her song cycle *Sun, Moon and Stars* she uses prose and poetic texts by the seventeenth-century English mystic Thomas Traherne. The first song is a gradual revelation of the world (and sound-world) of the mystic; the second song launches immediately into a breathless and rhythmically complex exhortation to the soul to rise and come away. *Solitude* expresses mental and physical desolation, which is soothed in the final song by the affirmation that only in heaven can one achieve happiness.

Judith Weir (b. 1954) wrote *Scotch Minstrelsy* as a set of five folk tales, full of drama and variety of character. The first song tells of Bessie Bell and Mary Gray who in 1645 tried to escape the plague in Perth by building themselves a bower by the River Almond. But the plague eventually caught up with them. There are sounds of the river, a fiddle playing, and also echoes of Schubert's *Gretchen am Spinnrade*. The second song, a Perthshire ballad, recounts the disappearance of Bonnie James Campbell. In *Lady Isobel and the Elf-Knight* we witness a seduction followed by revenge. Certainly Lady Isobel is a good match for the experienced lady-snatcher. Again there are echoes of Schubert, this time of *Erlk nig*. In the fourth song a young lady is charmed by visiting gypsies and gives up her comfortable existence to follow the gypsy laddie. In the Epilogue the lady leaves and her husband, the Lord, returns.... The final song, described by the composer as 'a short tender nightmare', recounts a lover's anxiety about whether his beloved remains true to him.

Liadan Laments by **Gabriel Jackson** (b. 1962) is a haunting elegy sung by the young Liadan after she has been forced to separate from her lover Cuirithir. Anguished vocal outbursts frame the piece, then Liadan recounts her sad tale as in a stream of consciousness over the repeated chordal figure in the piano.

Wherever We May Be by **Robin Holloway** (b. 1943) is a set of five love songs. The three 'tree'-pieces (*Olive Tree*, *Palm Tree*, *Fig Tree in Leaf*), though differentiated, are alike in being bright, clear and brief. *Robbers' Den*, the centrepiece, is more complex and

weighty - a vehement and only partially comic protest against what men take from women. The last song - whose closing lines give the cycle its title - is altogether more sustained and passionate. The twelve strokes of midnight, which build to the climax before the quiet last lines, make an obvious gift to the composer.

Sir **Peter Maxwell Davies** writes: *Farewell to Stromness* and *Yesnaby Ground* are piano interludes from 'The Yellow Cake Review', a sequence of cabaret-style numbers first performed at the St Magnus Festival, Orkney, by Eleanor Bron, with the composer at the piano, in June 1980. 'The Yellow Cake Review' takes its name from the popular term for refined uranium ore, and concerns the threat of proposed uranium mining to the economy and ecology of the Orkney Islands, which islanders are determined to fight down to the last person. Stromness, the second largest town in Orkney (pop. 1,500), would be two miles from the uranium mine's core; Yesnaby, the centre most threatened by pollution etc., is the nearby cliff-top beauty spot under whose soil the uranium is known to lie.

Nicola LeFanu (b. 1947) is the daughter of Elizabeth Maconchy. *But Stars Remaining* was written for the English soprano Jane Manning. It sets lines from two poems by C Day Lewis, bringing them together to create an aubade, or dawn love-song, in praise of a kestrel. It begins with outward, extrovert energy, and moves to an inward, intimate centre, before the imagery moves out again, toward the expanse of the sky at first light.

George Nicholson (b. 1949) is a Lecturer at the University of Sheffield, a composer and pianist. *Peripheral Visions* brings together four diverse texts, each with its own dry humour. A husband is battered by his wife; a panther and an owl compete over who gets the dinner; a hypochondriac examines his symptoms in the mirror, and a patriotic party-goer admits that he is a part of the arms trade.

James MacMillan: *Ballad*, setting 'The Tryst' by William Soutar

O! shairly ye hae seen my love
Down whaur the waters wind;
He walks like ane wha fears nae man
And yet his e'en are kind.

O! shairly ye hae seen my love
At the turnin' o' the tide;
For then he gethers in the nets
Down by the waterside.

O! lassie I hae seen your love
At the turnin' o' the tide;
And he was wi the fisherfolk
Down by the waterside.

The fisherfolk were at their trade
No far frae walnut grove;
They gether'd in their dreepin' nets
And fund your ain true love.

O! surely you have seen my love down by the shore; he walks like one who fears no man, and yet his eyes are kind. O! surely you have seen my love at the turning of the tide; for then he gathers in the nets down by the waterside. O! lassie I have seen your love at the turning of the tide; and he was with the fishing folk, down by the waterside. The fishing folk were at their trade, not far from the walnut grove, they gathered in their dripping nets, and found your own true love. (tr. A. Smart)

James MacMillan: *The Children*, poem by William Soutar

Upon the street they lie beside the broken stone.
The blood of children stare from the broken stone.
Death came out of the sky in the bright afternoon.
The darkness slanted over the bright afternoon.

Again the sky is clear but upon the earth a stain.
The earth is darkened with a dark'ning stain.
A wound which ev'rywhere corrupts the hearts of men.
The blood of children corrupts the hearts of men.

Silence is in the air. The stars move to their places.
Silent and serene, the stars move to their places.

James MacMillan: *Scots Song*, poem by William Soutar

O lue'ly, lue'ly, cam' she in and lue'ly she lay doon;
I kent her by her caller lips and her breists sae sma' and roon.
A' thru' the nicht we spak nae word nor sinder'd bane frae bane;
A' thru' the nicht I heard her hert gang soundin' wi' ma ain.
It was about the waukrife hour whan cocks began tae craw
that she smooled softly thru' the mirk afore the day would daw.
Sae lue'ly, lue'ly cam she in and lue'ly was she gaen,
and wi' her a' ma simmer days like they had never been.

O she came in gently, and gently she lay down; I knew her by her fresh lips and her small round breasts. All night long we spoke not a word, nor loosened our embrace; all night long I heard her heart beating with mine. It was about dawn when the cocks began to crow that she crept out through the mist before daybreak. She came in so gently, and she went gently too, and with her went all my summer days as if they had never existed. (tr.A Smart)

Texts: William Soutar - reproduced by kind permission of the National Library of Scotland.

Elizabeth Maconchy: *Sun, Moon and Stars*, words from Thomas Traherne

1. *Sun, Moon and Stars*

All appeared new and strange at first, inexpressibly rare and delightful and beautiful. The streets were mine, the Temple was mine, the people were mine, and so were the sun and moon and stars, and all the world was mine. All things were spotless and pure and glorious, Yea and infinitely mine and joyful and precious. But little did the Infant dream that all the treasures of the world were by. And that himself was so the cream and crown of all, which round about did lie.

2. *The Hill*

Rise, noble soul and come away;
Let us no longer waste the day:
Come let us haste to yonder Hill,
Where pleasures fresh are growing still.
The way at first is rough and steep;
and something hard for to ascend:
But on the top do pleasures keep
And ease and joys do still attend.
Come let us go: and do not fear

The hardest way, while I am near.
My heart with thine shall mingled be;
Thy sorrows mine, my joys with thee.
Rise and come away.

3. *Solitude*

How desolate!
Ah! how forlorn, how desolate.
How sadly did I stand
When in the field my woeful state I felt!
Not all the land,
Not all the skies
Tho' heaven shined before mine eyes,
Could comfort yield in any field to me.
Nor could my mind contentment find or see;
Felicity! O where? O where?
Shall I thee find to ease my mind! O where?

4. *Clothed with the Stars*

You never enjoy the world aright till you are clothed with the stars. Till your spirit filleth the whole world and the stars are your jewels.

Texts: Thomas Traherne - public domain.

Judith Weir: *Scotch Minstrelsy*

1. Bessie Bell and Mary Gray

Bessie Bell and Mary Gray,
they were two bonnie lasses.
They biggit a bow'r on the banks of the river
and theekit it over with rashes O!

They theekit it over with rashes green;
they theekit it over with heather;
the plague came into the river bank
and slew them both together.

2. Bonnie James Campbell

It's up in the highlands, along the sweet Tay,
bonnie James Campbell rode many a day.
He saddled, he bridled and gallant rode he,
and home came his good horse but never came he.

Out came his old mother a-crying full sair,
Out came his bonny bride tearing her hair.
'My meadow lies green and my corn is unshorn,
but bonnie James Campbell with never return.'

Saddled and bridled and booted rode he,
a plume in his helmet, a sword at his knee.
Empty his saddle all bloody to see;
oh home came his good horse but never came he.

3. Lady Isobel and the Elf Knight

Fair Lady Isobel sits in her bower sewing:
there she heard the Elf-Knight blowing his horn.
'If I had yon horn that I hear blowing,
and yon Elf-Knight to sleep in my bosom.'
The maiden had scarcely these words spoken;
when in at her window the Elf-Knight has luppen.

'It's a very strange matter, fair maiden' said he,
'I canna blow my horn but ye call on me.
But will ye go to yon Greenwood side?
If ye canna gang I will cause you to ride.'
He leapt on a horse and she on another,
and they rode on to the Greenwood together.

'Light down, light down, Lady Isobel' said he,
'We are come to the place where you are to die.'
'Have mercy, have mercy, kind sir, on me,
till once my dear father and mother I see.'
'Sev'n kings' daughters here have I slain,
and you shall be the eighth of them.'

'O sit down a while, rest your head upon my knee,
that we may have some rest before I die.'
She stroked him so softly the nearer he did creep;
with a small secret charm she lulled him fast asleep.
With his own sword belt so softly she bound him;
with his own dagger so softly she killed him.

4. *The Gypsy Laddie*

The gypsies came to our good lord's castle gates, and O! but they sang sweetly, O!
They sang so sweet, and so complete, that down came our fair lady, O!
They gave to her the nutmeg brown; they gave the finest ginger.
The gypsies saw her well-fared face and cast their glamour over her:
'Go, take from me this silver cloak and bring to me a plaidie.
I will forget my kith and kin, and follow the gypsy laddie.
Last night I lay on a feather bed, my wedded lord beside me;
tonight I lie with stars and moon and sky, Ah! whatever shall betide me?'

Epilogue (The Lady leaves with the gypsies, and the Lord returns...)
'Go, saddle to me the black,' he said, 'The brown rides never so speedy:
and I will neither eat nor drink nor sleep till I avenge my lady.'
There were fifteen valiant gypsies; they were black, O! but they were bonny;
they are all to be hanged on a tree for stealing our good lord's lady.

5. *The Braes of Yarrow*

I dreamed a dreary dream last night, that filled my heart with sorrow:
I dreamt I pulled the heather green, upon the braes of Yarrow.

I dreamed a dreary dream last night, that filled my heart with sorrow;
I dreamt my love came headless home, upon the braes of Yarrow.

O gentle wind that bloweth south, to where my love repaireth;
Convey a kiss from her dear mouth, and tell me how she fareth!

Texts: traditional - reproduced by kind permission of Novello & Co. Ltd.

Gabriel Jackson: *Liadan Laments*

Joyless
What have I done:
to torment my darling one?

But for fear
of the Lord of Heaven
he would lie with me here.

Not vain,
it seemed, our choice,
to seek Paradise through pain.

I am Liadan,
I loved Cuirithir
as truly as they say.

The short time
I passed with him
how sweet his company!

The forest trees
sighed music for us;
and the flaring blue of seas.

What folly
to turn him against me
who had treated me most gently.

No whim
or scruple of mine
could have come between

Us, for above
all others, without shame
I declare him my heart's love.

A roaring flame
has consumed my heart:
I will not live without him.

Translation: © John Montague (Penguin book of Women Poets) - reproduced by kind permission of John Montague

Robin Holloway: *Wherever We May Be* (Five Poems of Robert Graves, Op. 46)

1. *Olive Tree*

Call down a blessing
On that green sapling,
A sudden blessing
For true love's sake
On that green sapling
Framed by our window
With her leaves twinkling
As we lie awake.
Two birds flew from her
In the eye of morning
Their folded feathers
In the sun to shake.

Augury recorded,
Vision rewarded
With an arrow flying
With a sudden sting,
With a sure blessing,
With a double dart,
With a starry ring,
With music from the mountains
In the air, in the heart
This bright May morning
Re-echoing.

2. *The Palm Tree*

Palm-tree, single and apart

In your serpent-haunted land,

Like the fountain of a heart

Soaring into air from sand

None can count it as a fault

That your roots are fed with salt.

Panniers-full of dates you yield,

Thorny branches laced with light,

Wistful for no pasture-field

Fed by torrents from a height,

Short of politics to share

With the damson or the pear.

Never-failing phoenix tree

In your serpent-haunted land,

Fount of magic soaring free

From a desert of salt sand;

Tears of joy are salty too

Mine shall flow in praise of you.

3. *Robbers' Den*

They have taken Sun from Woman

And consoled her with Moon;

They have taken Moon from Woman

And consoled her with Seas;

They have taken Seas from Woman

And consoled her with Stars;

They have taken Stars from Woman

And consoled her with Tilth;

They have taken Tilth from Woman

And consoled her with Hearth;

They have taken Hearth from Woman

And consoled her with Praise

Goddess, the robbers' den that men inherit

They soon must quit, going their ways,

Restoring you your Sun, your Moon, your Seas,
Your Stars, your Trees, your Tilth, your Hearth
But sparing you the indignity of Praise.

4. *Fig Tree in Leaf*

One day in early Spring

Upon bare branches perching

Great companies of birds are seen

Clad all at once in pilgrim green

Their news of love to bring:

Their fig tree parable,

For which the world is watchful,

Retold with shining wings displayed:

Her secret flower, her milk, her shade,

Her scarlet, blue and purple.

5. *Wherever We May be*

Wherever we may be

There is mindlessness and mind,

There is lovelessness and love,

There is self, there is unself,

Within and without;

There is plus, there is minus;

There is empty, there is full;

There is God, the busy question

In denial of doubt.

There is mindlessness and mind,

There is deathlessness and death,

There is waking, there is sleeping,

There is false, there is true,

There is going, there is coming,

But upon the stroke of midnight

Wherever we may be,

There am I, there are you.

Texts: Robert Graves - reproduced by kind permission of A.P. Watt Ltd. on behalf of The Trustees for the Robert Graves Copyright Trust.

Nicola LeFanu: *But Stars Remaining*, words adapted from two poems by C Day Lewis

Now to be with you
Elate, unshared
My kestrel joy
O hoverer in wind
Over the quarry furiously at rest
Chaired on shoulders of shouting wind.

Rest from loving and be living.
Fallen is fallen past retrieving
The unique flyer dawn's dove
Arrowing down, feathered with fire.

Here's no meaning but of morning.
Naught soon of night but stars remaining,
Sink lower, fade, as dark womb
Recedes, fade, creation will step clear.

Text: C Day Lewis - from "The Complete Poems" published by Sinclair Stevenson (©1992 The Estate of C Day Lewis) and reproduced by kind permission, also by kind permission of Peters Fraser and Dunlop

George Nicholson: *Peripheral Visions*

1. *Abroad and At Home*, words by Jonathan Swift

As Thomas was cudgel'd one day by his wife,
He took to the street, and fled for his life:
Tom's three dearest friends came by in the squabble,
And sav'd him at once from the shrew and the rabble;
Then ventur'd to give him some sober advice;
But Tom is a person of honour so nice,
Too wise to take counsel, too proud to take warning,
That he sent to all three a challenge next morning:
Three duels he fought, thrice ventur'd his life;
Went home, and was cudgel'd again by his wife.

2. *I Passed by his Garden*, words by Lewis Carroll

I passed by his garden, and marked with one eye,
How the Owl and the Panther were sharing a pie.
The Panther took pie-crust, and gravy, and meat,
While the owl had the dish as its share of the treat.

When the pie was all finished, the Owl, as a boon,
Was kindly permitted to pocket the spoon:
While the Panther received knife and fork with a growl,
And concluded the banquet by eating the Owl.

3. *J'ai peur*, words anon.

J'ai peur
Du Flu!
Toute à l'heure
J'ai bu
Un peu trop
D'whisky chaud,
Et j'ai vu
Trois faces
Dans la glace:
Trois 'moi'
A la fois;
Et ma foi,
Tous les trois
Etaient moi!
J'ai peur
Du Flu!

I'm scared of the flu! Just now I drank a bit too much hot whisky, and I saw three faces in the mirror: three 'Me' at the same time; And my goodness, all three were Me! I'm scared of the flu! (tr. A. Smart)

4. *Call (Incident at week-end party)*, words by D.B. Wyndham Lewis

He cried: 'Let England to herself be true!
What sacrifice too great if England live?
What boots it that our treasure, poured anew,
Make of us paupers, if we gladly give?'
His face was honest, and sincere, and red:
He did a bit in armaments, he said.

Texts: public domain except 'Call' which is reproduced by kind permission of the Peters Fraser and Dunlop Group Ltd. on behalf of the estate of D. B. Wyndham Lewis

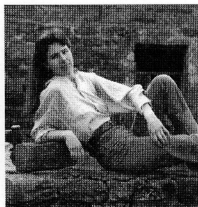
Alison Smart is dedicated to the interpretation of new British music. She trained at the Royal Northern College of Music with Teresa Cahill and was appointed to the staff of the BBC Singers in 1996. Since then she has appeared in many premières and live broadcasts for BBC Radio and TV, Dutch TV and Italian Radio.

As a soloist Alison travels widely throughout the UK and abroad singing in oratorios and recitals and giving vocal masterclasses. Her solo appearances in London include Tippett's *The Vision of St Augustine* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Andrew Davies at the Royal Festival Hall, and J.S. Bach's *Magnificat* with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment conducted by Roger Norrington.

This is Alison's debut CD.



Alison Smart



Katharine Durran

Katharine Durran lives on a Pennine hillside from where she travels widely as one of the most versatile pianists of her generation. She gave her first concerto performance in Edinburgh at the age of eleven, before studying at Cambridge and in London. Equally at home on the concert platform and in the recording studio, her recital repertoire covers Bach to Berio and Rameau to Runswick. Her CDs range from the complete Toccatas of J.S. Bach (MSV CD2001) to Spanish Song, English Song, newly commissioned chamber music with the ensemble Tapestry, and a collection of songs after childhood (MSV CD92039) recorded with the soprano Sandra Lissenden.



Alison Smart and Katharine Durran:
NEW FRENCH SONG
Settings of French texts by British composers
Métier MSVCD 92100

Alison Smart also appears on:

Divine Art DDA 21224 'Sounds of the Chionistra' – songs and chamber music by Cilia Petridou

Divine Art DDA 25186 'The Mystery of Christmas' - Kalanda (Carols) by Cilia Petridou

Katharine Durran also appears on:

Métier MSVCD 2001/MSV 72001 Bach: Keyboard Toccatas

Métier MSVCD 92039 'The Nursery – Songs for and about Children



DIVINE ART RECORDINGS GROUP



Over 500 titles, with full track details, reviews, artist profiles and audio samples, can be browsed on our website. Available at any good dealer or direct from our online store in CD, 24-bit HD, FLAC and MP3 digital download formats.

UK: Divine Art Ltd. email: uksales@divineartrecords.com

USA: Diversions LLC email: sales@divineartrecords.com

www.divineartrecords.com

find us on facebook, youtube and twitter

WARNING: Copyright subsists in all recordings issued under this label. Any unauthorised broadcasting, public performance, copying or re-recording thereof in any manner whatsoever will constitute an infringement of such copyright. In the United Kingdom, licences for the use of recordings for public performance may be obtained from Phonographic Performance Ltd, 1, Upper James Street, London W1R 3HG.

PERIPHERAL VISIONS

British works for voice and piano since 1970
Alison Smart - soprano & **Katharine Durran** - piano



1	James MacMillan	Ballad (1994; William Soutar)	3:58
2		The Children (1995; William Soutar)	5:01
3		Scots Song (1995; William Soutar)	5:55
	Elizabeth Maconchy	"Sun, Moon and Stars" (1976; Thomas Traherne)	
4		Sun, Moon and Stars	3:57
5		The Hill	1:51
6		Solitude	2:22
7		Clothed with the Stars	1:20
	Judith Weir	"Scotch Minstrelsy" (1986; texts adapted from Scottish folk ballads)	
8		Bessie Bell and Mary Gray	4:04
9		Bonnie James Campbell	2:13
10		Lady Isobel and the Elf Knight	2:02
11		The Gypsy Laddie	2:52
12		The Braes of Yarrow	2:01
13	Gabriel Jackson	Liadan Laments (1988; Liadan, Irish 7th Century, tr. John Montague)	7:15
	Robin Holloway	"Wherever We May Be" Op.46 (1980-81: Robert Graves)	
14		Olive Tree	1:10
15		The Palm Tree	2:00
16		Robbers' Den	2:21
17		Fig Tree in Leaf	0:51
18		Wherever We May Be	2:57
19	Peter Maxwell Davies	Farewell to Stromness (piano solos, 1980; from	4:19
20		Yesnaby Ground <i>The Yellow Cake Review</i>)	2:34
21	Nicola LeFanu	But Stars Remaining (soprano solo; 1970; C Day Lewis)	6:22
	George Nicholson	"Peripheral Visions" (1984)	
22		Abroad and At Home (Jonathan Swift)	1:50
23		I passed by his Garden (Lewis Carroll)	1:29
24		J'ai peur (anon.)	1:14
25		Call (Incident at Week-end Party) (D.B. Wyndham Lewis)	1:27

73:36



See booklet for text copyright details

Publishers: Boosey & Hawkes (1-3 & 14-20); Chesters (4-7); Novello (8-12 & 21); Gabriel Jackson (13) & George Nicholson (22-25)

Metier Sound & Vision would like to acknowledge the financial assistance of Andrew P F Smart

Recorded on 6-8 April 1998 in the Big School at Christ's Hospital, Horsham

Balance Engineer / Producer / Digital Editing / Booklet Design and Layout: David Lefeber

METIER
 MSV CD92025

©1999, Original recording by David Lefeber, Metier Sound & Vision

©1999, David Lefeber, Metier Sound & Vision

