

One Hundred Years
of **BRITISH SONG**

Vol. 3

James Gilchrist *tenor* · Nathan Williamson *piano***Peter Dickinson** (b.1934)

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|--------|
| [1] | Let the florid music praise | 4:08 |
| | <i>Four W.H. Auden Songs</i> | [9:30] |
| [2] | I. Look, Stranger | 3:16 |
| [3] | II. Eyes look into the well | 2:20 |
| [4] | III. Carry her over the water | 2:38 |
| [5] | IV. What's in your mind? | 1:16 |

Madeleine Dring (1923-77)

- | | | |
|------|----------------------------------|---------|
| | <i>Five Betjeman Songs</i> | [12:57] |
| [6] | A Bay in Anglesey | 3:37 |
| [7] | Song of a Nightclub Proprietress | 2:47 |
| [8] | Business Girls | 2:25 |
| [9] | Undenominational | 1:26 |
| [10] | Upper Lambourne | 2:42 |

Nathan Williamson (b.1978)

- | | | |
|------|--|---------|
| | <i>The Little That Was Once A Man*</i> | [14:23] |
| [11] | In someone else's poem | 2:03 |
| [12] | 4 a.m. | 2:17 |
| [13] | Not being... (I) The ordinary way | 1:33 |
| [14] | Not being... (II) Misunderstanding | 2:26 |
| [15] | Moon at rest | 6:03 |

John Woolrich (b.1954)

- | | | |
|------|---------------------------|--------|
| | <i>The Unlit Suburbs*</i> | [2:40] |
| [16] | I. The Submerged Bar | 1:01 |
| [17] | II. Rat Town | 0:55 |
| [18] | III. The Ghost Choir | 0:43 |

Nathan Williamson (b.1978)

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|------|-------------|------|
| [19] | Intermezzo* | 4:46 |
|------|-------------|------|

Geoffrey Poole (b.1949)

- | | | |
|------|----------------------------------|---------|
| | <i>The Eye of the Blackbird*</i> | [17:44] |
| [20] | I. Twenty snowy mountains | 2:16 |
| [21] | II. The Autumn wind | 0:52 |
| [22] | III. I was of three minds | 1:26 |
| [23] | IV. Which to prefer | 2:36 |
| [24] | V. Icicles | 2:14 |
| [25] | VI. I know noble accents | 1:57 |
| [26] | VII. Out of sight | 2:12 |
| [27] | VIII. He rode over Connecticut | 1:22 |
| [28] | IX. Evening all afternoon | 2:45 |

Total duration: 66:40

*First recordings

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James Gilchrist
*tenor*Nathan Williamson
piano

Peter Dickinson · John Woolrich* · Geoffrey Poole*

Madeleine Dring · Nathan Williamson*

*First Recordings

In this third of three volumes of British songs composed over the last 100 or so years, we throw the spotlight on more recent work, presenting a collection of songs written from the late 1950s onwards. Four of the five composers represented here are still writing today.

Whilst the first half of the 20th century was obviously more dramatic, dark and destructive than the second, and while the music of the early 1900s is seen as 'making the break' with previously established musical practices, I suggest that composers of recent decades have witnessed a time of far more, almost unimaginable, breathtakingly quick cultural change despite the relative stability and prosperity of the times. The compositional developments of the early 20th century were, after all, only the thin end of the wedge of 200 years of 'progress' in Western music. Compared with the recent explosion of different styles, genres and cultures, and the revolution of accessibility through online streaming, the musical developments of the early 1900s seem like pattering raindrops before a deluge.

The decades following the Second World War are often recalled as a 'golden age' of classical music, when a number of exceptionally gifted artists who could trace their lineage back to the founders of modern schools of performance were in their prime, and the horrors of recent conflict lent their art a special potency. Many became figures of global standing, exerting influence well beyond their professional sphere.

Yet, paradoxically, within the lifetimes of those luminaries a 'crisis of classical music' emerged, the genre suffering an enormous decline in reach. In a self-

defeating effort to shore up audiences, programming became increasingly conservative – the fear being not that an audience would riot in protest at a new work (such as happened to Stravinsky or Satie) but that they would simply stay at home.

My inclination, however, is that it is impossible not to conclude that we live in anything other than an unprecedented, digitally-charged and -enabled musical boom: a melting-pot of diverse, colourful, expressive styles and genres. As one amongst many sophisticated musical practices available for free at the touch of a button, it can hardly be surprising that 'classical music' has drifted from the mainstream.

As the present disc testifies, this polyglottal musical diversity has also been embraced wholeheartedly by composers working within the Western tradition. Tonality, romanticism, modernism, popular styles are all found in the music recorded here, united by an aim to express all the experiential twists and turns of life.

Peter Dickinson was born in Lancashire in 1934 and now lives in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, where he is still engaged in a range of musical activities. During the 2021 pandemic he recorded a CD of solo piano music for SOMM (*Lockdown Blues*, SOMMCD 0644) and, at the time of writing, is working on an organ piece for Westminster Cathedral. His music embraces a wide range of styles, including ragtime, spirituals, complexity and chromaticism, a diversity of influence also reflected in research interests as wide-ranging as Lennox Berkeley, Billy Mayerl and John Cage.

Throughout his career, Dickinson has also been active as a pianist, particularly in a 25-year partnership with his sister, the mezzo Meriel Dickinson. One might expect, therefore, an immense practicality in his music – except that one has to remember that the ***Four W.H. Auden Songs*** were written when he was only 21 years of age. These songs display a remarkable compositional technique and finesse for one so young. The text setting is completely natural, every vowel fits beautifully in the voice, the piano writing innovative but never awkward.

Despite dramatic technical flourishes and florid writing in places, the components of these songs are remarkably simple. Triadic harmony is present throughout – whether blues-ey ninths in ‘Look, Stranger’, quirky major sevenths in ‘What’s in your mind?’, or the pure triad in ‘Eyes look into the well’ – yet the harmony is never really tonal. The final three of this set of songs are strophic, with only minimal changes of piano texture and rhythm, adding, even so, enormous variety.

The simple gesture of repeated chords that opens ***Let the florid music praise*** is dramatic and intense, yet the entry of the voice maintains a joyful and positive aura. These songs are a worthy successor to any earlier settings of Auden by others, however illustrious.

Madeleine Dring was born in London in 1923 and studied composition at the Royal College of Music with Herbert Howells and Ralph Vaughan Williams (although one can hardly imagine two teachers whose music is less like that of this particular student). She was a precocious pianist and violinist, and also

worked professionally as an actress. In the late 1940s she signed with various publishers, from which time to her death in 1977 she produced a steady stream of songs, chamber works, piano pieces and incidental music for television and radio. Several further volumes of songs have been published posthumously, and these, along with two biographies [Hancock-Child, Micropress Music: 2000, and Brister & Rosenblatt, Clemson University Press: 2021] have ensured her reputation and profile continues steadily to grow.

Her ***Five Betjeman Songs*** – in my view some of her finest, certainly among her most enduringly popular – combine all the threads of what was clearly a fascinating, multi-faceted artistic personality. Her music is written in a very uncomplicated, popular style, yet there is nothing straightforward about the effect of these songs. Simplicity abounds – her scores have scant articulations or dynamics, and more or less every harmonic progression is one of three permutations: an oscillating chord or pair of chords (such as at the beginning of ‘A Bay in Anglesey’ and ‘Upper Lambourne’); triads over a descending or ascending line in the bass (as in ‘Business Girls’ and ‘Udenominational’); or a circle of fifths – found in every song multiple times.

Dring rarely uses specific word painting as such. Those examples one can find are fleeting – the spread chord representing “the host of little spiders” in ‘Song of a Nightclub Proprietress’, or the semi-quaver representation of “windy street” in ‘Business Girls’. Yet her music effortlessly conjures up each song’s individual and specific atmosphere – one could listen to ‘A Bay in Anglesey’ without understanding a single word of English, yet be transported exactly to the scene the poem depicts.

My own song cycle, ***The Little That Was Once A Man***, was written for James Gilchrist in 2016, following which I revised it extensively in 2019. It was commissioned by the family and friends of the poet Bryan Heiser, shortly after his death, fulfilling a long-standing wish that some of his poems be set to music.

Born in 1946, Heiser was educated at Durham and Harvard universities. Aged 27, he was left wheelchair-bound after contracting polio and spent his career in public service fighting for the rights of the disadvantaged, notably as special advisor to Transport for London, when he was instrumental in making all London buses accessible to the disabled. He began writing in retirement, the poems set here taken from his *Selected Poems* (2012) and *Poems 2012*, published the year before his death.

Particularly appealing about his poetry is its tremendous colour and huge range of expression, from irreverent innuendo to starkly staring death in the face, or from imitations of highfalutin, philosophical claptrap to simple, honest confessions. One does not need to have read his biography to know this poet is dying, but he is never self-pitying. Poems range from epic works of about 20 pages, all in exact metre and rhymes, to those of merely a dozen words. It was the opportunity of juxtaposing, cheek-by-jowl, these rather extreme, contrasting emotions in music which attracted me to setting his work.

The basic musical material of the song-cycle is the rhythm of a trochaic foot – strong + weak – representing the spoken intonation of the poet’s first and last names, ‘BRY-an HEI-ser’. This is first heard in its simplest form accompanying

the concluding lines of ‘In someone else’s poem’ – “whereas in my poem, things are very different” – acting as a musical ‘signature’. The rhythm morphs into the chiming of a clock in ‘4 a.m.’ – the hallucinatory half-dreams of an insomniac. In the two poems which make up ‘Not being...’ – a ‘What if...?’ re-telling of episodes from the Oedipus myth – it becomes a clumsy dance, representing lovers bound by fate fumbling their way towards equanimity, and then a musical cartoon of a swaggering, pelvic thrust in ‘Misunderstanding’, in which the hero evades the threat of the Sphinx by seducing her. The same rhythm then forms a cortège-like passacaglia for the final song, ‘Moon at Rest’.

John Woolrich has described how he approached the Irish poet Matthew Sweeney for a song text when they were both teaching at Dartington Summer School in the 1990s: “Matthew loved singers and songs (he was particularly fond of Elvis Costello and Tom Waits) and had a knack of writing just the right kind of words for a setting”. On hearing Woolrich’s first song, Sweeney responded with two others to make the mini song-cycle, ***The Unlit Suburbs***. “I always had it in mind to ask Matthew for more,” Woolrich adds, “but now it’s too late” – Sweeney having died of motor neurone disease in 2018.

Sweeney’s poetry often sits on the cusp of reality, employing flights of imagination which reflect and refract the everyday and commonplace all the more potently – what he called “alternative realism”. The three songs of *The Unlit Suburbs* depict scenes from a gritty, dead-end place, Woolrich responding to the deadpan verse with suitably matter-of-fact settings. Each movement lasts a minute at most with one note per syllable throughout the triptych, the voice as often reciting as singing.

‘The Submerged Bar’ is slightly rap-like with its punchy rhythms and dirty, blue-note harmonies; ‘Rat Town’ is based on a descending chromatic line in thirds in the left hand running throughout the whole song; ‘The Ghost Choir’ provides a spooky and surprisingly poignant conclusion. The overwhelming image is of being stuck in a rut from which you can only escape by maintaining a wry sense of humour – quite a contrast to the pastoral idyll so often associated with British song.

My own **Intermezzo** for solo piano was written in 2012 in response to a commission to celebrate a 90th birthday. As the dedicatee was an amateur organist and pianist with Welsh roots, I based the work on a theme from a popular Welsh hymn, imbuing my variations with characteristics from the dedicatee’s other favourite music, the late piano works of Schubert and Brahms – simple canons, modal cadences, and a reflective, simple and whimsical tone.

In early 1991, Geoffrey Poole began work on what was to become *Blackbird*, a 60-minute oratorio for chorus and orchestra. He sketched out the entire short score in only 11 days, a sudden response to the passing away, only in their early 40s, of two close friends. Later, while he was completing the full orchestral score, his wife was diagnosed with cancer, sadly to prove terminal. Some years later, the composer can now smilingly refer to the work as “a mid-life account of death, the meaning of life, universe and everything!” He chose his own texts – “reaching out in every direction, trying to make sense of things” – including Keats, Virginia Woolf, traditional Nigerian poems, extracts from the Catholic Requiem Mass and the Tibetan Book of the Dead, and Wallace Stevens’ *Thirteen*

Ways of Looking at a Blackbird. It is the settings of these vignettes which, some 15 years later, Poole re-fashioned into a song-cycle for voice and piano, ***The Eye of the Blackbird***, recorded here for the first time.

The poems are brief, rather dotty little masterpieces in which, for no apparent reason, blackbirds just seem to be there all the time. Poole describes the significance of the blackbirds’ prominence as “not at all morbid, but omnipresent and ominous, associated with death but also celebrating the joy of life”.

Poole covers a wide range of musical styles, including total chromaticism in ‘Out of sight’, the free tonality of late Romanticism in ‘Which to prefer’, and a Baroque parody in ‘I know noble accents’. He displays an especially keen ear for harmony and piano texture, with some of the more chromatic colours so beautifully managed as to beg the question why consonance has historically been considered more beautiful than dissonance.

Poole reflects the rather abstract texts by allowing his ideas to unfold of their own accord, an almost improvisatory approach balanced with a thread (one could hardly say ‘narrative’ in pieces so short) of specific musical references and imagery. Songs like ‘The Autumn wind’, ‘Icicles’, and ‘He rode over Connecticut’, are specifically onomatopoeic. Others, such as ‘Twenty snowy mountains’ and ‘Evening all afternoon’ (basically the same song set to different words, bookending the cycle), conjure a more abstract landscape in the manner of a painter. The overall effect is by turns thought-provoking, humorous, chilling and deeply moving.

Looking back over these three volumes of *100 Years of British Song*, the overwhelming feeling is one of astonishment at the depth of expressivity of the poetry and music we have performed and that the enormous, unpredictable changes within music over the last 100 years leave me none the wiser as to what *any* song being composed tomorrow will sound like – an incredibly enticing and inspiring thought.

Our three discs with SOMM Recordings are only the beginning of a journey into British song. On their foundation we have formed a new organisation, *The Art of British Song*, to further promote this remarkably rich and distinctive body of work, its legacy and future. Join us at: theartofbritishsong.co.uk.

Nathan Williamson © 2022

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PETER DICKINSON

[1] *Let the florid music praise*

W.H. Auden (1907-73)

Let the florid music praise,
The flute and the trumpet,
Beauty's conquest of your face:
In that land of flesh and bone,
Where from citadels on high
Her imperial standards fly,
Let the hot sun
Shine on, shine on.

O but the unloved have had power,
The weeping and striking,
Always: time will bring their hour;
Their secretive children walk
Through your vigilance of breath
To unpardonable Death,
And my vows break
Before his look.

Four W.H. Auden Songs

W.H. Auden (1907-73)

[2] *Look, Stranger*

Look, stranger, on this island now
The leaping light for your delight discovers,
Stand stable here
And silent be,
That through the channels of the ear
May wander like a river
The swaying sound of the sea.

Here at a small field's ending pause
Where the chalk wall falls to the foam and its tall ledges
Oppose the pluck
And knock of the tide,
And the shingle scrambles after the sucking surf,
And a gull lodges
A moment on its sheer side.

Far off like floating seeds the ships
Diverge on urgent voluntary errands,
And this full view
Indeed may enter
And move in memory as now these clouds do,
That pass the harbour mirror
And all the summer through the water saunter.

[3] *Eyes look into the well*

Eyes look into the well,
Tears run down from the eye;
The tower cracked and fell
From the quiet winter sky.

Under the midnight stone
Love was buried by thieves;
The robbed heart begs for a bone,
The damned rustle like leaves.

Face down in the flooded brook
With nothing more to say,
Lies One the soldiers took,
And spoiled and threw away.

[4] *Carry her over the water*

Carry her over the water,
And set her down under the tree,
Where the culvers white all days and all night,
And the winds from every quarter,
Sing agreeably, agreeably, agreeably of love.

Put a gold ring on her finger,
And press her close to your heart,
While the fish in the lake the snapshots take,
And the frog, that sanguine singer,
Sing agreeably, agreeably, agreeably of love.

The streets shall flock to your marriage,
The houses turn round to look,
The tables and chairs say suitable prayers,
And the horses drawing your carriage
Sing agreeably, agreeably, agreeably of love.

[5] *What's in your mind?*

What's in your mind, my dove, my coney;
Do thoughts grow like feathers, the dead end of life;
Is it making of love or counting of money,
Or raid on the jewels, the plans of a thief?

Open your eyes, my dearest dallier;
Let hunt with your hands for escaping me;
Go through the motions of exploring the familiar;
Stand on the brink of the warm white day.

Rise with the wind, my great big serpent;
Silence the birds and darken the air;
Change me with terror, alive in a moment;
Strike for the heart and have me there.

MADELEINE DRING Five Betjeman Songs

John Betjeman (1906-84)

6 *A Bay in Anglesey*

The sleepy sound of a tea-time tide
Slaps at the rocks the sun has dried,

Too lazy, almost, to sink and lift
Round low peninsulas pink with thrift.

The water, enlarging shells and sand,
Grows greener emerald out from land

And brown over shadowy shelves below
The waving forests of seaweed show.

Here at my feet in the short cliff grass
Are shells, dried bladderwrack, broken glass,

Pale blue squills and yellow rock roses.
The next low ridge that we climb discloses

One more field for the sheep to graze
While, scarcely seen on this hottest of days,

Far to the eastward, over there,
Snowdon rises in pearl-grey air.

Multiple lark-song, whispering bents,
The thymy, turfy and salty scents

filling in, brimming in, sparkling and free
The sweet susurrations of incoming sea.

7 *Song of a Nightclub Proprietress*

I walked into the nightclub in the morning
There was Kummel on the handle of the door
The ashtrays were unemptied
The cleaning unattempted
And a squashed tomato sandwich on the floor.

I pulled aside the thick magenta curtains
So Regency, so Regency, my dear
And a host of little spiders
Ran a race across the ciders
To a box of baby 'pollies by the beer.

Oh sun upon the summergoing bypass
Where ev'rything is speeding to the sea
And wonder beyond wonder
That here where lorries thunder
The sun should ever percolate to me.

When Boris used to call in his Sedanca
When Teddy took me down to his estate
When my nose excited passion
And my clothes were in the fashion
When my beaux where never cross if I was late

There was sun enough for lazing upon beaches
There was fun enough for far into the night;
But I'm dying now and done for
What on earth was all the fun for?
I am ill and old and terrified and tight.

8 *Business Girls*

From the geyser ventilators
Autumn winds are blowing down
On a thousand business women
Having baths in Camden Town.

Wastepipes chuckle into runnels,
Steam's escaping here and there,
Morning trains through Camden cutting
Shake the Crescent and the Square.

Early nip of changeable autumn,
Dahlias glimpsed through garden doors,
At the back precarious bathrooms
Jutting out from upper floors;

And behind their frail partitions
Business women lie and soak,
Seeing through the draughty skylight
Flying clouds and railway smoke.

Rest you there, poor unbelov'd ones,
Lap your loneliness in heat.
All too soon the tiny breakfast,
Trolley-bus and windy street!

9 *Undenominational*

Undenominational
But still the church of God
He stood in his conventicle
And ruled it with a rod.

Undenominational
The walls around him rose,
The lamps within their brackets shook
To hear the hymns he chose.

"Glory", "Gospel", "Russell Place",
"Wrestling Jacob", "Rock"
"Saffron Walden", "Safe at Home",
"Dorking", "Plymouth Dock".

I slipped about the chalky lane
That runs without the park
I saw the lone conventicle
A beacon in the dark.

Revival ran along the hedge
And made my spirit whole
When steam was on the window panes
And glory in my soul.

10 *Upper Lambourne*

Up the ash tree climbs the ivy,
Up the ivy climbs the sun,
With a twenty-thousand pattering,
Has a valley breeze begun,
Feathery ash, neglected elder,
Shift the shade and make it run –

Shift the shade toward the nettles,
And the nettles set it free,
To streak the stained Carrara headstone,
Where, in nineteen-twenty-three,
He who trained a hundred winner,
Paid the Final Entrance Fee.

Leathery limbs of Upper Lambourne,
Leathery skin from sun and wind,
Leathery breeches, spreading stables,
Shining saddles left behind –
To the down the string of horses
Moving out of sight and mind.

Feathery ash in leathery Lambourne
Waves above the sarsen stone,
And Edwardian plantations
So coniferously moan
As to make the swelling downland,
Far surrounding, seem their own.

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NATHAN WILLIAMSON The Little That Was Once A Man

Bryan Heiser (1946-2013)

11 *In someone else's poem*

In someone else's poem
I am that fat red drop
running down the bottle, and
they too sun-struck to lift

a finger. In someone else's
poem I am words with a line
through; a lost adjective,
missed caesura, line unbroken;

a dog at someone's feet; an
eddy behind a just closed
door, a hat left carelessly
on a table.

Whereas in my poem –
things are very different.

12 **4 a.m.**

Mind's distinctions fade
shadowland at wood's border
owls hoot... prey shriek
Chorus.

Not being...

After John Heath-Stubbs' *Not being Oedipus*

13 **I. The ordinary way**

It started well: she held her wrists for tying
and said goodbye to girlhood, he to life;
for fame was worth the lesser pangs of dying,
and she'd been bred to be Somebody's wife.

And so she wept and prayed and used her lotion;
he roared and flapped his wings and whet his claws;
but nothing inched across the crawling ocean;
only the seasons turned; time slowed to a pause

and stopped. Until they found beneath their sorrow
that neither really needed to be sad;
one sea-hushed, star-filled night "Perhaps tomorrow?"
became: "Shall we? Tonight?" And when they had,
they watched themselves become a metaphor,
though neither cared to think, or said, what for.

14 **II. Misunderstanding**

"The challenge may be said
to exist regardless of recognition
acceptance or turning away being
only of value according to
each life's unique metre," answered
the youth – or something similar –
wher at the astonished phantasm, purring,
gave off pheromones that

turned part of him to
stone. "Miaou," she uttered, that
being vernacular for: "Mount me,
big boy." "But then," he
told her, in media res:
"That being so, none but
myself can judge what this.....
.....O!"

He became incoherent, mistaking
vast devastation for high excitement,
subsequent catatonia for satiation:
had he looked back as
he walked away

and noticed the quick petrification
he would have felt only
smugger and whistled, sauntering along
the country road to Thebes.

15 **Moon at rest**

On one such perfect summer day
when the pale moon travels a deep blue sky
and our cats are sleeping in the house
dreaming of rabbit and of mice
and butterflies bask on the thistle heads
and a soft breeze ruffles the water reeds,
when the apple tree is weighted down
and the pheasant watch the ripening corn,
carry my ashes to the compost bins
and there, with family and friends
your audience and chorus, pour
onto that gentler, nourishing fire
the little that was once a man
where the long green grass snakes nest and sun

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JOHN WOOLRICH *The Unlit Suburbs*

Matthew Sweeney (1952-2018)

16 *The Submerged Bar*

Let's have a beer tonight
in the bar of the submerged town
where the drinks are all self-serve
and the last bell's never rung

and the music on the jukebox
hasn't been changed for years,
and the beer's still at 60s prices,
and no one smokes in there.

And no policeman comes knocking
in the middle of the night,
but it's best not to be found there
during the hours of daylight.

18 *The Ghost Choir*

The clarinet is playing
through the ruined church,
gathering the ghosts
to stand in the choir

and rescue from their deaths
the voices they had,
which they send soaring,
swooping on the wind,

and each ghost remembers
the coffin stood there,
the relatives weeping,
the secret of the night.

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17 *Rat Town*

Beneath the bridge
is rat town,
and don't go there
on your own

or they'll have your cheeks
for starters,
your well-stuffed stomach
for the main,

and littering the ground
in rat-town
are numerous bones
like your own.

GEOFFREY POOLE *The Eye of the Blackbird*

From *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird* – Wallace Stevens (1879-1955)

20 *Twenty snowy mountains*

Among twenty snowy mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird.

21 *The Autumn wind*

The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.
It was a small part of the pantomime.

22 *I was of three minds*

I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

23 *Which to prefer*

I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

24 *Icicles*

Icicles filled the long window
With barbaric glass.
The shadow of the blackbird
Crossed it, to and fro.
The mood
Traced in the shadow
An indecipherable cause.

25 *I know noble accents*

I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the blackbird is involved
In what I know.

26 *Out of sight*

When the blackbird flew out of sight,
It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.

27 *He rode over Connecticut*

He rode over Connecticut
In a glass coach.
Once, a fear pierced him,
In that he mistook
The shadow of his equipage
For blackbirds.

28 *Evening all afternoon*

It was evening all afternoon.
It was snowing
And it was going to snow.
The blackbird sat
In the cedar-limbs.



Photograph: Patrick Allen

Tenor **JAMES GILCHRIST** began his working life as a doctor, turning to a full-time music career in 1996. His musical interest was fired at a young age, singing first as a chorister in the choir of New College, Oxford and later as a choral scholar at King's College, Cambridge.

His extensive concert repertoire has seen him perform in major concert halls throughout the world with renowned conductors including Sir John Eliot

Gardiner, Sir Roger Norrington, Harry Bicket, Harry Christophers and the late Richard Hickox. He is considered a master of English music, and equally at home in Baroque repertoire – Bach's *St John* and *St Matthew Passions* feature prominently in his schedule.

On the opera stage James has performed the role of Rev. Adams in Britten's *Peter Grimes* with Bergen Philharmonic and Edward Gardner with performances at the Bergen and Edinburgh International Festivals, and more recently at Den Norske Opera, Oslo, Grieghallen in Bergen and the Royal Festival Hall, London. Last season he reprised the role in a new production by Deborah Warner in his company debut at the Teatro Real Madrid, conducted by Ivor Bolton. Recent concert highlights include a European tour of Bach's *St John Passion* with Bach Collegium Japan and Masaaki Suzuki, Haydn's *Creation* with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and for a staged production with Garsington Opera and Ballet Rambert, as well as a return to King's College, Cambridge to perform *St Matthew Passion* as part of Stephen Cleobury's final Easter week as Director of Music.

James' impressive discography includes recordings of *Albert Herring* (title role), Vaughan Williams' *Songs of Travel*, and solo disc *Solitude* with pianist and long-time collaborator Anna Tilbrook, including a new work by Jonathan Dove, all for Chandos Records. For Linn Records, *St John Passion* with the AAM, Vaughan Williams' *On Wenlock Edge*, and Britten's *Winter Words*, and his critically-acclaimed recordings of Schubert's song cycles for Orchid Classics.

For SOMM Recordings, he has sung Hubert Parry's *English Lyrics* and songs by Penelope Thwaites.



Photograph: Tamas Reti

NATHAN WILLIAMSON has performed at many of the world's leading venues and festivals as soloist and chamber musician, and collaborated on new compositions with a wide variety of artists both at home and abroad.

Recent highlights include the complete Beethoven Concertos with the Prometheus Orchestra, recording Sonatas and Nocturnes by Malcolm Lipkin for Lyrita, the premiere of Christopher Brown's 24 Preludes and Fugues, and international tours with the renowned new music ensemble Piano Circus. During lockdown Nathan

gave online recitals for City Music Live, as well as streaming regular live music into schools and care homes.

Nathan's own work includes the piano quartet *Crystal*, premiered in October 2021 by the Rossetti Ensemble, a substantial Sonata for cello and piano premiered in 2018 by Charles Watt, as well as new songs for James Gilchrist.

Other recent commissions include Daejeon Philharmonic Orchestra, Tuscaloosa Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble Endymion, NOW Ensemble, Bury St. Edmund's Cathedral and Pushkin House. Nathan has written several works for younger performers, including for Pro Corda, Waveney and Blyth Arts, and the Chamber Music 2000 project. A children's opera, *Machine Dream*, commissioned by Mahogany Opera for their ground-breaking 'Snappy Operas' project, has been performed in numerous primary schools across the UK.

Nathan's first CD for SOMM, *Great American Sonatas* (2017), was hailed by *Musical Opinion* as "a landmark in recordings of American piano music" and *Colour and Light* (2019), focusing on 20th-century British piano repertoire, was chosen as Album of the Month in *International Piano Quarterly*. His debut, *Brahms and Schubert: Late Piano Works*, was reviewed by Donald Sturrock as "a truly electrifying debut from a musician with a rare marriage of thoughtfulness and passion".

www.nathanwilliamson.co.uk

 @n_w_music

 YouTube Nathan Williamson Pianist Composer

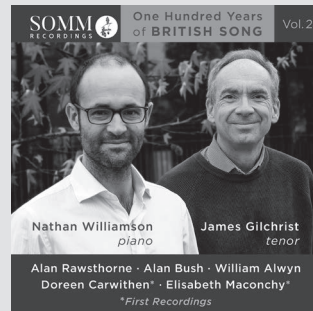


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