



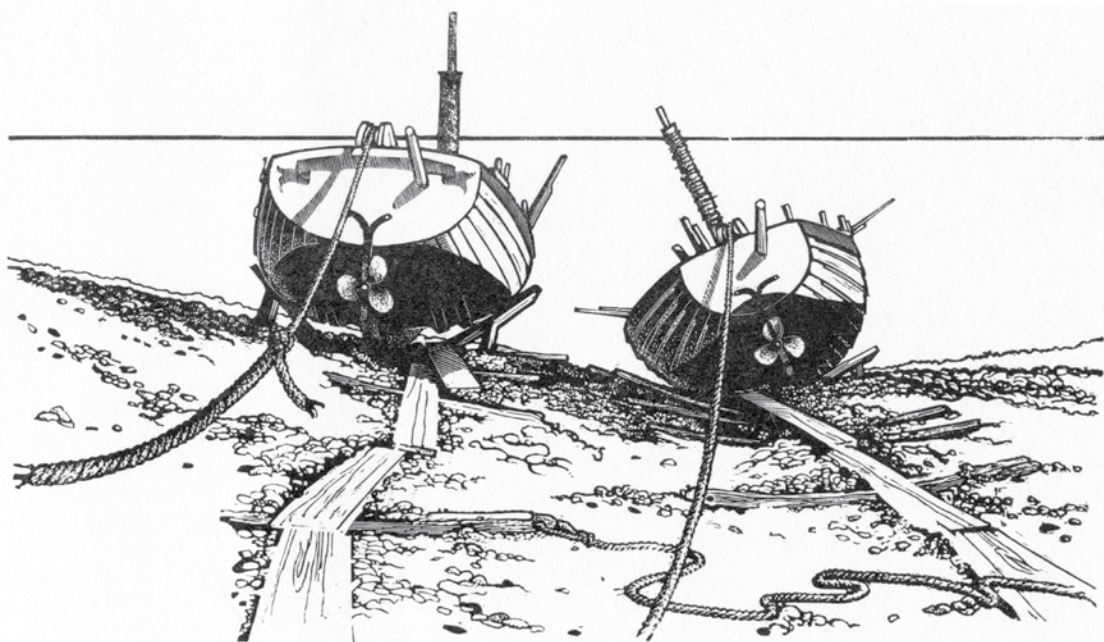
## A Britten Festival of Song



**April 26 and May 7, 2013**

**Glenn Gould Studio**  
Canadian Broadcasting Centre  
Toronto







# A Britten Festival of Song

Artistic Directors: Stephen Ralls and Bruce Ubukata

SHANNON MERCER, soprano  
SUSAN PLATTS, mezzo  
DANIEL TAYLOR, counter-tenor  
BENJAMIN BUTTERFIELD, tenor  
ALEXANDER DOBSON, baritone

Choir of St Thomas's Church  
director, JOHN TUTTLE



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*A Britten Festival of Song*



Friday, April 26, 8 pm: *The Canticles* « page 5  
Tuesday, May 7, 8 pm: *The Song-Cycles* « page 12

*A Britten Festival of Song* concludes on Sunday, May 26, at 2:30 pm in Walter Hall with  
*A Time There Was*. Soloists will include Virginia Hatfield, Scott Belluz, Colin Ainsworth and Geoffrey  
Sirett, with the Canadian Children's Opera Company, director Ann Cooper Gay.

For tickets, visit [www.aldeburghconnection.org](http://www.aldeburghconnection.org)

A Britten Festival of Song is supported by:





## BRITTEN IN CANADA

### A Continuing Connection



We welcome you to *A Britten Festival of Song*, celebrating the centenary of the greatest English composer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, born on St Cecilia's Day, November 22, 1913. In the course of two recitals in the Glenn Gould Studio and our final concert in Walter Hall, we present an overview of the music for voices and piano of the composer who has become so important to us in our presentations over more than thirty years. Firstly, let us point out that our inauguration in 1982 of the Aldeburgh Connection and its concert presentations was by no means the first example of a link between the English coastal town and the major cities of Canada.

"Canada is an extraordinary place. I am *certain* that N. America is the place of the future. I wish to goodness you would come across . . . Seriously, do think about it, and if I see anything at all possible I'll let you know." Thus Benjamin Britten wrote to his sister, Beth, on 25 June 1939 from Toronto. On 29 April, he and his partner, tenor Peter Pears, had set sail from Southampton on the *Ausonia*, following the example of their friends, the writers W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, who for various reasons, both artistic and political, had left for New York a few months earlier. The ship called in briefly at Quebec City on 9 May, but the two men disembarked in Montreal on the 10th. They were welcomed by the music department of the CBC, who had intended to mark Britten's arrival with a broadcast of the *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge* - "but the band wasn't big or good enough & anyhow, the boat was late". They spent four weeks in St Jovite, north of Montreal in the Laurentians, where work was done on the composition of the *Violin Concerto* and the song-cycle, *Les Illuminations*. Then, on 7 June, they boarded the train for Toronto.

Three weeks here, staying at the Alexandra Palace, Orde Street (on the site of the present Mount Sinai Hospital) were very productive. The performance of the *Frank Bridge Variations* finally took place, preceded by what Britten called a "horrible interview". This was broadcast, as well as a recital in which Pears may have sung the cycle *On This Island*. The composer wrote to Ralph Hawkes, his publisher: "Here is a continent just leaping ahead in the arts. Music means something here. Imagine English newspapers *interviewing* composers! Yet here I got a large amount of space in each of the three Toronto newspapers - & in 2 cases in the centre page!" On 23 June, Britten and Pears travelled to Bala (in "the Moskoka lakes") where the singer had several lessons with Campbell McInnes, the English baritone who premiered Butterworth's *Shropshire Lad* songs and several works by Vaughan Williams, and emigrated to Toronto in 1919. Finally, on 27 June, the two men travelled to New York. They were to spend the next three years in the USA - but on 16 March 1942 they boarded *MS Axel Johnson*, responding to the composer's overwhelming desire to return to his homeland. When the ship called in briefly in Halifax, Britten picked up a volume of medieval poems in a bookshop. On the voyage, he set some of these as his *Ceremony of Carols* - a final Canadian contribution on his first North American sojourn.







Seven years later, Britten's career and reputation had taken a quantum leap forward with the success of the opera *Peter Grimes* in 1945. His first postwar visit to Canada was in the fall of 1949, when he and Pears gave recitals in Ottawa (October 31), Toronto (November 1) and Montreal (November 3). While in Toronto, they listened to a tape of a CBC performance of *Peter Grimes* - the Canadian premiere, broadcast on October 12. Conducted by Geoffrey Waddington, with William Morton in the title role, Frances James (Adaskin) as Ellen Orford and Gordon Wry as Bob Boles, they found the result 'truly magnificent'. Also in Toronto, on November 2, Britten conducted his new cantata *St Nicolas* in Grace Church-on-the-Hill, a performance (also broadcast by CBC) which featured Pears as the saint - and our friend James MacDougall (now an Emeritus Director of the Aldeburgh Connection) in the small, but crucial, role of the boy Nicolas.

In 1957, the Canadian premiere was of the opera *The Turn of the Screw*, given at the Stratford Festival in August and September by the English Opera Group. The cast was British, but the chamber orchestra was of Canadian musicians, some performances being conducted by the composer and some by Charles Mackerras. The clarinetist and orchestral manager was Ezra Schabas, later to become professor at the University of Toronto and principal of the Royal Conservatory of Music. The stage director was Basil Coleman, who was then living in Toronto. Pears and Britten also gave three recitals in the Festival. In his letters back home, Pears makes no secret of the boredom of a summer spent in rural Ontario. One weekend, however, they - Britten, Pears and Coleman - escaped to Bayfield, "to a Lake [Huron] 400 (?) miles wide to bathe; Ben complained that it wasn't salt & was too warm, but the Inn where we stayed [the Little Inn] was kinda cute, and gave us lots of lovely food, & we had Scotch out of tooth mugs up in our bedroom".

On Labour Day weekend, they made a mad Sunday morning dash on congested roads to visit the former partner of Campbell McInnes (now deceased), Tom Jackson, who was still living in Bala. "Our hosts overfed us grossly in the Transatlantic style on stuffed chickens & sweet corn & relishes & peach pie & old-fashioneds, & meatloaf (farm style) & squash & pickles & wine jelly & so-on . . ." On Monday, they enjoyed a tour "around the very lovely belaked & wooded country". In the evening they had to drive down to Toronto to record a CBC recital. "But the thunder roared & the rain fell upon us in solid streams, & there were a million people going the same way . . ." However, the CBC waited and all went well. There were two Toronto sequels to the EOG's visit. In December, an article was published in *May Fair* magazine by Naomi Adaskin (wife of John Adaskin) entitled "Evenings with Benjamin Britten"; and on December 18, Basil Coleman directed a production of Britten's *Let's Make an Opera* at the Crest Theatre.

On 15 March 1962, Pears and Britten undertook a crowded recital tour of Canada, with concerts in Ottawa, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Saskatoon, Toronto and Montreal, returning to London on 7 April. During their stay in Vancouver (the composer's only visit to western Canada), they took part in a CBC television recording showcasing the *Nocturne*, Op. 60, in rehearsal and performance (now available on DVD). In addition, Britten was interviewed by Peter Garvie for CBC's *Music Diary* and he and Pears recorded four mini-recitals, later broadcast on CBC Wednesday Night as "An Anthology of English Songs".



The composer's last visit to this country was in 1967. He and Pears were to give an extended recital tour through the USA, Mexico and South America; but first, they flew to Montreal on 9 September to be present at the EOG's performances at Expo '67, including Britten's *Curlew River*, *The Burning Fiery Furnace*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Beggar's Opera*. During his stay in Montreal, Britten gave a substantial interview for *Opera Canada*. Throughout the '60s and '70s, of course, Pears made a number of visits on his own for oratorio engagements and for recital appearances with harpist Osian Ellis when Britten was no longer well enough to accompany the singer. On 14 November 1976, they gave a Toronto recital in aid of the Canadian Aldeburgh Foundation. The next day, Pears flew to Montreal to sing *St Nicolas*, but had to return immediately to Aldeburgh to be present at Britten's deathbed.

The Canadian Aldeburgh Foundation, which continues to provide scholarships which enable young singers and instrumentalists to study at the Britten-Pears Young Artists' Programme in Aldeburgh, has been one of the most beneficial and longlasting results of the composer's Canadian connection. It was while attending the Britten-Pears School in 1977 on a scholarship from the CAF that Bruce Ubukata rapidly found himself taken on as accompanist and coach, and in the process made the acquaintance of another pianist working there, Stephen Ralls. The rest, as they say, is history . . .

SR and BU





Friday, April 26, 8 pm  
Glenn Gould Studio

## THE CANTICLES

DANIEL TAYLOR counter-tenor, BENJAMIN BUTTERFIELD tenor,  
ALEXANDER DOBSON baritone,  
STEPHEN RALLS and BRUCE UBUKATA piano  
with the Choir of St. Thomas's Church, director JOHN TUTTLE



We wish to thank most sincerely  
Patsy and Jamie Anderson  
for sponsoring Daniel Taylor

Suzanne and James Bradshaw  
for sponsoring Benjamin Butterfield

and Michiel Horn and Cornelia Schuh  
for sponsoring Alexander Dobson



We are grateful to Connie and Jim MacDougall  
for providing the flowers on stage



The first concert of *A Britten Festival of Song* focuses on three of the pieces which the composer called, collectively, 'Canticles'. Within the *œuvre* of Benjamin Britten, the five *Canticles* comprise one of the most coherent single groups, rich in musical detail and emotional content. They provide a marvellous compendium of the composer's vocal writing throughout the post-war period. Stylistic parallels can be traced, in each piece, with his song-writing and also with his operas; but there is always a devotional element in the texts which finds ready reflection in the music. Some of Britten's most profound spiritual utterances are to be found here.

We are presenting the three *Canticles* which require piano alone for their performance. (*Canticle III* includes horn *obbligato* and *Canticle V*, written after the composer/pianist was incapacitated by a stroke, has harp accompaniment.) This gives us the opportunity to include other music for voices and piano, notably several of the Purcell realisations which were crucial in forming Britten's vocal style. Halfway through our programme, a secular Purcell duet, followed by the violent, not to say profane, excitement of *The Ballad of Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard*, take us away briefly from the world of spiritual contemplation.





**Music for a while** (*John Dryden*) (counter-tenor) « Henry Purcell (1659-1695), realised by Benjamin Britten (1913-76)

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The earliest recitals which Britten performed with tenor Peter Pears - in Canada and the USA between 1939 and 1942 - regularly featured the songs of Purcell. Not satisfied with the Edwardian-sounding 'realisations' (filling-out a keyboard accompaniment) then available, Britten started to make his own versions, a practise which continued when they were back in England. After the war, Boosey & Hawkes began their publication of these realisations, spurred on by the honouring in 1945 of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Purcell's death. The preface which Pears and Britten wrote for these volumes contains a telling sentence: "It has been the constant endeavour of the arranger to apply to these realisations something of that mixture of clarity, brilliance, tenderness and strangeness which shines out in all Purcell's music."

Music for a while  
Shall all your cares beguile;  
Wond'ring how your pains were eas'd,  
And disdaining to be pleas'd

Till Alecto free the dead  
From their eternal band;  
Till the snakes drop from her head;  
And the whip from out her hand.

**Canticle I: My Beloved is Mine** (*Francis Quarles*), Op.40 (tenor) « Britten

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The initial impulse for the first *Canticle* came from the composer's love of the music of Purcell (as it had, a few years earlier, for Michael Tippett in the writing of his own cantata, *Boyhood's End*). "A new invention in a sense, although modelled on the Purcell *Divine Hymns*," was Britten's own description of *My Beloved is Mine*. Peter Pears and the composer gave the first performance in 1947 at a memorial concert for Dick Sheppard, the founder of the Peace Pledge Union. There are indeed similarities to the style of Purcell - the division of the piece into various sections of 'recitative' and 'aria', a vocal line frequently laden with *coloratura*, even certain rhythmic characteristics (especially the dotted rhythms in the final section). The choice of a 17<sup>th</sup> century text is also appropriate.

There is nothing too mysterious about Britten's first use of the term 'canticle'. Quarles's poem, from his *Emblemes* of 1635, is based on lines from the biblical *Canticles* (or *Song of Solomon*). In succeeding works, Britten broadened the meaning of 'canticle' to include settings of poetry in various styles but always with a spiritual content. In *Canticle I*, the soul speaks of its relationship with God in quasi-amorous terms (familiar from much 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century writing and from the cantatas of J. S. Bach). Also, as Humphrey Carpenter says, "*Canticle I* seems to be, as no other work had yet been, a happy celebration of the composer's relationship with Pears."

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.

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**Lord, what is man?** (*William Fuller*) (baritone) « Purcell, realised by Britten

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Most of Purcell's devotional songs were originally published in his *Harmonia sacra: or Divine Hymns and Dialogues*. Britten arranged what he called *Three Divine Hymns*, published in 1947, of which *Lord, what is man?* is the first. It was premiered by Pears and Britten in the Wigmore Hall on 21 November, 1945 - the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Purcell's death.

Lord, what is man, lost man,  
 That Thou shouldst be so mindful of him?  
 That the Son of God forsook his glory, His abode,  
 To become a poor, tormented man!  
 The Deity was shrunk into a span,  
 And that for me, O wond'rous love, for me.

Oh! for a quill, drawn from your wing  
 To write the praises of eternal love;  
 Oh! for a voice like yours to sing  
 That anthem here, which once you sung above.  
 Hallelujah!

Reveal, ye glorious spirits, when ye knew  
 The way the Son of God took to renew  
 Lost man, your vacant places to supply;  
 Blest spirits tell,  
 Which did excel,  
 Which was more prevalent,  
 Your joy or your astonishment,  
 That man should be assum'd into the Deity,  
 That for a worm a God should die.



## Canticle II: Abraham and Isaac (*Chester Miracle Play*), Op.51 (counter-tenor/tenor) « Britten

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*Canticle II*, a setting of a scene from one of the medieval Chester Miracle Plays, was written early in 1952 for the touring concerts of Britten's English Opera Group. Its premiere was given in Nottingham by Kathleen Ferrier, Pears and the composer. After Ferrier's sadly early death in 1953, the first recording to be issued was by Pears, Britten and a brilliant boy treble, John Hahessy. This kind of casting, however, would always have balance problems in live concerts. As far as the composer was concerned, the 'authentic' performance was finally achieved by his discovery of the counter-tenor, James Bowman, who sang Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1967 and then *Canticle II* and *Canticle IV* (the latter being written for him - see the second half of our concert).

It is a masterly fusion of play, cantata and operatic *scena*. At the opening, the voice of God is depicted by two voices not quite in unison. (Tippett called this "one of the wonderful things in Ben's music".) God tells Abraham to sacrifice his son. As father and son set out on their journey, they sing a duet which Britten later used in his *War Requiem* (in the setting of Wilfred Owen's bitter rewriting of the biblical story). Abraham is forced to admit what the boy must undergo; after Isaac's tranquil acceptance of his fate, dramatic tension rises almost unbearably over a slow funeral march until God intervenes with a tremendous thunder crash. Because of Abraham's piety, Isaac is reprieved; the two voices sing a joyful *Envoi* - "Such obedience grant us, O Lord."

### INTERMISSION





**When Myra sings** (*George Granville*) (tenor/baritone) « Purcell, realised by Britten

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Britten's version of this duet, made for the concert at the 1971 Aldeburgh Festival which included *Canticle IV*, was sung on that occasion by Pears and John Shirley-Quirk.

<p>When Myra sings, we seek th'enchancing sound,          And bless the notes which do so sweetly wound;          What music needs must dwell upon that tongue          Whose speech is tuneful as another's song?</p>	<p>Such harmony, such wit, a face so fair,          So many pointed arrows who can bear?          The slave that from her wit or beauty flies,          If she but reach him with her voice, he dies.</p>
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**The Ballad of Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard** (*anon.*) (choir) « Britten

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The Choir of St Thomas's Church: Kevin Blagrove, Robert Laughton, John Meadows, Alexander Smith, Peter Tiefenbach, James Tuttle, Timothy Wright, David Yung

In November 1943, Britten wrote to a friend: "I am quickly scribbling a short choral work for a prison camp in Germany where some friends are." The *Ballad* was written at the request of Richard Wood (whose sister Anne had been in the BBC Singers with Pears before the war) who was a prisoner of war at Eichstätt in Germany. There he organized and conducted a male-voice choir, who premiered the work as part of an ambitious music festival in February 1944. Britten found the words in the *Oxford Book of Ballads*.

<p>As it fell on one holy-day,          As many be in the year,          When young men and maids together did go          Their matins and mass to hear,</p>	<p>Then he's cast off his hose and cast off his shoon,          Set down his feet and ran,          And where the bridges were broken down          He bent his bow and swam.</p>
<p>Little Musgrave came to the church door,          The priest was at private mass -          But he had more mind of the fine women          Then he had of Our Lady's grace.</p>	<p>'Awake! Awake! thou Lord Barnard,          As thou art a man of life,          Little Musgrave is at Bucklesfordberry          Along with thine own wedded wife.'</p>
<p>The one of them was clad in green,          Another was clad in pall,          And then came in my Lord Barnard's wife,          The fairest amongst them all.</p>	<p>He callèd up his merry men all:          'Come saddle me my steed;          This night must I to Bucklesfordb'ry,          F'r I never had greater need.'</p>
<p>Quoth she, 'I've loved thee, Little Musgrave,          Full long and many a day.'          'So have I lov'd you, my fair ladye,          Yet never a word durst I say.'</p>	<p>But some they whistled, and some they sang,          And some they thus could say,          Whenever Lord Barnard's horn it blew:          'Away, Musgrave, away!'</p>
<p>'But I have a bower at Bucklesfordberry,          Full daintily it is dight,          If thou'lt wend thither, thou Little Musgrave,          Thou's lig in my arms all night.'</p>	<p>'Methinks I hear the threstle -cock,          Methinks I hear the jay;          Methinks I hear Lord Barnard's horn,          Away Musgrave! away!'</p>
<p>With that beheard a little tiny page,          By his lady's coach as he ran,          Says, 'Although I am my lady's foot-page,          Yet I am Lord Barnard's man!'</p>	<p>'Lie still, lie still, thou Little Musgrave,          And huggle me from the cold;          'Tis nothing but a shepherd's boy          A-driving his sheep to the fold.'</p>



By this, Lord Barnard came to his door  
And lighted a stone upon;  
And he's pull'd out three silver keys,  
And open'd the doors each one.

He lifted up the coverlet,  
He lifted up the sheet . . .

'Arise, arise, thou Little Musgrave,  
And put thy clothès on;  
It shall ne'er be said in my country  
I've killed a naked man.

I have two swords in one scabbard,  
They are both sharp and clear;  
Take you the best, and I the worst,  
We'll end the matter here.'

The first stroke Little Musgrave struck  
He hurt Lord Barnard sore;  
The next stroke that Lord Barnard struck  
Little Musgrave ne'er struck more.

'Woe worth you, woe worth, my merry men all,  
You were ne'er born for my good!  
Why did you not offer to stay my hand  
When you saw me wax so wood?

For I've slain also the fairest ladye  
That ever wore woman's weed,  
Soe I have slain the fairest ladye  
That ever did woman's deed.

A grave, a grave,' Lord Barnard cried,  
'To put these lovers in!  
But lay my lady on the upper hand,  
For she comes of the nobler kin.'

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**Evening Hymn** (*William Fuller*) (counter-tenor) « Purcell, realised by Britten

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This is the third of *Three Divine Hymns*, Britten's realisations published in 1947. It was premiered at a concert in the National Gallery on 23 November, 1945. The song was very popular in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and remains one of the best-loved in Purcell's output. The increasingly rhapsodic vocal line is placed above one of Purcell's favourite devices, a recurring ground bass.

Now that the sun hath veil'd his light  
And bid the world goodnight,  
To the soft bed my body I dispose,  
But where shall my soul repose?  
Dear God, even in Thy arms, and can there be

Any so sweet security!  
Then to thy rest, O my soul! and singing, praise  
The mercy that prolongs thy days.  
Hallelujah!

---

**Magi videntes stellam** (choir) « anon.

---

The plainsong is the Antiphon before the Magnificat at First Vespers for the Feast of the Epiphany. (It will be quoted in the piano in *Canticle IV* when the Magi reach the end of their journey.)

Magi videntes stellam, dixerunt ad invicem: Hoc signum magni Regis est: Eamus, et inquiramus eum, et offeramus ei munera, aurum, thus et myrrham.

*The wise men, seeing the star, said one to another: This is a sign of the high King. Let us go and search for him and offer him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh.*

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**Canticle IV: Journey of the Magi** (*T.S.Eliot*), Op.86 (counter-tenor/tenor/baritone) « Britten

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James Bowman, Pears, John Shirley-Quirk and the composer premiered *Canticle IV* at the 1971 Aldeburgh Festival. During the poet's lifetime, Britten had set nothing by T. S. Eliot. Perhaps it is significant that the composer had been awarded the Order of Merit in 1965, two months after the death of Eliot, who had belonged to the Order (limited to 24 members at one time); he may have regarded himself as, in a sense, taking on the mantle of the older man.

*Journey of the Magi* is suffused with doubt and equivocation in its depiction of the Three Kings' journey to Bethlehem, the uneasy rocking of the piano introduction evoking the slow progress





of three camels across the desert. The opening lines are taken from a sermon by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century divine, Lancelot Andrewes (a link back to the world of *Canticle 1*). Later, we hear of the distractions and disillusionments that might have caused the Kings to abandon their quest. An exotic texture is created by the combination of the three voices, speaking as one voice, as it were, or completing one another's sentences. When, against all expectations, they find the Child, at Eliot's resonant word 'satisfactory', Britten introduces in the piano the plainsong *Magi videntes stellam* - a sudden vision of divine grace. The Kings cannot recapture the radiance of that moment; indeed, they are altogether unsure of what they found at the end of their journey. But, when they have finished singing, the piano postlude raises the possibility of hope.

'A cold coming we had of it,  
Just the worst time of the year  
For a journey, and such a long journey:  
The ways deep and the weather sharp,  
The very dead of winter.'  
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,  
Lying down in the melting snow.  
There were times we regretted  
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,  
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.  
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling  
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,  
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,  
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly  
And the villages dirty, and charging high prices:  
A hard time we had of it.  
At the end we preferred to travel all night,  
Sleeping in snatches,  
With the voices singing in our ears, saying  
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,  
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation,  
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,  
And three trees on the low sky,  
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.  
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,  
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,  
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.  
But there was no information, and so we continued  
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon  
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,  
And I would do it again, but set down  
This set down  
This: were we led all that way for  
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,  
We had evidence and no doubt. I have seen birth and death,  
But had thought they were different; this Birth was  
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.  
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,  
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,  
With an alien people clutching their gods.  
I should be glad of another death.







Tuesday, May 7, 8 pm  
Glenn Gould Studio

## THE SONG-CYCLES

SHANNON MERCER soprano, SUSAN PLATTS mezzo  
STEPHEN RALLS and BRUCE UBUKATA piano



We wish to thank most sincerely  
Earlaine Collins  
for sponsoring Shannon Mercer

and Pat and Tony Keith  
for sponsoring Susan Platts



We are grateful to Connie and Jim MacDougall  
for providing the flowers on stage



The major part of Benjamin Britten's vocal music consists of song-cycles for voice and piano. Apart from the *Canticles*, the composer wrote five cycles for his partner and muse, tenor Peter Pears, and himself to perform. Three cycles were composed, however, for distinguished female singers who featured in performances of Britten's music at various times in his career: Sophie Wyss, Nancy Evans and Galina Vishnevskaya. This evening, we perform these three cycles.

Sophie Wyss (1897-1983) was a Swiss soprano who settled in England in 1925. She sang the first performances of Britten's song-cycles with orchestra, *Our Hunting Fathers* and *Les Illuminations*. Her career faded away after the war and she rarely visited Aldeburgh. Mezzo Nancy Evans and soprano Galina Vishnevskaya, however, each taught at the Britten-Pears School for many years while the artistic directors of the Aldeburgh Connection were working there: Stephen Ralls and Bruce Ubukata count their friendships with these two great singers among the chief joys of their careers.



**Sound the trumpet** (*Nahum Tate?*) (Six Duets) (soprano/mezzo) « Henry Purcell (1659-95), realised by Benjamin Britten (1913-76)

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Britten found this duet in Purcell's *Birthday Song for Queen Mary: Come ye Sons of Art* of 1694. He realised his version some time before 1944, but it was not published until 1961 in *Six Duets for High and Low Voices*.

Sound the trumpet till around  
You make the listening shores rebound.  
On the sprightly Oboy play,  
All the instruments of joy  
That skilful numbers can employ  
To celebrate the glories of this day.





One of the most important influences on Britten in the early part of his career was the poet Wystan Hugh Auden. They met in 1935. Britten, only recently graduated from the Royal College of Music, had begun working as a composer for the General Post Office Film Unit (under John Grierson, who later became the first Commissioner of the National Film Board of Canada), and Auden was part of the writing team of the Unit. He and Britten collaborated on films and plays through the remaining years of the decade, interrupted by Auden's seven weeks' adventure as an ambulance-driver for the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War and visits to Iceland and China. Finally, Auden set sail for America in January 1939 with his current partner, the writer Christopher Isherwood. It was their example which led Britten and Peter Pears to leave for Canada and the USA later the same year.

A major collaboration between Auden and Britten was to be their operetta, *Paul Bunyan*, premiered at Columbia University in 1941. Before that, however, Britten set much of Auden's poetry during his work at the GPO Film Unit and also for various plays performed in the '30s by the Group Theatre. He composed the songs of *On This Island* between May and October 1937. On March 28, after an evening of listening to records of Flagstad, Elisabeth Schumann and Lotte Lehmann, Britten had confided to his diary: "I have such a passion for sopranos that I may some time become 'normal'." Sophie Wyss had premiered his *Our Hunting Fathers* six months earlier, and it was for her that he embarked on the composition of his new cycle, to be premiered by the two friends at a BBC contemporary music concert on 19 November.

The opening song, with its cascading piano arpeggios and brilliant, baroque vocalisation, throws down the gauntlet to the English song tradition (in which one note per word and a restrained pastoralism were *de rigueur*). The remaining songs include allusions to Auden's and Britten's left-wing political instincts, along with evocative descriptions of landscape, and end with a sardonic, Weill-like cabaret song. On the night of 19 November, after the premiere, Britten wrote: "The songs have a public success, but not a *succès d'estime* - they are far too obvious and amenable for contemporary music."

### 1. Let the florid music praise

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.

### 2. Now the leaves are falling fast

Now the leaves are falling fast,  
Nurse's flowers will not last;  
Nurses to the graves are gone,  
And the prams go rolling on.

Whispering neighbours, left and right,  
Pluck us from the real delight;  
And the active hands must freeze  
Lonely on the separate knees.

Dead in hundreds at the back  
Follow wooden in our track,  
Arms raised stiffly to reprove  
In false attitudes of love.

Starving through the leafless wood  
Trolls run scolding for their food;  
And the nightingale is dumb,  
And the angel will not come.

Cold, impossible, ahead  
Lifts the mountain's lovely head  
Whose white waterfall could bless  
Travellers in their last distress.



### 3. Seascape

Look, stranger, at 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 the 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 suck-  
ing surf,  
And the gull lodges  
A moment on its sheer side.

Far off like floating seeds the ships  
Diverge on urgent voluntary errands;  
And the 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.

### 4. Nocturne

Now through night's caressing grip  
Earth and all her oceans slip,  
Capes of China slide away  
From her fingers into day  
And th'Americas incline  
Coasts towards her shadow line.  
Now the ragged vagrants creep  
Into crooked holes to sleep:  
Just and unjust, worst and best,  
Change their places as they rest:  
Awkward lovers lie in fields  
Where disdainful beauty yields:  
While the splendid and the proud  
Naked stand before the crowd  
And the losing gambler gains  
And the beggar entertains:  
May sleep's healing power extend  
Through these hours to our friend.  
Unpursued by hostile force,  
Traction engine, bull or horse  
Or revolting succubus;  
Calmly till the morning break  
Let him lie, then gently wake.

### 5. As it is, plenty

As it is, plenty;  
As it's admitted  
The children happy  
And the car, the car  
That goes so far  
And the wife devoted:  
To this as it is,  
To the work and the banks  
Let his thinning hair  
And his hauteur  
Give thanks, give thanks.

All that was thought  
As like as not, is not;  
When nothing was enough  
But love, but love  
And the rough future  
Of an intransigent nature  
And the betraying smile,  
Betraying, but a smile:  
That that is not, is not;  
Forget, forget.

Let him not cease to praise  
Then his spacious days;  
Yes, and the success  
Let him bless, let him bless:  
Let him see in this  
The profits larger  
And the sins venial,  
Lest he see as it is  
The loss as major  
And final, final.



Nancy Evans (1915-2000) was a colleague of Pears at the Glyndebourne Opera in 1938. She first worked with Britten as one of the original Lucretias, double-cast with Kathleen Ferrier, in 1946. The stage director for those performances was Eric Crozier, who created for her the role of Nancy in his libretto for *Albert Herring*, Britten's next opera, premiered in 1947. They married in 1949 and remained an important part of music at Aldeburgh: after her retirement from singing, Nancy Evans taught at the Britten-Pears School and was a Director of Singing Studies for twenty-two years. An obituary in 2000 described her "warm, vibrant natural voice, remarkable for its clear diction, while her sparkling personality brought charm and vitality to all her roles."

*A Charm of Lullabies* was written for Nancy Evans in December 1947 and premiered by her in The Hague (Holland) a month later. The selection of material from a number of poets shows (like the *Serenade*, Op.31 and the *Nocturne*, Op. 60) an uncanny instinct as to what disparate verses will work together. In this instance, Britten found the texts in a volume entitled *A Book of Lullabies 1300-1900*, purchased in a second-hand bookshop when he and Crozier were visiting Dublin in the first week of December; the songs were written and in the mail to Nancy Evans on the 17<sup>th</sup> of the month, less than two weeks later.

### 1. Cradle Song (William Blake)

Sleep! Sleep! beauty bright,  
Dreaming o'er the joys of night;  
Sleep! Sleep! in thy sleep  
Little sorrows sit and weep.

Sweet Babe, in thy face  
Soft desires I can trace,  
Secret joys and secret smiles,  
Little pretty infant wiles.

O, the cunning wiles that creep  
In thy little heart asleep.  
When thy little heart does wake  
Then the dreadful lightnings break,

From thy cheek and from thy eye,  
O'er the youthful harvests nigh.  
Infant wiles and infant smiles  
Heaven and Earth of peace beguiles.

### 2. The Highland Balou (Robert Burns)

Hee balou, my sweet wee Donald,  
Picture o' the great Clanronald!  
Brawlie kens our wanton Chief  
What gat my young Highland thief.

Leeze me on thy bonnie craigie!  
An thou live, thou'll steal a naigie,  
Travel the country thro' and thro' ,  
And bring hame a Carlisle cow!

Thro' the Lawlands, o'er the Border,  
Weel, my babie, may thou furdur!  
Herry the louns o' the laigh Countrie,  
Synne to the Highlands hame to me!

### 3. Sephestia's Lullaby (Robert Greene)

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee;  
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.

Mother's wag, pretty boy,  
Father's sorrow, father's joy;  
When thy father first did see  
Such a boy by him and me,  
He was glad, I was woe;  
Fortune changed made him so,  
When he left his pretty boy,  
Last his sorrow, first his joy.

The wanton smiled, father wept,  
Mother cried, baby leapt;  
More he crowèd, more we cried,  
Nature could not sorrow hide:  
He must go, he must kiss  
Child and mother, baby bliss,  
For he left his pretty boy,  
Father's sorrow, father's joy.





#### 4. A Charm (Thomas Randolph)

Quiet! sleep! or I will make  
 Erinnys whip thee with a snake,  
 And cruel Rhadamanthus take  
 Thy body to the boiling lake,  
 Where fire and brimstone never slake;  
 Thy heart shall burn, thy head shall ache,  
 And ev'ry joint about thee quake;  
 And therefore dare not yet to wake!

Quiet! sleep! or thou shalt see  
 The horrid hags of Tartary,  
 Whose tresses ugly serpents be,  
 And Cerberus shall bark at thee,  
 And all the Furies that are three -  
 The worst is called Tisiphone -  
 Shall lash thee to eternity;  
 And therefore sleep thou peacefully!

#### 5. The Nurse's Song (John Philip)

Lullaby baby, lullaby baby,  
 Thy nurse will tend thee as duly as may be.

Be still, my sweet sweeting, no longer do cry;  
 Let dolours be fleeting, I fancy thee, I,  
 To rock and to lull thee I will not delay me.

The gods be thy shield and comfort in need!  
 They give thee good fortune and well for to speed,  
 And this to desire I will not delay me.  
 Lullaby baby, lullaby baby.

### Two Ballads (soprano/mezzo) « Britten

---

Britten composed these duets for Sophie Wyss and her sister, Colette, in 1936. They were first performed at a contemporary chamber music concert in the Wigmore Hall on December 15. In the event, the mezzo part was sung by Betty Bannerman "who takes Colette W's place in my duets as she is scared of the English". The composer also writes that "the duets go down very well - surprisingly. After the concert Wystan, Louis MacNeice, Lennox Berkeley, Beth [Britten's sister] & I all go to Café Royal & have a nice supper - back by 12.45."

#### 1. Mother Comfort (Montague Slater)

Montagu Slater (1902-56) was a poet and playwright who worked alongside Britten and Auden in the GPO Film Unit. He later wrote the libretto for *Peter Grimes*. This *Ballad* seems to depict two sides of a personality trying to come to a decision over a complicated love affair.

Dear, shall we talk or will that cloud the sky?  
 Will you be Mother Comfort or shall I?  
 If I should love him where would our lives be?  
 And if you turn him out at last, then friendship pity me!  
 My longing, like my heart, beats to and fro.  
 Oh that a single life could be both Yes and No.

Ashamed to grant and frightened to refuse -  
 Pity has chosen: Power has still to choose.  
 But darling, when that stretched out will is tired  
 Surely your timid prettiness longs to be overpower'd?  
 Sure gossips have this sweet facility  
 To tell transparent lies and, without pain, to cry.







## 2. Underneath the abject willow (*W. H. Auden*)

Here, the two voices take the part of a friend – Auden himself, who sent the poem to Britten in March 1936 – giving fatherly, and much-needed, advice on matters of the heart.

Underneath the abject willow,  
 Lover, sulk no more;  
 Act from thought should quickly follow:  
 What is thinking for?  
 Your unique and moping station  
 Proves you cold;  
 Stand up and fold  
 Your map of desolation.

Geese in flocks above you flying.  
 Their direction know;  
 Brooks beneath the thin ice flowing  
 To their oceans go;  
 Coldest love will warm to action,  
 Walk then, come,  
 No longer numb,  
 Into your satisfaction.

Bells that toll across the meadows  
 From the sombre spire  
 Toll for those unloving shadows  
 Love does not require.  
 All that lives may love; why longer  
 Bow to loss  
 With arms across?  
 Strike and you shall conquer.

## INTERMISSION

### Five folksongs (mezzo) « arranged by Britten

---

Early in the thirty-plus years of their performing career, the Pears/Britten duo achieved their most immediate success in the composer's folksong arrangements. Like the Purcell realisations which also featured regularly in their programmes, the folksongs were designed to provide a more approachable framework for Britten's original compositions. Six volumes, containing 43 songs, were published during the composer's lifetime and more have appeared in subsequent years, giving present-day performers an unrivalled source of material in the vernacular. In the group chosen for performance tonight, it is worth noting that the original poems by Robert Burns (*Ca' the yowes*) and Thomas Moore (*The Last Rose of Summer*) were each written to be sung to the respective folk-tunes.

#### 1. Sweet Polly Oliver (*English folksong*)

As sweet Polly Oliver lay musing in bed,  
 A sudden strange fancy came into her head.  
 "Nor father nor mother shall make me false prove,  
 I'll 'list as a soldier, and follow my love."

So early next morning she softly arose,  
 And dressed herself up in her dead brother's clothes.  
 She cut her hair close and she stained her face brown,  
 And went for a soldier to fair London Town.

Then up spoke the sergeant one day at his drill.  
 "Now who's good for nursing? A captain, he's ill."  
 "I'm ready," said Polly. To nurse him she's gone,  
 And finds it's her true love all wasted and wan.





The first week the doctor kept shaking his head,  
"No nursing, young fellow, can save him," he said.  
But when Polly Oliver had nursed him back to life  
He cried, "You have cherished him as if you were his wife."

O then Polly Oliver, she burst into tears  
And told the good doctor her hopes and her fears,  
And very shortly after, for better or for worse,  
The captain took joyfully his pretty soldier nurse.

## **2. Ca' the yowes** (*Robert Burns, to the Scottish tune*)

Ca' the yowes to the knowes,  
Ca' them where the heather growes,  
Ca' them where the burnie rows,  
My bonnie dearie.

Hark, the mavis evening sang,  
Sounden Clouden's woods amang;  
Then a-folding let us gang,  
My bonnie dearie.

We'll gang down by Clouden side,  
Through the hazels spreading wide  
O'er the waves that sweetly glide  
To the moon sae clearly.

Fair and lovely as thou art,  
Thou hast stol'n my very heart;  
I can die, but canna part,  
My bonnie dearie.

## **3. The trees they grow so high** (*Somerset folksong*)

The trees they grow so high and the leaves they do grow green,  
And many a cold winter's night my love and I have seen.  
Of a cold winter's night, my love, you and I alone have been,  
Whilst my bonny boy is young he's a-growing.

O father, dearest father, you've done to me great wrong.  
You've tied me to a boy when you know he is too young.  
O daughter, dearest daughter, if you wait a little while,  
A lady you shall be while he's growing.

I'll send your love to college all for a year or two,  
And then in the mean-time he will do for you;  
I'll buy him white ribbons, tie them round his bonny waist  
To let the ladies know that he's married,

I went up to the college and I looked over the wall,  
Saw four and twenty gentlemen playing at bat and ball.  
I called for my true love, but they would not let him come,  
All because he was a young boy and growing,





At the age of sixteen, he was a married man,  
And at the age of seventeen he was a father to a son.  
And at the age of eighteen the grass grew over him,  
Cruel death soon put an end to his growing.

And now my love is dead and in his grave doth lie.  
The green grass grows o'er him so very, very high.  
I'll sit and I'll mourn his fate until the day I die,  
And I'll watch all o'er his child while he's growing,

#### **4. The Last Rose of Summer** (*Thomas Moore, to the Irish tune*)

'Tis the last rose of summer,  
Left blooming alone;  
All her lovely companions  
Are faded and gone;  
No flow'r of her kindred,  
No rosebud is nigh  
To reflect back her blushes,  
Or give sigh for sigh.

I'll not leave thee, thou lone one,  
To pine on the stem;  
Since the lovely are sleeping,  
Go, sleep thou with them;  
Thus kindly I scatter  
Thy leaves o'er the bed  
Where thy mates of the garden  
Lie senseless and dead.

So soon may I follow,  
When friendships decay,  
And from love's shining circle  
The gems drop away!  
When true hearts lie wither'd  
And fond ones are flown,  
Oh! who would inhabit  
This bleak world alone?

#### **5. Come you not from Newcastle?** (*English folksong*)

Come you not from Newcastle?  
Come you not there away?  
O met you not my true love,  
Riding on a bonny bay?

Why should I not love my love?  
Why should not my love love me?  
Why should I not speed after him,  
Since love to all is free?



"How I hope that there will be a chance of hearing you sing! I have recently heard several of your wonderful records, which have made me a great admirer of yours." These lines were written to Galina Vishnevskaya (1926-2012), who responded to Britten's enthusiastic letter and accompanied her husband, Mstislav Rostropovich to the Aldeburgh Festival in 1961. The cellist performed several concerts with orchestra and with Britten at the piano, then accompanied his wife at the piano in a song recital. In her autobiography, the Russian soprano writes: "I met Ben the day I arrived, and my heart opened to him instantly. From the beginning I felt at ease with him; I'm sure that everyone who was lucky enough to know that charming man must have felt the same sense of simplicity and naturalness in his company." Britten, too, entered into an immediate and lasting friendship. After his death, as her singing career gradually came to an end, Vishnevskaya became a regular teacher at the Britten-Pears School through the '80s and '90s. For several years, she and her husband owned a large house in Aldeburgh which, on their whirlwind visits, they filled with an intense Russian atmosphere.

Soon after their first meeting, Britten composed the soprano role in his *War Requiem* for Vishnevskaya (although Russian intransigence prevented her singing at the 1962 premiere). Several years later, Britten and Pears were invited to stay at the Composers' Retreat, Dilizhan, Armenia, as guests of the Rostropoviches and it was there, in August 1965, that Britten's Pushkin cycle, *The Poet's Echo*, was written. (Vishnevskaya's favourite role was Tatyana, in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, based on Pushkin's narrative poem.)

Two direct quotations from composer and first interpreter will provide some background. Firstly, Britten refers to the texts as "a dialogue between the poet and the unresponsiveness of the natural world he describes: in one of them, when the thunder sounds or a beast roars, an echo comes back, but the echo itself gets no answer - and this is the poet's nature, too." The cycle's public premiere was given by the Rostropoviches in Moscow on 2 December, 1965. Before that, however, the party from the Composers' Retreat visited the Pushkin House Museum at Mikhailovskoye, where Pears and Britten tried out the songs in the poet's own sitting-room. Vishnevskaya takes up the story:

"The room was cloaked in semi-darkness - only two candles burned. They reached the last song, *Lines Written During a Sleepless Night*. The moment Ben started to play the prelude, which he had written to suggest the ticking of a clock, Pushkin's clock began to strike midnight, and the twelve strokes chimed in exact synchrony with Ben's music. We all froze. I stopped breathing and felt my scalp prickle. Pushkin's portrait was looking straight at Ben . . . He was shaken and pale, but didn't stop playing . . . The Poet's Echo . . . Not daring to speak, we silently dispersed to our rooms."





### 1. Ekho

Revjot li zver' v lesu glukhom,  
 Trubit li rog, gremi li grom,  
 Pojot li deva za kholmom -  
 Na vsjakij zvuk  
 Svoj otklik v vozdukhe pustom  
 Rodish' ty vdruk.

Ty vnemlesh' grokhotu gromov,  
 I glasu buri i valov,  
 I krikui sel'skikh pastukhov -  
 I shlesh' otvet;  
 Tebe zh net otzyva. . . Takov  
 I ty, poet!

### 2. Ja dumal, serdce pozabylo

Ja dumal, serdce pozabylo  
 Sposobnost' legkuju stradat',  
 Ja govoril: tomu, chto bylo,  
 Uzh ne byvat'! uzh ne byvat'!  
 Proshli vostorgi, i pechali,  
 I legkovernyye mechty. . .  
 No vot opyat' zatrepetali  
 Pred moshchnoy vlast'ju krasoty.

### 3. Angel

V dverjakh Edema angel nezhnij  
 Glavoj poniksheju sijal,  
 A demon mrachnij i mjatezhnij  
 Nad adskoj bezdnoju letal.

Dukh otrican'ja, dukh somnen'ja  
 Na dukha chistogo vziral  
 I zhar nevol'nyj umilen'ja  
 Vpervyye smutno poznaval.

«Prosti,» on rjok, «tebja ja videl,  
 I ty nedarom mne sijal:  
 Ne vsjo ja v nebe nenavidel,  
 Ne vsjo ja v mire preziral.»

### 4. Solovej i roza

V bezmolvii sadov, vesnoj, vo mgle nochej,  
 Pojot nad rozozu vostochnyj solovej.  
 No roza milaja ne chuvstvujet, ne vnemlet,  
 I pod vlyublennyj gimn kolebletsja i dremlet.  
 Ne tak li ty pojosh' dlja khladnoj krasoty?  
 Opomnis', o poet, k chemu stremish'sja ty?  
 Ona ne slushajet, ne chuvstvujet poeta;  
 Gljadish' - ona cvetet; vzyvajesh' - net otveta.

### 1. Echo

From leafy woods the savage howl,  
 A distant horn, the thunder's roll,  
 A maiden sighing 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!

### 2. 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.

### 3. 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 earn my spite."

### 4. 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?  
 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.





## 5. Epigramma

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

## 5. 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 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').]

## 6. Stikhi, sochinjonnyje nochju vo vremja bessonnicy

Mne ne spitsja, net ognja;  
 Vsjudu mrak i son dokuchnyj.  
 Khod chasov lish' odnozvučnyj  
 Razdajotsja bliz menja,  
 Parki bab'je lepetan'je,  
 Spjashchej nochi trepetan'je,  
 Zhizni mysh'ja begotnja. . .  
 Chto trevozhiš' ty menja?  
 Chto ty značiš', skučnyj šopot?  
 Ukorizna, ili ropot  
 Mnoj utrachennogo dnja?  
 Ot menja chego ty khočesh'?  
 Ty zovjosh' ili prorochiš'?  
 Ja ponjat' tebja khoču,  
 Smysla ja v tebe ishču. . .

## 6. 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 atrembling,  
 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. . .*

*(Singing translations by Peter Pears)*





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Mary Finlay  
Les & Marion Green  
Elizabeth Greville  
Dianne Henderson  
Peter & Verity Hobbs  
Dr Peter Janetos  
Donald & Susan Johnston  
Douglas & Dorothy Joyce  
Patricia Laks  
Rosabel Levitt  
Mary & Joe Lieberman  
Lorna MacDonald  
Joanne Mazzoleni  
James McMyn  
Jane Millgate  
Steve Munro  
Eve Nash  
Silvana Ness  
Tina Orton  
Clare & Mary Pace  
Helmut Reichenbacher & John Stanley  
Ezra & Ann Schabas  
Donald Smith  
Jane & Stephen Smith  
Karen Teasdale  
Dorothy Wheeler  
Anthony A.L.Wright

### ***Supporters***

Robert Baillie  
Doris Ball  
Joan Barber  
Jean Ashworth-Bartle  
Christopher Bunting  
Suzanne Cesaroni  
Frank & Jennifer Flower  
John & Encarnita Gardner  
Nora Gold & David Weiss  
John Guest  
Rosalie Hatt  
Mary Heather  
Geoffrey Huck  
Linda & Michael Hutcheon

Muriel Lessmann  
Teresa Liem  
Carsten Lueth  
Lois MacDonald  
Judith MacLachlan  
Ruth Manke  
Dorothea Manson  
Ruth Morawetz  
Edith Patterson Morrow  
William Murphy & John Hessels  
June Pinkney  
Rosemary Sewell  
Lynn Slotkin  
Joan & Leonard Speed  
Carol Verity  
Elizabeth Walker  
Margaret Whittaker  
Susan Wilson  
Jennifer Young

### ***Friends***

Ann Barrett  
Nancy Byers  
Barbara Campbell  
Barry Chapman  
Rosemary Clewes  
William Crisell  
Janette Doupe  
Timothy Fourie  
Priscilla Freeman  
Donald Gutteridge & Anne Millar  
Mary Hainsworth  
George Hrubecky & Mary Jessup  
Patricia Leigh  
Deborah MacFarlen  
James & Laurie Mackay  
Anne Murdock  
Jean Podolsky  
Marlene Preiss  
Nina Reynolds  
Hilde Schulz  
Penelope Sullivan  
Elizabeth Tidy  
Shelley Tidy  
Graham & Bev Tomkins  
Anne Townsend  
Barbara Walker  
Germaine Warkentin  
Philip Webster  
Eleanor Wright





**Aldeburgh** is the small town on the east coast of England where Benjamin Britten, Peter Pears and Eric Crozier founded the Festival of Music which flourishes to this day. Artistic Directors **Stephen Ralls** and **Bruce Ubukata** visited and worked there for many summers, and a large number of the singers who appear with the Aldeburgh Connection has a similar link.

**Benjamin Butterfield's** engagements for the 2012 – 13 season include Bach's *B minor Mass* with Vancouver Voices, Beethoven's *9<sup>th</sup> Symphony* and the premiere of Jeffrey Ryan's *Afghanistan: Requiem for a Generation* with the Calgary Philharmonic, Britten's *St. Nicholas* with the Bach Choir of Bethlehem, Haydn's *Die Schöpfung* with the Orchestra of St. Luke's at Carnegie Hall, the Mozart *Requiem* with Alberta Ballet as well as the Victoria Symphony and Mozart and Rossini arias with the American Classical Orchestra at Lincoln Center. The summer of 2012 saw Mr. Butterfield debut at Chicago's Grant Park Festival with Carlos Kalmar in Haydn's *The Seasons*.

Recent operatic engagements have included the role of Frère Massée in Messiaen's *St. François d'Assise* with Kent Nagano and the Montreal Symphony, as well as Tamino in *The Magic Flute* with the Toronto Symphony under Bernard Labadie. Highlights in an exciting 2011/12 season were debuts with the Seattle, Oregon and Eugene Symphonies. Mr. Butterfield recently visited the Bethlehem Bach Festival for the Charpentier *Midnight Mass*. He also returned to the Victoria Symphony for a New Year's Eve gala and to Taipei with the Taiwan National Choir for Puccini's *Messa di Gloria* under Agnes Grossmann. He was featured in the world premiere of Christopher Butterfield's *Contes pour enfants pas sages*, with Continuum Contemporary Music in Toronto.

Of his more than twenty-five recordings, the Britten *Serenade* (CBC/ Streatfeild), *Canticles* (Marquis/Aldeburgh Connection), *Everlasting Light* (CBC/ Adams) and *Messiah* Choruses (CBC/ Taurins) have been recognized by the Canadian Juno Awards while his recording of *Psalms 80* by Roussel (Timpani/Tovey) won a Diapason and Classica award in France. Benjamin Butterfield is Head of Voice for the School of Music at the University of Victoria in British Columbia.

**Alexander Dobson**, British-Canadian baritone, has been praised for his musicality and dramatic awareness in a range of repertoire on both opera and concert stages. Opera highlights include his riveting portrayals of Wozzeck and Don Giovanni, both conducted by Yannick Nezet-Seguin, Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* with Opera Hamilton, Mercutio in *Roméo et Juliette* for l'Opéra de Montréal, Silvio in Opera Quebec's *Pagliacci*, Marcello in *La bohème* for Saskatoon Opera and Pacific Opera Victoria, De Retz in Bard Summerscape's production of *Les Huguenots* and his Royal Opera, Covent Garden debut with *The Midnight Court*.

A dedicated concert and recital artist, Alexander has appeared with the Orchestre Métropolitain for Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfayer*; the National Arts Center Orchestra in Mahler's Symphony No. 8, "*Symphony of a Thousand*"; Beethoven's *Mass in C* with the Colorado Symphony; *Messiah* with the Edmonton Symphony; in recital with Toronto's Aldeburgh Connection; at the Vancouver New Music Festival, and as Aeneas in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* with Montréal's Theatre of Early Music. He has sung Schubert's *Winterreise* to great acclaim in Canada, England, and France.

Alexander graduated from the University of Toronto Opera Division and the Faculty of Music at the University of Western Ontario with Honours. He is also an alumnus of Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, the Steans Institute for Young Artists at Ravinia, and L'Atelier lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal.

**Shannon Mercer's** season began in Edmonton with a concert of Mozart arias with the Edmonton Symphony; she then returned to Toronto to participate in the 30th anniversary concert of Soundstreams featuring works by Analia Lugdar, Paul Frehner, Omar Daniel, and Fuhong Shi. Other Canadian engagements include Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with the Ottawa Choral Society, Handel's *Messiah* with the Calgary Philharmonic and Bach cantatas with Early Music Vancouver. Two concerts with Les Violons du Roy of Bach's *Lutheran Masses* are followed by performances in



Vancouver with Pacific Musicworks and the Vancouver Chamber Choir, and concerts in Montreal with both La Nef and Viva Voce. Engagements in the US include Boston Early Music Festival's new production of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* and Handel's *Messiah* with the Seattle Symphony and conductor Stephen Stubbs.

Fostering a deep commitment to performances of contemporary opera, Shannon has appeared with The Queen of Puddings Music Theatre in a number of works by Canadian composer Ana Sokolovic, including *Svadba (The Wedding)*, performed across Canada and in Europe, *Love Songs*, a one-woman virtuosic tour-de-force in performances across Canada and at the 2010 Holland Festival, and the highly praised production of *The Midnight Court* in London (UK) under the auspices of the ROH Covent Garden. She has also participated in world premieres of James Rolfe's *Inês*, John Beckwith's opera *Crazy to Kill*, and Andrew Hamilton's *Beckett: Feck It!*

Her award-winning discography includes two new releases of Bach's *St. John Passion*, one with Les Voix Baroques and Arion Baroque Orchestra (ATMA) and one with Portland Baroque Orchestra conducted by Monica Huggett (AVIE). She also recently released *Vivaldi: The Return of the Angels* on which Shannon re-joins Ensemble Caprice and Matthias Maute for a follow-up recording to their widely popular and JUNO Award-winning *Gloria! Vivaldi's Angels*, both on Analekta.

**Susan Platts**, British-born Canadian mezzo-soprano, brings her unique voice to a wide repertoire for alto and mezzo-soprano. She is particularly acclaimed for her performances of Gustav Mahler's works. In May of 2004, as part of the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative, world-renowned soprano Jessye Norman chose Ms Platts from candidates world-wide to be her protégée. With the generous support of Rolex, Susan recently commissioned a new work for mezzo-soprano and orchestra from Canadian composer Marjan Mozetich, *Under the Watchful Sky*, comprising three songs to ancient Chinese texts.

During past seasons, Ms Platts has performed at Teatro alla Scala, Teatro di San Carlo, Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center and has collaborated with many conductors including Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Marin Alsop, Roberto Abbado, Sir Andrew Davis, Christoph Eschenbach, Jane Glover, Kent Nagano, Peter Oundjian, Itzhak Perlman, Helmuth Rilling, Bramwell Tovey and Pinchas Zuckerman. She has appeared many times with the Aldeburgh Connection. Last season climaxed for her with appearances in John Adams's opera *Nixon in China* at the BBC Henry Wood Promenade Concerts in the Royal Albert Hall, London, August 2012. In February 1913, she debuted with Pacific Opera, Victoria, as Florence in Britten's *Albert Herring*, a role she will reprise for Vancouver Opera.

She has recorded Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* for Fontec Records with Gary Bertini and the Tokyo Metropolitan Orchestra, a disc of dramatic sacred art songs with pianist Dalton Baldwin, Gustav Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* with the Smithsonian Chamber Players and Santa Fe Pro Musica for Dorian Records and Brahms *Zwei Gesänge* with Steven Dann and Lambert Orkis on the ATMA label. Ms Platts recently released, to considerable critical acclaim, her first solo disc (also on the ATMA label), consisting of songs by Robert Schumann, Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms.

**Stephen Ralls** began his musical career in England with the English Opera Group who selected him as chief répétiteur for Britten's last opera, *Death in Venice*. This led to recital appearances with Sir Peter Pears at the Aldeburgh Festival and on the BBC, and to Mr Ralls's joining the staff of the Britten-Pears School in Aldeburgh. In 1978, he was appointed to the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto, where he held the position of Musical Director of the Opera Division from 1996 to 2008. He has worked with the Canadian Opera Company, the Banff Centre and the National Arts Centre. His recordings include *L'Invitation au voyage: songs of Henri Duparc* (CBC Records), several releases with the Aldeburgh Connection, including *Benjamin Britten: the Canticles*, *Schubert among friends* and *Our own songs*, and the Juno award winning *Songs*







of *Travel* with baritone, Gerald Finley. He and Bruce Ubukata founded the Aldeburgh Connection in 1982 and the Bayfield Festival of Song in 2007. In October 2010, they were joint recipients of an Opera Canada “Ruby” Award for their work in opera and with young Canadian singers; in December 2012, they were both appointed Members of the Order of Canada and recipients of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal.

**St Thomas’s Church, Huron Street**, founded in 1874, has been, from its earliest days, at the forefront of the liturgical and musical life of the Anglican Church of Canada. Excellent choral and organ music are vital components of all the Sunday services and Feast Day Solemn Eucharists. Under the direction of organist and choirmaster John Tuttle, assisted by organ scholar Elizabeth Anderson, the music at St. Thomas’s is acknowledged to be beautiful and diverse - from plainsong and Renaissance masterpieces to gems of the British cathedral tradition and contemporary compositions. The choirs regularly perform choral works by Canadian composers, including Healey Willan, Derek Holman and Andrew Ager.

In May 2004, the choir that sings at Solemn Eucharist won first prize in the church choir category of the CBC National Competition for Amateur Choirs. In May 2008, the same ensemble was awarded second prize. In July 2013, the choirs of St Thomas’s will travel to England to sing services in Canterbury Cathedral, St George’s Chapel, Windsor, and Westminster Abbey.

**Daniel Taylor** appears on more than one hundred recordings, including Bach cantatas / John Eliot Gardiner (for Deutsche Grammophon Archiv and SDG), Renaissance duets with James Bowman / actor Ralph Fiennes /TEM (BIS), Handel’s *Rinaldo* with Cecilia Bartoli / Christopher Hogwood (Decca), Sakamoto’s pop-opera “Life” with the Dalai Lama and Salman Rushdie (Sony), Bach Cantatas with Bach Collegium Japan (BIS), a Bach recital with the Theatre of Early Music and a recital of Shakespeare’s songs (Sony). New releases include Bach Cantatas with the Magdalena Consort / Chandos, Bach *St. Matthew Passion* with the Kammerchor Stuttgart / Bernius (Carus) and *Messiah* with the Handel & Haydn Society / Christophers (Coro).

Daniel’s debut at Glyndebourne in Peter Sellars’s staging of Handel’s *Theodora* followed his operatic debut in Jonathan Miller’s production of Handel’s *Rodelinda* (EMI). He took the title role in Gluck’s *Orfeo* at the Edinburgh Festival. His North American operatic debut was in Handel’s *Giulio Cesare* at the Metropolitan Opera. Other highlights of past engagements include *Rinaldo* at the Munich Opera House / Bickett; Bernstein’s *Chichester Psalms* with the Philadelphia Orchestra / Dutoit; Handel’s *Saul* with Bachakademie Stuttgart/ Rilling (for Hänssler Classics) and Schnittke’s *Faust Cantata* with the Rotterdam Philharmonic / Gergiev. With the Monteverdi Choir/ Gardiner, Daniel appeared on the Bach Cantata Pilgrimage, joining in concerts and recordings across Europe and North America.

Daniel is Artistic Director and Conductor of the Choir and Orchestra of the Theatre of Early Music, which performs more than thirty concerts every year in concert halls all over the world. The University of Toronto recently appointed him to the position of Head of Historical Performance in the Faculty of Music.

**John Tuttle** graduated from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where he studied organ with Alexander McCurdy. Following graduation, he served in the United States Army as organist and choirmaster of the Post Chapel at the United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y., and then returned to Philadelphia in 1971 to serve as Dr. McCurdy’s successor at the First Presbyterian Church. In 1975, he left the United States for Toronto to become organist and choirmaster of St. Paul’s Anglican Church, where he remained until accepting the post at St. Thomas’s Anglican Church in 1989.

In 1979, John was appointed organist to the University of Toronto and adjunct associate professor of organ at the University’s Faculty of Music. From 1981 to 2005, he conducted the Hart House Chorus at U of T and from 1981 to 2011 he was the founding conductor of the Exultate Chamber





Singers, a 20-voice ensemble that gained a national reputation for superb choral singing. From 1985 to 2000, he was music director of the Canadian Children’s Opera Chorus, which commissioned numerous operas for children, and toured throughout Canada and the U.S.A. In 2006, John was appointed organist and director of music at Trinity College, University of Toronto. He holds the Fellowship Diploma of the American Guild of Organists and honorary Fellowship diplomas from the Royal College of Organists (U.K.) and the Royal Canadian College of Organists, of which he was national president from 1986 to 1988. In addition to his many duties in Toronto, John plays concerts and teaches master classes in organ playing and choral conducting throughout Canada and the U.S.

**Bruce Ubukata** has established a reputation as one of Canada’s leading accompanists, working with singers such as Mary Lou Fallis in her successful one-woman shows. He has appeared in recital with mezzo Catherine Robbin across Canada and in France and has toured BC with Robbin and soprano Donna Brown. He had a long association with the Canadian Children’s Opera Chorus, has worked with the Toronto Symphony and the Canadian Opera Company, as well as for many years at the Britten-Pears School in Aldeburgh, England. He is also a noted organist (holding posts for many years at Toronto’s Grace-Church-on-the-Hill and the church of St. Simon the Apostle) and harpsichordist. His recordings include *Liebeslieder and Folksongs* for CBC Records, *Benjamin Britten: the Canticles* on the Marquis label and the Aldeburgh Connection’s most recent releases, *Schubert among friends* and *Our own songs*. He and Stephen Ralls founded the Aldeburgh Connection in 1982 and the Bayfield Festival of Song in 2007. In October 2010, they were joint recipients of an Opera Canada “Ruby” Award for their work in opera and with young Canadian singers; in December 2012, they were both appointed Members of the Order of Canada and recipients of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal.

**Illustrations:**

Front cover	Benjamin Britten, 1945 (painting by Henry Lamb)
Inside front cover	Boats on Aldeburgh beach (drawing by John Craig)
Page 2	Benjamin Britten at an unknown Canadian location, 1957
Page 4	Bruce Ubukata, Peter Pears and Stephen Ralls at The Red House, Aldeburgh, 1979 (photo by Rita Thomson)
Page 8	Bruce Ubukata, Derek Lee Ragin (counter-tenor) and Martin Kelly (tenor) coaching Canticle II with Peter Pears in his studio at the Red House, Aldeburgh, 1982 (photo by Edward Morgan)
Page 15	Bruce Ubukata, Nancy Evans, Eric Crozier and Stephen Ralls at The Timberyard, Great Glemham House, Suffolk, 1993
Page 20	Galina Vishnevskaya and Bruce Ubukata, Cherry House, Aldeburgh, 1991
Inside back cover	Aldeburgh beach, with Crag House, home of Britten and Pears from 1947 to 1957 (drawing by John Craig)
Back cover	View of the beach, Aldeburgh





