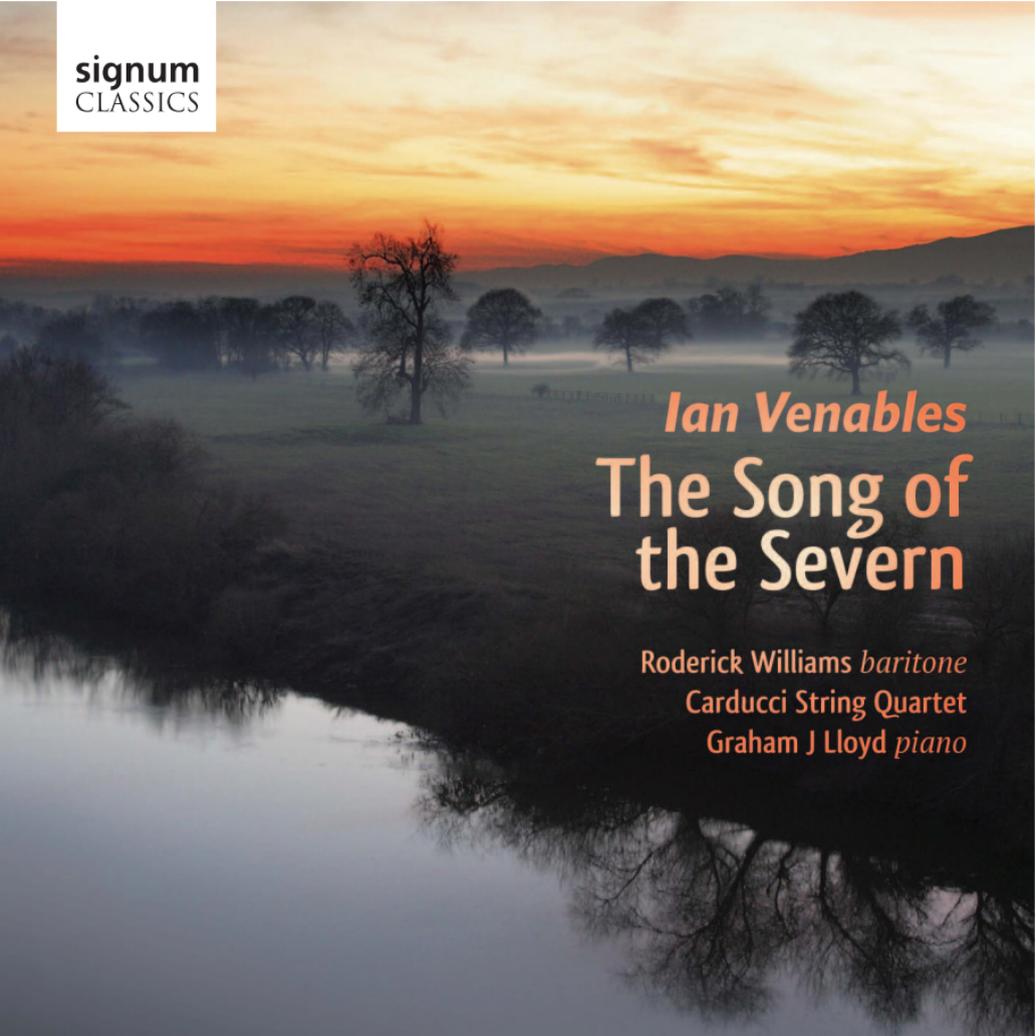


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CLASSICS



Ian Venables
**The Song of
the Severn**

Roderick Williams *baritone*
Carducci String Quartet
Graham J Lloyd *piano*

IAN VENABLES (b. 1955)

THE SONG OF THE SEVERN

Song Cycles and Songs

The Song of the Severn Op. 43 for Baritone, String Quartet and Piano.

1	I. On Malvern Hill (<i>Masefield</i>)	[5.27]
2	II. How clear, how lovely bright (<i>Housman</i>)	[5.39]
3	III. Elgar's Music (<i>Drinkwater</i>)	[3.40]
4	IV. Laugh and be Merry (<i>Masefield</i>)	[2.45]
5	V. The River in December (<i>Worner</i>)	[5.10]

The Pine Boughs Past Music Op. 39 for Baritone and Piano

6	I. My heart makes songs on lonely roads (<i>Gurney</i>)	[4.24]
7	II. Soft Rain (<i>Gurney</i>)	[3.49]
8	III. The Wind (<i>Gurney</i>)	[4.15]
9	IV. In Memoriam: Ivor Gurney (<i>Clark</i>)	[6.00]

Songs with String Quartet

10	Flying Crooked Op. 28, No. 1 (<i>Graves</i>)	[1.11]
11	A Kiss Op. 15 (<i>Hardy</i>)	[4.32]
12	Evening Bells Op. 31, No. 3 (<i>Clare</i>)	[2.16]
13	The Night has a Thousand Eyes Op. 41, No. 2 (<i>Bourdillon</i>)	[3.24]

Songs with Piano

14	Break, break, break Op. 33, No. 5 (<i>Tennyson</i>)	[2.46]
15	Midnight Lamentation Op. 6 (<i>Monro</i>)	[4.09]
16	The Hippo Op. 33, No. 6 (<i>Roethke</i>)	[1.34]
17	The Invitation to the Gondola Op. 22, No. 3 (<i>Symonds</i>)	[4.49]
18	Frutti di Mare Op. 41, No. 1 (<i>Scott</i>)	[4.14]

Total timings: [70.08]

RODERICK WILLIAMS BARITONE · CARDUCCI STRING QUARTET · GRAHAM J LLOYD PIANO

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THE SONG OF THE SEVERN

Flowing through the heart of Worcestershire is the majestic River Severn, the main artery and life-blood of a county that has, over the centuries, witnessed the changing scenes in our unfolding human drama; it has also been a source of inspiration for composers and artists alike. A few miles downstream is the ancient Roman city of Gloucester, home of the Georgian poet and composer Ivor Gurney. His intimate knowledge of the Gloucestershire landscape and deep love of the river was a recurring theme in his poetry "If England, her spirit lives anywhere – It is by Severn". I myself live within a short distance of the river and it was on one of my Severnside walks that the idea of composing a song cycle based on the history and landscape of Worcestershire took shape. From the outset, I decided that the river should tell the story of Worcestershire and once this artistic decision had been taken, my thoughts turned to the search for suitable texts. By placing Worcestershire at the centre of the cycle, I realised that this would limit my choice of poetry, although the county can boast one famous poet, namely A. E. Housman. I was, however more interested in the broader context of landscape and its spiritual resonances

than with those poets who happened to have been born in Worcestershire. I am reminded of Owen Sheers' eloquent description of landscape poetry: it can 'speak about us – the people who live in, look at and remember the places ... which have, in turn, remembered us; as individuals, as communities, as history'. In this way, landscape can reflect so much of ourselves, our memories and our collective past. It is simply waiting for the poet to discover and so 'illuminate that which we thought we already knew, and make us see that which we thought we'd already seen'.

With these thoughts in mind and the impetus of a commission from the prestigious Malvern Concert Club, it did not take very long before I found a poem that would open the cycle, John Masefield's dramatic poem **On Malvern Hill**. It recalls the early history of the occupation of Worcestershire by the Romans and in it, Masefield relates the famous story of the battle fought between Caractacus, (the leader of the ancient Britons) and the Romans. Through his eyes we are made witness to the siege of Caractacus's hill fort. The poem's first line conjures up a windswept scene on the hills – 'The wind is brushing down the clover / it beats the tossing branches bare'. The song opens in a turbulent

manner, with an ominous-sounding group of fast-moving semiquavers, heard low down in the piano, which is followed by the vocal entry. Although the music that underpins the first two stanzas is essentially strophic in nature, it gives way to a contrasting middle section. Here, the poet portrays a dramatic scene of the Roman army breaking through the British lines. A *quasi trompette* fanfare, heard initially on the piano, opens the section. This strident rhythmic figure descends through the octaves and settles to form the basis of a new texture – one that tries to capture the oppressiveness of the lines *'The Roman line, the Roman order / Swayed forwards to the blind assault'*. This passage leads to a passionate vocal climax on the words *'Spearman and charioteer and Bowman / Charged and were scattered into spray'*. With the battle over, the music returns to the principal theme heard at the outset of the song, although its mood has been recast to one of ineffable sadness as a violin *cantilena* is heard floating high above a calm and tranquil piano accompaniment. This 'music of twilight' mirrors the tragic scene, as the *'beaten warriors left the battle / Dead on the clansmen's wicker shields'*. In the final stanza, the turbulent opening music makes a brief return

before slowing down in preparation for the final lines, *'Quiet are clan and chief, and quiet / Centurion and signifer'*, ending the song in the gloom of dusk. The song is dedicated to Roderick Williams.

By contrast, the second song – a setting of A. E. Housman's poem **How Clear, How Lovely Bright** opens with the brightness of a new dawn. However, as with many of Housman's poems, what appears at first sight to be a straight forward lyric is not the case, as it reveals a coded and deeply personal narrative. In this instance, Housman's anguished feelings are about his unrequited love for Moses Jackson. The poem begins affirmatively, *'How clear, how lovely bright / How beautiful to sight / Those beams of morning play'*. The music's sprightly rhythms echo the poem's sense of hopefulness and anticipation. In the second stanza, the poet announces that *'To-day I shall be strong, / No more shall yield to wrong, / Shall squander life no more'*. These sentiments are expressed through an expansive and vigorous vocal line that culminates in a sensual cadence on the words 'life no more'. However, the poet's optimism gives way to more regretful and despondent thoughts *'Days lost, I know not how / I shall retrieve them now / Now I*

shall keep the vow / I never kept before'. Heralded by a bell-like figure in the piano accompaniment and sustained by an insistent rhythmic pedal in the 'cello, the music reflects Housman's note of defiance. In the final verse, there is a restatement of the song's opening material but the earlier sanguinity has now been replaced by the poet's sudden realisation that the vows that he intended to have kept, have *'died into the west away'*. To capture these feelings of despair, the voice repeats a downward interval of a major third three times on the word *'falls'*, its repetition acting as an aural metaphor for the inescapable finality of the *'remorseful day'*. The song is dedicated to Jennie McGregor-Smith.

The third song – a setting of part of John Drinkwater's poem, **Elgar's Music**, provides the cycle with a lyrical *intermezzo*. The music of Edward Elgar certainly casts a long shadow over the Worcestershire landscape and as I live within sight of the Malvern Hills, I cannot – and nor do I wish to – escape his influence. Elgar once said *'...there is music in the air, music all around us, the world is full of it and you simply take as much as you require'*. As I became more attuned to this 'sense of place', I began to wonder whether it was Elgar himself who

was *'in the air'*, so palpable was his presence. I had not realised that Elgar was the Malvern Concert Club's founder and in view of this important musical association it seemed only fitting that I should try to acknowledge him in some way. My thoughts centred initially upon the idea of incorporating within the cycle, a quote from one of his works, which I intended as a kind of 'homage'; I later dismissed this idea as being too clichéd. Fortunately, I had discovered a poem by John Drinkwater, entitled *'Elgar's Music'* written in 1935. In many ways, this sonnet was ideal to set, but the more I read it, the more problematical it became. My main objection was, that the second part of this 'Petrarchian' sonnet was not, in my opinion, top rate poetry. However, the more I read the octet the more I liked it and so eventually decided to set this portion of the poem. Then, something quite unforeseen happened. As I began working on the opening lines, *'How quietly he sleeps upon the hill / That sees the seasons go by Severnside'* a sudden rush of musical ideas came. Later, once I had written them down, I realised that there was a something familiar resonating in the music, but I could not grasp what it was and so I showed it to my partner. He immediately recognised that there was a hint

of the 'Sea Slumber-Song' – the first of Elgar's *Sea Pictures* – concealed within it. This allusion had been an entirely unconscious one, but once it had been revealed, I decided to integrate it within the song's evolving structure. So, strange as it may appear, Elgar did make his presence known and perhaps it is not too fanciful to suggest that *his* music is indeed 'in the air'. The song is dedicated to John and Gina Wilson.

A setting of John Masefield's exuberant poem, **Laugh, and be merry** acts as the cycle's boisterous scherzo. The opening *tutti* presents an energetic rhythmic figure in the unusual time signature of 7/4 that carries the poet's spirited commentary, '*Laugh and be merry, remember, better the world with a song / Better the world with a blow in the teeth of a wrong*'. Whilst sustaining this lively pace, the poem's fluctuating narrative required subtle variation in the music's changing moods; indeed, this irregular poem was quite a challenge to set. In the middle section for example, the music's tempo relaxes briefly and takes on a quasi-religious air in order to accentuate the poem's festive commentary. Another challenge was setting the final line '*and be you merry, my friends*'. Here, I employ

a prolonged vocal melisma on the repeated word 'merry' that is intended to bring the song to an exhilarating conclusion. The song is dedicated to Gerald Towell.

Sometimes, how to end a cycle can pose a problem. Having decided that the River Severn would play a central part in the cycle, it was time for it to have a voice of its own. In Philip Woner's poem **The River in December** the river represents the eternal and immutable element in the Worcestershire landscape; one through which the poet's voice is heard to reflect upon his mortality. Before setting this poem, I went on a Severnside walk. Just beyond the parish church at the village of Kempsey, I came across a view of the river silhouetted against the Malvern Hills. It was this magical scene that inspired the opening music. Following a brief piano introduction, a gently flowing 'cello solo ushers in the vocal melody on the line, '*Its peace again the river claims / But now December on it rests*' / *Too late for all its battered flowers, / Too late for all its abandoned nests*'. A calm undercurrent of strings supports the vocal melody as this passage grows slowly to a climax on the line, '*Hide this summer's ravage now*'. This brings a new thematic idea that underscores the poem's

central message; namely, that consolation can be found in knowing that our lives are part of Nature's eternal pattern. A short bridge-passage leads to the middle section. On the words, '*Only God now lights the river*' a broad, elegiac vocal melody is punctuated by forte pizzicato chords in the strings. As the river is flooded with light, the music reaches an iridescent climax on the words '*with the colours of the kingfisher*'. In the final stanza, the poet expresses his hope that after his death, the river will remember him. The song's calm opening returns and leads to a lengthy coda. At its climax, the voice repeats the words '*Remember me*' seven times in an expressive outpouring of emotion. With each melismatic phrase the voice and instrumental accompaniment gradually fade away, *a niente*. At the end, we are left hearing only a distant echo of those '*times long past*'. The song is dedicated to Anthony Gill.

The Song of the Severn was given its première at Malvern Theatres on May 3rd 2013. It was commissioned by Malvern Concert Club for its 110th Season, with funds from the Kay Trust, in memory of Kathy and Margaret Kay. The Kay Trust has also generously supported this recording of the work.

THE PINE BOUGHS PAST MUSIC

The Pine Boughs Past Music was commissioned by Christine Talbot-Cooper for the Gloucester Music Society's 80th anniversary celebrations in 2010. Having purposefully sought inspiration from the wide array of Gloucestershire poets, from W. E. Henley to F. W. Harvey, I finally found an inner artistic identification with the poetry of Ivor Gurney. His work is infused with the imagery of the Gloucestershire landscape and it is against this backdrop that the song cycle's narrative is played out. The opening song is a setting of **My Heart Makes Songs On Lonely Roads**. This poem was written towards the end of 1917 and it deals with Gurney's unrequited love for Annie Nelson Drummond – a nurse who cared for him while he was convalescing at the Edinburgh War Hospital. Most characteristically, Gurney turns his forlorn narrative away from the individual to affirm the collective; it is the experience of love itself that really matters. The song follows closely the poet's emotional journey, presenting in the first two stanzas, a simple vocal line that is melancholic in nature and sustained in mood by a lilting figure in the piano accompaniment. In the final stanza, the principal melodic ideas are transformed

in order to express the subtle change of emphasis away from the individual to the universal: *'But I am glad that love has come / To bind me fast and try my worth / For Love's a powerful Lord and gives / His friends dominion over the earth'*.

Soft Rain was written between 1926 and 1927 while Gurney was at the City of London Mental Hospital, Dartford. It begins contemplatively with the line, *'Soft rain beats upon my windows / Hardly harming'*. These resigned sentiments are echoed in a vocal melody that is expressed through long-breathed phrases, supported by a sensuous harmonic wash of sound. This calm atmosphere is however abruptly disturbed when the poet recalls the distant sound of a gale and *'that savage toss of the pine boughs past music'*. Here, the music rises to an ecstatic *ff* climax on the words *'And the roar of the elms'* before subsiding and returning to the song's opening in preparation for the poem's dénouement on the words, *'Here come, in the candle light, soft reminder / Of poetry's truth, while rain beats as softly here / As sleep, or shelter of farms'*. Tragically, the word 'here' refers to the asylum in which Gurney was incarcerated.

The Wind, written in 1929, is regarded by Gurney scholars as his final poem. Using the wind as an all-encompassing metaphor, Gurney captures the brevity of human existence in lines of stark despair. For the full force of the poem's existential narrative to be understood when sung, I decided to set the vocal line strophically, underpinning it with a piano accompaniment that supports, rather than comments upon the poem's disconsolate imagery; each of the three stanzas increase in intensity as the piano's textures become more elaborate.

It would have been easy to have rounded off the cycle by setting another poem by Ivor Gurney. However, it was to Leonard Clark (1905-1981) to whom I turned. The title of his summative poem speaks for itself. **In Memoriam : Ivor Gurney / Obit 26th XII 1937** is a haunting elegy to Gurney's everlasting memory. In this 'through-composed' song, I have tried to capture the poem's constantly shifting narrative – a journey that takes us through a multiplicity of moods from loss and mourning, to memory and commemoration and finally to affirmation. Nowhere, is this sense of affirmation more apparent than in the final vocal climax and piano postlude

where the chiming of the bells of Gloucester Cathedral can be heard resounding a celebratory note for one of Gloucestershire's finest poets. The cycle is dedicated to Roderic Dunnett.

FOUR SONGS WITH STRING QUARTET

Three of the **Four Songs with String Quartet** are arrangements by Graham J. Lloyd, of existing works that were originally written for piano and voice.

Flying Crooked is a humorous interpretation of Robert Graves' poem about the 'cabbage white' butterfly. The music's overriding character is one of levity and this has been perfectly captured in this string arrangement, by the use of playful pizzicatos. At the end of the song, I incorporate in the vocal line, a scalic passage on the word 'crooked'. This is intended, partly to mirror the haphazard flight of the butterfly in question but also to convey a feeling of mock gravitas. The song is dedicated to Lady Trudy Bliss.

In **A Kiss** from 'Moments of Vision', Thomas Hardy juxtaposes the naïve impulses of an innocent love with love as an eternal theme. Its

two stanzas are set strophically but with some slight variation and are flanked by a lengthy introduction and short coda. Although the song's prevailing mood is one of nostalgia, there are affirmative passages which use dance like rhythms, for example on the line, *'which in a trice took wing upon the air'* which also bring moments of lightness. The song is dedicated to Kevin McLean-Mair.

Evening Bells is a setting of a poem by the Northamptonshire poet, John Clare. It is the third song from a cycle for voice and string quartet entitled, *Invite, to Eternity Op. 31*. Clare evokes a pastoral scene, broken only by the sounds of distant bells and 'zephyrs swelling'. The accompanying music is lively and highly driven and its rusticity is underpinned by the use of the intervals of a fourth and fifth in combination with an insistent rhythmic pedal which dominates the texture; the latter's relentless quality allowing for an almost spontaneous interplay to occur between voice and string quartet. Contrast is provided in the third stanza, where ruminative tremolandi accompany a more lyrical vocal line. The song was commissioned by, and is dedicated to, Patrick Aydon and Brenda Aydon.

The Night Has a Thousand Eyes was commissioned by Kenneth R. Prendergast in 2012 to celebrate his 50th birthday. It is a setting of a short lyric poem by Francis William Bourdillon (1852-1921). The Poem presents a series of contrary thoughts; night and day, the many and the one, life and death, but its principal opposite is the heart versus the mind. In Bourdillon's opinion, the heart is more important to life than the mind and in the final two lines he states that the essence of life is lost, once love is lost. In this song, I have tried to evoke an otherworldly and transcendental mood by using an insistent oscillation of major and minor triads in the accompaniment, over which the voice sings an expressive lament. The melismatic nature of the vocal line at the end of the song is intended to intensify the finality of the words, *'when love is gone'*. The song is dedicated to Kenneth R. Prendergast.

FIVE SONGS WITH PIANO

Break, Break, Break is a setting of Alfred Lord Tennyson's Elegiac lyric to his friend, Arthur Hallam. The song's tempestuous introduction conjures up the elemental power of the sea breaking on the *'cold gray stones'*. The poet hears the joyful cries of the

'fisherman's boy who shouts with his sister at play', but this does not bring any comfort, only a reminder of what he has lost. The vocal line's opening declamation gives way to a slower central section where the music becomes intimate and nostalgic, in preparation for the poignant line, *'Oh for the touch of a vanished hand'*. The opening music returns and the song ends on a note of resignation as the poet realises that the *'tender grace'* of past happier days will never return. The song is dedicated to Nigel and Gilly Lowson.

Midnight Lamentation is my earliest song setting and was composed in 1974. The words are by the early 20th century Georgian poet – Harold Monro (1879-1932). The poem's narrative is deeply poignant and in my youthful ardour, I responded by composing a simple vocal melody underpinned by an accompaniment that has a directness that allows the poem's melancholic commentary to be heard clearly. The Song is dedicated to Graham. J. Lloyd.

The Hippo is a setting of a poem by the American poet Theodore Roethke and is one of my more light-hearted songs. Musically, I have sought to match the poem's whimsical

character through a vocal line that subtly mirrors its humour. However, this humour is understated and the song's overall mood is reflective, rather than mere parody. It is dedicated to Paul and Carol Walshe.

The Invitation to the Gondola is a setting of a poem by the 19th-century author and poet John Addington Symonds (1840-1893). Lost in reverie, Symonds, depicts the imagery of Venice as a *'city seen in dreams'*. The poem's six stanzas provided an obvious ternary structure, where, in the outer sections, the rapid semi-quavers of the piano accompaniment express the anticipatory nature of the poem, *'Come forth for night is falling'*. By contrast, the middle stanzas evoke an atmosphere of tranquillity as *'Bells call to bells from the islands'*. This is sustained by an impressionistic harmonic language and by the introduction of a rocking figure in the piano accompaniment that gives just a hint of *'a breeze from the sea'*. The final two stanzas reprise the opening music, culminating in a dramatic vocal climax that is followed by a short postlude for piano solo. The song is dedicated to Joanna Brickell.

Frutta di Mare was written during the summer of 2011. Geoffrey Scott (1884-1929) was an

English scholar and poet, known principally as an architectural historian. His relationship with Vita Sackville-West prompted a literary career that led to a volume of his poetry being published posthumously in 1931. Scott's poem is one of the earliest 20th century poems to deal with the subject of Ecology. Its essential message is, that mankind has become far too self-absorbed to hear Nature's warnings. The song follows closely the poem's narrative, opening with a piano accompaniment that imitates the gently lapping of waves on a distant seashore. The voice enters on the words *'I am a sea shell, flung up from an ancient sea / Now I lie here among roots of a tamarisk tree / no one listens to me'*. This tranquil introduction gives way to a middle section that grows gradually more chromatic, reaching a *ff* climax on the words *'only your sorrows sound comes coiling to the brim'*. This is followed by a reflective coda that introduces a new vocal melody that is accompanied by slow-moving chords in the piano. Here, the poem's narrative discloses that 'Nature' does, indeed have the answers to all our questions but, because of humanity's never ending hubris, denies to give them. The song is dedicated to Sally Porter Munro.

Ian Venables, 2015

THE SONG OF THE SEVERN OP.43

1 On Malvern Hill

John Masefield (1878-1967)

A wind is brushing down the clover,
It sweeps the tossing branches bare,
Blowing the poisoning kestrel over
The crumbling ramparts of the Caer.

It whirls the scattered leaves before us
Along the dusty road to home,
Once it awakened into chorus
The heart-strings in the ranks of Rome.

There by the gusty coppice border
The shrilling trumpets broke the halt,
The Roman line, the Roman order,
Swayed forwards to the blind assault.

Spearman and charioteer and bowman
Charged and were scattered into spray,
Savage and taciturn the Roman
Hewed upwards in the Roman way.

There in the twilight where the cattle
Are lowing home across the fields,
The beaten warriors left the battle
Dead on the clansmen's wicker shields.

The leaves whirl in the wind's riot
Beneath the Beacon's jutting spur,
Quiet are clan and chief, and quiet
Centurion and signifier.

The words of On Malvern Hill are reproduced by permission of The Society of Authors as Literary Representative of the Estate of John Masefield.

2 How Clear, How Lovely Bright

Alfred Edward Housman (1859-1936)

How clear, how lovely bright,
How beautiful to sight
Those beams of morning play,
How heaven laughs out with glee
Where, like a bird set free,
Up from the eastern sea
Soars the delightful day.

To-day I shall be strong,
No more shall yield to wrong,
Shall squander life no more;
Days lost, I know not how,
I shall retrieve them now;
Now I shall keep the vow
I never kept before.

Ensanguining the skies
How heavily it dies
Into the west away;

Past touch and sight and sound,
Not further to be found,
How hopeless under ground
Falls the remorseful day.

3 Elgar's Music

John Drinkwater (1882 -1937)

How quietly he sleeps upon the hill
That sees the seasons go by Severnside,
He who by music manifested still
Across the earth the ancient English pride –
This Worcester man who out of little lanes
Of whitethorn bud, and Evesham orchards bright
In harvest, made a magic that disdains
That easy summons of the lesser light.

4 Laugh and Be Merry

John Masefield

Laugh and be merry,
remember, better the world with a song,
Better the world with a blow
in the teeth of a wrong.
Laugh, for the time is brief,
a thread the length of a span.
Laugh and be proud to belong
to the old proud pageant of man.

Laugh and be merry:
remember, in olden time.
God made Heaven and Earth
for joy He took in a rhyme,
Made them, and filled them full
with the strong red wine of His mirth
The splendid joy of the stars:
the joy of the earth.

So we must laugh and drink
from the deep blue cup of the sky,
Join the jubilant song
of the great stars sweeping by,
Laugh, and battle, and work,
and drink of the wine outpoured
In the dear green earth,
the sign of the joy of the Lord.

Laugh and be merry together,
like brothers akin,
Guesting awhile in the rooms
of a beautiful inn,
Glad till the dancing stops,
and the lilt of the music ends.
Laugh till the game is played;
and be you merry, my friends.

The words of Laugh and Be Merry are reproduced by permission of The Society of Authors as Literary Representative of the Estate of John Masefield.

5 **The River in December**

Philip Warner

It's peace again the river claims,
But now December on it rests,
Too late for all its battered flowers,
Too late for all its abandoned nests.
Little mists of times long past,
Hide this summer's ravage now;
An ancient solace steals along
Broken bank and shattered bough.
Only God now lights the river,
Lights from stream to bank, to bark,
With the colours of the Kingfisher,
And returning rules the dark.
On such a day when I am gone,
Away to exile, still and free,
As quiet and steadfast flows the river,
If all is well, remember me.

**THE PINE BOUGHS PAST
MUSIC OP. 39**

6 **My heart makes songs on lonely roads**

Ivor Gurney (1890 -1937)

My heart makes songs on lonely roads
To comfort me while you're away,
And strives with lovely sounding words
Its crowded tenderness to say.

Glimmering against the forward dark,
Your face I see with pride, with pain
So that one time I did desire
Never to see that face again.

But I am glad that Love has come
To bind me fast and try my worth;
For Love's a powerful Lord and gives
His friends dominion over the earth.

7 **Soft Rain**

Ivor Gurney

Soft rain beats upon my windows
Hardly harming.
But by the great gusts guessed further off
Up by the bare moor and brambly headland
Heaven and earth make war.

That savage toss of the pine boughs past music
And the roar of the elms . . .
Here come, in the candle light, soft reminder
Of poetry's truth, while rain beats softly here
As sleep, or shelter of farms.

8 **The Wind**

Ivor Gurney

All night the fierce wind blew-
All night I knew
Time, like a dark wind, blowing
All days, all lives, all memories
Down empty, endless skies-
A blind wind, strowing
Bright leaves of life's torn tree
Through blank eternity:
Dreadfully swift, Time blew.
All night I knew
The outrush of its going.

At dawn a thin rain wept.
Worn out, I slept
And woke to a fair morning.
My days were amply long, and I content
In their accomplishment –
Lost the wind's warning.

9 **In Memoriam : Ivor Gurney** (Obit 26 xii 37)

Leonard Clark (1905-1981)

These Severn meadows knew
He would not come
To tread their little paths again.
A whisper, secret as the dew,
Fell from the trembling lips of men,
"An English singer's dumb"
But still the river glides his madrigals
Their cadences of richest Tudor sound:
In Framilode, a winter blackbird calls
Daffodils from frozen ground,
And Gloucester tower,
That certainty of stone and power,
Has heard once more,
His timeless music soar,
His young heart rise,
Triumphantly to Cotswold skies.

FOUR SONGS WITH STRING QUARTET

10 **Flying Crooked** Op. 28, No. 1
Robert Graves (1895 -1985)

The butterfly, the cabbage white,
(His honest idiocy of flight)
Will never now, it is too late,
Master the art of flying straight,
Yet has – who knows so well as I? –
A just sense of how not to fly:
He lurches here and here by guess
And God and hope and hopelessness.
Even the aerobatic swift
Has not his flying-crooked gift.

The words for Flying Crooked are set to music by permission of A.P. Watt Ltd on behalf of the Robert Graves Copyright Trust.

11 **A Kiss** Op. 15
Thomas Hardy (1840 -1928)

By a wall the stranger now calls his,
Was born of old a particular kiss,
Without forethought in its genesis;
Which in a trice took wing upon the air.
And where that spot is nothing shows:
There ivy calmly grows,

And no one knows
What a birth was there!

That kiss is gone where none can tell –
Not even those who felt its spell:
It cannot die; that know we well.
Somewhere it pursues its fight,
One of a long procession of sounds
Travelling aethereal rounds
Far from earth's bounds
In the infinite.

12 **Evening Bells** Op. 31, No. 3
John Clare (1793-1864)

Sweet the merry bells ring round
On even zephyrs dying swells
The sweetest chord the harp can sound
Sounds not so sweet as evening bells
O merry chiming bells
Swinging falls and melting rise
On viewless echo how it swells
Tis but the music of the skies
Can breath so sweet as evening bells
O merry chiming bells

Faint and fainter how they fall
Humming through the lonely dells
No sounds to charm this earthly ball

Can charm so sweet as evening bells
O merry chiming bells

Zephyrs breathing once again
Once again the zephyr swells
Still I lie upon the plain
Entranc'd to hear the evening bells
O merry chiming bells

While the runnel curdles clear
Once again the zephyr swells
Sweeter still the strains appear
O evening bells o evening bells
How sweet is evening bells

13 **The Night Has A Thousand Eyes** Op. 41, No. 2
Francis William Bourdillon (1852-1921)

The night has a thousand eyes,
And the day but one;
Yet the light of the bright world dies
With the dying sun.

The mind has a thousand eyes,
And the heart but one;
Yet the light of a whole life dies
When love is gone.

SONGS WITH PIANO

14 **Break, break, break** Op. 33, No. 5
Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809 – 1892)

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.
O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!
And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!
Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

15 **Midnight Lamentation** Op. 6
Harold Monro (1879 – 1932)

When you and I go down
Breathless and cold,
Our faces both worn back
To earthly mould,

How lonely we shall be!
What shall we do,
You without me,
I without you?

We are most nearly born
Of one same kind;
We have the same delight,
The same true mind.
Must we then part, we part;
Is there no way
To keep a beating heart,
And light of day?

I cannot find a way
Through love and through;
I cannot reach beyond
Body, to you.
When you or I must go
Down evermore,
There'll be no more to say
- But a locked door.

16 **The Hippo**
Theodore Roethke (1908 -1963)

A head or tail which does he lack?
I think his forward's coming back!
He lives on carrots, leeks and hay.

He starts to yawn, it takes all day.
Some time I think I'll live that way.

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17 **The Invitation to the Gondola** Op. 22, No. 3
John Addington Symonds (1840-1893)

Come forth; for Night is falling,
The moon hangs round and red
On the verge of the violet waters,
Fronting the daylight dead.

Come forth; the liquid spaces,
Of sea and sky are one
Where outspread angel flame- wings,
Brood o'er the buried sun.

Bells call to bells from the islands,
And far-off mountains rear
Their shadowy crests in the crystal
Of cloudless atmosphere.

A breeze from the sea is wafted;
Lamp-litten Venice gleams
With her towers and domes uplifted,
Like a city seen in dreams.

Her waterways are a tremble
With melody far and wide,
Borne from the phantom galleys
That o'er the darkness glide.

There are stars in the heaven, and starry
Are the wandering lights below;
Come forth! for the Night is calling,
Sea, city, and sky are aglow!

18 **Frutta di Mare** Op. 41, No. 1
Geoffrey Scott (1884-1929)

I am a seashell flung
Up from an ancient sea;
Now I lie here, among
Roots of a tamarisk tree;
No one listens to me.

I sing to myself all day
In a husky voice, quite low,
Things the great fishes say
And you most need to know;
All night I sing just so.

But lift me from the ground,
And hearken to my rim,
Only your sorrow's sound

Amazed, perplexed and dim,
Comes coiling to the brim;

For what the wise whales ponder
Awaking out from sleep,
The key to all your wonder,
The answers of the deep,
These to myself I keep.

IAN VENABLES

Ian Venables was born in 1955 and educated at Liverpool Collegiate Grammar School. He studied music with Professor Richard Arnell at Trinity College of Music, London and later with John Joubert, Andrew Downes and John Mayer at the Birmingham Conservatoire. His compositions encompass many genres, and he has added significantly to the canon of English art song. Described as “...a song composer as fine as Finzi and Gurney...” (BBC Music Magazine) and “...one of the finest song composers of his generation...” (BMS Newsletter), he has written over 60 works in this genre, which includes seven song-cycles, *Venetian Songs – Love’s Voice Op.22* (1995); *Invite to Eternity Op.31* (1997) for tenor and string quartet; *Songs of Eternity and Sorrow Op.36* (2004) for tenor, string quartet and piano; *On the Wings of Love Op.38* (2006) for tenor, clarinet and piano; *The Pine Boughs Past Music Op.39* (2009) for baritone and piano; *Remember This Op.40* (2011) a Cantata for soprano, tenor, string quartet, and piano (recently orchestrated) and *The Song of The Severn Op.43* (2013) for baritone, string quartet and piano. Other songs for solo voice and piano include, *Two Songs Op.28* (1997) and



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Six Songs Op.33 (2003) as well as a dramatic scena *At the court of the poisoned rose Op. 20* (1994). His many chamber works include a *Piano Quintet Op.27* (1995) – described by Roderic Dunnett in the Independent as ‘... lending a new late 20th Century dimension to the English pastoral...’, a *String Quartet Op.32* (1998) and more recently a *Canzonetta Op.44* for clarinet and string quartet (2013). He has also written works for choir – *Awake, awake, the world is young Op.34 – organ – Rhapsody Op.25* (1996), brass and solo piano. He is an acknowledged expert on the 19th-century poet and literary critic John Addington Symonds, and apart from having set five of his poems for voice and piano, he has contributed a significant essay to the book *John Addington Symonds – Culture and the Demon Desire* (Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000). He is President of The Arthur Bliss Society and Vice-President of the Gloucester Music Society. His continuing work on the music of Ivor Gurney has led to orchestrations of two of his songs (2003) – counterparts to the two that were orchestrated by Herbert Howells – and newly edited versions of Gurney’s *War Elegy* (1919) and *A Gloucestershire Rhapsody* (1921), with Dr Philip Lancaster. His music is published by

Novello and Co Ltd and has been recorded on the Regent, Somm, Signum and Naxos labels.

www.ianvenables.com

www.musicsalesclassical.com

www.musicroom.com

RODERICK WILLIAMS

Roderick Williams encompasses a wide repertoire, from baroque to contemporary music, in the opera house, on the concert platform and in recital.

He enjoys relationships with all the major UK opera houses and is particularly associated with the baritone roles of Mozart. He has also sung world premieres of operas by, among others, David Sawer, Sally Beamish, Michael van der Aa, Robert Saxton and Alexander Knaifel.

Roderick Williams has sung concert repertoire with all the BBC orchestras, and many other ensembles including the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Philharmonia, London Sinfonietta, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hallé, Britten Sinfonia, Bournemouth Symphony and Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Abroad he has worked with the Berlin Philharmonic,



Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Russian National Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Ensemble Orchestral de Paris, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome and Bach Collegium Japan amongst others. His many festival appearances include the BBC Proms (including the Last Night in 2014), Edinburgh, Cheltenham, Aldeburgh and Melbourne.

Recent opera engagements include Oronte in Charpentier's *Medée*, Toby Kramer in Van der Aa's *Sunken Garden* in the Netherlands and London, Pollux in *Castor and Pollux* for English National Opera and Van der Aa's *After Life* at Melbourne State Theatre. Future performances include Van der Aa's *Sunken Garden* at Opera de Lyon and the title role in *Billy Budd* for the Nationale Reisopera. Recent and future concert engagements include concerts with the Tonkünstler Orchester at the Musikverein, Cincinnati Symphony, Music of the Baroque Chicago and Virginia Arts Festival as well as many recitals and concerts in the UK and worldwide.

He is also an accomplished recital artist who can be heard at venues and festivals including Wigmore Hall, Kings Place, LSO St Luke's, the

Perth Concert Hall, Oxford Lieder Festival, London Song Festival, the Musikverein, Vienna and on Radio 3, where he has participated on Iain Burnside's *Voices* programme.

His numerous recordings include Vaughan Williams, Berkeley and Britten operas for Chandos, Verdi's *Don Carlos* (conducted by Bernard Haitink) for Philips, and an extensive repertoire of English song with pianist Iain Burnside for Naxos.

Roderick Williams is also a composer and has had works premiered at the Wigmore and Barbican Halls, the Purcell Room and live on national radio.

He will be Artistic Director of Leeds Lieder + in April 2016.

GRAHAM J LLOYD

Graham J Lloyd was born on the Wirral in 1963. He began his piano studies at the relatively late age of 14 and only four years later gave his debut recital in Liverpool, in a performance of Saint-Saëns's *Carnival des Animaux*. He studied at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester with the renowned



Polish pianist Ryszard Bakst and where, as a chamber musician, he was coached by the late Denis Matthews. He has worked as a soloist – Rachmaninov's *Piano Concerto No. 1*; chamber musician – Beethoven's *Complete Sonatas for Violin and Piano*, Schubert's *Trout Quintet* and in particular as an accompanist to many singers. He has specialised in recording the works of his partner Ian Venables and the CD 'The Songs of Ian Venables' received much critical acclaim "...the singer is ably supported by pianist Graham Lloyd..." (*Gramophone*). He has also recorded Venables' music for strings and piano with members of the Coull Quartet on the SOMM label "...pianist (Graham) Lloyd adding much to the sense of grandeur in the music..." (*International Record Review*) and the same composer's complete piano music on the NAXOS label. He combines a busy teaching career with recording, adjudicating and arranging.

CARDUCCI STRING QUARTET

Matthew Denton & Michelle Fleming violins
Eoin Schmidt-Martin viola
Emma Denton cello

Described by The Strad as presenting "*a masterclass in unanimity of musical purpose, in which severity could melt seamlessly into charm, and drama into geniality*", the Carducci Quartet is recognised as one of today's most successful string quartets. Performing over 90 concerts worldwide each year the quartet also run their own recording label Carducci Classics; an annual festival in Highnam, Gloucester; and in September 2014, curated their first Carducci Festival in Castagneto-Carducci: the town from which they took their name.

Winners of international competitions, including the Concert Artists Guild International Competition 2007 and Finland's Kuhmo International Chamber Music Competition, the Anglo-Irish quartet has appeared at prestigious venues across the globe including the Wigmore Hall, London; National Concert Hall, Dublin; Tivoli Concert Hall, Copenhagen; Carnegie Hall, New York and Library of



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Congress and John F Kennedy Center, Washington D.C. Festival appearances include Cheltenham Music Festival; Festival Messiaen au pays Meije; West Cork Chamber Music festival; Kuhmo Festival; and the Wratislavia Cantans Festival in Poland.

2015 will see the quartet present the complete catalogue of Shostakovich's String Quartets across a number of international cycles to commemorate 40 years since the composer's death. The project will be accompanied by a recording of quartet's Nos. 4, 8 and 11: their second disc for Signum Classics. Further to this, the quartet will tour Germany, Holland and Colombia and collaborate with guitarist Craig Ogden, clarinettist Emma Johnson, cellists Guy Johnston and Christian-Pierre La Marca.

Highly celebrated for their interpretations of contemporary repertoire, the Carducci Quartet is regularly invited to premiere new works. Recent highlights include a new String Quartet by John McCabe and Oboe Quintets by Michael Berkeley and Sven-Ingo Koch with Nicholas Daniel.

Educational work remains important to the quartet who set up the Carducci Music Trust, to support their work in schools. The quartet studied with members of the Amadeus, Alban Berg, Chilingirian, Takacs and Vanbrugh quartets and, as part of the ProQuartet professional training programme in France, with Gyorgy Kurtag, Walter Levin and Paul Katz.



This recording was made with the financial assistance of: The Kay Trust, The John Ireland Trust, The Composer's Project Trust, Alan Cook, Richard Hall, John Sammons, Eric and Astrid Hazelwood, Jennie and John McGregor-Smith, Jim and Frances Page, Patrick and Kate Aydon and Philip Jones.

Recorded at St Michael's Church, Summertown, Oxford, on 12th and 13th December 2014

Producer – Adrian Peacock
Recording Engineer – Mike Hatch
Recording Assistant – Chris Kalcov
Editor – Will Brown

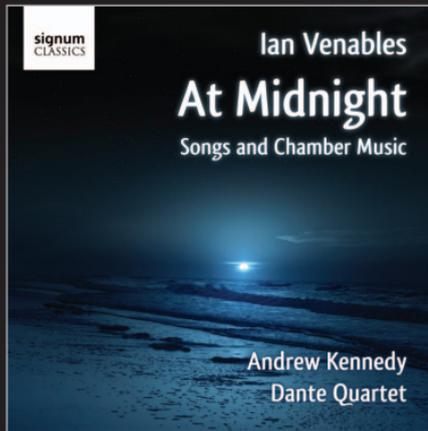
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"Kennedy's plangent tone fits ideally the predominant mood of melancholy ... The string quartet confirms Venables' originality: the gritty vitality of the outer movements straddling an adagio that mingles wit with wistful romanticism"

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