



THE COMPLETE

C.W. Orr

volume 1

SONGBOOK

MARK STONE  
SIMON LEPPER



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CHARLES WILFRED ORR (1893-1976)

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**MARK STONE** *baritone*  
**SIMON LEPPER** *piano*

## CHARLES WILFRED ORR

### The unsung hero of English song

#### Part one: The creation of a song-writer

Charles James Orr, a captain in the Indian army, met Jessie Jane Coke whilst visiting his aunt in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. In 1892 they married and joined his regiment in Hyderabad, but James died of tuberculosis the following year and Jessie returned to Cheltenham to live with her mother, stepfather and sister. Soon afterwards, on 31st July 1893, she gave birth to Charles Wilfred Leslie Orr.

Willie, as he was known, was a delicate child; an extreme reaction to a childhood vaccination led to recurrent attacks of eczema, which continued until he was over forty years old. In 1903, he started at Cheltenham College, a well-established school that did not consider music to be an important academic subject. F.G. Dyer, the organist and choirmaster, was the only professional musician on the staff, and the music facilities consisted of a few old and damp rooms in a converted stable. Orr considered the school's attitude towards music to be completely philistine. He sang in the school choir, but took private piano lessons in town and took no part in college concerts or musical activities.

He left school just before his 15th birthday and remained at home, due to his ill health, with little hope of a regular profession. He continued to pursue his musical interests, studying harmony and counterpoint with E.A. Dicks, the organist of St Luke's, Cheltenham, who constantly warned against the degradations of chromaticism and contemporary music in general. His teacher's conservatism probably had the effect of making new music all the more attractive, nurturing his distaste for classical composers when compared to the bolder, glowing orchestral colours and harmonies of Wagner, Elgar and Strauss.

His favourite genre was German Lieder, which he considered to be far superior to English songs of the time. He was a great admirer of the mezzo-soprano Elena Gerhardt, and managed to persuade his mother to attend a recital she gave in London. Inspired by Gerhardt, he bought all the Lieder of Schubert, Schumann, Brahms and Wolf that he could afford. It was this love of Lieder, Wolf's in particular, and hearing Gerhardt perform, which led him to want to be a song-writer.

For the sake of Orr's music, he and his mother moved to London just before the outbreak of war in August 1914. Swept up in the wave of patriotism, he joined the Artists' Rifles Officers

Training Corps in 1915, and later gaining a commission to the Coldstream Guards, however, intermittent attacks of eczema prevented him from serving abroad, and before the end of the war he was discharged from the army on medical grounds.

Although the musical scene at this time was much reduced, and no German artist or modern German music was presented, Orr took advantage of being in London by hearing a great deal of contemporary music. It was at this time that he first heard the music of Frederick Delius, an experience that had a dramatic effect on him. He attended every concert of Delius' music that he could and was soon able to recognise him at sight. On 16th June 1915, after a concert of his *First violin sonata*, he found himself leaving the Aeolian Hall directly behind Delius and his wife. He followed them to a restaurant and after a few moments plucked up the courage to introduce himself and lavish praise upon the composer. He was invited to join their table, and they subsequently saw a good deal of each other.

Delius' ruthless, single-minded attitude towards the execution of his art was in inspiration to a man who had, until this point, drifted somewhat aimlessly; Orr's privileged upper middle class background meant that he was a man of independent means. He sent three songs to Delius, which, although later destroyed by Orr because of their immaturity, were very encouragingly received. Delius praised Orr's music for having the most important ingredient: emotion.

Orr felt that he was in need of further tuition and so in April 1917 he enrolled at the Guildhall School of Music, emboldened by Delius' favourable opinion of Landon Robert, the school's principal. He studied composition with Orlando Morgan, who had no liking for contemporary music, and discouraged all Orr's chromatic attempts, as opposed to Delius who strongly advised against writing diatonic music. He left the Guildhall in January 1919 and spent six weeks that summer studying counterpoint with Edward Dent. Delius wholeheartedly supported this, his own counterpoint studies with Thomas Ward in Florida being, he considered, the only useful tuition he had ever received.

Delius acted as a mentor to Orr, providing the approval for his choice of career that he had not received from school. Orr was introduced to other members of the Delian circle, like Philip Heseltine, who not only introduced him to English musical life, but helped him take his first steps towards a compositional career.



**SEVEN SONGS FROM “A SHROPSHIRE LAD”**

Alfred Edward Housman (1859-1936)

Housman’s famous collection of 63 poems, *A Shropshire lad*, was published in 1896, by which time he was professor of Latin at University College London, despite having initially left Oxford without a degree. In 1911, he was appointed Kennedy Professor of Latin at Cambridge University, and so moved to Trinity College, where he spent the rest of his life. Orr completed this set of seven Housman songs between 1927 and 1931 and, after experiencing some difficulty in finding a publisher for them, funding the printing of the cycle himself, with the help of some friends.

1 i **Along the field**

This first song of the group was written in 1927 and describes a man retracing a walk he made a year earlier with a different lover who has since passed away; he believes that the trees’ whisperings foretell this, and wonders if they are predicting a similar fate for him this time. Orr’s shimmering semi-quavers have been compared to Duparc’s song *L’invitation au voyage* and together with the wandering figure of the piano’s left hand they give the impression of a journey along a familiar country path into an uncertain future.

Along the field as we came by  
 A year ago, my love and I,  
 The aspen over stile and stone  
 Was talking to itself alone.  
 “Oh who are these that kiss and pass?  
 A country lover and his lass;  
 Two lovers looking to be wed;  
 And time shall put them both to bed,  
 But she shall lie with earth above,  
 And he beside another love.”

And sure enough beneath the tree  
 There walks another love with me,  
 And overhead the aspen heaves  
 Its rainy-sounding silver leaves;  
 And I spell nothing in their stir,  
 But now perhaps they speak to her,  
 And plain for her to understand  
 They talk about a time at hand  
 When I shall sleep with clover clad,  
 And she beside another lad.

2 ii **When I watch the living meet**

With Philip Heseltine’s death in 1930, Orr lost a good friend and a discerning critic; he sent songs to Heseltine and occasionally destroyed inferior ones at his suggestion. To obtain feedback on this group he sent copies to the writer, Walter Legge, the composer Arnold Bax and the conductor Eugène Goossens. All three responded positively, with Goossens requesting orchestrations of numbers 1, 2, 6 and 7. This second song, reminiscent of Orr’s idol Hugo Wolf, was written in 1930 and is dedicated to Legge. It describes someone looking forward to the calm of death, and an end to the hatred and lust of the life.

When I watch the living meet,  
And the moving pageant file  
Warm and breathing through the street  
Where I lodge a little while,

If the heats of hate and lust  
In the house of flesh are strong,  
Let me mind the house of dust  
Where my sojourn shall be long.

In the nation that is not  
Nothing stands that stood before;  
There revenges are forgot,  
And the hater hates no more;

Lovers lying two and two  
Ask not whom they sleep beside,  
And the bridegroom all night through  
Never turns him to the bride.

### 3 iii **The Lent lily**

This song, composed in 1927 and dedicated to the pianist Dorothy Treseder, is unusually uplifting for a Housman setting. The poem, which urges the listener to go out and pick wild daffodils, is a metaphor for the fleeting nature of life, and a call to seize the moment. Housman's melancholy fleetingly appears as he describes the daffodils dying at Easter, although its repetition at the end is less for poignancy and more to evoke a sense of urgency. As ever, Orr manages to strike the perfect balance between portraying the positive image of the words, with an exuberant piano part, and occasionally hinting at the poem's darker subtext.

'Tis spring; come out to ramble  
The hilly brakes around,  
For under thorn and bramble  
About the hollow ground  
The primroses are found.

And there's the windflower chilly  
With all the winds at play,  
And there's the Lenten lily  
That has not long to stay  
And dies on Easter day.

And since till girls go maying  
You find the primrose still,  
And find the windflower playing  
With every wind at will,  
But not the daffodil,

Bring baskets now, and sally  
Upon the spring's array,  
And bear from hill and valley  
The daffodil away  
That dies on Easter day.

### 4 iv **Farewell to barn and stack and tree**

The baritone John Goss sang this song in 1928, the year of its composition, at Westminster Central Hall. The composer Arnold Bax, who was in the audience, told Orr how impressed he was, so Orr repaid the compliment and dedicated the song to him when it was finally published. Although this tale of fratricide refers to the Severn shore, Orr clearly took his musical cue from Housman's admission that his poetry was influenced by the Scottish border ballads. Specifically, his inspiration may have been the ballad *The two brothers*, included in Francis James Child's nineteenth century collection *The English and Scottish popular ballads*.

“Farewell to barn and stack and tree,  
Farewell to Severn shore.  
Terence, look your last at me,  
For I come home no more.

“The sun burns on the half-mown hill,  
By now the blood is dried;  
And Maurice amongst the hay lies still  
And my knife is in his side.

“My mother thinks us long away;  
’Tis time the field were mown.  
She had two sons at rising day,  
To-night she’ll be alone.

“And here’s a bloody hand to shake,  
And oh, man, here’s good-bye;  
We’ll sweat no more on scythe and rake,  
My bloody hands and I.

“I wish you strength to bring you pride,  
And a love to keep you clean,  
And I wish you luck, come Lammastide,  
At racing on the green.

“Long for me the rick will wait,  
And long will wait the fold,  
And long will stand the empty plate,  
And dinner will be cold.”

## 5 v **Oh fair enough are sky and plain**

Composed in 1931, this song was the last of the group to be written. The poem describes someone who is contemplating suicide being halted by the sight of their own reflection, seeing in themselves the will to live. Unlike the pensive, stillness of the setting by George Butterworth, or the solemnity of E.J. Moeran’s song, Orr’s treatment of the text is singularly optimistic. A continually flowing piano part paints a benign image of the water, with the fermata before the start of the third verse making the second half of the poem seem like someone awaking from a daydream.

Oh fair enough are sky and plain,  
But I know fairer far:  
Those are as beautiful again  
That in the water are;  
  
The pools and rivers wash so clean  
The trees and clouds and air,  
The like on earth was never seen,  
And oh that I were there.

These are the thoughts I often think  
As I stand gazing down  
In act upon the cressy brink  
To strip and dive and drown;  
  
But in the golden-sanded brooks  
And azure meres I spy  
A silly lad that longs and looks  
And wishes he were I.

6 vi **Hughley steeple**

Richard Lynex was a young lawyer who lived at the Kingscourt Hotel in London at the same time as Orr. The two were firm friends, and Lynex, who was a fine amateur baritone, sang a number of Orr's songs; *Hughley steeple*, composed in 1930, was dedicated to him. The poem describes the church tower dividing the sun from the shade, the south from the north, and the graves of those who died of natural causes from those who committed suicide. Housman had little experience of his eponymous county when he wrote *A Shropshire lad*, as this poem demonstrates: the church in Hughley has no steeple!

The vane on Hughley steeple  
Veers bright, a far-known sign,  
And there lie Hughley people,  
And there lie friends of mine.  
Tall in their midst the tower  
Divides the shade and sun,  
And the clock strikes the hour  
And tells the time to none.

To south the headstones cluster,  
The sunny mounds lie thick;  
The dead are more in muster  
At Hughley than the quick.  
North, for a soon-told number,  
Chill graves the sexton delves,  
And steeple-shadowed slumber  
The slayers of themselves.

To north, to south, lie parted,  
With Hughley tower above,  
The kind, the single-hearted,  
The lads I used to love.  
And, south or north, 'tis only  
A choice of friends one knows,  
And I shall ne'er be lonely  
Asleep with these or those.

7 vii **When smoke stood up from Ludlow**

For the concluding song of the group, Orr produced a flourishing, rustic air that is both jovial and ultimately contemplative. He composed it in 1929 and dedicated it to the baritone Sinclair Logan. The poem describes a ploughman's thoughts on his way to work, as he hears a bird singing. Orr was not part of the English folksong revival that took place at the start of the twentieth century, however, this song has the definite ring of a traditional tune. He adroitly manipulates the melody to suit each verse, leading naturally to a satisfying conclusion, as the ploughman walks off into the distance.

When smoke stood up from Ludlow,  
And mist blew off from Teme,  
And blithe afield to ploughing  
Against the morning beam  
I strode beside my team,

The blackbird in the coppice  
Looked out to see me stride,  
And hearkened as I whistled  
The trampling team beside,  
And fluted and replied:

"Lie down, lie down, young yeoman;  
What use to rise and rise?  
Rise man a thousand mornings  
Yet down at last he lies,  
And then the man is wise."

I heard the tune he sang me,  
And spied his yellow bill;  
I picked a stone and aimed it  
And threw it with a will:  
Then the bird was still.

Then my soul within me  
Took up the blackbird's strain,  
And still beside the horses  
Along the dewy lane  
It sang the song again:

"Lie down, lie down, young yeoman;  
The sun moves always west;  
The road one treads to labour  
Will lead one home to rest,  
And that will be the best."

8 **Silent noon**

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882)

Orr was helped with the first publication of his music by Philip Heseltine. He wrote this song in 1921, and the following year he sent it together with another, *Plucking the rushes*, to Heseltine, who copied them out and had them engraved and printed in Austria, taking advantage of the favourable exchange rate. They were then sent to Chesters, who agreed to publish them on a royalty basis. Rossetti's poem had already been famously set by Vaughan Williams, so it was certainly brave of Orr to produce his own version; Orr thought Vaughan Williams' song sounded too much like a church voluntary.

Your hands lie open in the long fresh grass, –  
The finger-points look through like rosy blooms:  
Your eyes smile peace. The pasture gleams and glooms  
'Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.  
All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,  
Are golden kingcup-fields with silver edge  
Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn-hedge.  
'Tis visible silence, still as the hour-glass.

Deep in the sun-searched growths the dragon-fly  
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky: –  
So this wing'd hour is dropt to us from above.  
Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower,  
This close-companioned inarticulate hour  
When twofold silence was the song of love.

9 **Tryste noel**

Louise Imogen Guiney (1861-1920)

This mock-medieval carol by the American poet, scholar and Catholic apologist was set by Orr in 1927. Guiney had died only a few years earlier in Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire, just a few miles from Cheltenham, having moved to England in 1901. She contributed to various newspapers and magazines, but it was her published essays and 1893 collection of poetry *A roadside harp*, which included this verse, that brought her to the centre of artistic life in Boston. Orr's cradle song with its strong pedal notes and consecutive fifths, produces a musical sound to match the antiquated language of the poem.

The ox he openeth wide the doore,  
And from the snowe he calls her inne,  
And he hath seen her smile therefore,  
Our ladye without sinne.  
Now soone from sleepe  
A starre shall leap,  
And soone arrive both king and hinde;  
Amen, amen:  
But O, the place co'd I but finde!

The ox hath husht his voyce and bent  
Trew e eyes of pittie ore the mow,  
And on His lovelie neck, forspent,  
The Blessèd lays her browe.  
Around her feet  
Full warme and sweete  
His bowerie breath doth meeklie dwell;  
Amen, amen:  
But sore am I with vaine travèl!

The ox is host in Juda's stall,  
And host of more than onelie one,  
For close she gathereth withal  
Our Lorde her littel Sonne.  
Glad hinde and king  
Their gyfte may bring,  
But wo'd to-night my teares were there,  
Amen, amen:  
Between her bosom and His hayre

## 10 **The brewer's man**

Leonard Alfred George Strong (1896-1958)

The baritone John Goss was a well-known enthusiast of sea-shanties and community songs, and this one, written for him in 1927, was included in the book *Seven sociable songs from the repertoire of John Goss and the Cathedral Male Voice Quartet*. Goss often sang Warlock and Moeran and was already interested in Orr's work, having sung through two early Housman settings that the composer had sent to Heseltine. The poem is from the 1921 collection *Dublin days* by the Plymouth-born writer, L.A.G. Strong and was dedicated to the poet T.W. Earp. Orr's setting was originally written for baritone and male chorus, as the title of Goss' book suggests.

Have I a wife? Bedam I have!  
But we was badly mated:  
I hit her a great clout one night,  
And now we're separated.

And mornin's going to my work  
I meets her on the quay:  
"Good mornin' to ye, ma'am," says I:  
"To hell with ye," says she.

## TWO SEVENTEENTH CENTURY POEMS

This brace of songs, published in 1930, show the stamp of Orr's composing mentor Hugo Wolf. Both are love poems, and their similar sentiment has led to remarkably similar treatments by the composer, possibly indicative of a temporary drying up of the composer's inspiration. Of his total of 40 compositions, 21 were composed in the 1920s, twelve in the 1930s, none in the 1940s and then a further seven in the 1950s. He was a man of private means and so did not have to compose to earn a living, a convenience that undoubtedly led to the small tally of his works.

### 11 i **The Earl of Bristol's farewell**

John Digby (1580-1653)

The first of the set was composed in 1927. Digby was an English diplomat, made Earl of Bristol in 1622, but his failure around this time to secure a marriage between Prince Charles and the Infanta Maria of Spain led to him being banished from court, and forbidden to take his seat in the House of Lords. Due to his allegiances in the civil war he was deprived of his property and finally died in exile in Paris. This poem states that every bitter farewell is merely nature's way of preparing us for when we will die and leave our loved ones forever.

Grieve not, dear love, although we often part;  
But know that nature gently doth us sever  
Thereby to train us up with tender art,  
To brook the day when we must part for ever.

For nature, doubting we should be surprised  
By that sad day whose dread doth chiefly fear us,  
Doth keep us daily schooled and exercised,  
Lest that the fright thereof should overbear us.

### 12 ii **Whenas I wake**

Patrick Hannay (fl. 1616-1629)

This second love song is the only piece that Orr dedicated to his wife Helen. He wrote it in 1928 and they became engaged the following year. The poet Patrick Hannay was also a court figure around the same time as Digby. He was favourably noticed by Queen Anne, wife of James I and received a clerkship in the office of the Irish privy council in Dublin. Attempts to have him ousted from office were halted by Charles I in 1625 on the basis of his mother's recommendation. He became master of chancery in Ireland in 1627 and is thought to have died at sea two years later.

Whenas I wake, I dream oft of my dear,  
And oft am serious with her in my sleep;  
I am oft absent when I am most near,  
And near whenas I greatest distance keep.  
These wonders love doth work, but yet I find  
That love wants power to make my mistress kind.

13 **Slumber song**

Noel Lindsay (1909-1987)

This song is a change from Orr's normal output. The date of composition is unknown, but it was published in 1937 as a unison song for choir and piano. The author of the words, Lindsay, was Oxford-educated, where he was president of the University Opera Club; he graduated in 1931 and it was presumably around this time that he wrote these words. He later lived in Mexico, where he worked as a novelist and journalist before moving to advertising, and finally retiring to the United States. Orr's simple lullaby gently illustrates the mill wheel, the fading dreams and the dancing flames.

Sleep, and let thy cares all be;  
Stars have eyes to watch for thee.  
Hear the mill wheel sing its song,  
Turning slowly all night long.  
Sleep, and let thy cares all be.

Quiet rest our walls of stone,  
Sleep, and let the world alone.  
Summer sweet and winter drear  
Fade like dreams of yesteryear.  
Sleep, and let the world alone.

Sleep, and let the sailing moon  
Wake to hear me sing this tune.  
Let the shadows from the fire  
Dance this measure till they tire.  
Sleep, O sleep to this my tune.

14 **Fain would I change that note**

Anonymous

Like *Slumber song*, the date of composition for this piece is not known, although it was also published in 1937. It is dedicated to Samuel W. Underwood MBE FRCO, a friend of Orr's, who was an organist in Stroud for many years and conducted the Stroud Choral Society from 1907 to 1957. The anonymous words were originally set by Tobias Hume, and his song was included in his 1605 collection *The first book of ayres*. The poem, often referred to as *Devotion*, proved popular with English song composers, and the twentieth century saw a great number of songs with these words.

Fain would I change that note  
To which fond Love hath charm'd me  
Long, long to sing by rote,  
Fancying that that harm'd me:  
Yet when this thought doth come,  
"Love is the perfect sum  
Of all delight,"  
I have no other choice  
Either for pen or voice  
To sing or write.

O Love! they wrong thee much  
That say thy sweet is bitter,  
When thy rich fruit is such  
As nothing can be sweeter.  
Fair house of joy and bliss,  
Where truest pleasure is,  
I do adore thee:  
I know thee what thou art,  
I serve thee with my heart,  
And fall before thee.

15 **When the lad for longing sighs**

Alfred Edward Housman

Orr composed this, his first Housman setting, in 1921, dedicating it to William Sydney Drew, subsequently the author of several books on singing technique and song interpretation. It was one of six songs that he sent to Heseltine the following year for his critical approval. Of these, Heseltine suggested he discard two, an early setting of *Is my team ploughing* and *If truth in hearts that perish*; Orr obeyed. In contrast, Heseltine said that this song was hauntingly beautiful, and he seems to have immediately found his Housman voice, expressing the verse's underlying anguish, without disturbing its simple form.

When the lad for longing sighs,  
Mute and dull of cheer and pale,  
If at death's own door he lies,  
Maiden, you can heal his ail.

Lovers' ills are all to buy:  
The wan look, the hollow tone,  
The hung head, the sunken eye,  
You can have them for your own.

Buy them, buy them: eve and morn  
Lovers' ills are all to sell.  
Then you can lie down forlorn;  
But the lover will be well.

## 16 The carpenter's son

Alfred Edward Housman

This song, sent to Heseltine at the same time as *When the lad for longing sighs*, was dedicated to him. It was written in the winter of 1921/22 in Menton in the south of France, where Orr was wintering with his mother, a local resident having allowed him to work at her upright Bechstein piano. The song is unusually dramatic for the composer, and Heseltine described it as quite magnificent. The poet parallels his own death sentence with Christ's crucifixion, a controversy that was commented on in one review at the time of publication, suggesting that it was not a suitable poem to be set as a song.

"Here the hangman stops his cart:  
Now the best of friends must part.  
Fare you well, for ill fare I:  
Live, lads, and I will die.

"Oh, at home had I but stayed  
'Prenticed to my father's trade,  
Had I stuck to plane and adze,  
I had not been lost, my lads.

"Then I might have built perhaps  
Gallows-trees for other chaps,  
Never dangled on my own,  
Had I left but ill alone.

"Make some day a decent end,  
Shrewder fellows than your friend.  
Fare you well, for ill fare I:  
Live, lads, and I will die."

"Now, you see, they hang me high,  
And the people passing by  
Stop to shake their fists and curse;  
So 'tis come from ill to worse.

"Here hang I, and right and left  
Two poor fellows hang for theft:  
All the same's the luck we prove,  
Though the midmost hangs for love.

"Comrades all, that stand and gaze,  
Walk henceforth in other ways;  
See my neck and save your own:  
Comrades all, leave ill alone.

17 **When I was one-and-twenty**

Alfred Edward Housman

Orr composed this song in 1924, sending it to Heseltine, who immediately played it through with the baritone John Goss and replied to Orr in very favourable terms. The poem is almost comic, as a love-lorn lad describes his own innocent bliss a year earlier, compared to his world-weary experience at the age of twenty-two. The song starts off sounding like a folksong, but soon develops, altering the harmony for the second verse as the turmoil of the present day wears upon the teller of the tale.

When I was one-and-twenty  
I heard a wise man say,  
"Give crowns and pounds and guineas  
But not your heart away;  
Give pearls away and rubies  
But keep your fancy free."  
But I was one-and-twenty,  
No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty  
I heard him say again,  
"The heart out of the bosom  
Was never given in vain;  
'Tis paid with sighs a plenty  
And sold for endless rue."  
And I am two-and-twenty,  
And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true.

18 **Soldier from the wars returning**

Alfred Edward Housman

Not only is this song dedicated to the memory of two lieutenants from Orr's former regiment of the Coldstream Guards who died in 1917, but it also includes the inscription "These in the glorious morning of their days, For England's sake lost all but England's praise." It was composed in 1928, and although it is not from *A Shropshire lad*, but from Housman's 1922 collection *Last poems*, its images of war and death made it similarly appealing to Orr. The poem tells a returning soldier to relax now that the fighting is finished, finally revealing in the last line and that he has died.

Soldier from the wars returning,  
Spoiler of the taken town,  
Here is ease that asks not earning;  
Turn you in and sit you down.  
  
Peace is come and wars are over,  
Welcome you and welcome all,  
While the charger crops the clover  
And his bridle hangs in stall.

Now no more of winters biting,  
Filth in trench from fall to spring,  
Summers full of sweat and fighting  
For the Kesar or the King.  
  
Rest you, charger, rust you, bridle;  
Kings and kesars, keep your pay;  
Soldier, sit you down and idle  
At the inn of night for aye.

19 **When summer's end is nighing**

Alfred Edward Housman

Orr's *Midsummer dance* for cello and piano was published in 1957 and is dedicated to Penelope Lynex, the professional cellist and daughter of his friend Richard Lynex. Penelope said that the Orrs were very much part of the fabric of her parents' life. She described Orr as a colourful character who got his thumbs in the mustard and hated all the paraphernalia of elegant eating, talking about the flavour of food in terms of composers: "This is very Delius, this cheese". The piece is presented here in a new arrangement for voice and piano, using Housman's words from his *Last poems*.

When summer's end is nighing  
And skies at evening cloud,  
I muse on change and fortune  
And all the feats I vowed  
When I was young and proud.

The weathercock at sunset  
Would lose the slanted ray,  
And I would climb the beacon  
That looked to Wales away  
And saw the last of day.

From hill and cloud and heaven  
The hues of evening died;  
Night welled through lane and hollow  
And hushed the countryside,  
But I had youth and pride.

And I with earth and nightfall  
In converse high would stand,  
Late, till the west was ashen  
And darkness hard at hand,  
And the eye lost the land.

The year might age, and cloudy  
The lessening day might close,  
But air of other summers  
Breathed from beyond the snows,  
And I had hope of those.

They came and were and are not  
And come no more anew;  
And all the years and seasons  
That ever can ensue  
Must now be worse and few.

So here's an end of roaming  
On eves when autumn nighs:  
The ear too fondly listens  
For summer's parting sighs,  
And then the heart replies.

## TWO SONGS FROM “A SHROPSHIRE LAD”

Alfred Edward Housman

Orr wrote this set of two songs in the winter of 1921/22 when he was in the south of France with his mother. They spent four winters there in total, starting in 1919, to help keep Orr's eczema under control. Philip Heseltine arranged for their publication and featured an announcement of songs by the new composer in the May 1923 edition of his magazine, *The Chesterian*. In the same issue he also wrote an unattributed appreciation of Orr, describing him to his readership as a composer of individuality and technical accomplishment.

### 20 i 'Tis time, I think, by Wenlock town

This song's original title, *Remembered spring*, highlights the nostalgic atmosphere Orr aimed to create. The poem is a celebration of the arrival of spring in Wenlock, and the fact that the snow showers of winter have been replaced by the white hawthorn flowers. The song's opening phrase, which is then developed throughout the song, is reminiscent of a church bell, and brings to mind both the village green and the passage of time. It was dedicated to Philip Wilson, the singer with whom Heseltine collaborated on editing Elizabethan and Jacobean lute songs.

'Tis time, I think, by Wenlock town  
The golden broom should blow;  
The hawthorn sprinkled up and down  
Should charge the land with snow.

Spring will not wait the loiterer's time  
Who keeps so long away;  
So others wear the broom and climb  
The hedgerows heaped with may.

Oh tarnish late on Wenlock Edge,  
Gold that I never see;  
Lie long, high snowdrifts in the hedge  
That will not shower on me.

### 21 ii Loveliest of trees, the cherry

Heller Nicholls, the dedicatee of the final song on this disc, was an influential friend of Orr's and the director of music at Dean Close School in Cheltenham. He travelled with Orr and his mother to Elena Gerhardt's recital in London and went backstage to tell the singer about her young admirer in the gallery. When Heseltine wrote to Orr about this song, referring to it by its earlier title of *The cherry tree*, he described it as charming. It is certainly a contemplative take on Housman's famous poem, which sees the blossoming tree as an epiphany of the brevity of life and the necessity to seize every opportunity that is offered.

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now  
Is hung with bloom along the bough,  
And stands about the woodland ride  
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,  
Twenty will not come again,  
And take from seventy springs a score,  
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom  
Fifty springs are little room,  
About the woodlands I will go  
To see the cherry hung with snow.

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Produced, engineered and edited by Richard Sutcliffe.

Recorded 22-23 December 2010 at Potton Hall, Suffolk, U.K.

Steinway technician: Graham Cooke.

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