



Monday's Child

KATJA WEBB
DAVID WICKHAM
ALLAN MEYER
PETER FACER



Monday's Child

KATJA WEBB
DAVID WICKHAM
ALLAN MEYER
PETER FACER

Monday's Child

MARGARET SUTHERLAND (1897–1984)

FIVE SONGS (*John Shaw Neilson*)

- | | | | |
|---|-----|--|------|
| 1 | i | For a child | 1'36 |
| 2 | ii | When kisses are as strawberries | 0'49 |
| 3 | iii | May | 2'13 |
| 4 | iv | In the dim counties | 2'27 |
| 5 | v | Song be delicate | 1'44 |
| 6 | | The orange tree (<i>John Shaw Neilson</i>) | 5'54 |

GEOFFREY ALLEN (*b. 1927*)

NURSERY RHYMES 9 Op.7 (*Anonymous*)

- | | | | |
|----|------|--------------------------|------|
| 7 | i | Wee Willie Winkie | 0'38 |
| 8 | ii | Simple Simon | 2'23 |
| 9 | iii | Little Tommy Tittlemouse | 0'45 |
| 10 | iv | Solomon Grundy | 0'25 |
| 11 | v | Hush-a-by baby | 0'51 |
| 12 | vi | Humpty Dumpty | 0'38 |
| 13 | vii | Monday's Child | 1'27 |
| 14 | viii | Four and twenty tailors | 0'39 |
| 15 | ix | Rock-a-bye baby | 0'56 |

MARGARET SUTHERLAND

THREE SONGS FOR VOICE AND CLARINET

- | | | | |
|----|-----|--|------|
| 16 | i | Arab love song (<i>Francis Thompson</i>) | 2'17 |
| 17 | ii | Cradle song (<i>Louis Essen</i>) | 2'25 |
| 18 | iii | September (<i>Dorothy McCrae</i>) | 0'42 |

DORIAN LE GALLIENNE (1915–1963)

FOUR NURSERY SONGS (*Anonymous*)

- | | | | |
|----|-----|-------------------------|------|
| 19 | i | Grey goose | 0'47 |
| 20 | ii | There was a king | 1'01 |
| 21 | iii | I had a little nut tree | 0'40 |
| 22 | iv | Peter White | 0'18 |

MARGARET SUTHERLAND

- 23 The gentle water bird (*John Shaw Neilson*) 5'27

GEOFFREY ALLEN

STILE AND STUMP Op.68 (*Kevin Crossley-Holland*)

- 24 i Shadows 2'04
25 ii Every stile and stump 1'15
26 iii Leaf girl 2'08
27 iv Grace 3'24
28 v The wellspring 2'12

DORIAN LE GALLIENNE

TWO SONGS

- 29 i Moonlight (*Hugh McCrae*) 1'58
30 ii The cactus of the moon (*Nancy Keesing*) 2'12

MICHIEL IRIK (*b.1953*)

- 31 The vase (*Michelle Yeh after Kuo Mo-jo*) 7'01

GEOFFREY ALLEN

FOUR SONGS Op.64 (*Rosemary Dobson*)

- 32 i A fine thing 2'40
33 ii The bystander 2'27
34 iii The alphabet 2'02
35 iv Ampersand 2'40

72'00

KATJA WEBB *soprano*
DAVID WICKHAM *piano*
ALLAN MEYER *clarinet*
PETER FACER *oboe*

Monday's Child

There is perhaps nothing definitively Australian in these songs – they share an educated familiarity with European models, and an international outlook. Despite the at-one-time obsessive search for an Australian national musical language, this might be a good thing – though other songs abound on such themes as wallabies and wattles from an earlier era they are often not of any musical consequence. Perhaps the Australian tendency to a certain defiant individuality can be detected, but then that is true of most interesting composers. The songs are united in their unwarranted neglect, which this project aims to help overcome. They deserve repeated hearings and performances, now made possible by various editors and publishers.

Margaret Sutherland was described by composer Felix Werder as “the undisputed first lady of Australian music” in 1967, two years before the stroke that effectively curtailed her career. The *Five songs* date from the opposite end of her working life. They are models of clarity and simplicity with an easy lyrical flow despite engaging quirks. It is as if she absorbed the models of English song and came summarily to surpass them before moving on to seek new inspiration. Modal harmonies and warm, moving piano figurations recall Bax or perhaps Delius, but these are no pastiches – the sureness of touch bespeaks a growing mastery.

Sutherland was a vital part of Australia's belated but swift jump into the 20th century, musically speaking, especially with her knowledge of European neo-classicism in the 1920s. In keeping with the tenets of this movement she eschewed sentimentality, but not lyricism, as we hear here.

The orange tree (1954) is a remarkable setting of a typical John Shaw Neilson poem. The itinerant labourer-poet, wise but apparently sparingly educated, nearly blind in his later years, is often compared to William Blake and Emily Dickinson for his ability to see the world in a unique, suggestive way. It is structured using his recurring device of an observer and a visionary character. The song displays very assured piano writing, full of subtle animation and capable of prophetic stillness. There is a strong French influence at work, particularly of Ravel in the orchestral aspirations of the texture. The clarinet seems to represent the mysterious light “not of the sky” that emanates from the orange tree; the narrator never quite apprehends the mystery but the listener to the song is transported by it.

Geoffrey Allen is an Englishman who settled in Australia in the 1950s, largely self-taught. Having set up his publishing company, The Keys Press, in 1991, he became one of the foremost promoters of Australian vocal and chamber music.

Nursery Rhymes 9 dates from 1959–61, around the time of the birth of his first child. Though he never envisaged them as songs for children, the set has a light-footed energy and zest that is perhaps childlike. Like the Le Gallienne nursery rhymes these are mostly short and pithy, retaining the natural sing-song speech rhythms. Occasional departures from this are all the more telling as a result. The textures are brighter and clearer than the other sets featured here, the counterpoint replaced by textures that support the atmosphere; rhythmical consistency is the norm and the chromaticism serves just as in Prokofiev to deliver nuance, irony and perhaps the cruel laughter of children. For the record, Allen and I are both Monday's children, though our faces have not been our fortunes!

The *Three songs for voice and clarinet* were edited for publication by David Symons, of the University of Western Australia, who regards Sutherland quite as highly as I do. They were not written as a coherent set, but the grouping is entirely plausible musically, and the texts may throw interesting sidelights on Sutherland's life circumstances. Symons speculates that the themes of marriage (*Arab love song*), motherhood (*Cradle song*) and the separation of lovers (*September*) are pertinent. The first, from 1926 is contemporaneous with Sutherland's marriage, the second (1929) with the birth of her first child and the third (early 1930s) with the beginning of the disintegration of that marriage.

Perhaps the composer had heard Stravinsky's 1919 *Three pieces for solo clarinet* – the concision, the sharply-etched lines and the deftness of touch are characteristic of both works.

Dorian Le Gallienne died before reaching fifty, but was nevertheless a key figure in the accelerated movement into Modernism in Australian music post World War 2; promoting new works, young Australian composers and breaking with received English models in his own music, moving to taut spare textures. Most of his songs were unpublished until 1999, thanks to Kerry Murphy and Jennifer Hill in Melbourne, Le Gallienne's home town.

The score carries a quote from pianist Nancy Weir "The tragedy of Dorian Le Gallienne's early death will become increasingly apparent as his compositions gain more familiarity." While this remains true, it is also fair to say that that familiarity is a long way from being realised. His John Donne settings have long been published, and, along with his *Sinfonietta*, are the only works to secure repeated hearings. The composer wrote that "We shall only be grown up when we possess a substantial body of representative Australian music that is regularly performed

here". This series of recordings is a small part of that process, as scholars assess and reassess the work of previous generations.

Le Gallienne's is unsentimental music, serious-minded but capable of powerful, direct expression as a result. Composer Linda Phillips (featured on a previous Stone Records CD) recalled that "Through the loveable and often oddly witty personality ran a strong vein of granite-like austerity which I have heard reflected in some of his songs...

The *Four nursery songs* probably all date from 1944 – they are epigrammatic, beguiling and beautifully crafted. They are markedly less chromatic than his other songs on this recording, befitting the texts, restraining lyricism to the absolute minimum – the opening of *Grey goose* a rare flowering. There is plenty of the mordant humour that Linda Phillips observed.

The gentle water bird (1954) is another example of Sutherland's songs with obligato instrument. The score suggests violin as an alternative to oboe, which seems a decision with an eye on potential sales rather than a necessary musical judgement. The oboe instantly recalls the mournful bird calls, but becomes an equal partner to the voice in the intertwining contrapuntal skeins. Neilson's poem once more suggests how wisdom may be won from nature, with lyrical humility. The poem is subtitled "*For Mary Gilmore*", a poet featured elsewhere in this series of recordings; and in several stanzas, not set by Sutherland, it makes explicit the poet's disdain for the "perils, perplexities ... all the old terror "of established creeds. Gilmore was also a free-thinking radical, and might have approved.

Kevin Crossley-Holland is best known for his lively and sympathetic translations of Anglo-Saxon, his prizewinning historical fiction for children, and his moody evocations of North Norfolk, where he lives. Four of the five settings here belong to the latter group – changing light, marshland and the encroaching sea as metaphors for impermanence colouring the first song; while one poem, *Leaf girl*, recalls the poet's time with his family in Minnesota, referencing maples, a skating rink and warming hut. *Grace* is another Norfolk poem; both bring out a sense of movement grounded on dense counterpoint with an affecting lightness, a sound world Allen more usually uses in instrumental chamber music. The cycle closes with *The wellspring*, a gently mystical prayer. Brought to quietude but not quite rest, the setting bears Allen's hallmark avoidance of conventional cadences and of a finely-calculated cloud of a harmonic centre rather

than a defined tonic. Allen's sombre lyricism suits these poems admirably – the gnarly intensity of Ivor Gurney and John Ireland's mournful harmonies infuse the set, entitled *Stile and stump* (2007).

Dorian Le Gallienne is further represented by his two settings of Australian texts. *Moonlight* (1948) is a typical Hugh McCrae poem recalling the English Georgians, here given an unexpectedly rapt and chromatic treatment, full of dark-toned desire shot through with silvery tenderness. In *The cactus of the moon* (1956) the gently urging movement in accompaniment carries a murmured speech-like vocal line. Again the texture is spare, saving the bass clef for intimations of mortality.

Michiel Irik's 1995 work *The vase* is one of many Australian songs drawing on the fertile ground of Chinese poetry. The sharply-etched detail, the delicacy of the language and the suggestive timelessness prove irresistible to curious composers. Here, the oboe has the keening edge for remembrance and a suggestion of its Chinese equivalent, the *suona*. Irik has a continuing interest in indigenous musical traditions; now resident in Brittany his latest works explore Breton folk music and its medieval heritage, changing the direction of his compositional language.

Distinguished Australian poet and illustrator Rosemary Dobson wrote of her work, "I hope it will be perceived that the poems ... are part of a search for something only fugitively glimpsed, a state of grace which one once knew, or imagined, or from which one was turned away ... a doomed but urgent wish to express the inexpressible".

For the *Four songs* (2006), Allen chooses texts that show a more whimsical, even witty, side to Dobson. The childlike imaginings of *A fine thing*, also set by Alan Tregaskis, the wry observations of incidental figures in paintings in *The bystander*, and a writer's affectionate fascination for orthography in *The alphabet* and *Ampersand* bespeak her vivid visual imagination and senses of wonder and humour. As an academic librarian Allen shares the poet's fondness for words and their printed manifestations. The textures of the songs recall for me complex improvisations on popular songs, but through a curious, chromatic prism.

MARGARET SUTHERLAND

FIVE SONGS

John Shaw Neilson (1872—1942)

1 i **For a child**

Into your angel mouth
The sport of Spring
And the Summer's honey
Came rioting.

Your eyes were as flowers,
Fine gold your hair,
Warm in my heart you sang
Love like a prayer.

The sunbeam, the moon-mist
Were one with you,
And all the sighing bloom
That takes the dew.

Love was about you,
Through your silken skin
Love like a sun-ray
Ran out and in.

Wild kiss and heavy love
Lose every hold,
Oh, sunlight – my sunlight –
How dark the cold.

2 ii **When kisses are as strawberries**

When bees are hot with honey-thirst
And hastening with the Spring,
When kisses are as strawberries
And Love is more than king –

When quiet birds have merriment
By waters brown and blue,
And little maids woolgathering
Will murmur, “I love you” –

When blossoms dance in carnival
To hearten maids and men
And kisses are as strawberries
Who would be sober then?

3 iii **May**

Shyly the silver-hatted mushrooms make
Soft entrance through,
And undelivered lovers, half awake,
Hear noises in the dew.

Yellow in all the earth and in the skies,
The world would seem
Faint as a widow mourning with soft eyes
And falling into dream.

Up the long hill I see the slow plough leave
Furrows of brown;
Dim is the day and beautiful: I grieve
To see the sun go down.

But there are suns a many for mine eyes
Day after day:
Delightsome in grave greenery they rise,
Red oranges in May.

4 iv **In the dim counties**

In the dim counties
We take the long calm
Lilting no haziness,
Sequel or psalm.

The little street wenches,
The holy and clean,
Live as good neighbours live
Under the green.

Malice of sunbeam or
Menace of moon
Piping shall leave us
No taste of a tune.

In the dim counties
The eyelids are dumb,
To the lean citizens
Love cannot come.

Love in the yellowing,
Love at the turn,
Love o' the cooing lip –
How should he burn?

The little street wenches,
The callous, unclean
– Could they but tell us what
All the gods mean.

Love cannot sabre us,
Blood cannot flow,
In the dim counties
That wait us below.

5 v **Song be delicate**

Let your song be delicate.
The skies declare
No war – the eyes of lovers
Wake everywhere.

Let your voice be delicate.
How faint a thing
Is Love, little Love crying
Under the Spring.

Let your song be delicate.
The flowers can hear:
Too well they know the tremble,
Of the hollow year.

Let your voice be delicate.
The bees are home:
All their day's love is sunken
Safe in the comb.

Let your song be delicate.
Sing no loud hymn:
Death is abroad ... oh, the black season!
The deep – the dim!

6 **The orange tree**

John Shaw Neilson

The young girl stood beside me. I
Saw not what her young eyes could see:

– A light, she said, not of the sky
Lives some where in the Orange Tree.

– Is it, I said, of east or west?
The heartbeat of a luminous boy
Who with his faltering flute confessed
Only the edges of his joy?

Was he, I said, borne to the blue
In a mad escapade of Spring
Ere he could make a fond adieu
To his love in the blossoming?

– Listen! the young girl said. There calls
No voice, no music beats on me;
But it is almost sound: it falls
This evening on the Orange Tree.

– Does he, I said, so fear the Spring
Ere the white sap too far can climb?
See in the full gold evening
All happenings of the olden time?

Is he so goaded by the green?
Does the compulsion of the dew
Make him unknowable but keen
Asking with beauty of the blue?

– Listen! the young girl said. For all
Your hapless talk you fail to see
There is a light, a step, a call,
This evening on the Orange Tree.

– Is it, I said, a waste of love
Imperishably old in pain,
Moving as an affrighted dove
Under the sunlight or the rain?

Is it a fluttering heart that gave
Too willingly and was reviled?
Is it the stammering at a grave,
The last word of a little child?

– Silence! the young girl said. Oh, why,
Why will you talk to weary me?
Plague me no longer now, for I
Am listening like the Orange Tree.

GEOFFREY ALLEN

NURSERY RHYMES 9 Op.7

Anonymous

7 i **Wee Willie Winkie**

Wee Willie Winkie runs through the town
Upstairs and downstairs in his nightgown
Rapping at the window, crying through
the lock
Are the children in their beds? Now its
eight o'clock.

8 ii **Simple Simon**

Simple Simon met a pie man
Going to the fair,
Said Simple Simon to the pie man
Let me taste your ware.

- Said the pie man to Simple Simon
 Show me first your penny.
 Said Simple Simon to the pie man
 Indeed I have not any.
- Simple Simon went a fishing
 For to catch a whale
 But all the water he had got
 Was in his mother's pail.
- Simple Simon went to look
 If plums grew on a thistle
 He pricked his fingers very much
 Which made poor Simon whistle.
- 9 iii **Little Tommy Tittlemouse**
 Little Tommy Tittlemouse
 Lived in a little house
 He caught fishes
 In other men's ditches.
- 10 iv **Solomon Grundy**
 Solomon Grundy
 Born on a Monday
 Christened on Tuesday
 Married on Wednesday
 Took ill on Thursday
 Worse on Friday
 Died on Saturday
 Buried on Sunday
 This is the end
 Of Solomon Grundy
- 11 v **Hush-a-by baby**
 Hush-a-by baby on the tree top
 When the wind blows the cradle will rock
 When the bough breaks the cradle will fall
 Down will come baby cradle and all.
- 12 vi **Humpty Dumpty**
 Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
 Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
 All the king's horses
 And all the king's men
 Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty
 Together again.
- 13 vii **Monday's child**
 Monday's child is fair of face
 Tuesday's child is full of grace
 Wednesday's child is full of woe
 Thursday's child has far to go
 Friday's child is loving and giving
 Saturday's child works hard for his living
 And the child that is born on the Sabbath day
 Is bonny and blithe and good and gay.
- 14 viii **Four and twenty tailors**
 Four and twenty tailors
 Went to kill a snail
 The bravest man among them
 Durst not touch her tail.
- She put out her horns
 Like a little Kyloe cow.
 Run tailors run
 Or she'll kill you all e'en now.

15 ix **Rock-a-bye baby**

Rock-a-bye baby
Thy cradle is green
Father's a nobleman
Mother's a Queen

And Betty's a lady
And wears a gold ring.
And Johnny's a drummer
And drums for the King.

MARGARET SUTHERLAND

**THREE SONGS FOR VOICE
AND CLARINET**

16 i **Arab love song**

Francis Thompson (1859–1907)

The hunchèd camels of the night
Trouble the bright
And silver waters of the moon.
The maiden of the morn will soon
Thro' Heaven stay and sing,
Star-gathering.

Now, while the dark about our loves is strewn,
Light of my dark, blood of my heart,
O come!
And night will catch her breath up, and
be dumb.

Leave thy father, leave thy mother
And thy brother,
Leave the black tents of thy tribe apart!
Am I not thy father and thy brother
And thy mother?
And thou what needest with thy tribe's
black tents
Who hath the red pavilion of my heart.

17 ii **Cradle song**

Louis Esson (1878–1943)

Baby, O baby 'gain you are for bed,
Magpie to mopoke busy as the bee:
The little red calf's in the snug cowshed,
An' the little brown bird's in the tree.

Daddy's gone a shearing down the Castlereagh
So we're all alone now only you and me.
All among the wool-o,
Keep your wide blades full-o,
Daddy thinks o' baby, wherever he may be.

Baby, my baby, rest your drowsy head,
The one man that works here, tired you
must be,
The little red calf's in the snug cowshed,
An' the little brown bird's in the tree.

18 **iii September**
Dorothy McCrae (1879–1937)

You kissed me in June
Today in September
There ripples the tune,
“Remember, remember.”

We part in September
How ripples the tune?
“Remember, remember.”

DORIAN LE GALLIENNE
FOUR NURSERY SONGS
Anonymous

19 **i Grey goose**
Grey goose and gander
Waft your wings together
And carry the good king's daughter
Over the one strand river.

20 **ii There was a king**
There was a king
And he had three daughters
And they all lived
In a basin of water.

The basin bended
My song is ended.

If the basin had been stronger
My song would have been longer.

21 **iii I had a little nut tree**
I had a little nut tree
Nothing would it bear
But a silver nutmeg
And a silver pear.

The King of Spain's daughter
Came to visit me
All for the sake
Of my little nut tree.

I skipped over water
I danced over sea
And all the birds of the air
Couldn't catch me.

22 **iv Peter White**
Peter White can ne'er do right;
Do you know the reason why?
He follows his nose,
Where-ever he goes,
And that goes all awry.

MARGARET SUTHERLAND

23 **The gentle water bird**
John Shaw Neilson

In the far days when every day was long,
Fear was upon me and the fear was strong,
Ere I had learned the recompense of song.

In the dim days I trembled for I knew
God was above me, always frowning through,
And God was terrible and thunder-blue.

Creeds the discoloured awed my
opening mind,
Perils, perplexities – what could I find?
All the old terror waiting on mankind.

Even the gentle flowers of white and cream.
The rainbow with its treasury of dream.
Trembled because of God's ungracious
scheme.

And in the night the many stars would say
Dark things unaltered by the light of the day:
Fear was upon me ever in my play.

There was a lake I loved in gentle rain:
One day there fell a bird, a courtly crane:
Wisely he walked, as one who knows of pain.

Gracious he was and lofty as a king:
Silent he was, and yet he seemed to sing
Always of little children and the Spring.

God? Did he know him? It was far he flew...
God was not terrible nor thunder-blue:
– It was a gentle water bird I knew.

Long have I learned that all his speech
was true;
I cannot reason it – how far he flew –
God is not terrible, nor thunder-blue.

GEOFFREY ALLEN

STILE AND STUMP Op.68
Kevin Crossley-Holland (b.1941)

24 i **Shadows**

A rib of shadow on the marsh,
It grows like a dark thought;

My skull begins to gather
All the far-off booming of the sea.

A crab's skeleton disintegrates
Between my careful fingers

And the salt harvest where I stand
Gleams like guttering candle-ends.

O most loved when almost lost,
This most uncommon common place,

Still at dark mysterious,
My sea-threatened wilderness.

The dark wave sweeps through me.
A rib of shadow on the marsh.

25 ii **Every stile and stump**

This is the path I'll take today
This is the stile
Where once and only once
I found white violets
That straddled the path I'll take today.

And this is the stump of a pollarded willow;
It gave six poles to build the stile
Where once and only once
I found white violets
That straddled the path I'll take today.

26 iii **Leaf girl**

Round and round the trampled
Ground between the flaming
Maple and the black walnut,
And out across the nickel rink
To the winter warming hut,
Round, round with bounds and
Yells, skips and little rushes
You chased October leaves.

Curtsy, shout, leap, and spin,
Your pale face thin and hair
Hay-wire, the best red-gold:
So you became the leaves
You caught. And watching you
I think I thought there's
Some movement, some pursuit
Best expressing each of us.

27 iv **Grace**

I left the sleepers' den;
My shining daughter smiled,
Moon-face uncompromised,
First state unreconciled.

Devils danced in circles
Round the tormented trees.
Boatyard pandemonium:
Whips, bells and jangling keys.

Half-sightless in the rain
I waded to Scolt Head
Over the sucking marsh
And round the cocklebed.

And there the ocean's guns
Exploded on the strand:
Double-thump and thunder,
The big boys in the band.

I watched the cormorants,
Silver in their beaks.
All day alone I heard
Their mewing, their fierce shrieks.

At dusk I turned for home
And saw my waving child.
A dancer in the blue hour.
And I grew wild.

28 v **The wellspring**
Infant of the bubbling stream
Well in my heart.

Child of the sighing marsh
Breathe in my head.

Son of the keen light
Quicken my eyes.

Rebel of the restless creeks
Tumble in my ears.

Disciple of the rising tide
Dance in my heart.

Teacher of the gruff salt-wind
Educate my tongue.

DORIAN LE GALLIENNE

TWO SONGS

29 i **Moonlight**
Hugh McCrae (1876–1958)
O deep and dewy hour
Night's lonely flower,
Oblivion bestowing
When softly through my dream
I hear the stream
Beneath the willows flowing.

Pale moon-time sonneted
By poets dead,
Have lovers in thy keeping
Nor let one truant spark
Dispart the dark
Where she in peace lies sleeping.

30 ii **The cactus of the moon**
Nancy Keesing (1923–1993)
The cactus of the moon blooms only for
one night;
Quivering and shivering its petals open slow
Alive with queer delight –
Petals that shudder and grow
Thin, tendril-like and white
To shine in the moon's light.
It will not bloom again, her own most
lovely flower.
Dawn wind, bright day intruding her domain
Make secret bliss turn sour.
This negative of pain
Must perish within the hour,
No sun shall have the power.

To stay, a moment even, love's perfect sign.
Softly the milky petals droop and fold
Into a shroud so fine
That when I am old
I'll weep I saw love live, laugh and decline
Before I guessed the truth and made it mine.

MICHIEL IRIK

31 **The Vase**

Michelle Yeh after Kuo Mo-jo

There was a girl, some years ago,
Who went to the Ling Mountain one day.
The mountain was full of plum blossoms,
And she picked five of them.

She threaded the blossoms on a pin
And sent them to a poet.
The poet, ah! he was a fool
He swallowed them, and died.

Since the death of that poet
Sev'ral years have gone by.
From his grave on the Ling Mountain
Appeared a cluster of plum trees.

Spring again!
The girl came to tend his grave.
The flower buds were already swelling
Though grass was still asleep.

Before the grave the girl stood still
Strumming a few notes on her lute Pi-Pa.
At the sound of her music
The blossoms began to grow.

Sweet scent hover'd above the trees
And below it rang the chords of her lute
Suddenly came a gust of wind
And the girl vanished in the air.

When the wind stilled
A carpet of falling petals covered the tomb.
No longer was the girl there,
But her lute played from within the grave.

There was a girl, some years ago,
Who went to the Ling Mountain one day.
The mountain was full of plum blossoms,
And she picked five of them.

GEOFFREY ALLEN

FOUR SONGS Op.64

Rosemary Dobson (1920–2012)

32 i **A fine thing**

To be a scarecrow
To lean all day in a bright field
With a hat full
Of bird's song
And a heart of gold straw;
With a sly wink for the farmer's daughter,
When no one sees, and small excursions;
Returning after
To a guiltless pose of indolence.

A fine thing
To be a figurehead
With a noble brow
On a ship's prow
And a look to the end of the world;
With the sad sounds of wind and water
And only a stir of air for thinking;
The timber cutting
The green waves, and the foam flashing.

To be a snowman
Lost all day in deep thought,
With a head full
Of snowflakes
And no troubles at all,
With an old pipe and six buttons,
And sometimes children in woollen gaiters;
But mostly lonely,
A simple fellow with no troubles at all.

33 ii **The bystander**

I am the one who looks the other way,
In any painting you may see me stand
Rapt at the sky, a bird, an angel's wing,
While others kneel, present the
 myrrh, receive
The benediction from the radiant hand.

I hold the horses while the knights dismount
And draw their swords to fight the battle out;
Or else in dim perspective you may see
My distant figure on the mountain road
When in the plains the hosts are put to rout.

I am the silly soul who looks too late,
The dullard dreaming, second from the right.
I hang upon the crowd, but do not mark
(Cap over eyes) the slaughtered Innocents,
Or Icarus, his downward-plunging flight.

Once in a Garden – back view only there –
How well the painter placed me, stroke
 on stroke,
Yet scarcely seen among the flowers and
 grass –
I heard a voice say, “Eat,” and would have
 turned –
I often wonder who it was that spoke.

34 iii **The alphabet**

My Twenty-six, my leaden men,
Your day-long skirmishing is done,
Sound out your trumpets to the west
For battles lost or battles won.

Upon this bare and silvered hill
Pitch your pavilions for the night,
Your single sentry set to cry
The wonder of a moon so bright.

Let him be O who wonder cries
While A to Z lie down to sleep.
Who strive all day unarmed undo
No swords at night their wits they keep.

(For wit's their weapon) close to hand
Lest from the moon's bright land should come
She who alone can beggar sense
And rob the brave and strike them dumb.

My Twenty-six, my leaden men,
Let morning see your flags unfurled,
And shall we not together then
Set out to conquer all the world?

I lie between the black & white,
The half-tone eve, the twilight grey,
Slip like a shadow, curl like a cat
After the night, before the day.

Between the sea & shore I make
My scribbled, fluent, changing line;
The earth & air would join in one
But that their meeting-place is mine.

With bell & book – a hand to each –
I banish chaos from the scene
For, think, unless I interposed,
Yellow & blue would run to green.

I stand between the left & right
Tall as a post to point the ways
For sinners & saints, who'd all unite –
But I prevent – to sing my praise.

I am the twenty-seventh child,
The last-born of the alphabet,
Yet Kings & Queens reserve a place –
Between them Ampersand is set.

We are very grateful to Edith Crown University for their financial contribution towards the making of this recording.

Produced by Jesse Stack and Geoffrey Allen.

Engineered and edited by Jesse Stack.

Recorded 8, 12 July, 30 August and 6 September 2015 at the Music Auditorium, Western Australia Academy of Performing Arts.

Fazioli piano engineer: Paul Tunzi.

Sung text of *Stile and stump* © K Crossley-Holland and Enitharmon Press, reproduced by permission.

Sung text of *The cactus and the moon* © the Nancy Keesing Estate, reproduced by arrangement with the Nancy Keesing Estate and Curtis Brown (Aust) Pty Ltd.

Sung text of *The vase* © Yale University Press, reproduced by permission.

Sung text of *Four songs* © the Rosemary Dobson Estate, reproduced by arrangement with the Rosemary Dobson Estate and Curtis Brown (Aust) Pty Ltd.

Publisher: Oxford University Press (1-5); Lady Northcote Permanent Orchestra Trust Fund (6); The Keys Press (7-22, 24-28, 31-35); Wirripang (23); University of Melbourne (29-30).

Booklet notes © 2015 David Wickham.

Front cover model: Isabelle Scott.

Inside front cover: photograph of Katja Webb © 2006 James Rogers.

Inside back cover: photograph of David Wickham © 2010 Matt Galligan Photography.

Graphic design: Colour Blind Design.

Printed in the E.U.



5 0 6 0 1 9 2 7 8 0 6 1 1

STONE
records