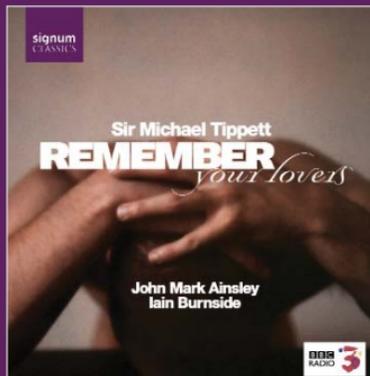


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CLASSICS

On Buying a Horse

The songs of Judith Weir

Susan Bickley • Andrew Kennedy
Ailish Tynan • Iain Burnside

BBC
RADIO 3

songs are histrionic and nervous, though framed by 'beautiful' piano accompaniments, just as Scotland's violent past is obscured by its abundant scenery.

Alice Coote was the dedicatee of **The Voice of Desire** (2003), which takes its title from its opening song, about nightingales, by Robert Bridges. Each of the four poems in the cycle (by Bridges, Hardy and Keats, alongside a Yoruba Huntsmen's song) is sung by a bird, whose perspective is more sophisticated than its uncomprehending human listener realises. The nightingale lives in a darker emotional world than we can imagine; the blue cuckoo knows that the wars we blunder into will bring destruction; the thrush sings joyfully whilst we are mentally blank; the dove has died rather than face emotional suffocation from its adoring owner.

Two magnificent (anonymous) Spanish romances from the sixteenth century, and a sly ballad provide the poetry for **A Spanish Liederbooklet** (1988), written for the soprano Eileen Hulse. Although the music was created as a very direct response to what the words are saying, listeners have remarked that the music 'sounds Spanish', and it may well be that the basic melodic and rhythmic shapes of these songs emanate from the language itself.

King Harald's Saga (1979) asks a lot of its soprano soloist (originally the intrepid Jane Manning). She has to sing every role, including duets and choruses, in a huge but brief grand opera about the Vikings, as retold in the 13th century Icelandic saga, *Heimskringla*. Whilst appearing in many exciting guises, she also presents her performance as a radio broadcast, giving helpful explanations of the opera's three acts before leaping back into character.

The medium of radio also inspired the short song **Ständchen** (1997). During Schubert's bicentenary year, BBC Radio 3 invited many composers to choose one of his song texts and set it again. Separated from one of Schubert's greatest-ever melodies, Rellstab's verse still has a gentle, wistful charm whose muted, nocturnal atmosphere I have attempted to capture.

© Judith Weir

ON BUYING A HORSE

Judith Weir is a magic realist, the Gabriel García Márquez of song. Once you enter her world it seems entirely reasonable that fairies should run off with a Hebridean baby, a turtle dove should berate a nightingale, and a sailor should calm the winds with his special secret song. She is also a storyteller. If her operas tell complete stories, these songs are like postcards. You will look in vain for back-stories or follow-ups. What were Bessie Bell and Mary Gray up to in their bower? How many white feet *did* the horse have? And how did Bey Pivlyanahin counter Bey Lujibovic's outrageous jibe about the lacy apron? Maddeningly, Weir never tells us. She drops her pebble in the pond and walks away smiling.

On this disc a huge amount happens. Battles are fought, heads are chopped off. Wherever you look people keep dying. Most of them in Scotland. Judith Weir's Scotland is a cruel, dark place, suffused with sinister magic. Her Serbia is little better, though at least it yields more laughs. Her songs are songs from the exotic indeed. Weir's magic carpet takes us both north and south within Europe, then on, in parallel with her operas, to Africa and China. Her nose for texts is one the great delights of this collection: how she roots out

poems or prose from so far afield then combines them in a way so fresh and utterly personal. Setting John Keats is not in itself remarkable; twinning him with African folk poetry is.

As is the quiet pizzicato tango that underpins Keats's little white dove. But then Weir's choice of piano texture is another mark of her originality. She makes the instrument speak in a way entirely her own, often with the simplest of means. The atmosphere of Lady Isobel's adventure with her Elf Night is established by just two notes rocking backwards and forwards, somehow both dangerous and witty. The first song of **Scotch Minstrelsy** has the disc's most extended piano writing: it is less a song, in fact, than a piano piece with vocal commentary. A single line, blurred and irregular in its pedaling, branches into two then goes back to one again. The plague, we learn, is breaking out by the River Almond, in Perth in 1645. Weir's music is watery, yet also diseased. None of her sharp primary colours here: this piano writing is all shades of grey and murky brown.

Her use of the voice is no less remarkable, changing in response to her vocal as well as her poetic Muse. Ironically the most performed work on

this disc is also the most fiendishly difficult. **King Harald's Saga** is a vocal commando course, where only future SAS members need apply. A *jeu d'esprit* simultaneously testing and celebrating Jane Manning's legendary powers, King Harald has taken on a life of his own, through plucky singers relishing challenge and plucky audiences finding unexpected delight in this vocal tour de force. Different voices inspire dark Balkan chestiness in the Nevesinje area and high soprano brilliance when Spanish honour is at stake. The end of **Ox Mountain** uses impassive Maoist declamation. Her simplest, most tender vocal writing comes in our final **Ständchen**, as near as Weir gets to a conventional lovesong. Here, though, the earnest serenader is not her focus. *Do you hear the nightingales?* he asks his lover. The girl is unlikely to miss them: casually mentioned by Rellstab, ignored by Schubert, these birds are what this song is all about.

But then birdsong runs as a leitmotif through this disc: a source of wisdom; the connection, in the case of Hardy's **Darkling Thrush**, with a higher plane. **The Voice of Desire** explores this idea in four brilliantly differentiated ways. Weir has made her own version of Waltraute's Narrative from Wagner's **Götterdämmerung**. The birds in the Ring cycle know a thing or two, as well: the Wood Bird

enlightens Siegfried, and ravens fly over him just before he gets stabbed in the back. Like Wagner's, Judith Weir's birds are one step ahead of the game.

© Iain Burnside

TEXTS

On buying a horse

One white foot, try him;
Two white feet, buy him;
Three white feet, put him in the dray;
Four white feet, give him away;
Four white feet and a white nose,
Take off his hide and feed him to the crows.

Text: Anonymous

Ox Mountain was covered by trees

Ox Mountain was covered by trees, but it stands by a populous city. The people climbed up with their axes and choppers; they cut the wood down, and the mountain lost its vegetation.

Yet even so, there came the night breeze. Rain and dew moistened it: green shoots began to grow. Cattle and sheep grazed there. After some time, the mountain was gaunt and bare. People who see it barren today imagine it always treeless.

Who knows that the woods were tampered with, hewn with axes, beaten with clubs? The trees are lopped, day after day; how will the mountain flourish?

Confucius said these words: "Hold on and it will remain. Let go and it disappears. One never knows the time it comes. One never sees where it has gone." In making his remarks, perhaps he referred to the heart.

Text: Mencius/Mengzi

Songs from the Exotic

1. Sevdalino, my little one

Sevdalino, my little one,
Are you still at home, my sweetheart?
You took all my money away,
You took all my money away:
Five thousand piastres,
Five thousand piastres,
Give me back a little money my sweetheart, Give
me back a little money that I might buy a pair of

trousers, That I might buy a pair of trousers.
Sevdalino, my little one,
Sevdalino, my little one...

Text: Serbian folk song

2. In the lovely village of Nevesinje

In the lovely village of Nevesinje,
Bey Lujibovic writes a letter
And sends it to the Rocky Piva,
Into the hands of Bey Pivlyanahin:

“Listen you, Bey Pivlyanahin,
You bit right into my heart,
For you killed my brother.
Ahi! Ahi!
Come out you,
I dare you to fight!

I give you three choices:
First at the rocky Korita,
Second on Trusina Hill,
The third, where ever we should meet by chance:
If you lack the courage to fight,
I will send you an embroidering frame and a distaff,
And moreover an Egyptian cotton reel With
aboxwood spindle; You may weave for me a shirt
and a lacy apron.”

When the letter reached baya,
He understood the contents:
He reached for his inkwell,
And wrote the Bey an answer.

Text: Serbian epic

3. The romance of Count Arnaldos

¡Quien hubiese tal ventura
Sobre las aguas del mar,
Como hubo el conde Arnaldos
La mañana de San Juan!

Con un falcón en la mano
La caza iba a cazar
Vió venir una galera
Que a tierra quiere llegar.

Las velas traía de seda,
La ejarcia de un cendal,
Marinero que la manda
Diciendo viene un cantar
Que la mar hacía en calma
Los vientos hace amainar,
Las peces que andan n'el hondo
Arriba los haces andar
Las aves que andan volando
N'el mástel las faz'posar

Alli fabló el conde Arnaldos
Bien oreis lo que dirá:

<<Por Dios te ruego marinero
Digasme ora ese cantar.>>

Respondiole el marinero
Tal respuesta le fue a andar:

<<Yo no digo esta conción
Sino a quien conmigo va:
Yo no digo esta canción
Sino a quien conmigo va.>>

Who could have had such good fortune
On the waters of the sea
As had Count Arnaldos
On the morning of St. John's Day!

With a falcon on his fist
He was going out hunting
When he saw a galley approaching
Trying to make land.

Its sails were of silk
And its shrouds were of fine crepe
And the sailor who commanded it
Came singing a song
Which made the sea calm

And made the winds die down
Which made the fish that swim in the deep rise to
the surface
And the birds that fly past perch on the mast.

Then Count Arnaldos spoke, indeed, you shall hear
what he said:
'I beg you in God's name, sailor, tell me now this
song of Yours.'
The sailor answered him and this is the answer he
gave:
'I only tell this song to those who come with me.'

Text: Spanish song 15th – 16th century, anonymous

4. The song of a girl ravished away By the fairies in south uist

My love, my love,
Let me home to my mother;
My love, my love, let me home;
My love, my love,
Let me home as you found me;
I came to call the cattle home.

I heard last night that my love was surrounded; I
climbed the hill by the light of the moon; My love,
my love, let me home as you found me:
I came to call the cattle home.

Though you gave me horses on halters,
Though you gave me cattle and sheep,
Though you gave me servants and footmen, I came
to call the cattle home.

My love, my love, let me home to my mother; My
love, my love, let me home, let me home; My love,
my love, let me home as you found me; I came to
call the cattle home.

Text: Scottish-Gaelic folk-song

Scotch Minstrelsy

Bessie Bell and Mary Gray

(To avoid an outbreak of the plague in Perth in
1645, these two ladies built themselves a bower by
the banks of the River Almond; but the plague
eventually spread even to this remote region, and
they succumbed to it.)

Bessie Bell and Mary Gray
They were two bonny lasses,
They biggit a bow'r on the banks of the river,
And theekit it over with rashes, O!

They theekit it over with rashes green,
They theekit it over with heather;
The plague came into the river bank,
And slew them both together.

Bonnie James Campbell

It's up in the highlands, along the sweet Tay,
Bonnie James Campbell rode many a day;
He saddled, he bridled, and gallant rode he,
And home came his good horse but never came he.

Out came his old mother a-crying full sair,
Out came his bonny bride, tearing her hair,
'My meadow lies green and my corn is unshorn
But bonny James Campbell will never return'.

Saddled and bridled and booted rode he,
A plume in his helmet, a sword at his knee,
Empty his saddle all bloody to see,
O home came his good horse, but never came he.

Lady Isobel and the Elf-Knight

Fair Lady Isobel sits in her bower sewing,
There she heard the Elf-Knight blowing his horn.

'If I had yon horn that I hear blowing,
And yon Elf-Knight to sleep in my bosom.'

The maiden had scarcely these words spoken,
When in at her window the Elf-Knight has luppen.

'It's a very strange matter, fair maiden' said he,
'I canna blow my horn but ye call on me.

But will ye go to yon Greenwood side?
If ye canna gaing, I will cause you to ride'.

He leapt on a horse and she on another,
And they rode on to the greenwood together.

'Light down, light down, fair lady Isobel', said he,
'We are come to the place where you are to die'.

'Have mercy, have mercy kind sir on me,
Till once my dear father and mother I see'.

'Seven king's daughters here have I slain,
And you shall be the eighth of them'.

'O sit down a while, rest your head upon my knee,
That we may have some rest before I die'.

She stroked him so softly the nearer he did creep;
With a small secret charm she lulled him
fast asleep.

With his own sword belt so softly she bound him;
With his own dagger so softly she killed him.

The Gypsy Laddie

The gypsies came to our good lord's castle gates,
And O! but they sang sweetly, O!
They sang so sweet and complete
That down came our fair lady, O!

They gave to her the nutmeg brown,
They gave the finest ginger.
The gypsies saw her well-fared face,
And cast their glamour over her.

'Go take from me this silver cloak
And bring to me a plaidie.
I will forget my kith and kin,
And follow the gypsy laddie.

Last night I lay on a feather bed,
My wedded lord beside me;
Tonight I lie with stars and moon and sky;
Ah! Whatever shall betide me!

(Epilogue: The Lady leaves with the gypsies, and
the Lord returns..)

'Go, saddle to me the black' he said,
'The brown rides never so speedy:
And I will neither eat nor drink nor sleep,
Till I avenge my lady'.

There were fifteen valiant gypsies,
They were black, O! but they were bonny.
They are all to be hanged on a tree
For stealing our good lord's lady.

The Braes Of Yarrow

I dreamed a dreary dream last night
That filled my heart with sorrow:
I dreamt I pulled the heather green
Upon the braes of Yarrow.

I dreamed a dreary dream last night,
That filled my heart with sorrow:
I dreamt my love came headless home,
Upon the braes of Yarrow.

O gentle wind that bloweth south,
to where my love repaireth;
Convey a kiss from her dear mouth,
And tell me how she fareth.

Text: Five Scottish ballads

The Voice of Desire

1. The Voice of Desire

Beautiful must be the mountains whence ye come,
And bright in the fruitful valleys the streams,
wherefrom

Ye learn your song:

Where are those stary woods? O might I wander there,
Among the flowers, which in that heavenly air
Bloom the year long!

[Nay,] barren are those mountains and spent
the streams:

Our song is the voice of desire, that haunts our dreams,
A throe of the heart,
Whose pining visions dim, forbidden hopes profound,
No dying cadence nor long sigh can sound,
For all our art.

Alone, aloud in the raptured ear of men
We pour our dark nocturnal secret; and then,
As night is withdrawn
[From these sweet-springing meads and bursting
boughs of May,]
Dream, while the innumerable choir of day
Welcome the dawn.

Text: Nightingales – Robert Bridges

2. White Eggs in the Bush

The blue cuckoo
lays white eggs in the bush.
When war captures the town
the blue cuckoo cries:
“Kill twenty, kill twenty!”
The red-bellied coucal cries:
“Kill thirty, kill thirty!”
Then death will not fail to come,
then death will not fail to come.
When men begin war,
the blue cuckoo cries:
“Fools, fools!”
The red-bellied coucal cries:
“The world is spoiled,
the world is spoiled!”
Then death cannot fail to come,
then death cannot fail to come.

*Text: Blue Cuckoo – from Hunter Poems of the Yoruba,
translated by Ulli Beier*

3. Written on Terrestrial Things

I leant upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-gray,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
The Century's corpse outleant,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead,
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy goodnight air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

Text: The Darkling Thrush – Thomas Hardy

4. Sweet Little Red Feet

I had a dove and the sweet dove died;
And I have thought it died of grieving:
Oh, what could it grieve for? Its feet were tied,
With a silken thread of my own
hand's weaving;
Sweet little red feet! why should you die -
Why should you leave me, sweet dove! why?
You liv'd alone on the forest-tree,
Why, pretty thing! could you not live with me?
I kiss'd you oft and gave you white peas;
Why not live sweetly, as in the green trees?

Text: I Had a Dove and the Sweet Dove Died – John Keats

A Spanish Liederbooklet

1. Romance de Fonte-frida

Fonte frida, fonre frida, • fonte frida y con amor
Do todas las avecicas • van tomar consolación,
Si no es tortolica • qu'está viuda y con dolor.
Por allí fuera pasar • el traidor del ruiseñor;
Las palabras que le dice • llenas son de traición:
“Si tú quisieses, señora, • yo sería tu servidor”.
“Vete d'ahi, enemigo, • malo, falso, engañador,
que ni poso en ramo verde, • ni en prado que tenga flor;
que si el agua hallo clara • turbia la bebía yo;
que no quiero haber marido • porque hihos no haya, no;
no quiero placer con ellos, • ni menos consolación.
¡Dejame, triste enemigo, • malo, falso, mal traidor,
que no quiero ser tu amiga • ni casar contigo, no!”

Romance of Fonte-frida

Cool fountain, cool fountain, cool fountain of love,
where all the little birds go to console themselves,
except the turtle-dove who is widowed and sorrowing.
By it there passed that traitor, the nightingale.
The words that he spoke were full of treachery:
“If you would allow me, lady, I would be your servant.”
“Go away enemy, false deceiver.
I do not perch on a green bough, nor in a meadow
that is in flower,

and if I find the water clear, I drank from it turbid.
I do not want a husband, so that there may be
no children.
I want no pleasure with children, nor yet any
consolation.
Leave me, sad enemy, wicked, false, evil traitor,
for I do not want to be your mistress, nor to marry
you either.”

2. Romance de Rosa fresca

Rosa fresca, rosa fresca • tan garrida y con amor,
Cuando yo's tuve en mis brazos • no vos supe servir, no,
Y agora que vos serviría • no vos puedo yo haber, no;
“Vuestra fué la culpa, amigo, • vuestra fué, que mia no;
enviástemme una carta • con un vuestro servidor,
y en lugar de recabdar, • él dijera otra razón:
qu'érades casado, amigo, • allá en tierras de León;
que tenéis mujer hermosa • y hijos como una flor.”
“Quien os lo dijo, señora, • no vos dijo verdad, non,
que yo nunca entré en Castilla, • ni allá en tierras
de León,
sino cuando era pequeño • que no sabia d'amor.”

Romance of the Fresh Rose

Fresh rose, fresh rose, so graceful and loving,
when I held you in my arms I did not know how to
please you,

and now that I would please you I cannot have you.
“The fault was yours, friend. It was yours, not mine.
You sent me a letter by your servant;
and instead of delivering it, he told me another story,
that you had married, friend, away in the land of León,
that you had a beautiful child and children as (fair
as) a flower.”

“Whoever told you that, lady. Did not tell you the truth,
for I have never been in Castile, nor yonder in the
land of León,
except when I was small and knew nothing of love.”

3. Serenilla de la Zarzuela

Yo me iba, mi madre, • a Villa Reale:
Erraya yo el camino • en fuerte lugare.
Siete días anduve • que no comí pane,
Cebada mi mula, • carne el gavilán.
Entre la Zarzuela • y Darazután,
alzaba los ojos • hacia do el sol sale;
viera una cabaña, • della el humo sale.
Picara mi nula • fuíme para allá;
Perros del ganado • sálemne a ladrar:
Vide una serrana • del bello donaire.
“Llegáos, caballero, • vergüenza no hayades;
mi padre y mi madre • han ido al lugar,
mi carillo Minguillo • es ido por pan,
ni vendrá esta noche • ni mañana a yantar;

comeréis de la leche • mientras el queso se hace.
Haremos la cama • junto al retamal;
Haremos un hijo • llamarse ha Pascual;
O será arzobispo • pap o cardenal,
O será porquerizo • de Villa Real.”

Hill Song of La Zarzuela

I was going, Mother, to Villa Real:
I lost my way in a difficult place.
I went seven days without eating bread,
Without my mule getting fodder or my hawk
getting meat.
Between La Zarzuela and Darazután,
I lifted my eyes toward the sunrise
and saw a cabin from which the smoke rose.
I spurred my mule and rode to it;
The shepherd's dogs came out to bark at me,
and I saw a highland girl with a pretty grace.
“Come in, knight, and do not be shy;
my father and mother have gone to the town,
my darling Minguillo has gone for bread,
and will not be back tonight or tomorrow to eat;
you shall drink milk while the cheese is being made.
We will make up the bed beside the broom field,
and we will get a son, whose name shall be Pascual.
He will either be an archbishop, a pope, or a cardinal,
or he will be the swine-drover of Villa Real.”

*From THE PENGUIN BOOK OF SPANISH VERSE edited by J. M. Cohen
(Penguin Books 1956, Third edition 1988). Copyright © J. M. Cohen,
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ACT 1

Announcement:

King Harald's Saga, act one. It is the year 1066. In the royal palace at Oslo, King Harald of Norway recounts his previous triumphs on the field of battle. To a fanfare of trumpets, Earl Tostig arrives from England. Tostig is a traitor. He persuades King Harald to invade England.

Harald:

I Harald, by the grace of God,
King of all the northern lands,
mightiest warrior that ever donned a coat of mail,
and held a sharp edged sword,
strongest king that ever strode a longship's prow
and sailed the restless sea.
Most merciless fighter that ever killed a
living man,
Whereas my brother, the blessed and holy man,
Olaf the Saint, said: Love thine enemies;
I say: Sever their limbs until they cause no trouble.

When I was young I raided endless Russia,
my ship sailed past Byzantium,
I scourged the Saracen men in Sicily,
I trod the holy ground of Palestine.
They knew my justice on both banks of the Jordan;
Wherever I went, men said:
May his soul abide in Christ!

All around the orb of the world, my name is feared;
by this name am I known: Harald the Merciless.

Fanfare of Trumpets:

Hail Tostig; tell all, Tostig; tell us your tale,
tall Tostig.
Treat us to the truth; tempt us with a
truthless trick;
trick us in a trance, tall terse Tostig;
Tell us all, tell us all, talk! all hail! tall hale
tell-tale;
talk! tall-tale telling Tostig.

Tostig

Hail; take; kill; win; sail; fight; go
Go.

ACT 2

Announcement

Act two. It is the middle of the night. King Harald is asleep. He dreams that he is in Trondheim and meets his dead brother, St.Olaf, who warns him that his expedition to England is ill-fated.

King Harald is not afraid of dreams; he leaps from his bed and orders his navy to make for England. The ships sail out of the fjord, into the open sea, and out of sight. Harald's two wives bid him farewell.

St. Olaf

Sleep Harald, sleep on, I fear that death awaits,
I hear the wolves cry in the mountains,
I see the wolves' jaws red with blood;
I see black ravens, birds of carrion, fly to the west.
I died at home a holy man;
To my blessed memory be true, trusty hero.

Harald

Put out to sea, put out to sea.
Sail, far, over sea.

Harald's wives

Farewell, Harald. Take care, Harald.
God bless Harald.

ACT 3

Announcement

Act three. King Harald's army lands at Scarborough. A messenger reveals that the English army has been sighted in unexpectedly large numbers. The two armies fight at Stamford Bridge in Yorkshire. The Norwegians are slaughtered by the thousand. Amongst the dead is King Harald.

The Norwegian army

We gladly leave for Harald
the land from which we came;

beneath his royal standard,
his courage and his fame.

We gladly fight for Harald,
we plunder and we steal;
our warriors' strength is famous,
our courage and our zeal.

We gladly kill for Harald,
we slaughter all his foes;
first, we beat them to the ground, and then we

A messenger

O Sir! O Harald; I bring fateful news. Your army lies
in great peril; the sun is bright but the fates are
black. We thought to meet no danger; but as we
approached the town of York, we saw dust, a cloud
a dust, raised by the hooves of horses; and below it
the gleam of handsome shields and white coats of
mail; and we could see that it was an army, an
army of men; and their glittering weapons sparkled
like a field of broken ice.

A soldier

Side by side the armies fought.
Shoulder to shoulder their men attacked;
the storm of arrows raged around the king,
and all around the clash of mail, the clang of swords,
men running and falling, the crack of blows,

bright weapons flying, hewing flesh,
grating, glinting,
men flinching, kicking, jolting, flinging axes,
breathless they gash and graze and grate.

No room to move, tripping, falling,
horses rearing, a litter of corpses;
they shove and stab and stab,
raining blows without purpose;
the leaders cannot command,
their shouted orders unheard
in the ripping and crashing.
Now Harald, the Norwegian king, felt anger and fury;
Into the thickest knot of bodies he ran,
fighting two-handed, swinging weapons aimlessly.
blood pouring, cramp and sweat, shouting, roaring,
cutting down, moving blindly.

Nearby, a man exhausted, fallen in the mud cried:
disaster has befallen us ! we have been duped!
there was no cause for Harald to bring his
forces westward;
we are all as good as dead!
At this moment, King Harald was struck in the throat,
And drew his last breath,
his last gasp.

EPILOGUE

Announcement

Epilogue. Back in Oslo, an ancient Icelandic sage
ponders Harald's violent end.

An Icelandic sage

I have seen this all before; ships returning to the
harbour unloading not live men but corpses.
Women weeping, children who have never seen
their fathers; it seems to happen often, and always
they say the same thing: since so many were killed,
we will never forget and make the same mistake.
But they do ! and it happens again.

Why did Harald bother? He could have stayed at
home and made the best of it. I could have told him
it would end like this.

*Music and Libretto by Judith Weir
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Ständchen

Leise flehen meine Lieder
Durch die Nacht zu Dir;
In den stillen Hein hernieder,
Liebchen, komm'zu mir!

Flüsternd schlanke Wipfel rauschen
In des Mondes Licht;
Des Verräters feindlich Lauschen
Fürchte, Holde, nicht.

Hörst die Nachtigallen schlagen?
Ach! Sie flehen Dich,
Mit der Töne süßen Klagen
Flehen sie für mich

Sie verstehn des Busens Sehnen
Kennen Liebesschmerz,
Rühren mit den Silbertönen
Jedes weiche Herz.

Lass auch Dir das Herz bewegen,
Liebchen, höre mich!
Bebend harr'ich Dir entgegen!
Komm', beglücke mich!

Softly my songs plead
Through the night to you;
Down into the silent grove,
Beloved, come to me!

Slender tree-tops whisper and rustle
In the moonlight;
My darling, do not fear
That the hostile betrayer will overhear us.

Do you not hear the nightingales call?
Ah, they are imploring you;
With their sweet, plaintive songs
They are imploring for me.

They understand the heart's yearning,
They know the pain of love;
With their silvery notes
They touch every tender heart.

Let your heart, too, be moved,
Beloved, hear me!
Trembling, I await you!
Come, make me happy!

*Text: Heinrich Friedrich Rellstab
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BIOGRAPHIES

JUDITH WEIR

Judith Weir is one of Britain's most wide-ranging composers. She studied composition with John Tavener whilst at school in London, and at Cambridge University with Robin Holloway. For six years she taught composition at Glasgow's University and RSAMD and she has also held visiting professorships at Oxford and Princeton. She is an active advocate of new music for school-age and adult amateur performers.

Her interest in theatre, narrative and folklore has resulted in three full length operas, *A Night at the Chinese Opera*, *The Vanishing Bridegroom* and *Blond Eckbert*; and theatrical collaborations with Sir Peter Hall, Caryl Churchill and Peter Shaffer. Together with storyteller Vayu Naidu, Judith has created a blend of storytelling and music entitled 'Future Perfect' which has toured England and India; a new instalment of which was premiered in 2005.

Works composed for specific artists include *woman.life.song*, a 50-minute song cycle commissioned and performed by Jessye Norman in Carnegie Hall, New York and at the BBC Proms;



© Suzanne Jansen

We are Shadows, written for Sir Simon Rattle and the CBSO orchestra and its three choruses (winner of the 2000 South Bank Show Music Award); an extended series of chamber works for Judith's long-time collaborators, the Schubert Ensemble, recently released on a double CD by NMC; and *The Voice of Desire*, a collection of songs written for Alice Coote.

Recent successes include a major orchestral work *The Welcome Arrival of Rain* for the Minnesota Orchestra and the ensemble work *Tiger Under the Table* for the London Sinfonietta. Judith recently completed *Armida*, an opera for television in collaboration with film-maker Margaret Williams, commissioned by Channel Four TV, and a new version of her opera *Blond Eckbert* for The Opera Group. She is currently writing a new work commissioned by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Tapiola Sinfonietta to be premiered in the autumn of 2006.

From 1995 to 1998 she was the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra's Composer in Association; and from 1995 to 2000 she was the Artistic Director of the Spitalfields Festival in London. She spent the first half of 2004 teaching at Harvard University, as the Fromm Foundation Visiting Professor of Music.

Judith Weir's music is published exclusively by Chester Music Ltd. and Novello and Co. Ltd.

SUSAN BICKLEY

Susan Bickley is firmly established as one of the most versatile mezzo-sopranos, equally at home in the opera house or the concert platform, with a wide repertory encompassing the Baroque, the great 19th century roles and the music of today.

In the UK, Susan Bickley has worked with the Royal Opera House, English National Opera, Welsh National Opera, Opera North, Scottish Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Glyndebourne Touring Opera and Grange Park Opera. Abroad, engagements include Paris Opera, Hong Kong Festival, San Francisco Opera, Flanders Opera, Netherlands Opera and Berlin Staatsoper.



© Samantha Owens

In concert, Susan Bickley works with all the major British symphony orchestras as well as ensembles like the Gabrieli Consort, The Sixteen, Nash Ensemble, London Sinfonietta, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Fretwork and The Purcell Quartet. Her work abroad has included engagements with Residentie Orkest, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Les Arts Florissants, Ensemble Intercontemporain and Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie.

She made her debut at Carnegie Hall singing Stravinsky's *Requiem Canticles*; sang Ligeti's *Requiem* and George Benjamin's *Upon Silence* at the Salzburg Festival, and her Proms appearances have included works by Simon Bainbridge, Leonard Bernstein, Thomas Adès and Nicholas Maw.

Engagements this season and next include *Ludmilla*, *The Bartered Bride* at Covent Garden, *Storge Jephtha* and Brangaene *Tristan und Isolde* for WNO, *Dido* for Opera North, and the world premiere of Malcolm Hayes' *Odysseus Remembers* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

Her many recordings can be heard on EMI, Deutsche Grammophon, BMG, Hyperion and Nimbus.

Susan Bickley is represented by Intermusica.

ANDREW KENNEDY - TENOR

Born in Ashington, Andrew studied at King's College, Cambridge, and the RCM. He was on the Young Artists Programme at Covent Garden; won the BBC Singer of the World Rosenblatt Recital Prize in 2005, and is currently a member of BBC Radio 3's New Generation Artists Scheme and a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award winner. He also won the 2006 Royal Philharmonic Society's Young Artists' Award.



Engagements this season include Tamino *The Magic Flute* and Fenton *Sir John in Love* for English National Opera, Flute *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Royal Opera House, Jaquino *Fidelio* at Glyndebourne and with London Symphony Orchestra, Mozart's *Requiem* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Finzi's *Dies Natalis* with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

Future plans include Ferrando *Così fan tutte* for Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Tom Rakewell *The Rake's Progress* in Brussels and Lyon, Nemorino *L'elisir d'amore* for Opera North, Francesco *Benvenuto Cellini* and Novice *Billy Budd* with London Symphony Orchestra, Vere *Billy Budd* in Houston, Berlioz *Grande Messe de Morts* with Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall, and Britten *Serenade and Nocturne* with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

Andrew Kennedy is represented by Intermusica.

AILISH TYNAN - SOPRANO

Ailish Tynan was born in Mullingar, Ireland, and studied at Trinity College and the Royal Irish Academy of Music in Dublin. In 2003 Ailish represented Ireland in the BBC Singer of the World Competition, winning the BBC Singer of the World Rosenblatt Recital Prize and also became a BBC New Generation Artist.

Ailish was a member of the former Vilar Young Artist Programme and roles for the Royal Opera have included Papagena *Die Zauberflöte*, First Niece *Peter Grimes*, Xenia *Boris Godunov* and Second Wood Nymph *Rusalka*. Recent operatic engagements include Valencienne *The Merry Widow* and Susanna *Le nozze di Figaro* for Welsh National Opera, Euridice *Orfeo ed Euridice* and Pamina *Die Zauberflöte* for Opera Ireland, Flora *The Knot Garden* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Sir Andrew Davis, Aenchen *Der Freischütz* and a Queens Hall recital at the Edinburgh International Festival and Marzelline *Fidelio* with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland. She has also given recitals at the Wigmore Hall, St Luke's, the City of London Festival, St John's Smith Square, the Royal Dublin Society, West Cork Music Festival, Cheltenham Music Festival, Gregynog Festival and Clandeboyne

Festival the Isle of Man Festival, as well as in studio for BBC Radio 3.

Future plans include her US debut as Zerlina *Don Giovanni* for the Seattle Opera, Marzelline *Fidelio* for the Royal Opera, Sophie *Der Rosenkavalier* for the Stockholm Opera and Héro *Béatrice et Bénédict* for Houston Grand Opera.



IAIN BURNSIDE

Iain Burnside enjoys a unique reputation as pianist and broadcaster. As a performer he is best known for his commitment to the song repertoire, forged through collaborations with leading international singers, including Dame Margaret Price, Susan Chilcott, Galina Gorchakova, Yvonne Kenny, Susan Bickley, David Daniels, John Mark Ainsley and Bryn Terfel. Iain also works with some outstanding younger singers: Lisa Milne, Sally Matthews, Sophie Daneman, Sarah Connolly, Christopher Maltman, William Dazeley, Roderick Williams and Jonathan Lemalu.

Iain's broadcasting career covers both Radio and TV. As presenter of BBC Radio 3's Voices programme, he has recently been honoured with a Sony Radio Award. He further combined roles as pianist and presenter in The Music Party for BBC World Service. Other Radio 3 work has featured special celebrations of Dame Janet Baker, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Maria Callas and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. His television involvement includes Cardiff Singer of the World, Leeds International Piano Competition and BBC Young Musician of the Year.

Current recording projects include a series co-produced between BBC's Voices and Signum, following their acclaimed first release of Tippett with John Mark Ainsley. For Naxos he is recording a number of English songs discs with Roderick Williams; black box recorded Iain in Schoenberg with Sarah Connolly and Williams; Debussy with Lisa Milne and Susan Bickley; and Copland with Susan Chilcott.



A number of organisations have invited Iain to programme concert series: Musique et Poésie, Brussels; the Bath Festival; the International Song Recital Series at London's South Bank Centre; Leeds Lieder+; and the Finzi Friends' triennial festival of English Song in Ludlow.

His main educational commitment is with singers and pianists at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Other masterclasses include the Juilliard School, New York, and the Banff Centre, Canada. He is a Director of Grange Park Opera.



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