

Concert inspired by John Drinkwater

www.johndrinkwater.org

St Nicholas Church, Piddington

Saturday 12th April 2014, 7.30pm

Mezzo Soprano Susie Self

Cello Michael Christie

Piano Nigel Foster

Three Drinkwater Songs for voice and piano Susie Self

Salut d'Amour for cello and piano. Elgar

Chanson du Matin for cello and piano. Elgar

Amarynth by John Drinkwater for voice and guitar. Susie Self

Late Summer by John Drinkwater for voice and guitar. Susie Self

Two James Joyce Songs for voice ,cello and piano Michael Christie

The Goddess in the Wood for voice and piano Susie Self

.....INTERVAL.....

Sea Slumber Song for voice and piano Elgar

Where Corals Lie for voice and piano. Elgar

Nocturne for cello and piano. Michael Christie

Songs of Immortality for voice, cello and piano Susie Self

Three Drinkwater Songs:

Colours for a Garment

Make me a garment
Of primrose yellow and the green
Of mint, of marjoram and thyme,
All crisp herbs of the prime,
When Javeh went
Bright palisades between,
Of sapling apples, crimson plums,
Figs bursting in the harvest, vines,
Heavy with wines
Ripening to the presses and the vats;
Make me of these a garment, when he comes,
To sing magnificats.

The Passing of a Stoic

Now stiff who once was willow,
Now bent who once was tall,
He walks along the garden
At noon and afternoon,
And while the buds are yellow
His life is at the fall,
Yet will he ask no pardon
Who never asked a boon.

With death he will not quarrel,
Nor bid the gods be kind,
The shadow of disaster
Has been his place of school,
And now he makes no moral
Of echoes in his mind
That tell of life the master
With whips for man the fool.

With eyes upon the gravel
He does not heed the year,
Among the lives that waken
He moves but does not live,
A bitter way to travel
He travels without fear,
But with no blessing taken
Goes on with none to give.

Dusk

Slowly, slowly, pass away
Images my mind has held
In companionship of day—
In the sunbeams beauty-spelled;
Slowly, slowly, wanes the sun,
Till with shadows they are one.

Planets that outpace the moon
Waken on a dusky sky;
Waters that outshone the noon
Darken slowly, slowly die;
Scarlet poppies in the gloom
Drowsing burn a deeper bloom.

Slowly, slowly, sleep comes on,
Stealing, sealing everything;
All the dog-roses are gone,
Folded now is every wing;
All the witnesses of day
Slowly, slowly, pass away.

Two Joyce Songs:

These two songs were written in 1991 and are part of a cycle of four songs. *Watching the Needleboats at San Sabba* refers to James Joyce watching his brother Stanislav rowing sculls at the beach in Trieste, and is a tribute to the sense of loss he felt over the fleeting sensations of life. *She Weeps over Ragoon* refers to a story that his wife was once wooed by an unfortunate young man in a rainstorm, who subsequently fell ill, died, and was buried in the cemetery at Ragoon.

Watching the Needleboats at San Sabba

I heard their young hearts crying
Loveward above the glancing oar
And heard the prairie grasses sighing:
No more, return no more!

Oh hearts, Oh sighing grasses
Vainly your loveblown bannerets mourn!
No more will the wild wind that passes
Return, no more return.

She Weeps over Ragoon

Rain on Ragoon falls softly, softly falling
Where my dark lover lies.
Sad is his voice that calls me, sadly calling
At grey moonrise.

Ever unanswered, and the dark rain falling,

Then as now.
Dark too our hearts, O love, shall lie and cold
As his sad heart has lain
Under the moongrey nettles, the black mould
And muttering rain.

Amarynth by John Drinkwater

Beauty forgotten yet is beauty still,
For nothing lovely ever upon earth,
Not Helen's face, nor Alexander's will,
Passing to death, but comes again to birth.
In some new brain the sleeping dust will waken;
Courage and love that conquered and were done,
Called from a night by thought of man forsaken,
Will know again the gladness of the sun.

All all things we have known for beauty here,
All little things fugitive and forgot,
Quick blossoms that have fallen year by year,
Kisses that even the dawn remembered not,
All these are now the tributes that we bring
To know the heart of every lovely thing.

Late Summer by John Drinkwater

Though summer long delayeth
Her blue and golden boon,
Yet now at length she stayeth
Her wings above the noon:
She sets the waters dreaming
To murmurous leafy tones,
The weeded waters gleaming
Above the stepping-stones.

Where fern and ivied willow
Run o'er the seaward brook,
I read a volume mellow-
A poet's fairy-book;
The seaward brook is narrow,
The hazel spans its pride
And like a painted arrow
The king-bird keeps the tide.

The Goddess in the Wood:

This extended song feels like a mini-scena of connecting episodes that culminate in an erotic catharsis. Rupert Brooke's sonnet is so highly evocative and evasive that I felt perhaps the complex feeling buried in it could be brought out in layers through music. Understanding the overall meaning of the sonnet raises many unanswerable questions and

it is particularly this element that drew me to the work. The Goddess is conversely "life giving" and "life taking". Compositionally I seek to weave material that explores this paradox.

Rupert Brooke is one of the six members of "The Dymock Poets" who met in the village of Dymock near Malvern before the 1st World War. The other members are: Robert Frost, Lascelles Abercrombie, John Drinkwater, Wilfrid Gibson and Edward Thomas. Brooke is buried on the beautiful Greek Island of Skyros and it is here that I imagine he embraces "The Goddess in The Wood". His simple grave is in an olive grove overlooking the glistening Aegean sea. When Brooke was a young man he said when at Cambridge that he hoped he would die on a Greek island. He got his wish by a curious twist of misfortune. When en route to battle in Gallipoli he was bitten on the lip by a mosquito. He subsequently died of septicaemia and the ship he was on was sailing near Skyros. With great solemnity and love from his colleagues he was buried on the island. By another twist of fate, I work yearly on the island of Skyros, so the sonnet's mystical prophetic mood is especially keenly felt when I visit Brooke's olive grove. In spring the river swells and lush pink oleanders flower in a profusion that perfectly evokes the Lady Venus's flowered dell.

The Goddess in the Wood

In a flowered dell the Lady Venus stood,
Amazed with sorrow. Down the morning one
Far golden horn in the gold of trees and sun
Rang out; and held; and died.....She thought the wood
Grew quieter. Wing, and leaf, and pool of light
Forgot to dance. Dumb lay the unfalling stream;
Life one eternal instant rose in a dream
Clear out of time, poised on a golden height.....

Till a swift terror broke the abrupt hour,
The gold waves purred amidst the green above her;
And a bird sang. With one sharp-taken breath,
By sunlit branches and unshaken flower
The immortal limbs flashed to the human lover,
And the immortal eyes to look on death.

.....INTERVAL.....

Sea Slumber Song by Hon Roden Noel

Where Corals Lie by Richard Garnett

Songs of Immortality

"Songs of Immortality" were commissioned by the baritone Jeremy Huw Williams with funds from the Ralph Vaughan Williams Trust. First performance took place at the Gloucester Music Society, March 22nd, 2012.

The cycle comprises settings of poems by six poets known as "The Dymock Poets". They met regularly to walk, eat, drink and commune in the village of Dymock near Malvern before the First World War. Their "oeuvre" eagerly embraces questions of immortality which from poets of such youth is perhaps best explained by the fact that war was imminently on the horizon. Of the six only two were involved in active service: Edward Thomas who died in the field and Rupert Brooke who died of an infection en route to battle and is buried on the Greek island of Skyros. Meanwhile Robert Frost decided to return to America. His iconic "The Road Less Traveled", usually interpreted in a very deep

way, is here set with the knowledge that Frost probably wrote it to tease his friend Edward Thomas who had a predilection to be indecisive. Even when Thomas had decided to sign up he was still not sure he had made the right decision! The three other poets, Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, Lascelles Abercrombie and John Drinkwater, found exemption from the war for a variety of reasons. There is a sense in the Dymock Poets' poems collectively that the World was about to change for ever and that the old ways would soon be history. However they also display a universal insight into the vulnerability and numinosity of being in the present which they would say was also ever present in the past and future. In other words life signals us with endless clues that point us towards the existence of immortality.

<p>1. Worcester Beacon</p> <p>When every spur of whin's a spike of ice, Each grassy tussock bristling blades of steel, Each withered bracken frond a rare device Of sparkling crystal crackling under-heel With brittle tinkling, then it is the time, O Love, to leave the chilly hearth and climb The sunlit Beacon, where the live airs blow Along the clean wave-edge of drifted snow.</p> <p>Love, let us go And scale the ridge: I long to see you there Breathing the eager air With cheeks aglow, The sunlight on your hair: O Love, I long to share With you a moment the white ecstasy And crystal silence of eternity.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Wilfrid Wilson Gibson</p>	<p>2. Clouds</p> <p>Down the blue night the unending columns press In noiseless tumult, break and wave and flow, Now tread the far South, or lift rounds of snow Up to the white moon's hidden loveliness. Some pause in their grave wandering comradeless, And turn with profound gesture vague and slow, As who would pray good for the world, but know Their benediction empty as they bless.</p> <p>They say that the Dead die not, but remain Near to the rich heirs of their grief and mirth. I think they ride the calm mid-heaven, as these, In wise majestic melancholy train, And watch the moon, and the still-raging seas, And men, coming and going on the earth.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Rupert Brooke</p>
<p>3. Adlestrop</p> <p>Yes. I remember Adlestrop-- The name, because one afternoon Of heat the express-train drew up there Unwontedly. It was late June.</p> <p>The steam hissed. Some one cleared his throat. No one left and no one came On the bare platform. What I saw Was Adlestrop--only the name</p> <p>And willows, willow-herb, and grass, And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry, No whit less still and lonely fair Than the high cloudlets in the sky.</p> <p>And for that minute a blackbird sang Close by, and round him, mistier, Farther and farther, all the birds Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Edward Thomas</p>	<p>4. The Road Not Taken</p> <p>Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, And sorry I could not travel both And be one traveler, long I stood And looked down one as far as I could To where it bent in the undergrowth;</p> <p>Then took the other, as just as fair, And having perhaps the better claim, Because it was grassy and wanted wear; Though as for that the passing there Had worn them really about the same,</p> <p>And both that morning equally lay In leaves no step had trodden black. Oh, I kept the first for another day! Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I should ever come back.</p> <p>I shall be telling this with a sigh Somewhere ages and ages hence: Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-- I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Robert Frost</p>

5. From "The End of the World"

Madness! You're not far out. -- I came up here
To be alone and quiet in my thoughts,
Alone in my own dreadful mind. The path,
Of red sand trodden hard, went up between
High hedges overgrown of hawthorn blowing
White as clouds; ay it seemed burrowed through
A white sweet-smelling cloud, -- I walking there
Small as a hare that runs its tunnelled drove
Thro' the close heather. And beside my feet
Blue greygles drifted gleaming over the grass;
And up I climbed to sunlight green in birches,
And the path turned to daisies among the grass
With bonfires of the broom beside, like flame
Of burning straw: and I lookt into your valley.
I could scarce look.
Anger was smarting my eyes like grit.
O the fine earth and fine all for nothing!
Mazed I walkt, seeing and smelling and hearing:
The meadow lands all shining fearfully gold, --
Cruel as fire the sight of them toucht my mind;
Breathing was all a honey taste of clover
And bean flowers: I would have rather had it
Carrion, or the stink of smouldering brimstone.
And larks aloft, the happy piping fools,
And squealing swifts that slid on hissing wings,
And yellowhammers playing spry in the hedges:
I never noted them before; but now --
Yes, I was mad, and crying mad, to see
The earth so fine, fine all for nothing!

Lascelles Abercrombie

6. Moonlit Apples

At the top of the house the apples are laid in rows,
And the skylight lets the moonlight in, and those
Apples are deep-sea apples of green. There goes
A cloud on the moon in the autumn night.

A mouse in the wainscot scratches, and scratches, and then
There is no sound at the top of the house of men
Or mice; and the cloud is blown, and the moon again
Dapples the apples with deep-sea light.

They are lying in rows there, under the gloomy beams;
On the sagging floor; they gather the silver streams
Out of the moon, those moonlit apples of dreams,
And quiet is the steep stair under.

In the corridors under there is nothing but sleep.
And stiller than ever on orchard boughs they keep
Tryst with the moon, and deep is the silence, deep
On moon-washed apples of wonder.

John Drinkwater

Biographical notes:

Susie Self is a dynamic composer, singer and conductor. She studied at the Royal College of Music gaining an ARCM. She studied voice with Josephine Veasey, composition with Stephen Dodgson and conducting with David Parry. She won scholarships from the Royal Society of Arts to study in Germany and The Banff Centre, Canada to study with John Cage. She is currently reading for an Mphil in composition at Cambridge. She is the granddaughter of John Drinkwater. Susie was invited by Michael Finnissy to compose for The Royal Opera House's "Garden Venture", her opera HEROIC WOMEN featured on Radio 3 and toured to Taiwan, California and Mexico. Her first two symphonies are recorded by The Moravian Philharmonic, the second was highly commended in the "Van de Vate" competition in Vienna and the First was performed in Beijing in 2008. Key commissions include "Magnificat" for The Arts Council, "EIS" for Brigittenu Orchestra, "Sheela-na-gig" for Sounds Positive and "Re-orientations" for Border Crossings at the Soho Theatre. This year the RVW Trust commissioned her to compose the song cycle "Songs of Immortality" for Jeremy Huw Williams, performed at Gloucester Music Society and "Ellipsis" commissioned "Cosmic Lion Goddess", performed for The Eckhart Society. Her new opera "The Boy from Brazil" was performed at Tête à Tête's Opera Festival this summer in London. She recently completed her Third Symphony, "The Pacific", and is currently working on her Fourth, "The Island". Current commissions include a song cycle for James Gilchrist, "Nor Ran Su Tuan" for Chris Brannick, and "Kandinsky's Ears" for "Sounds Positive". Susie will be the composer in residence for Tardebigge Song Festival next year.

Known as Susannah Self in the opera world, recent engagements include Ma Moss in Copland's "The Tender Land" for Lyon Opera, La Padrona in "Der Turm" for Luxembourg Opera, Mrs Grose in "Turn of the Screw" and Mistress Quickly in "Falstaff" for Salzburg and Chile and 3rd Secretary in John Adams's "Nixon in China" for Athens. Susannah worked for nine years with the Vlaamse Opera in Belgium and Opera du Rhin in Strasbourg. Roles in these houses included Madame de la Haltière

in “Cendrillon”, Marie in “Der Fliegende Holländer” and Emilia in “Otello”. During this time she sang Mahler’s Third Symphony, Glass’s Peace Symphony and Verdi’s Requiem with the Flemish Philharmonic and played Katisha in “The Mikado” at the Savoy Theatre. Susannah is a regular cover for Opera North, Glyndebourne and The Royal Opera House. Roles include Ježibaba in “Rusalka”, Mrs Sedley in “Peter Grimes”, Magdalone in “Maskarade”, Aksinya in “Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk” and Brigitta in “Die Tote Stadt”. She was awarded Best Vocalist at the Buxton Festival Fringe in 2010 for performances of her new album “Seachanges”. Susie co-directs “Selfmade Music” in London and “Seastar Opera” in North Norfolk. This year she conducts “Turn of The Screw “. She runs creative music workshops for Skyros (Greece), Esalen CA Rancho La Puerta (Mexico) and is visiting professor of composition at Junior Guildhall.

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Michael Christie studied 'cello, composition and piano at the Royal College of Music (1975-79), where he won the Bliss Prize. As a freelance 'cellist he worked with various orchestras in the UK, including shows in the West End. His music theatre work with ensembles such as the Lindsay Kemp Company took him on tours to Spain, Italy, Venezuela and the Shetland Islands. In 1989 he was commissioned by the Royal Opera House “Garden Venture” to write a chamber opera (“The Standard Bearer”), which was performed at the Donmar Warehouse. He wrote a number of music theatre pieces for Dartington Summer Music and also for the company which he co-founded with Susannah Self, Selfmade Music Theatre, with whom he has toured in Spain, Syria and throughout the U.K.

As a professional educator he has specialised in teaching 'cello, recorder, composition and creative class music. Currently he is a peripatetic instrumental tutor in a number of schools in North London, and is a professor of composition and musical awareness at the Junior Guildhall. He has also led many composition projects in schools for the English Sinfonia over the last few years. A song of his, 'Spår', was recently performed at the Baltic Sea Festival in Stockholm, by the well-known Swedish soprano Nina Stemme, accompanied by the Swedish Chamber Orchestra. The setting of a poem by Thomas Tranströmer, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in November 2011, was well received. The song is the first of a new song cycle which will be completed last year, with poems by Tranströmer and Bodil Malmsten.

Nigel Foster was born in London and studied piano at the Royal Academy of Music and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. His teachers were Roger Vignoles, Graham Johnson and Iain Burnside. At both the Academy and the Guildhall he won every prize and award available for piano accompaniment, and has since been appointed an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music. Nigel enjoys a busy schedule performing on the concert platform. He has played for singers including the late Philip Langridge, Sarah Walker, Yvonne Kenny, Roderick Williams, Elizabeth Watts, Louise Winter, Ian Partridge, Neil Jenkins, James Gilchrist, Jeremy Huw Williams, Ruby Hughes, Elisabeth Meister, Elizabeth Llewellyn, Ashley Riches, Stephan Loges, Stephen Varcoe and Jane Manning, and instrumentalists including violinist Madeleine Mitchell. He has performed at major UK venues including the Wigmore Hall, South Bank Centre, Royal Opera House Covent Garden (Crush Room) and St John Smith Square in London, and St David's Hall in Cardiff. Nigel has given concerts all over Europe; in France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, The Netherlands and Greece, as well as in Asia (Japan, Malaysia), New Zealand and the Americas (USA, Colombia). He has broadcast on BBC Radio 3, Classic FM in the UK and on French, Welsh and Greek television.

Nigel is the founder, director and pianist of the London Song Festival, an annual event that promotes the song repertoire. Further details may be seen at www.londonsongfestival.org

Nigel has given master-classes and led workshops in the song repertoire at summer courses and music programmes all over the UK, in Belgium and Portugal (OperaPlus), in Italy (Asolo Festival) and the USA (Summit City Art Song Festival and University of Toledo). In his formative years Nigel played for Graham Johnson's Songmakers' Almanac, the Park Lane Group and several opera companies including Glyndebourne. Nigel has worked with conductors including Sir John Eliot Gardiner, playing for singers including Renee Fleming, Angela Gheorghiu and Roberto Alagna. Nigel's musical interests range from the baroque right through to contemporary music, though his main love and passion is the song repertoire. He has given premieres of works by many leading composers including John Metcalf, Alun Hoddinott, Richard Causton, Julian Philips, Edward Rushton and Huw Watkins. Nigel's CD recordings include several discs of contemporary music and anthologies of songs of Alun Hoddinott and Mansel Thomas with Jeremy Huw Williams for the Sain label and collections of English song with Stephen Varcoe. He features on the soundtrack of the French film 'L'Homme est une Femme Comme les Autres'.