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ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

The Grimsby St Hugh's Festival

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Songs Now

British Songs of the 21st Century

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Paul Carey Jones – baritone
Ian Ryan – piano

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In the last ten years or so, I have been noticing a gradual but perceptible increase in the quantity and quality of songs being written by British composers. I am not sure why this is. However, in recent decades, the influence of the European avant-garde has receded, the influence of rock music has become ever stronger and British composers seem to have become more at ease with stylistic diversity as well as with their own national musical heritage. I suspect that these factors have all played a part in creating circumstances that are more favourable for songwriting than have existed for some time.

In 2007, a few of us discussed this and decided to form the short-lived *21st Century Song Project*. Several new song cycles were written for this including four that appear on this CD – Power, Armstrong, Whalley and Crowther. The strength of these songs further convinced me things were moving in this direction. However, we found it difficult to secure funding and were only able to deliver two concerts.

In 2009, the NMC label released their excellent quadruple Songbook CD, featuring songs by over 100 composers. The release of this CD prompted discussions in the national media about the possibility of a revival of British Song. This seemed a good omen and made me more determined than even to do a significant song project. The previous year – 2008 - I had formed the Grimsby St Hughs Festival. The aims of this Festival are to bring professional classical music concerts to North East Lincolnshire and to programme and promote new music that is relatively accessible but has a 21st century 'sensibility', so to speak. Now, inspired by the NMC songbook, I decided to devote a day of the Festival to 20th and 21st Century British song.

The Song Day took place at Grimsby Minster on Saturday 25th September 2010 and comprised three recitals – soprano and piano, tenor and piano and baritone and piano – and an excellent talk on British song by Peter Reynolds. Each concert was an approximately equal mix of early 20th century songs and 21st century ones. Moreover, we did our best to programme some of the very finest composers of 20th century songs and the recitals included works by Britten, Warlock, Quilter, Walton, W Denis Browne (a stunning songwriter who is ridiculously under-rated), Bridge, Finzi, Gurney and Butterworth. The 21st century songs included a generous amount of the songs on this CD. We even had an audience vote – just a bit of fun really – as to whether people preferred the 20th or 21st century music and the 21st century stuff won by 8%! One person wrote that he preferred the 21st century stuff 'even though' he was born in 1936!

The songday was so successful that there was a widespread feeling that we should not leave it at that but, rather, capture the new songs on CD. Funding from the Arts Council and the Festival's reserves made this possible and we were delighted when Meridian agreed to release the CD. The CD was certainly a joy to make. The performers, the composers, the engineer and the staff at the National Centre for Early Music in York – where the CD was recorded – and at Meridian Records have all been a pleasure to work with. This is, of course a tribute to their absolute professionalism. However, I think it is also due to their belief – expressed several times to me – that, with this CD, we were all working on something a little bit special. Well, here are the results. We all hope you enjoy it.

David Power

1. David Power – *Eight Evening Songs*

My starting point for this cycle of short songs was Georg Trakl's poem *Evening Song* which I set for voice and piano some years ago. I am greatly attracted to the atmosphere of Trakl's poetry. Often his imagery is very striking but the semantic meaning is allusive and elliptical rather than clear and specific. This sort of atmosphere suggests music to me. I sought other poems that also had these qualities in their own different ways and, in due course, I had my set of songs. For some reason, all the resulting songs were markedly shorter than my setting of *Evening Song* itself so I decided to keep *Evening Song* for another song cycle *(Three Expressionist Songs)* but still call this particular set *Eight Evening Songs* as a way of acknowledging that Trakl's *Evening Song* was the initial inspiration for the whole set.

David Power

2. Tom Armstrong - *Opened Spaces*

Opened Spaces comprises two brief songs to texts by the Merseyside-based playwright Jim Morris. Whilst the titles of both texts (*London Song, Song of Inishmaan*) indicate specific places, Jim takes these as starting points for elliptical yet highly evocative writings that could chime with any number of locations and their communities. It is this sense of ambiguity and openness in the writing that the collective title above is meant to suggest.

Musically both songs contain suggestions of verse structures clothed in a rich and, I hope, colourful harmonic language.

Some Geographical information: Inishmaan is an island off the coast of County Donegal in the Irish Republic. In the same song, the word 'sisal' refers to a strong piece of string and a 'curragh' is a small, light boat with a tarred underside.

Tom Armstrong

3. David Lancaster – *Memory of Place*

These three short songs for baritone and piano were composed in the autumn of 2009, following a request from the Late Music Festival. They each set poetry by the York-based poet Daniela Nunnari; her words were written as a poetic response to a series of art installations by Keiko Mukaide but they can equally stand alone as abstract, dreamy landscapes in verse. The outer songs are relatively concise but the second, 'Floating', is more extended and incorporates a moment from Bach's 'Goldberg Variations' woven into the texture.

David Lancaster

4. Richard Whalley -
Six Songs of Old Japanese Wisdom

Issa (1763-1827) was one of Japan's most important haiku poets. Though he lived a life full of tragedy, he found solace in nature and was known for a sympathetic attitude towards small creatures such as frogs and insects; this comes out very strongly in his poetry.

As a composer I find these beautifully poignant "snapshots" of life by Issa so powerful, offering through minimal means insights that tell us an inestimable amount about humanity and the world we live in. What better justification for why, as human beings, we need art? These modest songs aspire to the status of the frog in

the following: *Yase gaeru makeru na Issa koko ni ari*.

You skinny frog, you
Don't be beaten, don't give up!
Here stands Issa by you.

'The haiku are all by Issa; the English translations are by Earle Joshua Stone (in That Lovable Old Issa, www.ahapoetry.com/haiku.htm) and David G. Lanoue (http://haikuguy.com/issa). The titles of the songs are my own.'

Richard Whalley

5. Peter Reynolds – *Adieu to all Alluring Toys*

Adieu to all Alluring Toys take anonymous words from three eighteenth and early nineteenth century memorial plaques found in churches in South-East Wales and Lincolnshire. Two of the epitaphs are written to the memory of small children whilst another warns of the inevitability of our mortality. Innocent, naïve and sentimental, the words nonetheless are full of light, optimism and even humour, far removed from our more recent view of mortality. It is these qualities that the music seeks to capture.

The piece is cast in the form of a short cantata, with two songs (or arias) framing a small central recitative. The work was written between March and June 2011 especially for this CD.

6. Steve Crowther – *Songs for Don*

Both *Roses, wild thyme* and *For Mary* address the subject of 'loss' – the former achingly poetic, the latter touching and dramatic. The settings have hopefully embraced this. *Recovery* and *Junkie* are personal essays in depression and drug addiction: both powerful and disturbing and each bleeding authenticity. *Mr L…* and *Beggar* deal with aspects of displacement, alienation, though the latter poem's real target is the hypocrisy of 'pestering'. The tone of the poem is predominantly ironic, even humorous, but Walls' aim is deadly serious and the musical setting remains true to this. At the centre of this collection is, of course, *The Wife*. On an allegorical visit to see the poet, I made the mistake of popping my head inside Don's garden shed, a voice yelled 'f**k off', so I set *My Bad Manners* to music. The setting is canonic, with the poet frantically trying to shake-off the accusing piano line. 'Songs for Don' is dedicated to Don Walls, to the man and his art. I would also like to thank John and Kay Wheatcroft for nudging me in the direction of the poet's lair.

Steve Crowther

7. William Rhys Meek – *Winter is a Slow Death Waiting*

Winter is a Slow Death Waiting, in common with many of William's works, is structurally very simple but harmonically less straightforward. Stephen's highly rhythmic verse, with its theme of salvation through nature, is carried by a hymn-like melody, although this is supported by a more harmonically fragile and slightly unsettling accompaniment designed to reflect the sense of uncertainty and transience in the poem.

William Rhys Meek

8. Michael Parkin – *Three Songs*

The first song is a racy description of trying out a new car by e.e. cummings – '*she, being Brand new*. It soon becomes all too obvious that the poet

is leading us astray. The second song is a poem of lost love, longing and regret by Maturai Eruttalan Centamputan.
The final song is a nursery rhyme; one of the numerous 'bridge' songs collected from medieval Europe. All 'bridge' songs are associated with dances. Circles of dancers, holding hands, thread their way through a hand-held arch. Rather than following the structure of the words, my setting tries to re-create the spirit of the dance.

Michael Parkin

Biographies

David Power – composer

Born London 1962. His initial interest was rock music but the electronic instrumentals on David Bowie's album *Low* prompted a change in direction. He studied composition with Richard Steinitz, Steve Ingham and Roger Marsh. His *Three chamber Pieces* was premiered at the 1986 Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival and, since then his work has been performed widely throughout the UK and, more recently, Europe and the USA. He has received many commissions – including from the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival - and his work has been broadcast on Radio 3 and various local radio stations. He has written music for short films and gallery installations as well as the concert hall.

For more information about David Power, please visit: www.soundcloud.com/dave-power-1

Tom Armstrong – composer

Tom Armstrong studied composition with Roger Marsh at York University. Early works such as *Squaring Up*, performed by the BBC Philharmonic, are influenced by Tom's stint as a pianist with Icebreaker, whilst more recent pieces have embraced lyricism and stylistic diversity. Leading UK performers of Tom's music include the New Music Players, [rout], Gemini, Psappha, Endymion and the Fidelio Trio. He is currently collaborating with Jane Chapman, Melanie Pappenheim and Rebecca Askew on a large-scale music theatre work. 2012 sees the premiere of *The Cathedral on the Marshes*, a Crossness Engines Trust Commission, and work in progress at the ROH's Exposure series.

For more information about Tom Armstrong, please visit: www.soundcloud.com/modernist-tom

David Lancaster – composer

David Lancaster first encountered contemporary music when he took part in a performance of Harrison Birtwistle's *Grimethorpe Aria* at a brass band summer school. Music studies at York and Cambridge Universities and at Dartington Summer School (with Peter Maxwell Davies) followed, along with a period as Composer-in-Residence at Charterhouse. He gained a number of important awards including Lloyds Bank Young Composer Award, Michael Tippett Award, LCM Centenary Prize and the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival Composer Award; the Parke Ensemble devoted a London concert series to his work. In recent years David's music has undergone a dramatic

simplification of style. His work includes choral music (including *Bliss* which was performed in 2010 by the Elysian Singers and *Fallen* which received its premiere at Canterbury Cathedral) and instrumental music (*Vertigo* was played by the Tippett String Quartet in March 2011 and *Swan* by the Lunar Saxophone Quartet in June). He remains close to the sound of the brass band and his large scale work *Enemy Within* was given its first complete performance in May 2011. David *is Head of Programme for Music* at York St John University and composer-in-residence with Laudamus Chamber Choir and with the EYMS Band.

For more information about David Lancaster please visit: www.dragonmusicpublishing.com

Richard Whalley – composer

Richard Whalley was appointed as lecturer in composition at the University of Manchester in 2004. He is the founder and director of the university's new music ensemble, Vaganza. He also teaches composition and performs chamber music at the ARAM-Poitou Summer School in France each Summer. He studied music at University of York (1992-96), before earning a PhD in Composition at Harvard University (1997-2003). He was a finalist in the 1992 BBC Young Musician of the Year Composers' Award with *Phoenix,* in the 2001 Gaudeamus Music Week with *Elegy*, and took part in Ensemble Aleph's Second Forum for Composers in 2002/3. His music has been performed by ensembles including the Hilliard Ensemble, the New Professionals, the Quatuor Danel, Dinosaur Annex, Psappha, Trio Atem, and by soloists including Richard Casey, Caroline Balding and Oliver Coates in venues throughout the UK, and in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and the US. As a pianist his repertoire extends from Bach and Beethoven to Nancarrow and Ligeti, and he has premiered a number of works including Camden Reeves's *Diablo Canyon* and Kevin Malone's *M'Bongo*. For more information about Richard Whalley, please visit www.richardwhalley.com

Peter Reynolds – composer

Stillness, simplicity, an occasional playfulness and a tendency to set unusual and quixotic texts can be found in the music of Cardiff-born Peter Reynolds. His music avoids large-scale rhetorical forms and is often fashioned on a small-scale and often revised over many years before reaching its final shape.

Born in 1958, Peter Reynolds studied in Cardiff where he now lives. During the 1980s he attended over several years the Dartington Summer School where he won the Michael Tippett Award for Composition in 1986 leading to his first large-scale commission, a work for chamber orchestra in 1987. He formed the Cardiff-based PM Music Ensemble in 1991 and was Artistic Director of the Lower Machen Festival from 1997 to 2009. In addition he is a writer on music and published a history of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales in 2009. He is a part-member of the music staff at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Cardiff and, currently, Composer-in-residence with the Young Composer of Dyfed scheme. His music has been broadcast on Radio 3 and BBC Television. In 1993 his opera *The Sands of Time* was recognised by the *Guinness Book of Records* as a world record for the world's shortest opera at 3 minutes and 34 seconds.

For more information about Peter Reynolds, please visit: www.soundcloud.com/peter-reynolds-2

Steve Crowther – composer

Steve Crowther was born and bred in Bradford. The gritty character, social issues and difficulties, as well as the integrity of the city community itself, has been hugely influential and has informed both the content and subject matter of his compositions. After studying music at Sussex University with both Jonathan Harvey and Michael Finnissy, Steve has been lucky enough to work with many leading musicians including the Smith Quartet, the Fitzwilliam String Quartet, who toured the string quartet *Break on Through*, the London Sinfonietta, Ian Pace and many others. Steve Crowther was a finalist in the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival's Young Composers' Competition (1987) and was awarded the first, and quite possibly last, City of York Council Composers' Bursary Award in 1995 for the string quartet *A Song for Salford*. In 1995 Steve and composer David Power formed the acclaimed Late Music Festival, which has now simply become Late Music.

For more information about Steve Crowther, please visit: www.soundcloud.com/steve-crowther

William Rhys Meek – composer

William Rhys Meek was born in Lincolnshire in 1963. He studied at Leeds College of Music and was for several years a professional musician, during which time he wrote the music for many television programmes. He has released three discs of piano music, 'A Fenland Journey', 'On Salisbury Plain' and 'A Lincolnshire Promenade', all inspired by the landscapes in which he has lived and worked as an ecologist.

For more information about William Rhys Meek, please visit: www.williamrhysmeek.co.uk

Michael Parkin – composer

Michael Parkin studied at Huddersfield School of Music and the University College of North Wales with William Mathias and Jeffrey Lewis. His work has been broadcast and widely performed in Britain, Europe and the U.S. Prizes include the Yorkshire Arts Young Composers' Competition (1978), the MidNAG award (1979) and his work *'Elegy'* for solo flute was one of only two British works selected for the 1984 Gaudeamus International Musicweek in the Netherlands. *'Inevitable Inventions'* was awarded first prize in the 1996 Match TM Composition Award. His work ranges from a chamber opera, *'Cheap Tricks'* (commissioned for the 1984 York Festival) to a large number of solos and duos written for individual performers. Recent work such as the 4 string quartets, *'Srebrenica'* and the orchestral works '*On the Banks of the Nile'* and the '*Pastoral Symphony*', mark a return to a much more dramatic language, using large scale forms and forces. In 2006, he received a prestigious Creative Wales Award to enable him to write orchestral music. He is currently director of the Young Composer of Dyfed Scheme in West Wales and Composer- in- Residence for the Late Music Series, York.

For more information about Michael Parkin, please visit: www.soundcloud.com/michael-parkin

Paul Carey Jones – baritone
Paul Carey Jones was born in Cardiff and studied at The Queen's College Oxford, the Royal Academy of Music and the National Opera Studio. His operatic work includes principal roles for Scottish Opera, Northern Ireland Opera, Wexford Festival Opera, Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Teatro Rossini di Lugo, Cantiere Internazionale d'Arte di Montepulciano, Clonter Opera, the Aldeburgh Festival, Second Movement, and the Buxton Festival.

Paul's oratorio performances cover more than forty major works, including the world premieres of Richard Elfyn Jones' *In David's Land* at St David's Cathedral, and of Stephen McNeff's *Cities of Dreams* at the Brangwyn Hall. His broadcast performances include *The Lighthouse* for RAI, BBC Radio 3's *In Tune*, *Friday Night is Music Night* for Radio 2, *Opera Night* for RTE Lyric FM.

As a recitalist, Paul has given world premieres of works by composers including Richard Elfyn Jones, Emily Hall, Jonathan Dove, David Power, David Lancaster, Mike Parkin, Sadie Harrison and Jonathan Owen Clark.

His previous recordings include his critically-acclaimed debut album *Enaid – Songs of the Soul*, with the award-winning pianist Llyr Williams for Sain, Mr Allworthy in Edward German's *Tom Jones* for Naxos, and Andy Warhol in the DVD recording of the Italian premiere of Michael Daugherty's *Jackie O* for Dynamic.

Full details of all his forthcoming appearances can be found at: www.paulcareyjones.com

Ian Ryan – piano
Ian Ryan studied Economics at Selwyn College, Cambridge, and as a repetiteur at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and the National Opera Studio, London. He was a staff repetiteur for Scottish Opera between 2007 and 2010 and now works for many of the opera houses and festivals in the UK.

Passionate about contemporary music, Ian has worked on a number of premieres of new operas by composers including Nigel Osborne, Stuart MacRae and Lyell Cresswell. Other projects include performances of John Adams's 'El Niño' at the Edinburgh International Festival and 'The Death of Klinghoffer' at English National Opera.

In recent years, Ian has collaborated with Paul Carey Jones, in particular with performances at the York Late Music Festival and the Grimsby St Hugh's Festival. They have premiered a number of new songs and song cycles by British composers, including several that feature on this CD.

Dr Jeremy Wells – technician/engineer
Jeremy Wells graduated from the University of Surrey's *Tonmeister* course in Music and Sound Recording in 1994. Since then he has worked for audio companies such as Fairlight and Digital Audio Research, and as a freelance recording engineer and editor. He obtained a PhD in computer modelling of audio in 2006 from the University of York, where he is now a lecturer and has taught many subjects including recording techniques, acoustics and psychoacoustics. This year he began a public engagement fellowship with the Royal Academy of Engineering, looking at issues in sound recording and how they relate to the discipline of engineering.

For more information about Jeremy Wells, please visit www.jezwells.org

Linda Ingham – artist.

Cover art – *Songhead* by Linda Ingham. Linda Ingham is an artist based in Lincolnshire.

For more information about Linda Ingham, please visit www.lindaingham.com

Texts

1. David Power – *Eight Evening Songs*

Don't Touch – (text - David Russell)
(the following excerpts from this poem are set)

'Don't touch!' they cried
'Don't touch!'

Someone's lost a memory
Someone's taking shocks
Don't touch!'

Don't touch
Don't lead, don't show
Just pump and load

Don't Touch
Don't Touch
Don't Touch

Kinds of White – (Text - Ana Eulate trans. Alan Dunnett)
White over white under white
Red over white
Expanse of brutal purity
White

White of raw reverie

A frozen sea roars by me without touching

Aurora – (Text - E.H. Visiak)
O Aching heart! O frozen ground,
In grief's black winter iron-bound!
O misty ocean, dark and frore!
O ghost ship drifting evermore,
'Mid floes of ice that groan and crack,
Like a world riven on the rack
O glory of the jeweled sea!
O flashing hand that waves to me!
O streamers of eternity!

The War Ants – (Text - E.H. Visiak)
(the following excerpt of this poem is set)

Once I saw in converging bands
Ants on a war-path swarming
I took a clod in my two hands
And made a great disarming

Now would I were among the gods
I'd break the moon and make two clods . . .

Did I Dream You? – (Text - Carolyn Doyley)
(the following excerpt of this poem is set)

Did I dream you,
or was it planted?
A silent seed in my sleeping brain.

Have you been watching us, counting the years
waiting for someone to speak your name.

Have I released you?

The Waiting – (Text - Jane MacNamee)
The waiting
the waiting
spilled into me

The world is a stranger without you

A Marble – (Text - Ernst Meister translated by Richard Dove)
A child's marble
rolls into my room;
from afar it rolls into
the grass that I am,

Grass whose tips quiver
While it converses
With stucco roses
Up on the ceiling
Give the Questioning Winds Outside - (Text - Ernst Meister translated by Richard Dove)

Give the questioning winds outside
the grain
of harvest-certainty.

The spaces
are very empty;
I know too
That none of midnight's seeds
are hers

so give the carehollow
winds their grain
before you sleep.

2. Tom Armstrong - *Opened Spaces*
London Song – (Text – Jim Morris)
'I'm a northern girl' she said to me
'Well I am a northern boy', I said.
'What I don't know about painting plates.'
'What I don't know about mist-clay shapes'

'I watched his hands. I watched his hands. I watched his hands. I watched his hands. I watched his hands.'

I watched her hands, as she told me

'What do I know but pots and plates
A baby grows inside me

Can you shape the stone inside me?
Can you turn the stone?'

What I don't know about mist-clay shapes.
Can you turn the stone inside me?

I watched his hands. I watched his hands. I watched his hands. I watched his hands. I watched his hands.

I watched her hands, as she told me.

Song of Inishmaan – (Text – Jim Morris)
Buy the whitewashed cottage
Wrap the sisal around
Carry the memories in your upturned hand
Upturn the upturned curragh
Take your spiders hands from my land.

Buy the whitewashed cottage
Wrap the sisal around
Feather the black tar past
Take your spiders hands from my land.

3. David Lancaster – *Memory of Place*
Frozen – (Text – Daniela Nunnari)
Frozen in its rigid beauty,
Wistful, willow, of
crystal tears
Formed in fire, now
long forgotten.
Left to
reflect
a former light.
An echo, carried
through the years.

Floating – (Text – Daniela Nunnari)
Floating little, lazy, lights
are drawn towards their trickling end.
Burning orange, amber, yellow.
Safe, encased,
in buoyant bowls.

Light through glass, it
flickers, dances,
circles slowly, ripples,
rests.
Moving always, nearer
to the edges,
for the final fall.

Huddled in amongst the rocks,
they wait, protected,
precious things.
Until they are returned again,
to start their dance once more.

Their watery song will keep the rhythm,
guiding them, enticing them.
Their glowing, pulsing love parade,
a pilgrimage, as one,
alone.

Their light will always shimmer,
on the water, on the stones.
Their light will always dance with joy.
A journey to the known.

If Wishes Were Willows – (Text – Daniela Nunnari)
If wishes were willows,
they'd line every street.
They'd rustle and crinkle
their white paper leaves.
They'd hang low and heavy
with the weight of our woes.
They'd lean and embrace us
in long silent rows.
They'd keep our small secrets,
in loosely tied bows.

4. Richard Whalley - ***Six Songs of Old Japanese Wisdom***

Wisdom – (Text – Issa – translated by Earle Joshua Stone)

the radish puller
pointing with a radish root
teaches me the way

Life – (Text – Issa – translated by Earle Joshua Stone)
from infant bathtub
to burial tub changing…
this utter nonsense

Beauty – (Text – Issa – translated by Earle Joshua Stone)
like colourful birds
set free in the trees…
blossoms

for the poor
there's not a spring
without blossoms

my blossom comrades
we'll meet again
how many springs?

Instinct – (Text – Issa – translated by Earle Joshua Stone)
lightning flash –
the astonished face
of the dog

lightning flash –
not giving a damn
the toad's face

Reflection – part one– (Text – Issa – translated by Earle Joshua Stone)
quietness –
the summits of clouds
at the bottom of the lake

Reflection – part two– (Text – Issa – translated by Earle Joshua Stone)
old age –
even the cool moon
soon grows tiresome

nothing at all
but a calm heart
and cool air

Wisdom – (Text – Issa – translated by Earle Joshua Stone)
the radish puller
pointing with a radish root
teaches me the way

5. Peter Reynolds – *Adieu to all Alluring Toys*

One – (Text – anonymous)
Weep not parents but rejoice
Our blessed savious saith
That Little children are his choice
Let that confirm your faith
Adieu to all alluring toys
For God has chosen me
I shall Partake of heaven's Joys
To all Eternity

Two – (Text – anonymous)
Who can withstand God's dreadful hand,
He spares not young or old
All living must return to dust
Thou, reader, art but mould

Three – (Text – anonymous)
Dear lovely babe early thy
Course was run

Scare morning dawn'd ere
Set your evening sun

Yet sweet innocence thou'rt
Doubly bless'd

Escap'd from worldly cares,
Thy soul's at rest

When your fond parents drop the
Cumbrous clay

May'st though a cherub, wing them
On their way

6. Steve Crowther – *Songs for Don*

Roses, wild thyme – (Text – Don Walls)
Roses, wild thyme
and all the flowers down the lane
buddleia, bay
and the call of ringdove in the lime,
but oh that she were here today
in wind and rain
and all the flowers some other time.

Recovery – (Text – Don Walls)

Blur.
A spasm of will
holds back vomiting
and thoughts swoop in
peck at my mind.
I shoo them away.
The sun's a menace.
The ceiling arid.
Blue nurses hovering.
Pee.
Pills, drip
Whatever it is
I'm harnessed to
I wait on the edge
of what happens next,
pillows rumpled
- a world of curtains, patterns
terrain of the walls
the coldness of ice
and thoughts swoop back
swift as swifts – this way, that:
road tax
rain
- my tiles on the roof
and what I said or should have said.
What if?
I know the counterpane inside out.
Outside the frost.
It's never been so white before.
What a miracle my hand is
in sheets, shadows
- legs, toes.
everything close
and a closer light
round those I know

For Mr L who talked about going back – (Text – Don Walls)

The door boarded
We enter through a window
beneath the barbed wire
light the candles
and fetch the shadows
fold them into chairs, tables, the piano
madam blavatsky and the old songs
dabonavitch markova
and the arch of her back
the kazaks
the ring growing slack on your mother's finger
the bells of azinak
the stealth of snow
and frost translating stones
and shells
jackal fox
the wide-eyed owl
the eye of the solstice
closed for days
then blinking open
fire and ice
the shivering sun
wolf howl stars
and the glittering night
and where did the sky end
and the hills begin
lost cubs and weddings
bleakness and the long wind
a violin
white nights
white years
flickerings
blackness and the long way back
we strike a match
a newspaper tells us
which language we're in
which war

My Bad Manners – (Text – Don Walls)

My wife tracks them down
in the kitchen on the stair
wherever I am they're always there
round my feet in my speech
language bristling on the street
the way I eat gluttonous cram
slam the door
slurp and burp,
wherever they are she flushes them out
sharpens her glance and puckers her mouth
squints and scowls
at night she drums my ears in bed
so I lock them in the garden shed.

Beggar – (Text – Don Walls)

A beggar on the street
I pestered folk.
I pestered in Leeds
I pestered in York,
Parliament Street
and Lord Mayor's Walk,
Grosvenor, Sycamore,
until a great aunt
left shares to invest
then I pestered no more
but deep in old England pestering anew
but not on the street
at home on the phone
at meal time, prime time,
and the passage knee deep
in credit card pesterings
glossy and gold.
Embarrassed I remember
how tattered I begged
tattered and crude
when I could have learnt pestering at its best
- refined, polite
in Lloyd's, Nat West.

Junkie – (Text – Don Walls)

Scared at first
but now it's nowt.
You've got to get it right.
In the groin.
In the arm
and the stuff must be right
or you're fucked up all night.
Right and it floods the brain and then you're floating.
Nowt to eat
mould on the bread
- syringes, fag ends
blood on the bed
keeping ahead.
Topping up.
Enough for tonight,
stuff for tomorrow.
Always a risk
pigs on your back
drought – no crack,
kicks: ketamine, hash
vomiting, cramps
and you gag for a fix.

For Mary – (Text – Don Walls)

A few glimpses still:
snow, the Alps
dazzling in Tuscany
wine in Graz
the Guggenheim, Bilbao,
surprise-remembering
red roses in France,
and a childhood ago
clear as this photograph
- school-girl gawky
stains round your mouth -
surprised by deer this far south
- a mouse in the grass
sparrowhawk, owl,

and now the lessening of light
and the blurring of borders – morning, night
and you setting out
and the police bring you back
and both of us lost,
frost
where fireweed grew
the logic of blackthorn
white as snow
before the leaves peep through.

7. William Rhys Meek – *Winter is a Slow Death Waiting*

In the woods old trees sigh deeply.
Crooked fingers numb with cold,
Tiring of their summer burden,
Drop the leaves spring longed to hold.
Now the night shall have its season,
Now, at last, the starry sky
Greets our upward gaze with wonder
Man and star, all light must die.

When this wave of life retreating
Leaves us sea-wrecked on the shore
Will we hear the mermaids singing
Of the joy-filled world before?
Waters of an earthbound heaven
Keep this wilted soul alive,
Resurrect the stream of summer
Help me live, and death survive.

8. Michael Parkin – *Three Songs*

she being Brand-new – (Text e.e. cummings)

she being Brand new; and you
know consequently a
little stiff i was
careful of her and(having
thoroughly oiled the universal
joint tested my gas felt of
her radiator made sure her springs were O.

K.) i went right to it flooded-the-carburettor
cranked her

up,slipped the
clutch(and then somehow got into reverse she
kicked what
the hell)next
minute i was back in neutral tried and

again slo-wly;bare,ly nudg. ing(my

lev-er Right-
oh and her gears being in
A 1 shape passed
from low through
second-into-high like
greasedlightening) just as we turned the corner of
Divinity

avenue i touched the accelerator and give

her the juice, good

(It was the first ride and believe i we was
happy to see how nice she acted right up to
the last minute coming down by the Public
Gardens i slammed on
the
internalexpanding
&

externalcontracting
brakes Bothatonce and

brought allof her treB
-ling
to a:dead.

Stand-
;Still)

e.e. cummings

What He Said – (Text traditional Javanese translated by Maturai Eruttalan Centamputan)

Before I laughed with him
nightly,
the slow waves beating
on his wide shores
and the palmyra
bringing forth heron-like flowers
near the waters,
my eyes were like the lotus
my arms had the grace of the bamboo
my forehead was mistaken for the moon.
But now.

Merseburger Bridge – (Text traditional German Nursery Rhyme translated by Michael Parkin

We want to go over the Mersburger Bridge
It is all broken, broken
Who has broken it?
The goldsmith with his daughter.
We will build it up again
With what?
With gold and silver and precious stones
With stones and bones and precious stones
Keep moving through, moving through.