



BENJAMIN BRITTEN

Who are these Children?

Winter Words · Four Burns Songs

Daniel Norman · Christopher Gould

JOHN BROADWOOD & SONS
LONDON.

BRITTEN, BENJAMIN (1913–76)

WINTER WORDS, Op. 52 (1953) *(Boosey & Hawkes)* 22'39

Lyrics and ballads of Thomas Hardy

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|---|--|------|
| 1 | At day-close in November | 1'34 |
| 2 | Midnight on the Great Western (or 'The Journeying Boy') | 5'06 |
| 3 | Wagtail and Baby (A Satire) | 2'05 |
| 4 | The Little Old Table | 1'23 |
| 5 | The Choirmaster's Burial (or 'The Tenor Man's Story') | 4'06 |
| 6 | Proud Songsters (Thrushes, Finches and Nightingales) | 1'11 |
| 7 | At the Railway Station, Upway (or 'The Convict and Boy with the Violin') | 2'58 |
| 8 | Before Life and After | 3'24 |

FOUR BURNS SONGS (1975) *(Faber)* 8'32

Texts: Robert Burns. Piano arrangements by Colin Matthews

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|----|-------------------------------|------|
| 9 | Afton Water, Op. 92 No. 5 | 2'28 |
| 10 | Wee Willie Gray, Op. 92 No. 3 | 0'50 |
| 11 | The Winter, Op. 92 No. 6 | 3'15 |
| 12 | My Hoggie, Op. 92 No. 4 | 1'47 |

WHO ARE THESE CHILDREN? Op. 84 (1969) *(Faber)* 22'44

Lyrics, rhymes and riddles by William Soutar

- | | | |
|----|----------------------|------|
| 13 | A Riddle (The Earth) | 1'21 |
| 14 | A Laddie's Sang | 1'13 |
| 15 | Nightmare | 2'41 |
| 16 | Black Day | 0'40 |
| 17 | Bed-time | 1'22 |

18	Slaughter	1'46
19	A Riddle (The child you were)	0'56
20	The Larky Lad	0'36
21	Who are these Children?	2'28
22	Supper	1'29
23	The Children	5'25
24	The Auld Aik	2'01
25	IF IT'S EVER SPRING AGAIN <i>(Boosey & Hawkes)</i>	2'40
	Text: Thomas Hardy	
26	DAWTIE'S DEVOTION <i>(Faber)</i>	1'17
	Text: William Soutar	
27	THE GULLY <i>(Faber)</i>	0'53
	Text: William Soutar	
28	THE CHILDREN AND SIR NAMELESS <i>(Boosey & Hawkes)</i>	2'42
	Text: Thomas Hardy	
29	TRADITION <i>(Faber)</i>	0'52
	Text: William Soutar	
30	CA' THE YOWES (from Folk Song Arrangements, Vol. 5) <i>(Boosey & Hawkes)</i>	4'08
	Text: Robert Burns	

TT: 68'11

DANIEL NORMAN *tenor*
CHRISTOPHER GOULD *piano*

A *t day-close in November*, the first song in the Thomas Hardy cycle *Winter Words* (1953), contains the essential themes to be found in all Britten's major vocal compositions. The natural world is given a musical dimension: the trees move like dancers in the wind, and dance-like patterns are echoed in the movements of birds in flight. As for the human dimension, there is a stark contrast between the troubled persona of the poet, who is nearing the end of his life but remembers planting trees in his younger years, and the innocent children, who live in the present and have no sense of the inexorable passage of time.

Britten captures all this in music whose wintry sounds are both direct in expression and allusive in technique, setting the scene for one of his finest achievements in the genre of the song cycle. The seven 'lyrics and ballads' which follow *At day-close in November* enrich and deepen the motives connected with nature and humanity. Hardy appeared to believe (*Before Life and After*) that feeling is a 'disease': that the world was a strange place (*Wagtail and Baby*), in which even infants can sense the irony of human behaviour being so much more threatening than that of animals: that loneliness is the most common human quality, to children and grown-ups alike (*Midnight on the Great Western* and *At the Railway Station, Upway*), and that the beauties of birdsong are the more poignant because birds are quite unaware of their ephemeral existence (*Proud Songsters*).

For Hardy, the world is also a place where ghosts can be more resilient and compassionate than humans (*The Choirmaster's Burial*), and where truths about the most intense relationships survive only in the form of inanimate pieces of furniture (*The Little Old Table*). Just as the felicity and economy of Hardy's verse transforms these potentially depressing themes in ways capable of inspiring and even comforting the reader, so Britten's music works its magic by bringing out poignant emotions and subtle insights even more vividly than the texts on their own. Moreover, the music's emotional depth is grounded in compelling, quasi-

naturalistic sound images: the whistling, rattling train in No. 2, the improvisatory violin playing in No. 7, and the subtle transmutation of the hymn tune *Mount Ephraim* in No. 5.

Britten often made more settings of his favourite poets than he eventually included in particular cycles. There are two further Hardy songs, *The Children and Sir Nameless* and *If it's ever Spring again*, which were not published until 1994, eighteen years after the composer's death, and which round out the characteristic themes of *Winter Words* itself. Soon after completing the work, and still in wintry mood, Britten embarked on an opera based on Henry James's novella *The Turn of the Screw*. This is among the most powerful of all his explorations of the threat to children posed by adults who only seem able to survive in the world by affecting helplessness in the face of natural as well as social forces.

The most destructive of all social forces is, arguably, war, and although Britten dealt with this in several of his operas there is only one song cycle, *Who are these Children?* (1969), to which war is central. These 'lyrics, rhymes and riddles' represent a return to the world of the *War Requiem* after a period in which Britten's main focus had been the very different atmosphere of the three parables for church performance. *Who are these Children?* was written for a concert in the National Gallery of Scotland, and Britten turned to the relatively little-known poet William Soutar, whose intense, at times doom-laden English language poems have things in common with Wilfred Owen's, a war poet Soutar much admired. But there was also a different, lighter side to Soutar. He often used Scots dialect, and his delight in word-play was another attraction for a composer who relished the opportunity to match poetic allusions with musical ones. Soutar's doom-laden bleakness is represented in four settings spread evenly through the cycle: *Nightmare* (No. 3), *Slaughter* (No. 6), *Who are these Children?* (No. 9) and *The Children* (No. 11). These songs offer unsparing depictions of violence and cruelty – the

tree attacked by an axe-bearing man (No. 3), the hunting party riding past a group of uncomprehending children in a bomb-damaged landscape (No. 9), and, most starkly of all, the vision of children killed in a bombing raid (No. 11).

To find an appropriate formal context for such harrowing material would test any composer, but Britten is equal to the challenge. The various riddles, in dialect, touch on the same themes of vulnerability, menace and social division: but they also acknowledge their more positive counter-parts – the indifferent beauty of nature, and the robust independence of humanity that is possible even during childhood. The basic themes of both types of verse are comparable, and so it is a stroke of genius that Britten makes the two strands converge in the final song, *The Auld Aik*, a dialect poem about the ultimate disintegration of all things, even a 200-year-old oak tree. The closing image of the fallen tree can set up powerful associations with the tree-dominated landscape of Hardy's *At day-close in November*.

Britten's three additional Soutar settings were not included in the published cycle, but can be performed separately. In all its varied guises, Soutar's verse underlines his affinity with Robert Burns, his great Scots predecessor, to whose verse Britten turned near the end of his life. In 1975 Queen Elizabeth II asked for a suitable work to mark her mother's 75th birthday, and, since Britten was no longer able to play the piano in public, he obliged with *A Birthday Hansel* for high voice and harp. The tragic, embittered aura of his Hardy and Soutar cycles was clearly not appropriate for this commission, and Britten composed some of his most deft and delicate music, lyrical and, where appropriate, light-hearted. Soon after its completion Britten asked his assistant Colin Matthews to arrange the harp part of four of the six songs for piano.

Almost a quarter of a century before *A Birthday Hansel*, in 1951, Britten had arranged the traditional setting of Burns's haunting *Ca' the yowes* as part of his

large-scale folk song project. This was first performed by Peter Pears and the composer in the rather incongruous setting of Vienna's Konzerthaus, and eventually included in the fifth volume of Britten's *Folk Song Arrangements*, published in 1961.

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Daniel Norman and **Christopher Gould** have been performing together since their first recital at Leighton House, London, in 1996. They studied together at the Royal Academy of Music and the Britten-Pears School where they worked on *Winter Words* with Roger Vignoles, who introduced them to *Who are these Children?* leading to a performance of the latter at the Aldeburgh Festival in 1999. Daniel Norman and Christopher Gould were prizewinners at the Wigmore Hall International Song Competition in 2001. Since then they have performed song recitals internationally. They continue to develop their wide repertoire in programmes of English, French and German song from the 18th to the 21st centuries.

Daniel Norman was a choral scholar at New College, Oxford, where he read engineering. In his first year out of the Royal Academy of Music in London he made débuts at the Queen Elizabeth Hall with Trevor Pinnock, the Royal Festival Hall with David Atherton, the Wigmore Hall with Graham Johnson, the Aldeburgh Festival with David Parry and the Barbican with Richard Hickox.

As well as his regular partnership with Christopher Gould, he has appeared in recital with Graham Johnson, Julius Drake, Christopher Glynn and Julian Milford. In concert he has performed with Sir Simon Rattle, Gianandrea Noseda, Sir Andrew Davis, Thomas Adès, Martha Argerich, Edward Gardner, Christian Curnyn and Daniel Harding.

Opera appearances range from Monteverdi in Munich and Tel Aviv, to John Adams in Boston, via Arne's *Alfred* at the Covent Garden Festival, Strauss's *Ariadne* at the Paris Opera, Adès's *Powder Her Face* all over the world and in a film for Channel 4, and Peter Quint in *Turn of the Screw* in a new production for Glyndebourne.

Among his several recordings are Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* with Osmo Vänskä and the Minnesota Orchestra and Brett Dean's *Winter Songs* with the Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet, both on BIS.

Christopher Gould read music at Clare College, Cambridge before winning a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music, where he studied accompaniment with John Streets and Malcolm Martineau, supported by the Countess of Munster Musical Trust. In 1996 he was the first young pianist to receive an award from the Geoffrey Parsons Trust; this was followed by the Gerald Moore Award (1998) and the first prize for accompaniment in the Wigmore Hall International Song Competition (2001).

Christopher Gould is staff pianist and coach on several international summer schools and divides his time between vocal coaching and a busy recital career in the UK and abroad. In London he has performed with such artists as Sarah Walker, Ann Murray, Lorraine Hunt Lieberson and Geraldine McGreevy at the Wigmore Hall, St John's Smith Square, the Purcell Room and on BBC Radio 3. Concerts abroad have included recitals at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, the Opera House in Lille and in Italy, Israel and Japan.

At day-close in November, das erste Lied des Thomas-Hardy-Zyklus *Winter Words* (1953), enthält die Grundthemen, die sich in allen bedeutenden Vokalwerken Benjamin Brittens finden. Die Natur erhält eine musikalische Dimension: Bäume bewegen sich wie Tänzer im Wind, während Tanzrhythmen in den Bewegungen fliegender Vögel nachklingen. Was die menschliche Dimension angeht, so gibt es einen großen Kontrast zwischen der sorgenvollen Persona des Dichters, der seinem Lebensende entgegensieht (sich aber daran erinnert, wie er in jungen Jahren Bäume gepflanzt hat), und den unschuldigen Kindern, die in der Gegenwart leben und das unerbittliche Vergehen der Zeit nicht empfinden.

Britten fängt all dies in einer Musik ein, deren winterliche Klänge unmittelbar expressiv und technisch voller Anspielungen sind – und eine seiner größten Errungenschaften in der Gattung Liedzyklus darstellen. Die sieben „Gedichte und Balladen“, die auf *At day-close in November* folgen, bereichern und vertiefen die mit Natur und Menschheit verknüpften Themen. Hardy schien zu glauben, daß Gefühl eine „Krankheit“ ist (*Before Life and After*); daß die Welt ein seltsamer Ort ist (*Wagtail and Baby*), in der sogar Kleinkinder die Ironie verspüren, die daran liegt, daß das Verhalten der Menschen weitaus bedrohlicher ist als das der Tiere; daß Einsamkeit die allgemeinste, bei Kindern und Erwachsenen gleichermaßen vertretene menschliche Eigenschaft ist (*Midnight on the Great Western* und *At the Railway Station, Upway*), und daß die Schönheit des Vogelgesangs umso ergreifender ist, als die Vögel sich ihrer flüchtigen Existenz wohl kaum bewußt sind (*Proud Songsters*). Für Hardy ist die Welt auch ein Ort, an dem Geister belastbarer und mitfühlender als Menschen sein können (*The Choirmaster's Burial*) und wo Wahrheiten über die intensivsten Beziehungen nur in Gestalt von leblosem Mobiliar (*The Little Old Table*) überdauern. Ganz wie die Prägung und Ökonomie von Hardys Dichtkunst diese potentiell deprimierenden Themen so

verwandeln, daß der Leser sich inspiriert und sogar ermutigt fühlen kann, so wirkt Brittens Musik ihren Zauber, indem sie ergreifende Emotionen und subtile Einblicke noch lebendiger zum Vorschein bringt als die Textvorlagen selber. Darüber hinaus gründet die emotionale Tiefe der Musik in bezwingenden, quasi-natürlichen Klangbildern: der pfeifende, ratternde Zug in Nr. 2, das improvisatorische Violinspiel in Nr. 7 und die subtile Umwandlung des Kirchenlieds *Mount Ephraim* in Nr. 5.

Britten schrieb oft mehr Vertonungen seiner Lieblingsdichter als er schließlich in entsprechenden Zyklen unterbrachte. Und so gibt es zwei weitere Hardy-Lieder, *The Children and Sir Nameless* und *If it's ever Spring again*, die erst 1994, 18 Jahre nach dem Tod des Komponisten, veröffentlicht wurden und die den charakteristischen Themenkreis der *Winter Words* ergänzen. Bald nach Fertigstellung des Werks – und immer noch in winterlicher Stimmung – nahm Britten eine Oper nach Henry James' Novelle *The Turn of the Screw* in Angriff. Sie gehört zu den wirkungsvollsten seiner Erkundungen jener Bedrohung der Kinder durch die Erwachsenen, die nur dadurch in der Welt bestehen zu können scheinen, daß sie angesichts natürlicher oder gesellschaftlicher Gewalten Hilflosigkeit vortäuschen.

Die wohl zerstörerischste aller gesellschaftlichen Kräfte ist der Krieg, und wenngleich Britten ihn in etlichen seiner Opern thematisiert hat, gibt es nur einen Liederzyklus – *Who are these Children?* (1969) –, in dem der Krieg eine zentrale Rolle spielt. Diese „Gedichte, Reime und Rätsel“ stellen eine Rückkehr in die Zeit des *War Requiem* dar, nach dem Britten sich auf die ganz anders geartete Atmosphäre der drei Parabeln zur Aufführung in der Kirche konzentriert hatte. *Who are these Children?* wurde für ein Konzert in der National Gallery of Scotland komponiert; Britten wandte sich dabei dem kaum bekannten Dichter William Soutar zu, dessen eindringliche, mitunter schicksalsschwere englischsprachigen Gedichte eine gewisse Nähe zu denen von Wilfred Owen aufweisen, einem

Kriegsdichter, den Soutar sehr verehrte. Doch Soutar hatte auch eine andere, leichtere Seite. Oft benutzte er den schottischen Dialekt, und seine Freude an Wortspielen machte ihn für einen Komponisten, der es liebte, poetischen Anspielungen musikalische an die Seite zu stellen, besonders anziehend. Soutar schicksalsbeladene Trostlosigkeit zeigt sich in vier Vertonungen, die relativ gleichmäßig über den Zyklus verteilt sind: *Nightmare* (Nr. 3), *Slaughter* (Nr. 6), *Who are these Children?* (Nr. 9) und *The Children* (Nr. 11). Diese Lieder präsentieren schonungslose Schilderungen von Gewalt und Grausamkeit – der Baum, auf den ein Mann mit einer Axt einhaut (Nr. 3), die Jagdgesellschaft, die hinter einer Gruppe verständnisloser Kinder in einer von Bomben verwüsteten Landschaft reitet (Nr. 9) sowie, als schroffer Höhepunkt, die Vision von Kindern, die bei einem Bombenangriff getötet werden (Nr. 11).

Für derart erschütternde Sujets den passenden formalen Rahmen zu finden, ist eine Herausforderung für jedweden Komponisten, und Britten zeigt sich ihr gewachsen. Die verschiedenen Rätsel berühren im Dialekt dieselben Themen von Verletzlichkeit, Bedrohung und sozialer Isolation; doch sie tragen auch ihren eher positiven Gegenstücken Rechnung – die gleichgültige Schönheit der Natur und die robuste Eigenständigkeit der Humanität, die selbst in der Kindheit möglich ist. Die Grundthemen beider Gedichttypen sind vergleichbar, und so ist es ein Geniestreich, daß Britten im letzten Lied, *The Auld Aik*, beide Stränge verknüpft: ein Dialektgedicht über den letztlichen Zerfall aller Dinge, selbst den einer 200 Jahre alten Eiche. Das Schlußbild mit umgestürztem Baum kann starke Assoziationen an die baumgeprägte Landschaft von Hardys *At day-close in November* heraufbeschwören.

Die drei zusätzlichen Soutar-Vertonungen wurden nicht in den veröffentlichten Zyklus aufgenommen, können aber selbständig aufgeführt werden. In all ihren unterschiedlichen Gestalten unterstreicht Soutars Lyrik seine Affinität zu Robert Burns, seinen großen schottischen Vorgänger, dessen Lyrik Britten sich

gegen Ende seines Lebens zuwandte. 1975 gab Königin Elisabeth II. ein geeignetes Werk zur Feier des 75. Geburtstags ihrer Mutter in Auftrag; da er selber nicht mehr öffentlich Klavier spielen konnte, entsprach er dem Wunsch mit *A Birthday Hansel* für hohe Stimme und Harfe. Die tragische, verbitterte Atmosphäre seiner Hardy- und Soutar-Zyklen war für diesen Auftrag offenkundig ungeeignet, stattdessen komponierte Britten eine überaus gewandte und zarte Musik – lyrisch und mitunter frohgemut. Bald nach der Fertigstellung bat Britten seinen Assistenten Colin Matthews, die Harfenstimme von vier der sechs Lieder für Klavier zu bearbeiten.

1951, fast ein Vierteljahrhundert vor *A Birthday Hansel*, hatte Britten die überlieferte Vertonung von Burns' bewegendem *Ca' the yowes* als Teil seines großangelegten Volksliedprojekts bearbeitet. Diese Fassung wurde erstmals von Peter Pears und Britten in dem hierzu eher kontrastierenden Ambiente des Wiener Konzerthauses aufgeführt und schließlich in den fünften, 1961 veröffentlichten Band von Britten's Volksliedbearbeitungen aufgenommen.

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Daniel Norman und Christopher Gould treten seit 1996, dem Jahr ihres ersten Rezitals im Leighton House, London, gemeinsam auf. Beide studierten an der Royal Academy of Music und der Britten-Pears School, wo sie bei Roger Vignoles an *Winter Words* arbeiteten und auf *Who are these Children?* aufmerksam gemacht wurden, das sie dann beim Aldeburgh Festival 1999 aufführten. 2001 waren Daniel Norman und Christopher Gould Preisträger bei der Wigmore Hall International Song Competition. Seither haben sie auf internationaler Ebene Liedrezitale gegeben und ihr umfangreiches Repertoire stetig um Programme mit englischen, französischen und deutschen Liedern vom 18. bis zum 21. Jahrhundert erweitert.

Daniel Norman war Chorist am New College, Oxford, wo er Ingenieurwesen studierte. In seinem ersten Jahr nach dem Abschluß an der Royal Academy of Music in London debütierte er in der Queen Elizabeth Hall mit Trevor Pinnock, der Royal Festival Hall mit David Atherton, der Wigmore Hall mit Graham Johnson, dem Aldeburgh Festival mit David Parry und dem Barbican Centre mit Richard Hickox. Neben seinen regelmäßigen Auftritten mit Christopher Gould hat er Rezitale mit Graham Johnson, Julius Drake, Christopher Glynn und Julian Milford gegeben. Außerdem hat er mit Sir Simon Rattle, Gianandrea Noseda, Sir Andrew Davis, Thomas Adès, Martha Argerich, Edward Gardner, Christian Curnyn und Daniel Harding konzertiert.

Er ist in Opern von Monteverdi (München und Tel Aviv) bis John Adams (Boston) aufgetreten und gastierte in Arnes *Alfred* beim Covent Garden Festival, in Strauss' *Ariadne* an der Pariser Oper, in Adès' *Powder Her Face* in der ganzen Welt (und in einem Film für Channel 4) und, in einer neuen Glyndebourne-Produktion, als Peter Quint in *Turn of the Screw*. Zu seinen zahlreichen CD-Einspielungen gehören Beethovens *Neunte Symphonie* mit dem Minnesota Orchestra unter Osmo Vänskä und Brett Deans *Winter Songs* mit dem Philharmonischen Bläserquintett Berlin (beide auf BIS).

Christopher Gould studierte Musik am Clare College, Cambridge, bevor er ein Stipendium für die Royal Academy of Music gewann, wo er, unterstützt vom Countess of Munster Musical Trust, bei John Streets und Malcolm Martineau Liedbegleitung studierte. 1996 war er der erste Jungpianist, der einen Preis des Geoffrey Parsons Trust erhielt; es folgten der Gerald Moore Award (1998) und der Erste Preis für Liedbegleitung bei der Wigmore Hall International Song Competition 2001. Christopher Gould ist Pianist und Coach bei zahlreichen internationalen Sommerschulen; er teilt seine Zeit zwischen Stimmtraining und einer sehr ak-

tiven Rezitalkarriere in Großbritannien und im Ausland auf. In London gab er Konzerte mit Künstlern wie Sarah Walker, Ann Murray, Lorraine Hunt Lieberson und Geraldine McGreevy in der Wigmore Hall, St John's Smith Square, dem Purcell Room und auf BBC Radio 3. Zu seinen internationalen Konzerten zählen Auftritte beim Aix-en-Provence-Festival, an der Oper Lille sowie in Italien, Israel und Japan.

A *At day-close in November*, la première chanson du cycle *Winter Words* de Thomas Hardy, renferme les thèmes essentiels trouvés dans toutes les compositions vocales importantes de Britten. Le monde naturel reçoit une dimension musicale : les arbres bougent comme des danseurs poussés par le vent et les mouvements de vol d'oiseaux font écho à des pas de danse. Quant à la dimension humaine, il se trouve un fort contraste entre les personnages tourlés du poète qui achève sa vie mais se rappelle d'avoir planté des arbres dans sa jeunesse, et les enfants innocents qui vivent dans le présent et ne perçoivent pas le passage inexorable du temps.

Britten capte tout cela en musique dont les sonorités hivernales sont à la fois directes dans leur expression et allusives dans leur technique, préparant la scène pour l'une de ses meilleures réussites dans le genre de cycle de chansons. Les sept « poèmes et ballades » qui suivent *At day-close in November* enrichissent et approfondissent les motifs reliés à la nature et l'humanité. Hardy semblait croire (*Before Life and After*) que le sentiment est une « maladie » : que le monde est une drôle de place (*Wagtail and Baby*) où même les petits enfants peuvent pressentir l'ironie dans le fait que la conduite humaine est beaucoup plus menaçante que celle des animaux : que la solitude est la caractéristique humaine la plus répandue, chez les enfants comme chez les adultes (*Midnight on the Great Western* et *At the Railway Station, Upway*) et que les beautés du chant d'oiseaux sont les plus touchantes parce que les oiseaux sont inconscients du caractère éphémère de leur existence (*Proud Songsters*).

Pour Hardy, le monde est aussi un endroit où les fantômes peuvent être plus résistants et compatissants que les humains (*The Choirmaster's Burial*) et, là où les vérités sont les plus intenses, les relations ne survivent que sous la forme de morceaux inanimés d'ameublement (*The Little Old Table*). Tout comme la justesse et l'économie de la poésie de Hardy transforment ces thèmes éventuelle-

ment déprimants en moyens d'inspirer et même de réconforter le lecteur, de même la musique de Britten fait de la magie en faisant ressortir les émotions poignantes et la perspicacité subtile encore plus vivement que les textes à eux seuls. De plus, la profondeur émotionnelle de la musique repose sur des images sonores irrésistibles, quasi-naturalistes : le sifflet et le cliquetis du train dans le no 2, l'improvisation au violon dans le no 7 et la transmutation subtile de l'hymne *Mount Ephraim* dans le no 5.

Britten fit souvent des arrangements de ses poèmes préférés qu'il finissait par inclure dans des cycles particuliers. *The Children and Sir Nameless* et *If it's ever Spring again*, deux autres chansons de Hardy, ne furent pas publiées avant 1994, soit dix-huit ans après le décès du compositeur, et finalisent les thèmes caractéristiques de *Winter Words*. Peu après avoir terminé l'œuvre et encore en humeur hivernale, Britten se lança dans un opéra sur le bref roman *The Turn of the Screw* de Henry James. Ce travail se place parmi ses explorations les plus frappantes de la menace formée contre les enfants par les adultes qui ne semblent capables de survivre dans le monde qu'en feignant l'impuissance devant des forces naturelles et sociales.

On peut soutenir que la plus destructive de toutes les forces sociales est la guerre et, même si Britten s'est servi de ce thème dans plusieurs de ses opéras, il n'est central que dans un seul de ses cycles de chansons, *Who are these Children ?* (1969). Ces « poèmes, rimes et énigmes » représentent un retour au monde de *War Requiem* après une période où l'attention principale de Britten plongeait dans l'atmosphère très différente des trois paraboles, destinées à des concerts sacrés. *Who are these Children ?* fut écrit pour un concert à la Galerie Nationale d'Ecosse et Britten se tourna vers le poète relativement peu connu William Soutar dont les poèmes dans un anglais intense, parfois chargé de fatalité, ont des liens communs avec ceux de Wilfred Owen, un poète de guerre que Soutar admi-

rait beaucoup. Soutar pouvait aussi montrer un côté différent, plus léger. Il avait souvent recours au dialecte écossais et son goût prononcé pour les jeux de mots n'était qu'un autre attrait pour un compositeur qui appréciait toute chance d'appareiller des allusions poétiques aux musicales. L'austérité fataliste de Soutar est représentée dans quatre arrangements répartis également dans le cycle : *Nightmare* (no 3), *Slaughter* (no 6), *Who are these Children?* (no 9) et *The Children* (no 11). Ces chansons décrivent impitoyablement la violence et la cruauté – l'arbre attaqué par un homme armé d'une hache (no 3), le groupe de chasseurs à cheval qui dépasse des enfants interloqués dans un paysage dévasté par des bombes (no 9) et, le plus dur de tout, la vision d'enfants tués dans un bombardement (no 11).

De trouver un contexte formel approprié à un matériel aussi déchirant mettrait n'importe quel compositeur à l'épreuve mais Britten est à la hauteur du défi. Les diverses énigmes, en dialecte, effleurent les mêmes thèmes de vulnérabilité, menace et division sociale : mais ils reconnaissent aussi leurs contreparties plus positives – la beauté indifférente de la nature et la robuste indépendance de l'humanité possible même dans l'enfance. Les thèmes fondamentaux des deux types de poésie sont comparables et Britten montre un trait de génie en faisant converger les deux opposés dans la chanson finale, *The Auld Aik*, un poème en dialecte traitant de l'ultime désintégration de toute chose, même d'un chêne de deux cents ans. L'image finale de l'arbre tombé peut susciter de fortes associations avec le paysage forestier de *At day-close in November* de Hardy.

Les trois arrangements additionnels de poèmes de Soutar ne furent pas inclus dans le cycle publié mais ils peuvent être chantés séparément. Sous tous ses aspects différents, la poésie de Soutar souligne son affinité avec Robert Burns, son grand prédécesseur écossais, dont la poésie attira Britten vers la fin de sa vie. En 1975, la reine Elizabeth II souhaita une œuvre appropriée au 75^e anniversaire de sa mère et, comme Britten ne pouvait plus jouer du piano en public, il répondit à

la demande avec *A Birthday Hansel* pour voix élevée et harpe. L'atmosphère tragique et amère de ses cycles de Hardy et Soutar ne convenait évidemment pas à cette commande et la musique que Britten composa se range parmi sa plus leste, délicate, lyrique et, là où cela était à propos, joyeuse. Peu après avoir terminé cette œuvre, Britten demanda à son assistant Colin Matthews d'arranger pour le piano la partie de harpe de quatre des six chansons.

Presque un quart de siècle avant *A Birthday Hansel*, en 1951, Britten avait mis en musique l'arrangement traditionnel de la hantante *Ca' the yowes* de Burns pour l'inclure dans son grand projet de chanson populaire. Elle fut ensuite créée par Peter Pears et le compositeur dans le milieu un peu absurde du Konzerthaus de Vienne et finit par être insérée dans le cinquième cahier de *Folk Song Arrangements* de Britten, publié en 1961.

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Daniel Normal et **Christopher Gould** travaillent ensemble depuis leur premier récital à la Leighton House à Londres en 1996. Ils ont étudié tous deux à l'Académie Royale de Musique et à l'école Britten-Pears où ils ont travaillé sur *Winter Words* avec Roger Vignoles qui leur présenta *Who are these Children?*, qu'ils interprétèrent au festival d'Aldeburgh en 1999. Daniel Norman et Christopher Gould furent lauréats au Concours international de chant au Wigmore Hall en 2001, après quoi ils ont donné des récitals de chansons partout au monde. Ils continuent de développer leur vaste répertoire de programmes de chansons anglaises, françaises et allemandes du 18^e au 21^e siècle.

Daniel Norman fut boursier choral au New College à Oxford où il faisait des études d'ingénieur. A sa sortie de l'Académie royale de musique à Londres, il fit

ses débuts aux Queen Elizabeth Hall avec Trevor Pinnock, Royal Festival Hall avec David Atherton, Wigmore Hall avec Graham Johnson, festival d'Aldeburgh avec David Parry et Barbican avec Richard Hickox.

En plus de sa collaboration régulière avec Christopher Gould, il s'est produit en récital avec Graham Johnson, Julius Drake, Christopher Glynn et Julian Milford. En concert, il a chanté avec Sir Simon Rattle, Gianandrea Noseda, Sir Andrew Davis, Thomas Adès, Martha Argerich, Edward Gardner, Christian Curnyn et Daniel Harding.

Son expérience en opéras passe de Monteverdi à Munich et Tel Aviv à John Adams à Boston, via *Alfred* d'Arne au festival du Covent Garden, *Ariadne* de Strauss à l'Opéra de Paris, *Powder Her Face* d'Adès partout au monde et dans un film pour le canal 4, et Peter Quint dans *Turn of the Screw* dans une nouvelle production pour Glyndebourne.

Parmi ses nombreux enregistrements se trouvent la *Symphonie no 9* de Beethoven avec Osmo Vänskä et l'Orchestre du Minnesota ainsi que *Winter Songs* de Brett Dean avec le Quintette à vent de la Philharmonie de Berlin, tous deux sur étiquette BIS.

Christopher Gould a étudié la musique au Clare College à Cambridge avant de gagner une bourse pour l'Académie royale de musique où il a étudié l'accompagnement avec John Streets et Malcolm Martineau, avec l'aide du Fond musical de la comtesse de Munster. En 1996, il fut le premier jeune pianiste à recevoir un prix du Fonds Geoffrey Parsons ; il fut suivi du prix Gerald Moore (1998) et du premier prix d'accompagnement au Concours international de chant au Wigmore Hall (2001).

Christopher Gould enseigne le piano et est répétiteur à plusieurs écoles estivales internationales et il partage son temps entre son travail de répétiteur vocal

et de récitaliste au Royaume-Uni et à l'étranger. A Londres seulement, il a accompagné Sarah Walker, Ann Murray, Lorraine Hunt Lieberman et Geraldine McGreevy au Wigmore Hall, St John's Smith Square, Purcell Room et sur les ondes de Radio 3 de la BBC. A l'étranger, il a donné des récitals au festival d'Aix-en-Provence, à la maison d'opéra de Lille ainsi qu'en Italie, Israël et au Japon.

Winter Words, Op. 52

Texts: Thomas Hardy (1840–1928)

1. At day-close in November

The ten hours' light is abating,
And a late bird wings across,
Where the pines, like waltzers waiting,
Give their black heads a toss.

Beech leaves, that yellow the noon-time,
Float past like specks in the eye;
I set every tree in my June time,
And now they obscure the sky.

And the children who ramble through here
Conceive that there never has been
A time when no tall trees grew here,
That none will in time be seen.

2. Midnight on the Great Western

In the third-class seat sat the journeying boy,
And the roof-lamp's oily flame
Played down on his listless form and face,
Bewrapt past knowing to what he was going,
Or whence he came.

In the band of his hat the journeying boy
Had a ticket stuck; and a string
Around his neck bore the key of his box,
That twinkled gleams of the lamp's sad beams
Like a living thing.

What past can be yours, O journeying boy
Towards a world unknown,
Who calmly, as if incurious quite

On all at stake, can undertake
This plunge alone?

Knows your soul a sphere, O journeying boy,
Our rude realms far above,
Whence with spacious vision you mark and mete
This region of sin that you find you in,
But are not of?

3. Wagtail and Baby

A baby watched a ford, whereto
A wagtail came for drinking;
A blaring bull went wading through,
The wagtail showed no shrinking.

A stallion splashed his way across,
The birdie nearly sinking;
He gave his plumes a twitch and toss,
And held his own unblinking.

Next saw the baby round the spot
A mongrel slowly slinking;
The wagtail gazed, but faltered not
In dip and sip and prinking.

A perfect gentleman then neared;
The wagtail, in a winking,
With terror rose and disappeared;
The baby fell a-thinking.

4. The Little Old Table

Creak, little wood thing, creak,
When I touch you with elbow or knee;
That is the way you speak
Of one who gave you to me!

You, little table, she brought –
Brought me with her own hand,
As she looked at me with a thought
That I did not understand.

– Whoever owns it anon,
And hears it, will never know
What a history hangs upon
This creak from long ago.

5 The Choirmaster's Burial

He often would ask us
That, when he died,
After playing so many
To their last rest,
If out of us any
Should here abide,
And it would not task us,
We would with our lutes
Play over him
By his grave-brim
The psalm he liked best –
The one whose sense suits
'Mount Ephraim' –
And perhaps we should seem
To him, in Death's dream,
Like the seraphim.

As soon as I knew
That his spirit was gone
I thought this his due,
And spoke thereupon.
'I think,' said the vicar,
'A read service quicker
Than viols out-of-doors

In these frosts and hoars.
That old-fashioned way
Requires a fine day,
And it seems to me
It had better not be.'
Hence, that afternoon,
Though never knew he
That his wish could not be,
To get through it faster
They buried the master
Without any tune.

But 'twas said that, when
At the dead of next night
The vicar looked out,
There struck on his ken
Thronged roundabout,
Where the frost was graying
The headstoned grass,
A band all in white
Like the saints in church-glass,
Singing and playing
The ancient stave
By the choirmaster's grave.

Such the tenor man told
When he had grown old.

6 Proud Songsters

The thrushes sing as the sun is going,
And the finches whistle in ones and pairs,
And as it gets dark loud nightingales
In bushes
Pipe, as they can when April wears,
As if all Time were theirs.

These are brand-new birds of twelve-months'
growing,
Which a year ago, or less than twain,
No finches were, nor nightingales,
Nor thrushes,
But only particles of grain,
And earth, and air, and rain.

7 At the Railway Station, Upway

'There is not much that I can do,
For I've no money that's quite my own!'
Spoke up the pitying child –
A little boy with a violin
At the station before the train came in, –
'But I can play my fiddle to you,
And a nice one 'tis, and good in tone!'

The man in the handcuffs smiled;
The constable looked, and he smiled, too,
As the fiddle began to twang;
And the man in the handcuffs suddenly sang
With grimful glee:
'This life so free
Is the thing for me!'
And the constable smiled, and said no word,
As if unconscious of what he heard;
And so they went on till the train came in –
The convict, and boy with the violin.

8 Before Life and After

A time there was – as one may guess
And as, indeed, earth's testimonies tell –
Before the birth of consciousness,
When all went well.

None suffered sickness, love, or loss,
None knew regret, starved hope, or
heart-burnings;
None cared whatever crash or cross
Brought wrack to things.

If something ceased, no tongue bewailed,
If something winced and waned, no heart
was wrung;

If brightness dimmed, and dark prevailed,
No sense was stung.

But the disease of feeling germed,
And primal rightness took the tinct of wrong;
E're nescience shall be reaffirmed
How long, how long?

Four Burns Songs

Texts: Robert Burns (1759–96)

9 Afton Water

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green
 braes,
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Thou stock dove whose echo resounds thro' the
 glen,
Ye wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den,
Thou green-crested lapwing, thy screaming
 forbear,
I charge you disturb not my slumbering Fair.

Thy crystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides,
And winds by the cot where my Mary resides;
How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,
As, gathering sweet flowerets, she stems thy
 clear wave.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green
 braes,
Flow gently, sweet River, the theme of my lays;
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

10 Wee Willie Gray

Wee Willie Gray, and his leather wallet,
Peel a willow-wand, to be him boots and jacket:
The rose upon the breer will be him trews and
 doublet,
The rose upon the breer will be him trews and
 doublet.

Wee Willie Gray, and his leather wallet,
Twice a lily-flower will be him sark and cravat;
Feathers of a flee wad feather up his bonnet,
Feathers of a flee wad feather up his bonnet.

11 The Winter

The Winter it is past, and the summer comes
 at last,
And the small birds, they sing on ev'ry tree;
Now ev'ry thing is glad, while I am very sad,
Since my true love is parted from me.

The rose upon the brier, by the waters running
 clear,
May have charms for the linnet or the bee;
Their little loves are blest, and their little hearts
 at rest,
But my true love is parted from me.

12 My Hoggie

What will I do gin my Hoggie die,
My joy, my pride, my Hoggie?
My only beast, I had nae mae,
And vow but I was vogie.

The lee-lang night we watch'd the fauld,
Me and my faithfu' doggie;
We heard nocht but the roaring linn,
Amang the braes sae scroggie.

But the howlet cry'd frae the castle wa'.
The blitter frae the boggie,
The tod reply'd upon the hill –
I trembled for my Hoggie.

When day did daw, and cocks did crawl,
The morning it was foggie;
An unco tyke lap o'er the dyke,
And maist has killed my Hoggie.

Who are these Children? Op. 84

Texts: William Soutar (1898–1943)

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13 A Riddle (The Earth)

There's pairt o' it young
And pairt o' it auld:
There's pairt o' it het
And pairt o' it cauld:

There's pairt o' it bare
And pairt o' it claid:
There's pairt o' it quick
And pairt o' it dead.

14 A Laddie's Sang

O! it's owre the braes abüne our toun
Whan the simmer days come in;
Whaur the blue-bells grow, and the burnies row,
And gowdan is the whin.

The gowk sings frae the birken-schaw,
And the laverock far aboon:
The bees bummer by, the peesies cry,
And the lauchin linn lowps down.

15 Nightmare

The tree stood flowering in a dream:
Beside the tree a dark shape bowed:
As lightning glittered the axe-gleam
Across the wound in the broken wood.

The tree cried out with human cries:
From its deepening hurt the blood ran:
The branches flowered with children's eyes
And the dark murderer was a man.

There came a fear which sighed aloud;
And with its fear the dream-world woke,
Yet in the day the tree still stood
Bleeding beneath the axe-man's stroke.

[16] Black Day

A skelp frae his teacher
For a' he cudna spell:
A skelp frae his mither
For cowpin owre the kail.

A skelp frae his brither
For clourin his braw bat;
And a skelp frae his faither
For the Lord kens what.

[17] Bed-time

Cuddle-doun, my bairnie
The dargie day is dune:
Yon's a siller sternie
Ablow the siller mune.

Like a wabster body
Hingin on a threed,
Far abüne my laddie
And his wee creepie-bed.

[18] Slaughter

Within the violence of the storm
The wise men are made dumb:
Young bones are hollowed by the worm:
The babe dies in the womb.

Above the lover's mouth is pressed
The silence of a stone:
Fate rides upon an iron beast
And tramples cities down.

And shall the multitudinous grave
Our enmity inter;
These dungeons of misrule enslave
Our bitterness and fear?

All are the conquered; and in vain
The laurel binds the brow:
The phantoms of the dead remain
And from our faces show.

[19] A Riddle (The child you were)

It was your faither and mither,
Yet it wasna weddit:
It was your sister or brither
Though nane were beside it.

Wit and wisdom it lent ye,
Yet it wasna lairéd:
And though it dee'd or it kent ye
It was never buried.

[20] The Larky Lad

The larky lad frae the pantry
Skipt through the muckle ha';
He had sma' fear o' the gentry,
And his respec' was sma'.

He cockit his face richt merry;
And as he jiggit on
His mou' was round as a cherry
Like he whistled a braw tune.

And monie a noble body
Glowered frae his frame o' gowd
On the plisky pantry-laddie
Wha was sae merry and royd.

[21] Who are these Children?

With easy hands upon the rein,
And hounds at their horses' feet,
The ladies and the gentlemen
Ride through the village street.

Brightness of blood upon the coats
And on the women's lips:
Brightness of silver at the throats
And on the hunting whips.

Is there a day more calm, more green
Under this morning hour;
A scene more alien than this scene
Within a world at war?

Who are these children gathered here
Out of the fire and smoke
That with remembering faces stare
Upon the foxing folk?

[22] Supper

Steepees for the bairnie
Sae moolie in the mou':
Parritch for a strappan lad
To mak his beard grow.

Stovies for a muckle-man
To keep him stout and hale:
A noggin for the auld carl
To gar him sleep weel.

Bless the meat, and bless the drink,
And the hand that steers the pat:
And be guid to beggar-bodies
Whan they come to your yett.

[23] The Children

Upon the street they lie
Beside the broken stone:
The blood of children stares from the broken stone.

Death came out of the sky
In the bright afternoon:
Darkness slanted over the bright afternoon.

Again the sky is clear
But upon the earth a stain.
The earth is darkened with a darkening stain.

A wound which everywhere
Corrupts the hearts of men:
The blood of children corrupts the hearts of men.

Silence is in the air:
The stars move to their places:
Silent and serene the stars move to their places:

But from earth the children stare
With blind and fearful faces:
And our charity is in the children's faces.

24 The Auld Aik

The auld aik's doun:
The auld aik's doun:
Twa hunner year it stüde, or mair,
But noo it's doun, doun.

The auld aik's doun:
The auld aik's doun:
We were sae shair it wud aye be there,
But noo it's doun, doun.

25 If it's ever Spring again

Text: Thomas Hardy

If it's ever spring again,
Spring again,
I shall go where went I when
Down the moor-cock splashed, and hen,
Seeing me not, amid their flounder,
Standing with my arm around her;
If it's ever spring again,
Spring again,
I shall go where went I then.

If it's ever summer-time,
Summer-time,
With the hay crop at the prime,
And the cuckoos – two – in rhyme,
As they used to be, or seemed to,
We shall do as long we've dreamed to,
If it's ever summer-time,
Summer-time,
With the hay, and bees achime.

26 Dawtie's Devotion

Text: William Soutar

Keep me leal, and keep me weel,
And keep me bricht and bonnie;
Be day and be nicht and be cannel-licht,
And awa frae the bogie-mannie.

A bitie bake, and a bitie cake,
And a bitie for daddy and mummie;
And at leerie-law and at beddie-baw
I'll aye be your ain wee lammie.

[27] The Gully

Text: William Soutar

And wudna onie lad
Be gled that he had been born
As Bengie noo was gled
On his ain birthday morn:

To hae on his birthday morn,
Richt there in his lufe sae ticht,
The bonnie heft o' horn
And the blade sae glinty bricht?

He tried it on a raip:
He tried it on a stick:
Andwow! It gar'd ye gape
To see it wark sae snick.

He thocht he'd hae a try
At Grannie's muckle chair –
And maybe, by and by,
He'll try his hurdies there.

[28] The Children and Sir Nameless

Text: Thomas Hardy

Sir Nameless, once of Athelhall, declared:
'These wretched children romping in my park
Trample the herbage till the soil is bared,
And yap and yell from early morn till dark!
Go keep them harnessed to their set routines:
Thank God I've none to hasten my decay;
For green remembrance there are better means
Than offspring, who but wish their sires away.'

Sir Nameless of that mansion said anon:
'To be perpetuate for my mightiness
Sculpture must image me when I am gone.'
– He forthwith summoned carvers there express
To shape a figure stretching seven-odd feet
(For he was tall) in alabaster stone,
With shield, and crest, and casque, and
word complete:
When done a statelier work was never known.

Three hundred years hied; Church-restorers
came,
And, no one of his lineage being traced,
They thought an effigy so large in frame
Best fitted for the floor. There it was placed,
Under the seats for schoolchildren. And they
Kicked out his name, and hobnailed off his nose;
And, as they yawn through sermon-time,
they say,
'Who was this old stone man beneath our toes?'

29 Tradition

Text: William Soutar

'Heh! young folk arena what they were':
Wheeng'd the auld craw to his cronie:
'Sic galivantin here and there,
Sic wastrie and aye wantin mair:
Their menners far frae bonnie.

Eh me! it's waur and waur they get
In gumption and decorum:
And sma' respec' for kirk or state.'
Wi' that the auld craw wagg'd his pate
As his faither did afore him.

30 Ca' the yowes

Text: Robert Burns

Ca' the yowes tae the knowes,
Ca' them whar the heather grows,
Ca' them whar the burnie rows,
My bonnie dearie.

Hark, the mavis' e'enin' sang,
Soundin' Cluden's woods amang;
Then a fauldin' let us gang,
My bonnie dearie.

We'll gang down by Clouden side,
Through the hazels spreading wide
O'er the waves that sweetly glide
To the moon sae clearly.

Fair and lovely as thou art,
Thou hast stol'n my very heart;
I can die, but canna part,
My bonnie Dearie.

INSTRUMENTARIUM
Grand Piano: Steinway D

Dialect coach: Mhairi Lawson

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