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Songs of Travel

ARTHUR SOMERVELL (1863–1937)

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BARITONE

CHRISTOPHER MALTMAN

Piano

ROGER VIGNOLES
ARTHUR SOMERVELL was educated at Uppingham, King’s College, Cambridge (where he studied with Stanford), at the Hochschule für Musik, Berlin, the Royal College of Music, and with Parry. His career was principally in music education; from 1901 to 1928 he was Inspector of Music to the Board of Education where his advocacy ensured that music was viewed as an important part of the curriculum. His music (which was principally influenced by Schumann and Brahms) includes many compositions for amateur performers, educational works for children, as well as orchestral and choral works. However, it is for his contribution to English song, and in particular his song cycles, that he is chiefly remembered, notably for *A Shropshire Lad*, which has the distinction of being the first setting of Housman’s eponymous collection.

Unusually for the period Somervell’s song cycles have a narrative thread, which puts them in the tradition of the early Romantic song cycles such as Schubert’s *Winterreise*. Wordsworth and Shakespeare were his favourite poets, as well as Robert Browning, whose verse he sets in *A Broken Arc*, which like all his cycles deals with the dual themes of love and death. It was published in 1923 and apart from its dedication to The Society of English Singers nothing has been discovered about the background to its composition or its premiere. For his texts Somervell created an anthology from several sources, using either complete poems or extracts, from *The Two Poets of Croisic* ([1]), *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* ([2] and [4]), *Men and Women* ([3] and [6]), *Dramatis Personae* ([5]), *Easter Day* ([7]) and *Pippa Passes* ([8]). The overall title may allude to a line from another poem, *Abt Vogler*: ‘On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round’.

From them Somervell creates a narrative about a relationship in which both love and friendship are betrayed. On paper the storyline from one poem to another seems tenuous, and in reality only the fifth and sixth songs narrate specific situations. However, by his subtle use of thematic references between songs and the creation of an effective sequence of moods the narrative unity of the work becomes convincing through the music. The first four songs serve to extol the object of the protagonist’s affection and to establish his deep love for her. A sense of ardour characterises ‘Such a starved bank of moss’; in ‘Meeting at night’ there is colourful word-painting in the accompaniment’s evocation of the seascape and the piano also clinches the image of the climactic embrace of the lovers. ‘My star’ has an ecstatic quality created through the grace notes in the accompaniment figure, and the threefold repetition of the final phrase ‘I love it’. His love for her is further emphasised in ‘Nay but you, who do not love her’ with yet another passionate climax on the word ‘love’ heightened by a rising chromatic scale in the harmony underpinning it.

However, ‘The worst of it’ brings an abrupt change of mood with the discovery of his love’s infidelity. This song is the heart of the cycle in which the vocal line is more arioso than song and the music takes on a mood of disbelief and sadness as the hero muses on events. The nadir of his despair is reached after the words ‘There’s a heaven above may deserve your love’, when an arpeggiated chord of unutterable sadness occurs and lingers on a dissonance before resolving. In ‘After’ he has wreaked terrible vengeance, but the rival he has killed is revealed as his childhood friend. The song opens in the manner of a recitative, then the accompaniment takes on the sombre tread of a funeral processional. A touching recollection of their youthful companionship is accompanied by a quotation of the theme representing childhood happiness from Somervell’s choral setting of Wordsworth’s *Intimations of Immortality*. However, reality returns as the man
orders that the corpse’s face be covered: a spine-chilling moment which the singer is instructed to perform ‘with a shudder’.

In the wake of this double disaster, ‘From Easter Day’ shows the man turning to God for solace in a setting which makes thematic references to the two previous songs. This paves the way for the cathartic climax to the cycle as the shimmering accompaniment and affirmative vocal line of ‘The year’s at the spring’ indicate that his troubled soul has found peace.

W (William) Denis Browne was a member of the chorus in the 1909 Cambridge University production of Aristophanes’s The Wasps for which Vaughan Williams provided the incidental music. After Rugby (where he started a lifelong friendship with Rupert Brooke), he entered Clare College, Cambridge, in 1907 to read classics, but quickly became involved in the university’s music-making and drama activities. By 1910 he was studying music and was organ scholar at Clare. He received encouragement from Edward Dent, and through him met Busoni with whom he stayed in Germany in the summer of 1912. He took his BMus the same year, then moved to London where he became part of Edward Marsh’s artistic circle, wrote trenchant criticism for The Times and The New Statesman, and performed as organist and pianist (he gave the first British performance of Berg’s Piano Sonata). He was killed in the Gallipoli campaign, not long after he had buried Brooke on the island of Skyros. His compositional legacy was minimal, including an incomplete ballet and a handful of songs; these, nevertheless, indicate an outstanding musical mind.

Browne’s best-known song, To Gratiana dancing and singing, setting words by Richard Lovelace, was composed in February 1913 for his friend, the tenor Steuart Wilson, and is one of the most beautiful creations in the entire repertoire of twentieth-century English song. The influence of Elizabethan music is apparent: the melody that forms the accompaniment is an anonymous seventeenth-century Allmayne in Elizabeth Rogers’s Virginal Book, which the composer heard in a 1908 while acting in a university production of Milton’s Comus. Over the sonorous, rich chords of the piano, treading the measure of the Allmayne, the vocal line curves and soars in ecstatic wonder at Gratiana’s performance.

Diaphenia, composed in October 1912, is a lilting love song setting words by Henry Constable. Its provenance is
the Edwardian ballad, suitable for domestic music-making, rather than the art song, nevertheless it is utterly charming with an easy-going accompaniment suggesting the plucked strings of a lute, and juicy inner chromatic parts which hint at the aching ardour of the suitor.

Two months later Browne was tackling a far more ambitious poem: Ben Jonson’s *Epitaph on Salathiel Pavy* (subtitled ‘A Child of Queen Elizabeth’s Chapel’), which was conceived as a companion piece to ‘Diaphenia’. It relates the tale of a thirteen-year-old chorister who also excelled as an actor, the poet’s conceit being that the child acted an old man so well that the Fates took him to be one and death ensued. The music has the character of a slow, sad dance, like a Pavan, with an extended arched, lamenting melody in the unusual time signatures of $\frac{10}{4}$ or $\frac{12}{5}$. Elizabethan influences are again apparent, whilst the verses are bound together by a ritornello with a portentous descending chromatic bass and ascending triads, symbols respectively of a summons to the grave, and a gasping for life.

Vaughan Williams’s *Songs of Travel* cycle belongs to the first decade of the last century when his personal voice was emerging and the work marks a major achievement in his development. The poems are by Robert Louis Stevenson, and the songs were originally performed in a group of eight by Walter Creighton and Hamilton Harty at the Bechstein Hall, London, on 2 December 1904. Most of them had probably been written in 1904, although ‘Whither must I wander?’ predates the others and had been published in the June edition of the magazine *The Vocalist* in 1902 and also performed that November. Although conceived as a group of integral songs, the commercial demands of the publisher meant that they appeared separately in two volumes in 1903 and 1905, apart from the final song which the composer clearly planned as an epilogue to be performed only when the songs were performed as a whole. This was not published until 1960 in the first edition of the cycle in its original sequence, which was first performed by Harvey Allen, accompanied by Frederick Stone, in a BBC broadcast on 21 May the same year.

The *Songs of Travel* made a strong impression on audiences and musicians of the time; for instance, Arthur Bliss, nineteen years Vaughan Williams’s junior, who studied at Cambridge between 1910 and 1913, recalled in his autobiography *As I Remember*: ‘To us musicians in Cambridge Vaughan Williams was the magical name; his *Songs of Travel* were on all pianos’. In the context of the development of English song they are important too, for they reflect a significant advance from the parlour song to the art song which professional singers—such as the cycle’s dedicatee, the bass-baritone Plunket Greene—were encouraging composers to write. Here, like the Somervell cycles, was a work conceived in the tradition of the early Romantic questing song cycle of love and loss. Nevertheless, it differs from its models and from Somervell’s works in that there is no real narrative thread from one poem to the next, rather a set of different circumstances on which the poet comments. Significant too is the influence of folksong on several of the songs. Vaughan Williams collected his first folksong, ‘Bushes and Briars’, in December 1903 and the experience of finding the lovely traditional tunes is apparent in *Songs of Travel*.

The opening song ‘The vagabond’ establishes the cycle’s Romantic credentials; indeed Stevenson had composed the words ‘To an air of Schubert’. Its steady tramping accompaniment, combined with a triplet which prefigures the opening of the vocal line, evokes the purposeful tread of the wanderer striding out on the open road. ‘Let Beauty awake’, with its images of dawn and dusk, has a fervent melodic line that floats on a buoyant arpeggio accompaniment. Particularly memorable is the
bitter-sweet radiance of the phrase ‘And the stars are bright in the west!’ which recurs as a link between the verses and in the brief coda. Over a joyous accompaniment, ‘The roadside fire’ radiates the delight of new-found love that bubbles over ecstatically in the final verse. ‘Youth and love’ is the kernel of the cycle and points to its central dilemma: which is preferable, ‘love’ and by implication a settled life, or ‘solitude’ and the freedom to wander. As if emphasising the choice to be made, the accompaniment includes transformed allusions to the triplet figure from ‘The vagabond’ and the opening phrase of ‘The roadside fire’ at the song’s climax. ‘In dreams’ has a chill melancholy, created through a persistent, uneasy off-beat rhythm in the piano and a brooding chromatic vocal line. Pianissimo, wide-spaced arpeggiated piano chords, combined with an expansive melodic line evoke the vast brilliance of the night sky in ‘The infinite shining heavens’, in which the traveller, gazing above, finds peace. ‘Whither must I wander?’ has a homely simplicity, appropriate to the poet’s images of childhood and the security of home and family which are now long in the past, never to return. In its character it is close to Vaughan Williams’s most renowned song ‘Linden Lea’, composed the year before it. A sole sonorous chord, like a call to attention, opens ‘Bright is the ring of words’, whose forthright melody incorporates the opening notes of the hymn ‘Sine nomine’ (‘For all the Saints’), which haunted the composer throughout his life. The brief epilogue, with its references to ‘The vagabond’, ‘Whither must I wander?’ and ‘Bright is the ring of words’, encapsulates the whole cycle with the wanderer, now old, looking ahead to his final journey beyond the grave.

George Butterworth and Vaughan Williams became friends while the former was at Oxford. It was Butterworth who badgered him to write a purely orchestral symphony after the success of A Sea Symphony and the result, A London Symphony, was later dedicated to his memory. Butterworth was educated at Eton and Trinity College, Oxford, where he read classics, and his musical talents were encouraged by Hugh Allen, organist of New College. After graduating he wrote musical criticism for The Times, taught at Radley College, then studied at the Royal College of Music with Charles Wood. From 1906 onwards he was a leading member of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, collecting songs and sword dances, mainly in Oxfordshire. By reputation he was a fine dancer and was a member of Cecil Sharp’s original six-man morris side. During World War I he served gallantly and was killed during the Somme offensive, being posthumously awarded the Military Cross. Butterworth destroyed most of his compositions before his departure for France, and his reputation stands in particular for his songs setting A E Housman, and the orchestral rhapsody A Shropshire Lad conceived as an epilogue to the songs.

Critical opinion has generally singled out Butterworth’s settings as the finest among the many composers who were attracted to Housman’s A Shropshire Lad. They were written between 1909 and 1911 and, probably under the influence of Somervell, were initially conceived as a cycle with a loose narrative thread. In this guise nine songs received their premiere in Oxford on 16 May 1911; J Campbell McInnes was the baritone and Butterworth accompanied him. Butterworth must have swiftly changed his mind about the success of the sequence for by the following month it was the Six songs from ‘A Shropshire Lad’ in their published version that were performed in London on 20 June at the Aeolian Hall when McInnes again was the singer and Hamilton Harty accompanied. It was in Butterworth’s Housman settings that English folksong was wholly and effortlessly absorbed into English art song, and no more so than in the perfection of ‘Loveliest of trees’. Its opening is a brief, magical descending phrase for piano, which seems to encapsulate
both the delicacy and transience of the blossom and, by extension, of life itself. This and other snatches of melody in the song, such as the exultant outburst at the end of the first stanza, form the basis of the later orchestral rhapsody.

‘When I was one-and-twenty’ is the only time when Butterworth uses a traditional folk tune in his Housman songs. The young man’s bitter realisation of the folly of spurning the ‘wise’ man’s advice is brilliantly emphasised by a mere one-bar extension of the tune at the conclusion of the song. In ‘Look not in my eyes’ Housman alludes to the myth of Narcissus. It is set to a flowing melody in $\frac{5}{4}$ time and has a fine moment of word painting at the end of the first verse where, on the word ‘eyes’, the music literally halts with an arpeggiated chord of C major, epitomising the forbidden long deep gaze. It is contrasted by a devil-may-care rendering of ‘Think no more, lad’, a fine piece of musical irony with a superficially carefree manner that masks the darker undertones of the poem.

A characteristic of the songs is their economy of means, something which is amply demonstrated in ‘The lads in their hundreds’ with its lilting melody, piano ritornello between verses derived from it and spare harmony. Arguably Butterworth’s greatest Housman setting, ‘Is my team ploughing?’ is a conversation between the quick and the dead with melody and harmony that are heart-rending in effect. Irony, once again, is at the heart of the poem where the ghost poses a series of questions to his living friend about his former life and lover. The poignant falling sequence of bare chords uncannily suggests the cold of the grave; by comparison the chords underpinning his friend’s answers course with life. After the chilling last response, side-stepping the truth about the fate of the dead man’s girl, the chords of the ghost fade to end the song in utter bleakness.

‘Bredon Hill’ and other songs was published the year after Butterworth’s first group of Housman songs in 1912. Musical images of bells, from joyous pealing to funereal tolling, permeate and unify the setting of ‘Bredon Hill’. The clangour is set in motion by the oscillating chords at the beginning, and the scales in the accompaniment to the vocal line which for the first four verses radiate happiness. However, at the beginning of the fifth verse the change is stark and wintry, the doleful chords like a single bell tolling the coffin to the grave. At the end, there is a recall of the main bell motif, but now tainted with the experience of death and loss. Again it is Butterworth’s simplicity that is the principal means of the effectiveness of ‘Oh fair enough are sky and plain’, combined with apposite musical images to mirror the words of the poem, as, for instance, in the descending phrase at ‘As I stand gazing down’.

‘When the lad for longing sighs’ is a further example of how folksong was totally absorbed into Butterworth’s voice, for it could easily be taken as a traditional tune. The second verse has an accompaniment in thirds, a Butterworth characteristic, and the final cadence is unresolved as if posing a question. ‘On the idle hill of summer’ is the most ambitious of the songs in this group, with the syncopated added-sixth chords, heightened by the occasional rumble of an A pedal point, suggestive of both the languid heat of a summer’s day, as well as the sound of distant drumming. For the final verse the music is urgent and animated with triplets evoking the bugles of the text and rising to the climax of the song at ‘Woman bore me, I will rise’. In its simplicity of gesture, its nostalgia and melancholy, ‘With rue my heart is laden’ seems to sum up the mood of Butterworth’s art. Its opening phrase is quoted at end of the Shropshire Lad rhapsody and at the very end there is a final allusion to the opening of ‘Loveliest of trees’, as if the cycles of life, love and death have come full circle and are poised to begin again.

ANDREW BURN © 2003
A Broken Arc
ARTHUR SOMERVELL (1863–1937)

1 Such a starved bank of moss
Such a starved bank of moss
Till that May morn,
Blue ran the flash across:
Violets were born!
Sky—what a scowl of cloud
Till, near and far,
Ray on ray split the shroud
Splendid, a star!
World—how it walled about
Life with disgrace
Till God's own smile came out:
That was thy face!

2 Meeting at night
The grey sea and the long black land:
And the yellow half-moon large and low:
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed in the slushy sand.
Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

3 My star
All that I know
Of a certain star,
Is, it can throw
(Like the angled spar)
Now a dart of red,
Now a dart of blue,
Till my friends have said
They would fain see, too,
My star that darts the red and the blue!
Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled:
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world?
Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

4 Nay but you, who do not love her
Nay but you, who do not love her,
Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her?
Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
And this last fairest tress of all,
So fair, see, ere I let it fall?
Because you spend your lives in praising;
To praise, you search the wide world over:
Then, why not witness, calmly gazing,
If earth holds aught—speak truth—above her?
Above this tress, and this I touch
But cannot praise, I love so much!

5 The worst of it
Would it were I had been false, not you!
I that am nothing, not you that are all:
I, never the worse for a touch or two
On my speckled hide: not you, the pride
Of the day, my swan, that a first fleck's fall
On her wonder of white must unswan, undo!
But what will God say? Oh, my sweet,
Think, and be sorry you did this thing!
Though earth were unworthy to feel your feet,
There's a heaven above may deserve your love:
Dear, I look from my hiding-place.
Are you still so fair? Have you still the eyes?
Be happy! Add but the other grace,
Be good! Why want what the angels vaunt?
I knew you once: but in Paradise,
If we meet, I will pass nor turn my face.

6 After
Take the cloak from his face, and at first
Let the corpse do its worst.
How he lies in his rights of a man!
    Death has done all death can.
And, absorbed in the new life he leads,
    He recks not, he heeds
Nor his wrong nor my vengeance—both strike
    Nor his wrong nor my vengeance—both strike
On his senses alike,
    On his senses alike,
And are lost in the solemn and strange
    And are lost in the solemn and strange
Surprise of the change.
    Surprise of the change.
Ha, what avails death to erase
    Ha, what avails death to erase
His offence, my disgrace?
    His offence, my disgrace?
I would we were boys as of old
    I would we were boys as of old
In the field, by the fold:
    In the field, by the fold:
His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn
    His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn
Were so easily borne.
    Were so easily borne.
I stand here now, he lies in his place:
    I stand here now, he lies in his place:
Cover the face.

From Easter Day
Thou Love of God! Or let me die,
Or grant what shall seem Heaven almost!
Let me not know that all is lost,
Though lost it be—leave me not tied
To this despair, this corpse-like bride!
Let that old life seem mine—no more—
With limitation as before,
With darkness, hunger, toil, distress:
Be all the earth a wilderness!
Only let me go on, go on,
Still hoping ever and anon
To reach one eve the Better Land.

The year's at the spring
The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven:
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in His heaven—
All's right with the world!

Diaphenia
Diaphenia like the daffadowndilly,
White as the sun, fair as the lily,
Heigh ho, how I do love thee!
I do love thee as my lambs
Are belovèd of their dams:
How blest were I if thou would'st prove me.
Diaphenia like the spreading roses,
That in thy sweets all sweets encloses,
Fair sweet, how I do love thee!
I do love thee as each flower
Loves the sun's life-giving power;
For dead, thy breath to life might move me.
Diaphenia like to all things blessèd,
When all thy praises are expressèd,
Dear joy, how I do love thee!
As the birds do love the spring,
Or the bees their careful king;
Then in requite, sweet virgin, love me!

Epitaph on Salathiel Pavy
Weep with me all ye that read
This little story:
And know, for whom a tear you shed,
Death's self is sorry.
'Twas a child, that so did thrive
In grace, and feature,
Years he numbered scarce thirteen
When Fates turned cruel,
Yet three filled zodiacs had he been
The stage's jewel;
And did act (what now we moan)
Old men so duly.
As, sooth, the Parcae thought him one,
He played so truly.
So, by error, to his fate
They all consented;
But viewing him since (alas, too late)
They have repented.
And have sought (to give new birth)
In baths to steep him:
But, being so much too good for earth,
Heaven vows to keep him.
BEN JONSON (1572–1637)
Epitaph on S.P., a Child of Queen Elizabeth’s Chapel

To Gratiana dancing and singing
W DENIS BROWNE (1888–1915)
See! with what constant motion
Even, and glorious, as the sun,
Gratiana steers that noble frame,
Soft as her breast, sweet as her voice
That gave each winding law and poise,
And swifter than the wings of Fame.
Each step trod out a lover’s thought
And the ambitious hopes he brought,
Chain’d to her brave feet with such arts;
Such sweet command, and gentle awe,
As when she ceas’d, we sighing saw
The floor lay pav’d with broken hearts.
So did she move; so did she sing
Like the harmonious spheres that bring
Unto their rounds their music’s aid;
Which she performèd such a way,
As all th’ enamoured world will say:
The Graces danced, and Apollo play’d.
RICHARD LOVELACE (1618–1658)

Songs of Travel
RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958)

The vagabond
Give to me the life I love,
Let the lave go by me,
Give the jolly heaven above,
And the byway nigh me.
Bed in the bush with stars to see,
Bread I dip in the river—
There’s the life for a man like me,
There’s the life for ever.

Let the blow fall soon or late,
Let what will be o’er me;
Give the face of earth around,
And the road before me.
Wealth I seek not, hope nor love,
Nor a friend to know me;
All I seek, the heaven above,
And the road below me.

Or let autumn fall on me
Where afield I linger,
Silencing the bird on tree,
Biting the blue finger.
White as meal the frosty field—
Warm the fireside haven—
Not to autumn will I yield,
Not to winter even!

Let Beauty awake
Let Beauty awake in the morn from beautiful dreams,
Beauty awake from rest!
Let Beauty awake
For Beauty’s sake
In the hour when the birds awake in the brake
And the stars are bright in the west!
Let Beauty awake in the eve from the slumber of day,  
Awake in the crimson eve!
In the day’s dusk end  
When the shades ascend,  
Let her wake to the kiss of a tender friend,  
To render again and receive!

**The roadside fire**

I will make you brooches and toys for your delight  
Of bird-song at morning and star-shine at night,  
I will make a palace fit for you and me  
Of green days in forests, and blue days at sea.

I will make my kitchen, and you shall keep your room,  
Where white flows the river and bright blows the broom;  
And you shall wash your linen and keep your body white  
In rainfall at morning and dewfall at night.

And this shall be for music when no one else is near,  
The fine song for singing, the rare song to hear!  
That only I remember, that only you admire,  
Of the broad road that stretches and the roadside fire.

**Youth and love**

To the heart of youth the world is a highwayside.  
Passing for ever, he fares; and on either hand,  
Deep in the gardens golden pavilions hide,  
Nestle in orchard bloom, and far on the level land  
Call him with lighted lamp in the eventide.

Thick as stars at night when the moon is down,  
Pleasures assail him. He to his nobler fate  
Fares; and but waves a hand as he passes on,  
Cries but a wayside word to her at the garden gate,  
Sings but a boyish stave and his face is gone.

**In dreams**

In dreams unhappy, I behold you stand  
As heretofore:  
The unremember’d tokens in your hand  
Avail no more.

No more the morning glow, no more the grace,  
Enshrines, endears.  
Cold beats the light of time upon your face  
And shows your tears.

He came and went. Perchance you wept awhile  
And then forgot.  
Ah me! but he that left you with a smile  
Forgets you not.

**The infinite shining heavens**

The infinite shining heavens  
Rose, and I saw in the night  
Uncountable angel stars  
Showering sorrow and light.

I saw them distant as heaven,  
Dumb and shining and dead,  
And the idle stars of the night  
Were dearer to me than bread.

Night after night in my sorrow  
The stars looked over the sea,  
Till lo! I looked in the dusk  
And a star had come down to me.

**Whither must I wander?**

Home no more home to me, whither must I wander?  
Hunger my driver, I go where I must.  
Cold blows the winter wind over hill and heather:  
Thick drives the rain and my roof is in the dust.  
Loved of wise men was the shade of my roof-tree,  
The true word of welcome was spoken in the door—  
Dear days of old with the faces in the firelight,  
Kind folks of old, you come again no more.

Home was home then, my dear, full of kindly faces,  
Home was home then, my dear, happy for the child.  
Fire and the windows bright glittered on the moorland;  
Song, tuneful song, built a palace in the wild.  
Now when day dawns on the brow of the moorland,  
Lone stands the house, and the chimney-stone is cold.  
Lone let it stand, now the friends are all departed,  
The kind hearts, the true hearts, that loved the place of old.
Spring shall come, come again, calling up the moorfowl,
Spring shall bring the sun and rain, bring the bees and flowers;
Red shall the heather bloom over hill and valley,
Soft flow the stream through the even-flowing hours.
Fair the day shine as it shone on my childhood—
Fair shine the day on the house with open door;
Birds come and cry there and twitter in the chimney—
But I go for ever and come again no more.

Bright is the ring of words
Bright is the ring of words
When the right man rings them,
Fair the fall of songs
When the singer sings them,
Still they are carolled and said—
On wings they are carried—
After the singer is dead
And the maker buried.

I have trod the upward and the downward slope
I have trod the upward and the downward slope;
I have endured and done in days before;
I have longed for all, and bid farewell to hope;
And I have lived and loved, and closed the door.

‘Bredon Hill’ and other songs
GEORGE BUTTERWORTH (1885–1916)

Bredon Hill
In summertime on Bredon
The bells they sound so clear;
Round both the shires they ring them
In steeples far and near,
A happy noise to hear.

Here of a Sunday morning
My love and I would lie,
And see the coloured counties,
And hear the larks so high
About us in the sky.

The bells would ring to call her
In valleys miles away;
“Come all to church, good people;
Good people come and pray.”
But here my love would stay.

And I would turn and answer
Among the springing thyme,
“Oh, peal upon our wedding,
And we will hear the chime,
And come to church in time.”

But when the snows at Christmas
On Bredon top were strown,
My love rose up so early
And stole out unbeknown
And went to church alone.

They tolled the one bell only,
Groom there was none to see,
The mourners followed after,
And so to church went she,
And would not wait for me.

The bells they sound on Bredon,
And still the steeples hum,
“Come all to church, good people.”—
O noisy bells, be dumb;
I hear you, I will come.
Oh fair enough are sky and plain
Oh fair enough are sky and plain,
But I know fairer far:
Those are as beautiful again
That in the water are;
The pools and rivers wash so clean
The trees and clouds and air,
The like on earth was never seen,
And oh that I were there.
These are the thoughts I often think
As I stand gazing down
In act upon the cressy brink
To strip and dive and drown;
But in the golden sanded brooks
And azure meres I spy
A silly lad that longs and looks
And wishes he were I.

When the lad for longing sighs
When the lad for longing sighs,
Mute and dull of cheer and pale,
If at death’s own door he lies,
Maiden, you can heal his ail.
Lovers’ ills are all to buy:
The wan look, the hollow tone,
The hung head, the sunken eye,
You can have them for your own.
Buy them, buy them: eve and morn
Lovers’ ills are all to sell,
Then you can lie down forlorn;
But the lover will be well.

On the idle hill of summer
On the idle hill of summer,
Sleepy with the flow of streams,
Far I hear the steady drummer
Drumming like a noise in dreams.

Far and near and low and louder,
On the roads of earth go by,
Dear to friends and food for powder,
Soldiers marching, all to die.
East and west on fields forgotten
Bleach the bones of comrades slain,
Lovely lads and dead and rotten;
None that go return again.
Far the calling bugles hollo,
High the screaming file replies,
Gay the files of scarlet follow;
Woman bore me, I will rise.

With rue my heart is laden
With rue my heart is laden
For golden friends I had,
For many a rose-lipt maiden
And many a lightfoot lad.
By brooks too broad for leaping
The lightfoot boys are laid;
The rose-lipt girls are sleeping
In fields where roses fade.

ALFRED EDWARD HOUSMAN (1859–1936) from A Shropshire Lad

Six songs from ‘A Shropshire Lad’
GEORGE BUTTERWORTH (1885–1916)

Loveliest of trees
Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.
Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.
And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.
When I was one-and-twenty
When I was one-and-twenty
I heard a wise man say,
“Give crowns and pounds and guineas
But not your heart away;
Give pearls away and rubies
But keep your fancy free.”
But I was one-and-twenty,
No use to talk to me.
When I was one-and-twenty
I heard him say again,
“The heart out of the bosom
Was never given in vain;
’Tis paid with sighs a plenty
And sold for endless rue.”
And I am two-and-twenty,
And oh, ‘tis true, ‘tis true.

Look not in my eyes
Look not in my eyes, for fear
They mirror true the sight I see,
And there you find your face too clear
And love it and be lost like me.
One the long nights through must lie
Spent in star-defeated sighs,
But why should you as well as I
Perish? Gaze not in my eyes.
A Grecian lad, as I hear tell,
One that many loved in vain,
Looked into a forest well
And never looked away again.
There, when the turf in springtime flowers,
With downward eye and gazes sad,
Stands amid the glancing showers
A jonquil, not a Grecian lad.

Think no more, lad
Think no more, lad; laugh, be jolly;
Why should men make haste to die?
Empty heads and tongues a-talking
Make the rough road easy walking,
And the feather pate of folly
Bears the falling sky.
Oh, ’tis jesting, dancing, drinking
Spins the heavy world around.
If young hearts were not so clever,
Oh, they would be young for ever;
Think no more; ’tis only thinking
Lays lads underground.

The lads in their hundreds
The lads in their hundreds to Ludlow come in for the fair,
There’s men from the barn and the forge and the mill and the fold,
The lads for the girls and the lads for the liquor are there,
And there with the rest are the lads that will never be old.
There’s chaps from the town and the field and the till and the cart,
And many to count are the stalwart, and many the brave,
And many the handsome of face and the handsome of heart,
And few that will carry their looks or their truth to the grave.
I wish one could know them, I wish there were tokens to tell
The fortunate fellows that now you can never discern;
And then one could talk with them friendly and wish them farewell
And watch them depart on the way that they will not return.
But now you may stare as you like and there’s nothing to scan;
And brushing your elbow unguessed at and not to be told
They carry back bright to the coiner the mintage of man,
The lads that will die in their glory and never be old.
Is my team ploughing?

“Is my team ploughing,
That I was used to drive
And hear the harness jingle
When I was man alive?”

Ay, the horses trample,
The harness jingles now;
No change though you lie under
The land you used to plough.

“Is football playing
Along the river-shore,
With lads to chase the leather,
Now I stand up no more?”

Ay, the ball is flying,
The lads play heart and soul;
The goal stands up, the keeper
Stands up to keep the goal.

“Is my girl happy,
That I thought hard to leave,
And has she tired of weeping
As she lies down at eve?”

Ay, she lies down lightly,
She lies not down to weep:
Your girl is well contented.
Be still, my lad, and sleep.

“Is my friend hearty,
Now I am thin and pine,
And has he found to sleep in
A better bed than mine?”

Yes, lad, I lie easy,
I lie as lads would choose;
I cheer a dead man’s sweetheart,
Never ask me whose.

ALFRED EDWARD HOUSMAN (1859–1936) from A Shropshire Lad
CHRISTOPHER Maltman

Winner of the Lieder Prize at the 1997 Cardiff Singer of the World Competition, Christopher Maltman read biochemistry at Warwick University and studied singing at the Royal Academy of Music.

On the opera stage, he has sung Dandini in La Cenerentola (La Monnaie, Brussels), Figaro in Il barbiere di Siviglia (Deutsche Staatsoper, Berlin), Laurent in Therese Raquin (San Diego Opera), Tarquinius in The Rape of Lucretia and Guglielmo in Così fan tutte (English National Opera) and the title role in Billy Budd (Welsh National Opera and in Seattle). His roles at the Glyndebourne Festival include Ned Keene in Peter Grimes, Sid in Albert Herring and Figaro in Le nozze di Figaro. Other engagements include Tarquinius at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich, a return to Glyndebourne as Papageno and roles at the Royal Opera House—Antonio in Thomas Adès’s new opera The Tempest, Guglielmo and Nardo in La finta giardiniera.

Concert engagements have been with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony, London Philharmonic, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Concentus Musicus, Boston Symphony and New York Philharmonic, under such conductors as John Eliot Gardiner, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Sir Simon Rattle, Sir Roger Norrington and Kurt Masur. He has appeared in recital at the City of London, Buxton and Cheltenham Festivals and in New York at both the Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall. He is now a regular guest artist in recital at the Vienna Konzerthaus, Wigmore Hall, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, and at the Edinburgh and Schubertiade Festivals.

His discography includes Vaughan Williams’ Serenade to Music and songs by Beethoven, Warlock, Holst, Somervell and Ireland. His recording of Schumann’s Dichterliebe (CDJ33105) was received with tremendous critical acclaim; he has recorded Schumann’s Liederkreis Op 24 with Graham Johnson (CDJ33108) and a Debussy album with Malcolm Martineau (CDA67357).