

# RICH AND STRANGE

a Senior Voice Recital

Daniel Chong, Tenor

Beatrice Lin, Piano

Felita Eleonora, Harp

6 May, Friday

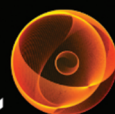
YST Concert Hall

540-640pm



Yong Siew Toh  
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Rich and Strange: A recital of 20th century English art songs

Daniel Chong, Tenor  
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*When that I was and a little tiny boy* Traditional

*Sweet and Twenty*  
*Pretty Ring Time*  
*Rest, Sweet Nymphs* Peter Warlock (1894–1930)

*Songs for Ariel:*  
*No. 1, Come unto these yellow sands*  
*No. 2, Full fathom five*  
*No. 3, Where the bee sucks* Michael Tippett (1905–1998)

*Canticle V: The Death of Saint Narcissus* Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)

*Tombeaux:*  
*No. 1, De Sapho*  
*No. 2, De Socrate*  
*No. 3, D'un fleuve*  
*No. 4, De Narcisse*  
*No. 5, De Don Juan* Lennox Berkeley (1903–1989)

*The Little Turtle Dove* Traditional

*Winter Words, Op. 52, No. 5,*  
*The Choirmaster's Burial* Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)

*Adoration*  
*Come to Me in My Dreams* Frank Bridge (1879–1941)

Good evening.

This recital was conceived as an exposition of twentieth-century British song by British composers. Tonight's programme is by no means an exhaustive representation of the genre, however, and only presents select works. Composers were chosen for their distinctive styles and contributions to the art song canon in a variety of musical idioms, and some lesser-heard composers were chosen over quintessential ones in order to bring their voices to light.

A key feature of this programme is its sung languages; save for a set of five songs in French, the music is mostly in English. This allows for better appreciation of the language's expressive capacity and its treatment as musical material, with its inherent speech rhythms and sound patterns. The interludes of traditional folk tunes remove the element of instrumental accompaniment, to allow for greater scrutiny of the use of verse and rhyming scheme. These have been included as an homage to the significance of British folk song, a trove of text and music that inspired the likes of Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gustav Holst.

The poets of the texts had no small bearing on the songs presented today. Among English writers, William Shakespeare is arguably the most famous and recognisable. Many of his songs have retained their popularity across centuries, and have been set to music by nearly every prominent British composer. The Shakespeare settings of Peter Warlock and Michael Tippett, though perhaps less well-known than Roger Quilter or Gerald Finzi's settings, possess their own merit and charm. The other poets of this programme were close contemporaries of their respective composers, which make the combinations of text and music unique to the time of their conception. Jean Cocteau, whose poetry was set to music in Lennox Berkeley's *Tombeaux*, was himself a key figure of twentieth-century modernism.

The twentieth century saw the reemergence of English art song after it had dwindled in the two centuries prior. Within a relatively short span of seventy-odd years, British composers produced songs in a great diversity of styles: the balance and lyricism of Peter Warlock and Frank Bridge, the French approach of Lennox Berkeley, and the expanded tonality found in Benjamin Britten and Michael Tippett's works.

It is with great pleasure that I sing these works for you this evening.

*When that I was and a little tiny boy*

Traditional

When that I was and a little tiny boy,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
A foolish thing was but a toy,  
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came unto my beds,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
With toss-pots still had drunken heads,  
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came to man's estate,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
'Gainst knaves and thieves men shut their gate,  
For the rain it raineth every day.

A great while ago the world begun,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
But that's all one, our play is done,  
And we'll strive to please you every day.

But when I came, alas! to wive,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
By swaggering could I never thrive,  
For the rain it raineth every day.

The text of this song is taken from the final scene of Shakespeare's play *Twelfth Night*, where Feste (a jester) breaks the fourth wall and sings to the audience. Following the resolution to a topsy-turvy chain of events, Feste adopts a philosophical and stoic tone. He relates a tale of a boy growing into a man who encounters the trials and tribulations of life, symbolised by the rain that "raineth every day". The man does not bemoan his suffering, however, but accepts it with a wistful "hey, ho". The song concludes with a resignation to the inevitability of life's troubles, but with a hope that the comedic play had brought some reprieve.

This traditional tune is typically sung in the play unaccompanied, or accompanied minimally with a lute. The song is simple and its melody unchanging, but belies a deeper, bittersweet message, mirroring how Feste went from household to household uttering philosophical truths that no one took seriously.

*Sweet and Twenty*  
*Pretty Ring Time*  
*Rest, Sweet Nymphs*

Peter Warlock (1894–1930)

'Peter Warlock' was the pseudonym under which Philip Heseltine published his musical compositions. This choice of name most likely stemmed from his time in Ireland where he dabbled in the occult, developing a preoccupation which eventually affected his psychological health. Apart from composing, he did editorial work on Elizabethan music and was a music critic. His innate gift for songwriting, bolstered by his knack for early music and the influences of composers Frederick Delius and Bernard van Dieren, altogether gave Warlock a unique perspective, manifested in a highly personal compositional voice. By the end of his short life, he had produced a remarkable body of work, including songs of abundant lyricism and considerable charm.

O mistress mine, where are you roaming?  
O stay and hear, your true love's coming  
That can sing both high and low

What is love? 'Tis not hereafter;  
Present mirth hath present laughter;  
What's to come is still unsure:

Trip no further, pretty sweeting;  
Journeys end in lovers' meeting  
Ev'ry wise man's son doth know

In delay there lies no plenty;  
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty;  
Youth's a stuff will not endure

*Sweet and Twenty* is a setting of 'O Mistress Mine', another song from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* sung by Feste, the jester. This light-hearted tune is a coy urge toward a lover, asking her to live in the present and heed the affection shown to her while she is young. Such a sentiment is a fitting musical interlude in a play that features a great deal of unbridled revelry. Warlock's setting is correspondingly playful and lilting, with a simple melody that seems to swing back and forth.

It was a lover and his lass  
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino  
That o'er the green cornfield did pass  
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time  
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding ding;  
Sweet lovers love the spring

This carol they began at hour  
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino  
How that a life was but a flower  
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time  
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding ding;  
Sweet lovers love the spring

Between the acres of the rye  
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino  
These pretty country folks would lie  
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time  
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding ding;  
Sweet lovers love the spring

And therefore take the present time  
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino  
For love is crowned with the prime  
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time  
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding ding;  
Sweet lovers love the spring

*Pretty Ring Time* is a setting of 'It was a lover and his lass', taken from Shakespeare's play, *As You Like It*. This song tells of two lovers frolicking "over the green cornfield" and between "[acres of] rye", with the slang phrase "hey nonino" being a cheeky reference to their sexual interaction. The rhyming of "spring time" with "ring time" is an intentional pairing, meant to create the association of spring as a prime season for marriage, while the onomatopoeic "ding a ding ding" evokes the sound of birdsong and bells. The syllabic setting of this text makes this a breezy, patter-like song, and the piano accompaniment varies with the intended depiction of each stanza. Warlock even cleverly conceals in the piano part the tune of the sixteenth-century carol 'Unto us is born a son', likely a reference to the "carol they began at hour".

Rest, sweet nymphs, let golden sleep  
Charm your star brighter eyes,  
While my lute her watch doth keep  
With pleasing sympathies.  
Lullaby, lullaby.  
Sleep sweetly, sleep sweetly,  
Let nothing affright ye,  
In calm contentments lie.

Thus, dear damsels, I do give  
'Good night', and so am gone:  
With your hearts' desires long live,  
Still joy, and never morn.  
Lullaby, lullaby.  
Hath eased you and pleased you,  
And sweet slumber seized you,  
And now to bed I hie.

While the author of the text for *Rest sweet nymphs* is not known, it was likely one who was contemporaneous to Shakespeare, for an earlier musical setting of this text was an eponymous madrigal by Francis Pilkington (ca. 1565–1638). No doubt it was Warlock's extensive knowledge of Elizabethan music that played a part in his discovery of this text. Pastoral and mythological elements were common in art and literature at that time, and this text is no different, being a lullaby sung to nymphs. Descending chords provide a gently rocking accompaniment that evokes the gesture of plucking a lute, while subdued dissonances give a quietly sparkling quality to the harmony.

*Songs for Ariel:*  
No. 1, *Come unto these yellow sands*  
No. 2, *Full fathom five*  
No. 3, *Where the bee sucks*

Michael Tippett (1905–1998)

Michael Tippett's compositional style morphed along with his personal growth and the circumstances of the time. While his earlier music was marked by a general conservatism, albeit with inklings of a burgeoning personal voice, his subsequent compositional output began to take on modernist approaches. Adopting newer compositional trends fulfilled his desire for the expressivity they offered. Of particular note, however, was his principled view that in the writing of songs, the composer's reaction to the poetry and his ability to create a sustained sense of 'situation' in the music was of chief importance. This view was made explicit in a publication in 1960, around the time that his music took on a more stark and severe tone. These altogether signalled a full maturity and decisiveness in Tippett's own compositional approach.

*Songs for Ariel* was composed later, in 1962, and takes its text from Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*. This trio of songs is so named as they are songs sung by the character Ariel, a sprite in service to a sorcerer. Originating from a play, these songs come with pre-existing dramatic context, and Tippett composed them with a level of theatricality fit for the stage.

Come unto these yellow sands,  
And then take hands:  
Courtsied when you have and kiss'd  
The wild waves whist,  
Foot it featly here and there;  
And, sweet sprites, the burthen bear.  
Hark, hark!  
The watch-dogs bark!  
Hark, hark! I hear  
The strain of strutting chanticleer  
Cry, Cock-a-diddle-dow.

Ariel sings *Come unto these yellow sands* to a shipwrecked sailor named Ferdinand, to whom she is invisible. The song beckons Ferdinand onto a beach, and has the magical effect of calming the waves and storm that destroyed his vessel. A chorus of "sweet sprites" respond to Ariel, and make animal noises to steer the sailor onto dry land. Tippett's writing captures Ariel's alluring disposition, while the piano accompaniment paints a vivid image of waves, sprites, dogs, and roosters.

Full fathom five thy father lies  
Of his bones are coral made  
Those are pearls that were his eyes  
Nothing of him that doth fade  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange  
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell  
Ding-dong, ding-dong  
Hark, now I hear them,  
Ding-dong, bell

*Full fathom five* is sung in the same scene as before, almost immediately after the previous song. Ariel continues to sing to the shipwrecked sailor as a disembodied voice, convincing him that his father had drowned in the storm. This setting's melancholic tone is created by minimalistic writing, while the harmony evokes a sense of illusion and enchantment.

Where the bee sucks, there suck I:  
In a cowslip's bell I lie;  
There I couch while owls do cry.  
On the bat's back I do fly  
After summer merrily.  
Merrily, merrily do I live now  
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

*Where the bee sucks* is the last of Ariel's songs in the play. While her previous songs were used to bewitch listeners, this song is sung out of spontaneity at the prospect of being released from her servitude, free to do as the bees, owls, and bats do. This merry song employs a great deal of \*word painting, especially on the words "cry", "fly" and "hangs", where multiple notes are sung for a single syllable.

\*a compositional technique where music mimics the literal meaning of lyrics



Benjamin Britten's series of five Canticles were written across the span of his compositional career, weaving a thread of conceptual thought through his corpus of work. Individually, these pieces are occasional in nature, composed as dedications to friends, rather than as parts of a larger whole. However, all of them share similar sources of inspiration; biblical and extra-biblical literature—hence the name Canticles. In doing so, these pieces take on a large thematic scale, usually concerning the profound topics of love, religion, war, and death. Britten also composed several successful operas in his lifetime, and while the Canticles are of smaller physical scale, they mirror Britten's artistic and psychological development in creating music of great magnitude.

*Canticle V: The Death of Saint Narcissus* is the last of the Canticles, and among the last handful of works the composer wrote. Even among the five Canticles, this final one sets itself apart. While previous Canticles were written for voice(s) and piano, this was written for voice and harp. Following a minimally successful heart operation, Britten's health declined, leaving him unable to play the piano, which led him to turn to the harp for its instrumental colour and expressive potential. In spite of his waning strength, the composer had lost none of his compositional prowess, composing a work of astounding economy and impact. His admiration and fascination for the harp proved particularly useful, for he exploited the techniques and capabilities of the instrument to great effect. Though the harp's timbre is lighter than the piano's, it remains ever-present in the soundscape and serves a fundamental narrative role.

Britten, possessing a heightened awareness of his own impending mortality, was haunted by the idea of death, and presumably resonated with *The Death of Saint Narcissus*. This poem by T.S. Eliot, whose work Britten greatly admired, is rife with multi-faceted symbolism. The titular character, Narcissus, is an amalgamation of three archetypal figures: Saint Sebastian, an early Christian martyr who later became a homo-erotic symbol, frequently painted with twisted legs and arrows to the heart; Saint Narcissus, who was acquitted of unfounded claims of homosexuality; and the mythological Narcissus, who died out of self-love. Together, they form the Narcissus of the poem, who attains an increasing recognition of his adolescent sexuality, struggling with it in the face of religious devotion. He undergoes a series of transformations, each a self-gratifying product of his own mind. These intensify into the height of carnage where Narcissus exults in arrows that pierce his skin, a scene that is both horrific and glorious. With death as the ultimate sensual experience, Narcissus is finally satisfied.

Several musical features are of note. The combination of harp and voice makes for an especially sparse musical texture that is generally austere, yet the music retains a lyrical quality. The harp's delicate tone also lightens the weighty subject matter, and conjures a sense of antiquity. Bitonality (the juxtaposition of two keys\*) features heavily in this work, to create a sonic struggle between Narcissus' identities. And throughout the work, the musical metre and tonal centre change often, to parallel the dynamics of the text and Narcissus' constant metamorphosis.

\*C# minor is occasionally superimposed on C major. The note E is common in both keys, possibly representing Narcissus himself.

Come under the shadow of this gray rock  
Come in under the shadow of this gray rock  
And I will show you something different from either  
Your shadow sprawling over the sand at daybreak, or  
Your shadow leaping behind the fire against the red rock:  
I will show you his bloody cloth and limbs  
And the gray shadow on his lips.

He walked once between the sea and the high cliffs  
When the wind made him aware of his limbs smoothly passing each other  
And of his arms crossed over his breast.  
When he walked over the meadows  
He was stifled and soothed by his own rhythm.  
By the river  
His eyes were aware of the pointed corners of his eyes  
And his hands aware of the pointed tips of his fingers.

Struck down by such knowledge  
He could not live men's ways, but became a dancer before God.  
If he walked in city streets  
He seemed to tread on faces, convulsive thighs and knees.  
So he came out under the rock.

First he was sure that he had been a tree,  
Twisting its branches among each other  
And tangling its roots among each other.  
Then he knew that he had been a fish  
With slippery white belly held tight in his own fingers,  
Writhing in his own clutch, his ancient beauty  
Caught fast in the pink tips of his new beauty.

Then he had been a young girl  
Caught in the woods by a drunken old man  
Knowing at the end the taste of his own whiteness,  
The horror of his own smoothness,  
And he felt drunken and old.

So he became a dancer to God,  
Because his flesh was in love with the burning arrows  
He danced on the hot sand  
Until the arrows came.  
As he embraced them his white skin surrendered itself to the redness of blood, and satisfied him.  
Now he is green, dry and stained  
With the shadow in his mouth.

*Tombeaux:*

Lennox Berkeley (1903–1989)

No. 1, *De Sapho* (Of Sappho)

No. 2, *De Socrate* (Of Socrates)

No. 3, *D'un fleuve* (Of a Stream)

No. 4, *De Narcisse* (Of Narcissus)

No. 5, *De Don Juan* (Of Don Juan)

Lennox Berkeley was born and raised in England, but had French ancestry, and was a committed Francophile. In a meeting with Maurice Ravel, he was encouraged to study with famed French pedagogue Nadia Boulanger in Paris. This provided more than enough impetus for him to pursue professional studies in a country whose cultural and artistic landscape was highly attractive to the young composer. There, Berkeley found an abundance of musical inspiration and immersed himself in the musical stylings of prominent local composers. He went on to develop a particular style that combined his French sensibilities with an English reserve, setting him apart from composers in the main English song tradition.

Berkeley arrived in Paris in 1926, and would frequent a haunt of Ravel's, where he befriended several leading artists and thinkers. These included members of the group Les Six (which functioned more as six individuals than a collective of composers), as well as Jean Cocteau, who shaped the group's ideals. Cocteau's set of poems, *Tombeaux*, was fashioned as a series of epitaphs. Five of them, set to music by Berkeley, memorialised different literary figures: Sappho; Socrates; a rivulet; Narcissus; and Don Juan. They bore Cocteau's signature offhandedness, and their brevity provided a catalyst for Berkeley to create a handful of modernist pastiches. Despite being written within the first year of his arrival in Paris, even before he had completed his professional studies, this early work is polished and focussed, clearly demonstrating the influences of Nadia Boulanger and Les Six.

*No. 1, De Sapho*

Voici, toute en cendres, Sapho,  
Dont ce fut le moindre défaut  
D'aimer, Vénus, les coquillages  
Que vous entr'ouvrez sur les plages.

Le feu qu'elle éteint dans la mer  
N'était pas la flamme des cierges;  
Comme fleurs rougissent les vierges,  
Sapho rougit comme le fer.

Ce feu dont ne reste que poudre,  
Tua jadis une cité.  
Mais soyons justes, car la foudre  
Y tomba d'un autre côté.

Non. Sapho vous apprit à lire,  
Vierges, dans son propre roman;  
Elle repose maintenant  
Entre les jambes de sa lyre.

Sur ce beau corps mélodieux  
Elle repose chez les dieux:  
Sapho, déesse médiane  
Entre Cupidon et Diane.

Of Sappho

Here, reduced to ashes, lies Sappho,  
whose smallest fault it was,  
Venus, to love the shells  
you pick up on the beaches.

The fire that she extinguishes in the sea  
was no candle flame;  
virgins blush like flowers,  
Sappho reddens like iron.

That fire, of which now only dust remains,  
in time past destroyed a city.  
But let us be fair, the thunder  
descended upon it from another source.

No. Sappho taught you, virgins,  
to read from her own story;  
she rests now  
between the feet of her lyre.

Upon this beautiful, melodious body  
she rests now, with the gods:  
Sappho, a goddess midway  
between Cupid and Diana.

[All translations by Roger Nichols (1939–)]

This first epitaph, centred around the archaic Greek poet Sappho, makes references to her status as a symbol of love between women. In this text, 'fire' is used to suggest burning, all-consuming passion, while archaic references to a lyre, and to the Roman mythological figures of Venus (beauty), Cupid (romance), and Diana (fertility) contextualise the setting. The most striking feature of this piece is Berkeley's use of bitonality, a technique fashionable at the time of its composition, particularly among composers of the Les Six. The unrelenting *ostinato* chords in the piano give the music stoic yet sensual undertones.

No. 2, *De Socrate*

Ce qui distingue cette tombe  
Des autres, soit dit en passant,  
C'est que n'y viennent les colombes,  
Mais, parfois, deux agneaux paissant.

Visiteuse, que ne vous vexe  
Ce sage victime des sots:  
C'est la grâce de votre sexe  
Qu'il aimait chez les jouvenceaux.

Of Socrates

What distinguishes this tomb  
from the others, let it be said in passing,  
is that doves never come here  
but, sometimes, two grazing sheep.

Fair visitor, let us not be angry with  
this wise man, the victim of fools:  
it was the grace of your sex  
that he loved in young men.

The second epitaph is centred around the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates. It is curious in its use of animalistic symbols. 'Doves' represent peace and messengers, while 'sheep' represent innocent youth and ancient wisdom. The image of two sheep may hark back to the relationships Socrates had with his pupils, ones that have conjectured speculations of his homosexuality. Set in an uneven metre (7/8), the music is cerebral and meditative. This song calls to mind Erik Satie, whose own *Socrate* was premiered eight years prior, and who had passed away just the year before in 1925.

No. 3, *D'un fleuve*

Aglaé, soeur d'Ophélie,  
Prise sans en avoir l'air  
Par son mal, par sa folie,  
Va se jeter dans la mer.

Of a Stream

Aglaë, the sister of Ophelia,  
secretly gripped  
by her mad sickness,  
goes off to throw herself into the sea.

The third epitaph references Ophelia, from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, who goes insane and eventually drowns. Aglaë, likely a character of the poet's making, follows in her sister's maddened footsteps and "throws herself into the sea". This piece is concise and abrupt, and its unprepared harmonic changes seem to mimic Francis Poulenc's witty compositional style.

No. 4, *De Narcisse*

Celui qui dans cette eau séjourne  
Démasqué, vécut s'intriguant.  
La mort, pour rire, le retourne  
À l'envers, comme un doigt de gant.

Of Narcissus

He who dwells in this water  
unmasked, was a puzzle to himself while he was alive.  
Death, as a joke, has turned him  
inside out, like the finger of a glove.

The fourth epitaph references Narcissus, who died out of an obsession with his own reflection in a pool. Death is personified here as one who has a sense of humour, turning Narcissus into a flower "as a joke". Berkeley's setting of this poem is suitably mysterious and peculiar, and the piano accompaniment invokes a mirror with its inverted but parallel lines. The words "comme un doigt de gant" are unaccompanied, as if to portray Death casually turning the five fingers of a glove inside out.

*No. 5, De Don Juan*

En Espagne, on orne la rue  
Avec des loges d'opéra.  
Quelle est cette belle inconnue?  
C'est la mort. Don Juan l'aura.

Of Don Juan

In Spain, they adorn the streets  
with boxes from the opera house.  
Who is that unknown beauty?  
It is death. Don Juan will have her.

The final epitaph references Don Juan, a fictional Spanish character most known for being a womaniser. This tribute is distinct from the rest in that Don Juan does not yield to Death as an inevitable victim, but takes her as his final conquest. The vivacious piece has an ostentatiously Spanish flair, most likely influenced by Ravel's own Spanish-flavoured works.

*The Little Turtle Dove*

Traditional

O can't you see yon little turtle dove  
Sitting under the mulberry tree?  
See how that she doth mourn for her true love:  
And I shall mourn for thee, my dear,  
And I shall mourn for thee.

The crow that's black, my little turtle dove,  
Shall change its colour white;  
Before I'm false to the maiden I love,  
The noon-day shall be night, my dear,  
The noon-day shall be night.

O fare thee well, my little turtle dove,  
And fare thee well for a-while;  
But though I go I'll surely come again,  
If I go ten thousand mile, my dear,  
If I go ten thousand mile.

The hills shall fly, my little turtle dove,  
The roaring billows burn,  
Before my heart shall suffer me to fail,  
Or I a traitor turn, my dear,  
Or I a traitor turn.

Ten thousand mile is very far away,  
For you to return to me,  
You leave me here to lament, and well-a-day!  
My tears you will not see, my love,  
My tears you will not see.

*The Little Turtle Dove* is a folk tune that appeared in the early eighteenth century, popular in England and America. Given that songs like these were transmitted aurally, many variants of the tune and its lyrics exist, and this form is one of several. All variants bear the same rhyming scheme and repetition of the final line of each verse, and their meanings are practically identical. In this plaintive tune, the voice of a lover bids farewell to his beloved, and compares his faithfulness to the constancy of the crow's plumage, the sun, and the ocean.

*Winter Words, Op. 52, No. 5,  
The Choirmaster's Burial*

Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)

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.

But t'was 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.

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 was  
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.

Such the tenor man told  
When he had grown old.

Britten's song cycle *Winter Words* is a set of eight songs with poetry by Thomas Hardy. The composer selected the poems and ordered them to create a narrative of reflection and remembrance of youth in the narrator's old age, hence the cycle's title. Each song focuses on an aspect of the narrator's life, and the fifth song in particular deals specifically with the death of a family member and the realisation of the callousness of adults.

*The Choirmaster's Burial* is akin to a ballad in its way of recounting a story, with its short lines giving it a sense of spontaneity. In it, the narrator recalls how the choirmaster requested a particular hymn be played at his funeral, to which the unsympathetic vicar paid no heed. The burial was thus without music. However, a band of what seemed to be angels appeared in the night by the choirmaster's grave to grant his dying wish.



Britten's musical setting utilises different melodic styles to differentiate the voice of the narrator and the vicar; the narrator's is lyrical and flowing, while the vicar's is angular and disjunct. Several key changes also mark the shifting of one event to the next. Britten also cleverly disguises the melody of 'Mount Ephraim' (the requested burial hymn) in the piano accompaniment. Of additional note is the composer's use of melismas for expressive purposes, showing the influence of Henry Purcell (1659–1695), a composer he greatly admired, and whose own folk songs Britten had made several arrangements of.

*Adoration*  
*Come to Me in My Dreams*

Frank Bridge (1879–1941)

If one were to trace the genealogy of British composers' teachers and students, they would find that Frank Bridge was part of a lengthy lineage of significant composers, himself having taught the likes of Benjamin Britten and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Bridge had been given a well-grounded musical upbringing which formed the basis of his development as a composer and musician. His earlier compositions, such as the three presented here, display a distinctly Romantic style of writing perhaps not unique to composer, but undoubtedly idiomatic and refined.

Asleep! O sleep a little while, white pearl!  
And let me kneel, and let me pray to thee,  
And let me call Heaven's blessing on thine eyes,  
And let me breathe into the happy air  
That doth enfold and touch thee all about,  
Vows of my slavery, my giving up,  
My sudden adoration, my great love!

The poem of *Adoration* was written by John Keats (1795–1821), and speaks of one whose lover has fallen asleep, a metaphor for having died. The bereaved voice calls upon the blessings of heaven unto his beloved, and mourns over his earthly chains, his waning will to go on living, the brevity of their time together, and his enduring devotion to her. Bridge wrote this as a meditative lament that grows from stillness into a broad climax of despair and anguish.

Come to me in my dreams, and then  
By day I shall be well again!  
For then the night will more than pay  
The hopeless longing of the day.

Or, as thou never cam'st in sooth,  
Come now, and let me dream it truth;  
And part my hair, and kiss my brow,  
And say - My love! why sufferest thou?

Come, as thou cam'st a thousand times,  
A messenger from radiant climes,  
And smile on thy new world, and be  
As kind to all the rest as me.

Come to me in my dreams, and then  
By day I shall be well again!  
For then the night will more than pay  
The hopeless longing of the day.

*Come to me in my dreams* uses poetry by Matthew Arnold (1822–1888), and was likely written in the year of his engagement to his future wife, whose father forbade their relationship. Their correspondence was only renewed some time later, giving this poem greater earnestness than meets the eye. Accordingly, Bridge sets this poem with a sentiment of longing and fervour, employing a balance of tension of release in the harmony and melodic contours, and with a more intense and active musical texture for the middle two stanzas.