

Naxos 8.570346 Judith Bingham: Choral Works

[01] **Salt in the Blood** *A ghost story*

Twilight's wreath bestows its vaporous glow on a glassy sea. A creaking ship drifts into view under halo-covered clouds.

O whisky is the life of man,
Whisky, Johnny,
O I'll get whisky where I can,
Whisky for me, Johnny.

O whisky here and whisky there,
Whisky, Johnny,
O I'll get whisky everywhere,
Whisky for me Johnny.

Small waves becoming longer,
numerous white caps, an
unsettling swell.

There's hornpipe dancing on the lower deck,
Whisky, Johnny,
Not a friend on the boat has Billy le Bec,
Whisky for me, Johnny.

The third mate calls for Daniel Stone,
Whisky, Johnny,
To show bad Billy how the dance should go,
Whisky for....

O which of them turns a better toe?
Whisky, Johnny,
A fight breaks out...

Force four!

Hornpipe I

Dog watch! Eight bells!
Force four, force five, force six –

Stronger breezes
Large waves beginning to form
More spray, squally weather,
Storm petrels, pelagic.

Hey don't yer see that black cloud arising?
Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe,
Up go the boys to furl the mizzen top-sail,
Way haul away...

A sudden squall, a dirty sea,
Caught by the wind, the ship
lurches, leewardly.

Dan slips and falls, did Billy help him on his way?
Way haul away, haul,
Billy's laughing.

Your bones are all broke, your dancing days are over,
Way haul away, salt in the blood!
Hey don't yer see that black cloud arising?

That black cloud

Cumulonimbus,
Long white patches of foam,
Waves blown into froth,
Violent storm.

Roaring gale and roaring seas,
Hail and sleet and snow, foaming on,
Force eleven, foaming on.

Force eleven.

Hornpipe II

The wind suddenly ceased, the ship covered with aquatic birds, thousands of them dying on the deck.

Razorbills (fast and straight)
Fog, seafog drifting etc...

Fulmars (gliding),
Shearwaters, seafog drifting, dark,
dank, cold, like spirits of those
lost at sea, thousands dying,
[touching the living] with their
clammy hands, drifting etc...

The birds are spirits of sailors lost at sea

Look at the sky-sail yard!
No, Daniel Stone
All green and wet with weeds so cold
Around his form green weeds had hold,
All dank his hair, all dim his eye,
He challenged them to climb so high.
Put up a moonsail, Billy!

Look, a cloud of bird souls,
Look, shearwaters,
the ghost, the ghost...

Tatters of weed, the mist

A moonsail, cloud cleaner,
Stargazer, skyscraper.

The mist had cleared, the sails were set,
A boy was sent to find Le Bec,
For we are homeward bound, we're homeward, homeward bound.
They found him hanging in the shrouds,
His neck festooned with green weed clouds,
For we..
In Dublin town I long to be,
and grieve no more...

Hornpipe III

...upon the sea.

Sources: Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort (*the Beaufort Scale*)
Charles A. Abbey (*Before the mast in the clippers*)
The log of the East Indiaman 'Buckinghamshire.'
Bram Stoker (*Dracula*)
Allan Villiers (journal on 'The Parma').
Traditional
Anon
Judith Bingham
selected and arranged by the composer.

[02] **The Darkness Is No Darkness**

The darkness is no darkness with Thee,
But the night is as clear as the day,
The darkness and the light (no darkness at all),
In Thee is no darkness at all,
But the night is as clear as the day.
Surely the darkness shall cover Thee?
In Him is no darkness at all.

(Extracted from Isaiah 26 and Psalm 139)

Thou Wilt Keep Him in Perfect Peace
(S.S. Wesley)

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,
Whose mind is stayed on Thee.
The darkness is no darkness with Thee,
But the night is as clear as the day.
The darkness and the light to Thee are both alike,
God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.
For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
For ever more.

(taken from Isaiah 26 and Psalm 139)

[03] **First Light**

Words by Martin Shaw (reproduced by kind permission)

Out from the dark You come,
From the unreachable reaches
Of universal scope You cross.
From the pointed boundless source
You vault Hell's negating margins.
Waiving Heaven's unbridled extravagance,
You station here purple-born and damp:
Primed for first light's piercing.

Does the disclosure of dream
Bridge the distance between
That which we do see
And that which we cannot see?

Out from the asylum of God's bearing
You come, released for freedom's shock.
Severed; death claims Your birth's residue.
Nothing is voiced around You, but pronounced
In the sigh of exhaustion's pale reprieve.
At Your breath's awakened expansion,
All eyes wait contracted to Your chest-fall.
One atom from You, earth's gasping relieves.

Does the disclosure of suffering
Bridge the distance between
That which we can feel
And that which we cannot bear?

Out from Woman's folds you stretch,
Your arms lie across Your breast,
Marking the junction of now and eternity.
You hold intimate our resistance;
Warm it out from its rigid hiding.
Now astride Her knee, Your hands bloom,
Arms spread to reveal red-raw exposure.
Graft us, the bruised, onto Your expense.

Does the disclosure of music
Bridge the distance between
That which hearing understands
And that which understanding cannot hear?

Out from the silence You sing.
Your voice, amber-toned and stilling,
Arises from the core of You, new-born.
Breath and song merge in wordless Word,
Resonant with Mary's practised art, yet new.
This music cannot be captured
For posterity's greed, but only overheard.
Would that crowded ears were cleared!

Does the disclosure of a journey
Bridge the distance between
That which journeying encounters
And that which it anticipates?

Out from the Source of paths unveiling,
You journey, yet to crawl, amble, spring.
You move on the breast of Mary's composure.
Relishing the air with dangling feet,
You sway, dance with her azure-freedom.
Soon enough the soles will thicken.
From our paths' grit, the insteps' veins will rise,
Pronounced by your pilgrim treading.

[05] **The Secret Garden**
Words and music by Judith Bingham

Botanical fantasy for
SATB and organ

The flowers' leaves serve as bridal beds which the Creator has so gloriously adorned with such noble bed curtains
and perfumed with so many soft scents that the bride groom with his bride might there celebrate their nuptials with so
much the greater solemnity.
Linnaeus (1707-1778)

For now I'm haunted with the thought of that
Heav'n-planted garden, where felicity
Flourish'd in every tree.
Lost, lost it is; for at the garden gate
A flaming sword forbiddeth sin
(That's I) to enter in.
Joseph Beaumont (1616-1699), The Garden

1. Ouverture

So He drove out Man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming
sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the Tree of Life.
(Genesis 3: xxiv)

The gates closed on their tears: the way back
Barred by fire and fear, they cringeingly moved on.
Shame and guilt trudged the stony road that leads from
Paradise to self-knowledge. Farewell to them.

2. Air de Musette

Now the night flowers open their pale eyes, and
Raise their haloed faces to the moon, their father:
Pittosporum, lonicera, carissa macrocarpa,
Stephanotis, trachelospermum jasminoides.
Their heady fragrance plumes on the air:
Angel's trumpets, amaryllids, and the
Night-flowering orchid, angraecum sesquipedale;
(The Star of Bethlehem, glistening in the humid air)
These are the bridal beds, perfumed and soft, awaiting
Their bridegrooms in the dewy night.

3. Vol de Nuit

Tumbling down the fragrance plumes come the
Hawkmoths and sphinx moths, mysterious and sombre
In their nocturnal plumage. The death's head sphinx,
Acherontia atropos, and, like a gorgeous tiny bird,
Macroglossum Stellatarum.
They navigate by scent in their longing for the
Sphingophilous flowers: Lindenia, Psychotria and the
Scented pathways of the night-shade family.
Strangest and rarest is the Star of Bethlehem
With its trailing nectar spurs, waiting, waiting for
Xanthopan morganii praedicta:
Morgan's Sphinx.

(Organ solo: the synergy between plants and insects)

4. Entr'acte

After a while, the angels left the Garden's gates, and men came back, curious to see the place
where it all happened. The tree became a shrine and many people came to stare at Paradise. They
put down paving stones, and charged an entry fee. All went well until, during some minor conflict,
the tree, a eucalyptus it was said, was caught in the cross-fire and destroyed. People went away,
the floor of the shrine cracked, and nothing grew but weeds.

5. Air de Nuit

In the night, the moon rose on Paradise,
The Tree bleached and fallen.
The creeping green fingers of bindweed,
Convolvulus sepium, ardently
Twisted and turned about it, like a
Mourning lover, longing.
The pointed folds of the flower buds
Opened out, moonwards.
The stamens, with their powdery anthers sway and sing:
Where are you? Night has come!
Through a crack in the earth, no more than dust itself,
The creature emerges,
Its papery wings quiver in the cool evening air,
It shrugs off its shroud,
Expands and shimmers in the moonlight.
Agius convolvuli,
(the Convolvulus Sphinx) transformed, ecstatic.
Earth becomes Air.

Below, tiny seeds stir - violets and veronica
Henbit and henbane, and
Like a speck of black dust, Brassica Nigra,
The common mustard seed.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.
(Matthew 13.xxi)