

Saturday 3 May (1.00pm): Stuart O'Hara (bass) and Marianna Cortesi (piano)

Elizabeth Lutyens: *Refugee Blues* (Auden)

David Blake: *Morning Sea* (Cafay)

Dawn Walters: *Pre-dawn* (Richard Kitchen)

Pre-dawn, a poem by Richard Kitchen, compelled Dawn to set the text initially because of the title but also because of the atmosphere captured in the text, which afforded many opportunities for word-painting. She enjoys setting poetry by living writers, having spent many years setting Shakespeare songs and sonnets, some of which have been broadcast on BBC radio and performed in the International Composers' Festival. Recent compositional endeavours include pieces workshopped by Quatuor Diotima and Ensemble Intercontemporain. She also writes piano and choral works, and is published by Banks Music.

An Alto soloist and small ensemble singer, Dawn Walters currently performs with Robert Hollingworth's ensemble The 24, with the York Oratory, and with Sheffield Cathedral choir. Dawn is also a deputy lay clerk for several cathedrals, including York Minster and Bradford Cathedral.

Dawn Walters

www.dawnwalters.wordpress.com

Pre-dawn by Richard Kitchen

Walking in the limbo hour,
early or too late, I'm out of time, unwelcome.
Something is disturbed that doesn't want me here,

so alien to trees;
aimless amid purpose; formless;
static in a world of growing,
vaster and more merciless than mine.
If I was ever of it, I'm outside it now.

Cracked with cold, its whisper in the escalating wind
forbids my entity,
commanding me to leave.

Jenny Jackson: *Collecting Stones* (Richard Kitchen)

Collecting Stones is the result of an invitation to compose a song for the Late Music Song Project. I loved receiving an email with sixteen new poems to choose from and I enjoyed the process of reading all of the poems and imagining how they could be set to music. I chose *Collecting Stones* by York-based poet Richard Kitchen because it is full

of words and imagery that lend themselves well to musical interpretation. The narrative implies a fragile recovery from grief of some sort, although there is a sense of optimism near the end which is rather uplifting. The visual imagery sets the scene in a garden where stones are being searched for and then passed 'from hand to hand' as a means for communication where words are perhaps too difficult. I loved the description of the stones as 'little moons, potatoes, rough and smooth', and hope I have augmented the poem in a way that Richard approves of!

Jenny Jackson

<http://www.jennyjacksoncomposer.com>

Collecting Sones by Richard Kitchen

Early clouds had blown away
and nearing noon you smiled
"I liked that story", like a child.
As we searched for stones in the garden
I counted the days of your silence
cast away, like pebbles over sea.

We collected stones like little moons,
potatoes, faces, rough and smooth, and one
all eaten out by acid tears;
and in its crystal womb
a tiny jewel of moisture gleamed and trembled,
only to evaporate.

The gathered stones were passed from hand to hand
like gifts, as ancient stories were,
in trust, as truth;
and in the rhythm of the giving on
your eyes unclouded like the dazzling day
and hearts grew whole which grief had made decay.
Robert Holden: *Flaneur* (John Gilham)

When the poems were shared with us 'Flaneur' caught my imagination. I looked up the word and knew that was the one I had to ask to set. A poem from the point of view of "a man who saunters around observing society" seemed perfect for a composer who does most of his sketching on the bus and walking across Bradford city centre to and from work.

It seems Bradford's juxtaposition of modernist and gothic revival architecture is reflected in my music, drawing inspiration by turns from renaissance composers and modernists

Thanks to Steve for organising and John for the words. I hope you enjoy my music.
Robert Holden

<https://robholden.bandcamp.com/>

<https://youtube.com/@robertholden3381?si=Ey5atGJK0XjMvank>

Flâneur by John Gilham

dark streets:
a black car slinks to a portico
where a doorman waits

government streets:
dirty pavements, armed guards,
dark secrets

moneyed lanes:
Threadneedle, Lombard,
dark suits: the spider and the fly

and working streets:
a woman's smile, a man's whistle;
a bright workshop
that would gladly respray
a black limousine.

a different city, steps away

Katie Laing: *Maker* (Richard Kitchen)

I set Richard Kitchen's poem '*Maker*' to music, which was a thoroughly enjoyable experience. From first reading the poem, I loved its rhythm and imagined a 6/8 dance-like feel fitting the words nicely, so was compelled to compose this beautiful poem as a haunting, minor folk song. The first melody came to me quickly and then I sat at the piano and improvised different folk-like melodies and experimented whereabouts I could potentially modulate to. During the piece, I briefly modulate from D minor to F major, C major and Ab major, symbolising an element of hope and joy. Once I had a melody and chords that I was happy with, I then began to intensify the piano accompaniment, which starts simplistically, outlining the calm yet haunting mood and then continues to build in intensity as the song grows in dynamic and register. Towards the end of the song, the vocal register lowers and the piano accompaniment thins in texture, ending very similarly to how the song began, as though nothing ever happened. This enhances the eerie atmosphere that I was aiming for.

Katie Laing

Instagram: [katie.e.laing.music](https://www.instagram.com/katie.e.laing.music)

Maker by Richard Kitchen

I have led you to walls, to trees, to holes, to stony places
on crooked paths of questions;
teasing, testing,
pushing, demanding
that what is granted should not be taken as such;
and still you come home, across the wilderness,
braving the slough, shunning temptation.
Baring your knees and your blessings, you always come home.

You praise me in the plaster casts,
you dance my name upon the manhole covers.
Windows that illuminate doctor your philosophy;
you speak, in many tongues, new sacraments;
go build your house of certainty
on faith that treasures ambiguity.
In my image truly are you made:
even I have questioned my design.

Thomas J Crawley: *Leather Heart* (Hugh Bernays)

Leather Heart by Hugh Bernays

I think my heart is made of leather
It must be of some such stuff
It gets worn in every kind of weather
And never says it's had enough

Some things get beaten in their treatment
I think it must be one of those
Perhaps she wants it for a garment
She looks so good in ragged clothes.

James Else: *Retratos IV* (Alan Gillott)

Retratos IV is the final piece in a song cycle based on four poems by Alan Gillott, each inspired by a different visual artist's portrait. This movement responds to Salomón Huerta's *Untitled Figure*, a work that presents only the back of the subject's head. In my setting, Gillott's concise poem is repeated four times, with each repetition shifting the emphasis to different parts of the phrase - echoing the anonymity and facelessness of the subject in the painting.

James Else

www.jameselse.co.uk

Retratos IV by Alan Gillott

Yet my faceless back
Set foursquare toward your gaze
Lets you see my face

Tim Brooks: *Jeer* (*Lizzie Linklater*)

Jeer (lyrics by Lizzi Linklater) was written several years ago as part of the Sounds Lyrical concert series, promoting music by local composers together with poetry by local poets. It was originally written for a baritone voice because that was the brief (as is today's concert) - which does raise the question of how the sentiment behind the words and music might change depending on the vocal register used.

Tim Brooks

Jeer by Lizzie Linklater

I was raking the garden;
bagging rotting leaves,
hunks of mud, cracked twigs.

Picking up sweet wrappers,
a doll's limb, twisted coat hangers,
when, just as the rain started,

they snapped into sentences.
Words wriggled out of the beech hedge,
marched across the laburnum,

paused to pose on the patio,
burrowed in the ivy, scrambled on the clematis
stomped devilish on the dustbin.

They whispered on the rising wind
whirled in the steady rain
taunted and jaunted and jeered.

I flung down my rake,
slipped my feet into the daisied lawn
and danced away.

They threaded behind me,
squabbling, tough,
bright and full.

But on and on I danced.
The daisies tugged me on,
the grass soaking up my sliced and broken heels.

David Blake: *Voices*(Cafay)

Stephen Dodgson: *Various Australian Bush Ballads, 2nd Series*

Bass-baritone **Stuart O'Hara** is a lay vicar in the Choir of Westminster Abbey under Organist and Master of the Choristers Andrew Nethsingha. He regularly broadcasts and records with the choir, most notably at the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II in 2022 and the coronation of King Charles III in 2023.

Stuart enjoys consort work with I Fagiolini, whose ongoing project to revive and record the polychoral works of Orazio Benevoli has been a particular highlight of the last few years. Stuart also sings regularly with The Carice Singers, notably in the official UK memorial performance for Kaija Saariaho at Kings Place, and recently performed Berio's *Cries of London* at Spitalfields Festival.

As a recitalist, Stuart has a fruitful relationship with York Late Music Festival and also sang in the Finzi project *Still Alive and Frying Bacon*, curated by Iain Burnside, at St Endellion Festival 2024. He regularly returns to his home city to perform the works of JS Bach with the Liverpool Bach Collective, of which he is a founder member.

He has a website, <https://stuartohara.wixsite.com/bass-baritone> with full upcoming engagements, media and more, and can be found on various social media at @ohasm1

Marianna Cortesi is an Italian pianist, researcher and academic and she works as Associate Lecturer in Music at the University of York. She studied piano performance in Italy at the Conservatorio G.B. Martini in Bologna, gaining a First-Class Honours degree, and took part in performance masterclasses with well-known pianists such as Daniel Rivera. Alongside her research activities, Marianna has been performing and teaching piano since 2015. She gained considerable experience of performing in Northern Italy, particularly in Bologna and has been actively performing in York since 2017, both as a soloist and in ensemble settings. In 2020 she performed Mozart's Piano Concerto K.503 with the University of York Chamber Orchestra and in recent years she has undertaken solo and ensemble lunchtime concerts in York and collaborated with the University of York Symphony Orchestra on several occasions. Upcoming performance includes a selection of contemporary works for the Late Music Concert Series with London-based baritone Stuart O'Hara. As a piano teacher, Marianna has regularly taught students of various ages (6-62) and levels, both privately and as an instrumental teacher at the Music Department, University of York.

Richard Kitchen is a York-based artist and writer with a background of Literature and Drama teaching in the UK and Spain. He is a co-founder of Navigators Art, a local collective of artists, writers, musicians and performers who engage in community projects and devise exhibitions and live events, including the Micklegate Arts Trail for the York Festival of Ideas.

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Hugh Bernays has been writing poetry since his teens, occasionally published and awarded prizes, has spent the majority of his life working in manual labour. This has given him time to study and develop his craft. He is currently writing on the origins of storytelling under the title: 'Goldilocks and Her Forebears'.

John Gilham lives in York, UK, where he passes his retirement with poetry, cycling, pubs, jazz, ferroequinology, and grandchildren. Three collections of his poetry have been published by Stairwell Books : *Fosdyke and Me and Other Poems* (2009), *Learning to Breathe* (2015), and *Where the Hares Are*(2019). *Footprints in the Mud* will be published in 2025. He is a former editor of *Dream Catcher* poetry magazine.

Alan Gillott is a poet, writer, broadcaster, composer, and singer. He has a following as a music and art critic and is known for his lyrical style based on internal structures. His observational poetry often highlights injustice and institutional irresponsibility. His poems have been described as “erudite and mellifluous, written with a musical ear for sound and rhythm, and far-ranging in their cultural references.”

His collaborative projects include a Keats retrospective in Rome, TEDx, Chapel FM, UoY and Two Rivers Radio; *The Poetry Show*; and Poetry for All.