



EVENT PROGRAMME

FOLK CONNECTIONS

Thursday, 5 February, 8.00pm

Picture Gallery, Founder's Building

Ruby Hughes Soprano

Huw Watkins Piano

EVENT REPERTOIRE

Henry Purcell (1659-1695; arr. Thomas Adès): *By Beauteous softness*

Henry Purcell (arr. Michael Tippett): *Music for a while*

Trad., arr. Benjamin Britten (1913-1976): *I wonder as I wander*

Trad., arr. Benjamin Britten: *How sweet the answer*

Cameron Biles-Liddell (b. 1997): *Under the Dome of Heaven*
(English Premiere)

Huw Watkins (b. 1976): *Echo*

Errollyn Wallen (b. 1958): *What's up doc*

Errollyn Wallen: *Peace on Earth*

Errollyn Wallen: *Jesus on a train*

Errollyn Wallen: *Rain*

There will be no interval during this evening's event.

Estimated event finish time: 9.15pm

Please no flash photography or visual/audio recording throughout the event.

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HENRY PURCELL (1659-1695)

By Beauteous Softness (arr. Thomas Adès)

Thomas Adès's four Purcell arrangements, *Four Songs*, were co-commissioned by Simon Yates and Kevin Roon, and Carnegie Hall. The World Premiere was given by Iestyn Davies and Thomas Adès in Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall, New York City on October 15, 2017. The collection is comprised of two of Purcell's *Tempest* songs 'Come Unto these Yellow Sands' and 'Full Fathom Five', alongside the much-loved 'An Evening Hymn' and 'By Beauteous Softness', the latter we will hear this evening.

By beauteous softness mix'd with majesty,
An empire over ev'ry heart she gains;
And from her awful pow'r none would be free,
She with such sweetness and such justice reigns.

Anon.

HENRY PURCELL (1659-1695)

Music For a While (arr. Michael Tippett)

This work for harpsichord, lute, bass viol and voice, originally composed in 1692, was arranged by Michael Tippett in the 1940s during a notable Purcell revival. The song presents a melancholic telling of the story of the Greek traditional myth of Oedipus. Oedipus, in this tale, tragically fulfils the prophecy that he will kill his father, marry his mother and lead to the downfall of his family. A mythical serpent being, named 'Alecto' is sent to punish Oedipus for killing his father. The song 'Music for a while' is a lament to calm 'Alecto' until its serpent extensions drop down and the being becomes harmless.

Music for a while
Shall all your cares beguile.

Wond'ring how your pains were eas'd
And disdaining to be pleas'd
Till Alecto free the dead
From their eternal bands,
Till the snakes drop from her head,
And the whip from out her hands.

Music for a while
Shall all your cares beguile.

John Dryden

BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913-1976)

I wonder as I wander

‘I wonder as I wander’ is a traditional Appalachian tune that was recorded by John J Niles in 1933. It is said that Niles heard a young girl, later named as Annie Morgan, was heard singing a fragment of this song originally which Niles then transformed into ‘I wonder as a I wander’ into an extended and complete vocal melody. This song’s mysterious birth is reflected in the small range of notes which suddenly leap then descend back down. As well as the free, ‘wondering’ melodic lines. The text depicts a reflection of the Christian nativity story.

I wonder as I wander, out under the sky,
how Jesus the Savior did come for to die
for poor ordinary people like you and like I;
I wonder as I wander, out under the sky.

When Mary birthed Jesus, 'twas in a cow's stall
with wise men and farmers and shepherd and all.
but high from God's heaven a star's light did fall,
and the promise of ages it did then recall.

If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing,
a star in the sky, or a bird on the wing,
or all of God's angels in heaven for to sing,
he surely could have it, 'cause he was the King.

I wonder as I wander, out under the sky,
how Jesus the Savior did come for to die
for poor ordinary people like you and like I;
I wonder as I wander, out under the sky.

BENJAMIN BRITTEN

How Sweet the Answer

Britten's setting of Thomas Moore's Irish folksong *How sweet the answer* was first performed at the Kammermusiksaal, Graz, Switzerland, by himself and Peter Pears on 24 April 1957. In his booklet note on the folksongs for Hyperion, Lewis Foreman notes also how the song was performed at Cecil Sharp House in honour of the Folk Song Society's Diamond Jubilee. Eric Roseberry describes the 'pentatonic imagery' of this setting, and talks of how 'Britten joins hands with Purcell in the 'echo song' genre, launched with *Come you not from Newcastle?*, and looks forward to one of Britten's own echo songs, the first in the cycle *The Poet's Echo*.

How sweet the answer Echo makes
To music at night;
When rous'd by the lute or horn, she wakes,
And far away, o'er lawns and lakes,
Goes answ'ring light.

Yet love hath echoes truer far,
And far more sweet,
Than e'er beneath the moonlight's star,
Of horn, or lute, or soft guitar,
The songs repeat.

'Tis when the sigh, in youth sincere,
And only then
The sigh, that's breath'd for one to hear,
Is by that one, that only dear,
Breath'd back again.

Thomas Moore

CAMERON BILES-LIDDELL (B.1997)

Under the Dome of Heaven (English Premiere)

Under the Dome of Heaven sets three poems that all depict nature in contrasting ways. In this work, I wanted to place the soprano at the forefront of the musical drama, as previous cycles of mine had always built upon my affinity towards the piano. These three short movements, have a traditional title (i.e. nocturne, gigue and postlude) that indicates their general mood as well as a more descriptive title that draws from the text being text.

Across the cycle the singer explores various moods and atmospheres, the first being contemplative and thoughtful, evoking the evening night sky from a text by Sera Teasdale. The second is rhythmic and full of vitality, taking inspiration from the baroque dance form. The third and final movement, is a choral and returns to the thoughtfulness of the opening movement. However this time, with a hint of nostalgia and melancholy which is explored in the poem by Christina Rossetti.

Composer's Note

Nocturne (Alone in the Night)

Alone in the night
On a dark hill
With pines around me
Spicy and still,

And a heaven full of stars
Over my head,
White and topaz
And misty red;

Up the dome of heaven
Like a great hill,
I watch them marching
Stately and still,
And I know that I
Am honored to be
Witness
Of so much majesty.

Sara Teasdale

Myriads with beating
Hearts of fire
That aeons
Cannot vex or tire;

Gigue (Dancing Upon the Shore)

Dance there upon the shore;
What need have you to care
For wind or water's roar?
And tumble out your hair
That the salt drops have wet;
Being young you have not known
The fool's triumph, nor yet
Love lost as soon as won,
Nor the best labourer dead
And all the sheaves to bind.
What need have you to dread
The monstrous crying of wind!

William Butler Yeats

Postlude (O Wind, where have you been?)

O wind, where have you been,
That you blow so sweet?
Among the violets
Which blossom at your feet.
The honeysuckle waits
For Summer and for heat.
But violets in the chilly Spring
Make the turf so sweet.

Christina Rossetti

HUW WATKINS (B. 1976)

ECHO

Echo was written for Ruby Hughes, and given its premiere, with Julius Drake at the piano, at Carnegie Hall, New York, on 13 October 2017.

It is the third piece (following my one-act opera *In the Locked Room*, and my song cycle with string orchestra, *Remember*) that I've written for Ruby's exquisite voice, which was very much in my mind as I wrote the music. There are five songs altogether, beginning with a setting of Christina Rossetti's 'Echo' which gives the cycle its title. After settings of Dickinson, Larkin and Yeats, the cycle ends with a short but searingly powerful poem by David Harsent. *Echo* was a co-commission between Carnegie Hall and the Presteigne Festival; it received its UK premiere on 25 August 2018 at St Andrew's Church, Presteigne performed by Ruby Hughes and Huw Watkins.

Composer's Note

ECHO

Come to me in the silence of the night;
Come in the speaking silence of a dream;
Come with soft rounded cheeks and eyes as bright
As sunlight on a stream;
Come back in tears,
O memory, hope, love of finished years.

Oh dream how sweet, too sweet, too bitter sweet,
Whose wakening should have been in Paradise,
Where souls brimfull of love abide and meet;
Where thirsting longing eyes
Watch the slow door
That opening, letting in, lets out no more.

Yet come to me in dreams, that I may live
My very life again tho' cold in death:
Come back to me in dreams, that I may give

Pulse for pulse, breath for breath:
Speak low, lean low,
As long ago, my love, how long ago.

Christina Rossetti

FOR EACH ECSTATIC INSTANT

We must an anguish pay
In keen and quivering ratio
To the Ecstasy.

For each beloved hour
Sharp pittances of years,
Bitter contested farthings
And coffers heaped with tears.

Emily Dickinson

IF GRIEF COULD BURN OUT

Like a sunken coal
The heart would rest quiet
The unrent soul
Be as still as a veil
But I have watched all night

The fire grow silent
The grey ash soft
And I stir the stubborn flint
The flames have left
And the bereft
Heart lies impotent

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WHEN YOU ARE OLD and grey and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

William Butler Yeats

BABY BLUE

She might be singing 'My buttie, my lolly, my blue-eyed boy'
As she stoops to take him up in joy,

then stops on a broken note, her own eyes full
as she catches a glimpse of the sky through the skull.

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ERROLLYN WALLEN (B.1958)

Selection from The Errollyn Wallen Songbook

All these songs were written from my heart and in a state of grace. At last they have made the journey from my battered manuscript sketchbook where they were often feverishly scribbled down. I am very pleased to be able to share them in this book.

Improvisation is an important characteristic of my performances. In some songs in this book I have retained elements of my own style of improvisation, particularly in the piano solos and in some vocal lines.

In others I have given a bare skeleton, designed to act as a springboard for flights of fancy. I encourage the performer, whether from a pop, classical, folk or jazz background, to feel free to imbue their performances of this music with their own creative spirit.

Composer's Note

WHAT'S UP DOC?

Sometimes I get so lonely
that I eat the television
Sometimes I get so lazy
that I eat the television

*What's up Doc?
Is it the words you say
Or the way you say it?*

Sometimes I get so cold that I,
I hug the television
Sometimes I get so crazy
that I hug the television

*What's up Doc?
Is it the words you say
Or the way you say it?
The tears fall in my soup
And dance around the room
To the tune that's in the news
Ev'ry one sings
Ev'ryone is smiling
The colours on the screen
Confound my misery*

Sometimes I get so weary that
I drink the television
Sometimes I get so churlish
that I drink the television

PEACE ON EARTH

And snow falls down on me.
Peace on earth.
The night is dark and soft.
Peace on earth.
The lights that sparkle in the square, The smoke the lingers in the air.
Peace on earth.

And grace falls down on me.
Peace on earth.
The dark will turn aside.
Peace on earth.
The fires that burn in ev'ry hearth
Do sing out praise of Christmas past.
Peace on earth.

Hear them singing.
Peace on earth.

JESUS ON A TRAIN

Rolling hills go past this place I'm in
Rolling land reminds me that I can
Fall from grace
Half this world will eat their sandwiches
So confident that life was and shall remain
So sure
The middle of the night finds him crying
And the stone is covered in blood
Children huddle from bullets raining down
And so hungry
And while you talk I see pain buried deep in your lips
And on your hand gold tells me
Nothing about love
Still we're sure
So sure
Rolling hills go past this place I'm in

Rolling land reminds me that I can
Fall from grace
Rolling hills
Yet we're still so sure

RAIN

And another day
As I rise up
To greet the rain
And another year
Since we first heard
There would be
No rain at all
But how wonderful is the rain
You should find yourself
Something that's big and bright
And orange
Maybe I should
Paint myself a large square
Of
Blue
But how wonderful is the rain

OUR PROGRAMME NOTES

Unless otherwise stated, all of our programme notes have been written by a team of student volunteers enrolled onto the University's Concert Management & Artist Personnel Programme.

This event is presented as part of the International Concert Series 2025-2026 - VOX HUMANA - at Royal Holloway University of London

EVENT PERFORMERS

RUBY HUGHES SOPRANO

Former BBC New Generation Artist, winner of both First Prize and Audience Prize at London's 2009 Handel Singing Competition, Ruby also holds a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award and was shortlisted for a 2014 Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award. Through her blossoming catalogue of recordings and lovingly curated performances, she has become known for her interpretations of the music of the baroque and 20th and 21st Century.

Given her background and her wide range of interests, it comes as no surprise that Ruby is a passionate programmer, curator and collaborator. She has forged particularly close relationships with artists such as Laurence Cummings, Joseph Middleton, Jonas Nordberg, Natalie Clein and Julius Drake, Huw Watkins, United Strings of Europe, The Manchester Collective and the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra. This season 23/24 she was invited to curate and perform in a series of three concerts for BBC Northern Ireland as well as to present Inside Music for BBC Radio 3.

Ruby's captivating capacity for communication and connection with audiences has lead to invitations to perform at Wigmore Hall, Berlin Philharmonie, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Vienna Konzerthaus and Musikverein, Palais Garnier and Philharmonie de Paris and in the US at both the Frick Collection and Carnegie Hall, New York. Festival appearances have included the BBC Proms, Cheltenham, Edinburgh International, Newbury, Aldeburgh, Aix en Provence, Gent Festival OdeGand, Göttingen, Marlboro and Spitalfields. She has worked with a host of conductors including Rinaldo Allesandrini, Ivor Bolton, Laurence Cummings, Thierry Fischer, Pablo Heras Casado, Jun Markl, Juanjo Mena, Gianandrea Nosedà, Marc Minkowski, Hervé Niquet, Thomas Søndergård, John Storgårds, and Osmo Vänskä.

On the opera stage Ruby has sung productions for Theater an der Wein (Roggiero in Rossini's Tancredi, and Fortuna in



‘L’Incoronazione di Poppea), Aix-en-Provence Festival (Euridice L’Orfeo), Opéra de Toulon (Rose Maurant Street Scene) and Potsdamer Winteroper (title role, Theodora) and in the UK has performed major roles with English National Opera, Garsington Opera and for Scottish Opera.

Ruby's vibrant discography continues to grow and includes solo recital recordings for major independent labels such as BIS, Chandos, Delphian and Hyperion. Her first solo orchestral disc is a tribute to Giulia Frasi, Handel’s lyric muse. (OAE Laurence Cummings Chandos records). Recorded for BIS and dedicated primarily to female composers of the 17th century, 'Heroines of Love & Loss' was released to huge critical acclaim, receiving a Diapason d’or award. ‘Clytemnestra’, the highly praised album of orchestral songs by Mahler, Berg and Rhian Samuel, in collaboration with BBCNOW, received a nomination for a Gramophone Award. Ruby has recorded Mahler Symphony No. 2 with the Minnesota Symphony under Osmo Vänskä, a solo recital disc with Joseph Middleton titled ‘Songs for New Life and Love’ including works by Mahler, Ives and Helen Grime and a programme with United Strings of Europe, featuring Golijov’s ‘Three Songs for Soprano and String Orchestra.’

Recent releases include the critically acclaimed ‘Echo’ with pianist and composer Huw Watkins and ‘End of my Days’ with the Manchester Collective, which was record of the month in the BBC Music Magazine and received 5* in the Times. Future recording projects for BIS include ‘Amidst the Shades’ with lutenist Jonas Nordberg, and ‘Inheriting the Earth’ with United Strings of Europe. A further recording with the Manchester Collective is due to be released later this year featuring a commission by Edmund Finnis together with Britten’s ‘Les Illuminations’. This programme was rapturously received whilst on tour in the UK in 2023.

Ruby’s passion for performing new repertoire has also led to her becoming a champion of female composers. Pieces by Helen Grime, Deborah Pritchard, Judith Weir and Errollyn Wallen have been commissioned for her.



HUW WATKINS

PIANO

Huw Watkins was born in Wales in 1976. He studied piano with Peter Lawson at Chetham's School of Music and composition with Robin Holloway, Alexander Goehr and Julian Anderson at Cambridge and the Royal College of Music. In 2001 he was awarded the Constant and Kit Lambert Junior Fellowship at the Royal College of Music, he now teaches composition at the Royal Academy of Music.

As a pianist, Huw Watkins is in great demand with orchestras and festivals including the London Sinfonietta, Britten Sinfonia, the BBC orchestras and Aldeburgh and Cheltenham Festivals. He has performed globally at concert halls including at the Barbican, the Wigmore Hall, the Library of Congress in Washington and the Smithsonian Institute. Strongly committed to the performance of new music, Huw has given premieres of works by Alexander Goehr, Tansy Davies, Michael Zev Gordon and Mark-Anthony Turnage. He recently presented a programme of Hans Werner Henze's piano works at the BBC's Total Immersion day at the Barbican. UK recent appearances include Newbury and Peasmarsh Festivals, Wigmore Hall, Eaton Square, Kettle's Yard Cambridge, Saffron Walden, Glasgow, Bath. Further afield, Ferrara, Columbus (USA) with ProMusica Chamber Orchestra, Domaine Forget and Toronto Summer Music Festival.

A favourite partner for chamber collaborations, Huw Watkins performs regularly with his brother Paul Watkins, as well as Alina Ibragimova, James Gilchrist, Daniel Hope, Nicholas Daniel, Sebastian Manz, Mark Padmore, Carolyn Sampson, and Alexandra Wood. Recently Huw has featured as both Composer in Residence and pianist at festivals including Presteigne and Lars Vogt's 'Spannungen' Festival in Heimbach, Germany, as well as with the Orchestra of the Swan (2012–14).

Huw Watkins is one of Britain's foremost composers and his music has been performed throughout Europe and North America. Huw's works have been performed and commissioned by the Nash Ensemble, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, Belcea Quartet, Elias Quartet, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, BBC Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra and Cincinnati Chamber

Orchestra. Highlights include his acclaimed Violin Concerto premiered at the BBC Proms by Alina Ibragimova and the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Edward Gardner, Piano Concerto premiered by BBC NOW, London Concerto premiered to mark the London Symphony Orchestra's centenary, Double Concerto premiered at the BBC Proms with BBC NOW conducted by Jac van Steen and In My Craft of Sullen Art for tenor and string quartet premiered at the Wigmore Hall by Mark Padmore and the Petersen Quartet. Huw was Composer-in-Association with BBC NOW for three years 2015-2018.

Huw Watkins is regularly featured on BBC Radio 3, both as a performer and as a composer. His recordings include a disc of Mendelssohn's cello and piano works with his brother Paul Watkins (Chandos), British sonatas for cello and piano with Paul Watkins (Nimbus), Alexander Goehr's piano cycle 'Symmetry Disorders Reach' (Wergo), and Thomas Adès' song cycle 'The Lover in Winter' with the countertenor Robin Blaze (EMI Classics). Most recently, NMC Records have released a disc dedicated to Huw Watkins' work entitled 'In my craft of sullen art' (NMC). The disc showcases Huw's 'outstanding pianism' (Andrew Clements, The Guardian) and reveals him as 'one of the most rounded composer-musicians in the UK' (Andrew Clark, Financial Times).

Department of Music

Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

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