

OPHELIA *

songcycle for mezzo-soprano and piano

by

Trevor Hold

1. HER SONG OF DEFIANCE

Look at me if you dare!

Keep away!

Or my grief will madden you.

Stay where you are

And leave me to my despair.

For what can you know

Of the sores of the soul,

The burns in the brain,

The horrors that stalk the cellars of the mind?

Let the wild sun spin like a top through the sky,

And the crazy moon hunt the night with her pack of stars,

Let the whole weary world judder and creak:

I do not care.

Rain and wind and darkness are my companions now.

Once I was young and pretty,

Admired by all the men around.

They gave me presents

Of flowers and jewels,

All vying for my company.

But who wants the scrawny limbs of a wild-eyed hag?

They come now only to smirk and stare,

To taunt and jeer at me like a caged bear.

Let the seas and oceans spill from the earth,

And the moon and stars fall out of the sky,

Let the whole weary world shudder and crack:

I do not care.

Rain and wind and darkness are my companions now.

So look at me if you dare!

Keep away!

Or my grief will madden you.

Stay where you are

And leave me to my despair.

For what can you know

Of the burns in the brain,

The sores of the soul,

The horrors that stalk the cellars of the mind?

* Broadcast R3 16th April 1982 & 11th Jan. 1983
(Margaret Castle & Bernard Roberts)

2. BONNY SWEET ROBIN

Where have you gone to,
My shy deer?
Come, my love,
And lay your gentle head upon my lap.

He fled away
Into the green forest,
Vanished away in a thicket of leaves.
And now the jay
Tears down the canopy
With its screams
And rackways echo with raucous laughter.

Where have you gone to,
My shy deer?
Come, my love,
And lay your gentle head upon my lap.

The world has curdled
And my life tinned sour.
Birds litter the woods and fields,
And trees grow like scabs on the landscape,
Lining the road like skeletons.
I am alone
In an alien world
With no one to listen to my dreams.

O where have you gone to,
My shy deer?
Come, my love,
And lay your gentle head upon my lap.

3. WATCHING EYES

The gillyflowers spy on me.
Clematis and honeysuckle
Stretch across the garden fence
And furtively listen at the door.
Even my roses
That I tended so carefully,
Even my roses spy on me,
Prying in their silent ways.

The fields are full of watchers too.
The kestrel brooded against the sky,
The weasel crouching in the hedge.
Even the sun and moon,
The bright eyes of night and day,
Keep their vigil,
Watch and wait,
Prying in their silent ways.

4. TO THE MOON

Cold, bright bird
Gazing from your nest in the sky,
How I would possess you!

Once I had a bird of my own.
I fed him with the sweetest food,
With choicest scraps from my own hands.
But he beat his wings against the cage
And would not sing for me.

Cold, bright bird
Gazing from your nest in the sky,
How I would possess you!

5. HER SONG OF TRIUMPH

Come near me if you dare,
You with your taunts and jeers.
Come at your peril!
For this is a magic garden,
Full of hidden eyes and secret ears.
Beware my cabal of roses,
My coven of gillyflowers!

x x x x x x x

Cat and weasel, crow and mouse,
Sit in a circle by this house.
Mouse and weasel, cat and crow,
Warn of danger, hint of woe!

Beware, beware!
The hare on fire,
The brindled cat
Asleep in the byre.

Beware, beware!
The crack in the bowl,
The gusting curtain
And the screeching owl.

Cat and weasel, crow and mouse,
Sit in a circle by this house.
Mouse and weasel, cat and crow,
Warn of danger, hint of woe!

Beware, beware!
The beckoning light,
The blue firedrake
In the night.

Beware, beware!
The shooting star,
And voices whispering
From afar.

I wear the powers of night
Like a charm upon my wrist.
Rain and wind and darkness
Are my companions now!

x x x x x x x

The moon shall be my chariot,
The stars shall be my team
And we'll outride the laggard sun
And day be lost forever.

And we shall take the mountains
And toss them in the ocean,
We'll hunt the magic unicorn
And tie it to a rainbow.

And we shall plough the heavens
Till the sky is overturned,
And build ourselves a home
And begin our lives again.

6. ENVOI

Love,
My love
Has fled away,
Taking the sunlight,
Taking the bright day,
Leaving me here with the night
And the silent moon with its tattered coat of stars.

May the good stars warm me
And the moon companion me
And the dark night
In its gloom
Enwrap me,
O my love, O
My love!.....

Libretto begun: February 1977
Music completed: September 1979

Trevor Hold

f

horrors ——— that stalk ——— the cellars ——— of the

Bia
Red.

Slightly faster: $\text{♩} = c 152$

mind? ——— *mp* (lyrical) Let the wild sun

Red.

spin like a top — through the sky, And the cra- zy moon hunt the

Red.

night with her pack — of stars, ——— Let the whole weary world

Red.

cresc. *f* Slightly slower: $\text{♩} = c 120$
dim.

judder and creak: ——— I ——— do not care. ———

4/4 sfmf dim. sustained
Red.

p intensely

Rain and wind and dark-ness

p *dim*

dim. *p* Slowly, delicately: $\text{♩} = c 100$

are my com-pan-ions now.

pp *pp* ⁶ mark the tune

Red. *

p innocently

(hold back slightly) Once I was young and pretty,

Ad-mired by all the men a-round. They gave me

presents Of flowers and je-wels, All vying for my

com - pa - ny.

Suddenly quicker: freely
 (RECIT.) *f* But who, — who — wants the scrawny limbs of a wild-eyed hag?

sfmf with voice
f
 Ped.
 Bra

f (quasi accel.) *veloce* *pp*

(Ped.) → Bra

freely: slower than before
mp They come now only to smirk and stare, — — — — — To taunt and

Bra OSTINATO *v. fast* *cresc.* *approx.*

begin slowly and speed up to — — — — —

(Ped.) *

Very slow: ♩ = c 63
 jeer at me — like a ca-ged bear.

f *p* *dim. slightly* *poco sf*

Bra
 clear pedal gradually
 Ped *