

## Sleeve notes

### The Beachcomber

Lynne Plowman

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There are two works which form the framework for this album, both composed in 2017 - *A Field Guide to Pebbles* (five short pieces for percussion duo) and *Songs of the Sea Dreamer*, a song-cycle for tenor and harp - settings of four poems by Russell Hoban. As with much of Hoban's work, the subconscious – dreams, imagination and obsession – perforate his 'ordinary' world. I have drawn these four poems together, to tell a story of love, loneliness and the sea. The individual movements are separated and intertwined with short instrumental solos and duos composed during the last twenty years. Curating this album has brought together themes and sound-worlds in my music that perhaps I hadn't connected before.

Huge thanks go to all the wonderful musician friends who have commissioned these pieces and contributed to this recording with special thanks to producer Steve Plews.

### 1. Logs and Shells

Percussion Duo (from *A Field Guide to Pebbles*)

Recorded by O Duo (Owen Gunnell and Oliver Cox) at Tŷ Cerdd Studio, Cardiff on 14th June 2018. Published by Composers Edition.

*A Field Guide to Pebbles* (2017) is a collection of five short percussion duos, funded by the Arts Council of Wales. This first piece in the set, *Logs and Shells*, uses log drums and temple blocks with pedal bass drum and congas.

### 2. Fred to Samantha

Tenor and Harp (from *Songs of the Sea Dreamer*)

Words by Russell Hoban

Recorded by Michael Bennett (tenor) and Sandrine Chatron (harp) on 15th August 2018, Turner Sims Concert Hall, Southampton University. Commissioned by Michael Bennett and Sandrine Chatron with funding from the Britten-Pears Foundation. Published by Composers Edition.

*Songs of the Sea Dreamer* (2017) are settings of four poems by Russell Hoban.

(Poems by permission of The Russell Hoban Trust)

Fred to Samantha

*I've read somewhere: on Chesil Beach,  
the sea sorts pebbles, each from each,  
from large to small,*

*and smooths them all  
with grinding, rubbing, rolling, rounding,  
in the clicking tidewash sounding  
under the gull's cry  
and the long, lone sigh  
of the wind.*

*I wondered, in my thoughts of you,  
just how the two of us might do:  
though I am short and you are tall  
I hoped you would return my call;  
I hoped the telephone would ring  
to make my heart triumphant sing.  
I hoped, in every wind and weather  
the two of us might rub together.*

*But no, long silence fills the day  
and all my hopes have ebbed away.  
I think perhaps some colder sea  
sorts me from you and you from me.*

### **3. Pedalling Man**

Percussion Duo (from *A Field Guide to Pebbles*)

Recorded by O Duo (Owen Gunnell and Oliver Cox) at Tŷ Cerdd Studio, Cardiff on 14th June, 2018. Published by Composers Edition.

*Pedalling Man* is written for a set of thirteen “Almglocken” (tuned cowbells) and a marimba playing in the same pitch range. I enjoyed exploring the subtle difference in the sounds of tuned metal and wood. The title of this piece comes from another poem by Russell Hoban. “*The Pedalling Man*” describes a weather vane mounted to the roof of his house.

### **4. Mermaid**

Tenor and Harp (from *Songs of the Sea Dreamer*)

Words by Russell Hoban

Recorded by Michael Bennett (tenor) and Sandrine Chatron (harp) on 15th August 2018, Turner Sims Concert Hall, Southampton University. Commissioned by Michael Bennett and Sandrine Chatron with funding from the Britten-Pears Foundation. Published by Composers Edition.

Mermaid

*Mermaid, mermaid,  
green-glimmering in the deeps,  
pearly-naked gliding  
where the Kraken sleeps!  
Ancient is the ocean of my mind;  
In its full-moon waters  
you I find,  
mermaid!*

## **5. Panjangle**

Percussion Duo (from *A Field Guide to Pebbles*)

Recorded by O Duo (Owen Gunnell and Oliver Cox) at Tŷ Cerdd Studio, Cardiff on 14th May 2018. Published by Composers Edition.

*Panjangle* is composed for pots and pans - in this case four upturned woks - alongside a range of drums played lightly with the fingers (two tom-toms, three congas and three bongos) and a Shekere (a West African percussion instrument made from a dried gourd with beads or shells woven into a net covering the gourd.)

## **6. The Mermaids' Lagoon**

Solo Harp

Recorded by Lucy Wakeford, Manchester University, September 2002. Published by Chester Music Ltd.

*The Mermaids' Lagoon* was composed for harpist Elinor Bennett in 1995 when I was just getting started as a composer. Elinor was very generous with her time, and invited me to her Cardiff flat so that I could learn about composing for the harp. I had just pitched an idea for a community opera based on JM Barrie's Peter Pan, which never came to fruition, but wrote this piece for Elinor based on this description from the book:

*"If you shut your eyes and are a lucky one, you may see at times a shapeless pool of lovely pale colours suspended in the darkness; then if you squeeze your eyes tighter, the pool begins to take shape and the colours become so vivid that with another squeeze they must go on fire. But just before they go on fire you see the lagoon. This is the nearest you ever get to it on the mainland, just one heavenly moment; if there could be two moments you might see the surf and hear the mermaids singing..."*

## **7. Lullaby for lanto**

Solo Piano

Recorded by Joanna Lam at Felsted School Essex, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2019. Commissioned by Presteigne Festival of Music and the Arts with funds from the Colwinston Trust. Published by Composers Edition.

*Lullaby for lanto* (2007) was the first piece I composed following the birth of my son in December 2006.

## **8. Harrison's Stone**

Percussion Duo (from *A Field Guide to Pebbles*)

Recorded by O Duo (Owen Gunnell and James Harrison) at Ty Cerdd Studio, Cardiff on 12th December 2018. Published by Composers Edition.

In 2012 I was awarded a Creative Wales Award by the Arts Council of Wales. This bought me some time to take stock, and refresh and renew my composition technique. I was mentored by the wonderfully generous Sir Harrison Birtwistle. At my first visit to his home

in Wiltshire, he showed me a pebble picked up on Aldeburgh beach. He set it rocking on the surface of a glass table. It moved about erratically, settling into a pattern, then suddenly changing direction and rhythm at unexpected moments. Since that simple lesson, I've introduced much more rhythmic freedom into my music - playing with changing pulses and breaking up the regular repeating patterns from my earlier music. *Harrison's Stone* uses a similar instrumentation to *Logs and Shells* - with a six-note scale of log drum and temple block pitches for one player, and congas, bongos and temple blocks for the second player, tuned to roughly the same pitches.

## **9. Another set of footprints in the snow (after Debussy)**

Solo Piano

Recorded by Joanna Lam at Felsted School Essex, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2019. Published by Composers Edition.

*Another set of footprints in the snow* (2018) is based on the Debussy Prelude "...des pas sur la neige". It was commissioned by York Late Music Festival as one of ten new commissions to commemorate the centenary of Debussy's death. Each piece starts with a minute of a Debussy solo piano piece before journeying into the composer's own sound-world. It was first performed by James Willshire on 1st September 2018 at St Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel, York.

## **10. Long, Lone**

Tenor and Harp (from *Songs of the Sea Dreamer*)

Words by Russell Hoban

Recorded by Michael Bennett (tenor) and Sandrine Chatron (harp) on 15th August 2018, Turner Sims Concert Hall, Southampton University. Commissioned by Michael Bennett and Sandrine Chatron with funding from the Britten-Pears Foundation. Published by Composers Edition.

Long, Lone

*Long, long, long and lone  
is the selkie's song when the storm winds moan,  
is the sigh of the sea as it rubs the stone,  
is the word of the sea that lives in the bone.*

*Long and lone is the gliding flight  
of the albatross in the dawn's grey light  
on its wide white wings where the winds blow high  
over the waves where the sea-ghosts cry.*

*Long and lone is the sea I find  
that sighs on the shore at the edge of my mind;  
long, long, long and lone  
is the word of the sea that lives in the bone.*

## 11. Bell Patterns

Percussion Duo (from *A Field Guide to Pebbles*)

Recorded by O Duo (Owen Gunnell and James Harrison) at Tŷ Cerdd Studio, Cardiff on 12th December 2018. Published by Composers Edition.

*Bell Patterns* explores slower gamelan-like textures, using Almglocken and Crotales alongside a combination of tuned gongs and bowls.

## 12. The Owl-Woman

Tenor and Harp (from *Songs of the Sea Dreamer*)

Words by Russell Hoban

Recorded by Michael Bennett (tenor) and Sandrine Chatron (harp) on 15th August 2018, Turner Sims Concert Hall, Southampton University. Commissioned by Michael Bennett and Sandrine Chatron with funding from the Britten-Pears Foundation. Published by Composers Edition.

The Owl-Woman

*“Do you love me?” says the owl-woman,  
long legs reaching for the ground as she lands,  
yellow eyes burning into mine.  
Snowy white and speckled brown she is, from the  
North she comes to my dreams and says,  
“Do you love me?” always the same, from  
the North, where the ice bear  
swims in the sea, miles from the land, never lost.  
“Yes,” I say, “I love you.”  
“Do you think I am beautiful?” says the owl-woman,  
sunlight through her wings, turning and turning,  
yellow eyes burning. “Say it,” she says  
“Yes,” I say, “you are beautiful.”  
“I know,” she says. “Now you can sleep.”*

## 13. floating turning spinning

Oboe d’amore and Harp

Recorded by Okeanos (Jinny Shaw – oboe d’amore, Lucy Wakeford – harp) at Manchester University in September 2002. Commissioned by Okeanos with funds from the David James Music Trust and the RVW Trust. Published by Chester Music Ltd.

From 2000 to 2001 I held the position of Composer in Residence at Wingfield Arts in Suffolk. I lived and worked on-site, with access to beautiful galleries and gardens next to a medieval college, church and fantastic local pub. While I was there, this piece was commissioned by Okeanos. It was composed in response to Katharine Dowson’s installation, *Myriad*, a huge suspended curtain made from hundreds of optical and magnifying lenses. Katharine Dowson was invited to install the exhibition in the Wingfield Gallery accompanied by performances by Okeanos. *floating turning spinning* is a result of that collaboration. It was originally performed alongside a projection of sunlight on water refracted through the lenses of the installation. As the title suggests, the music, simple,

floating and meditative, gently moves through gradually accelerating repeated circular motifs.

## 14. Rain

Percussion Duo

Recorded by O Duo (Owen Gunnell and Oliver Cox) at Tŷ Cerdd Studio, Cardiff on 14th May 2018. Commissioned by O Duo with funding from the Britten-Pears Foundation. Published by Composers Edition.

*Rain* (2014) was commissioned by O Duo for a premiere at the Cheltenham Festival. It uses a pedal bass drum, log drums, temple blocks and a triangle to imitate the drumming of rain-drops. A tam-tam joins them for a final downpour.

## Biography

Lynne Plowman is a composer and flautist based in Wales. Her compositions range from delicate instrumental solos to dramatic large-scale vocal, theatrical and orchestral works. Commissioners and collaborators include Welsh National Opera, Glyndebourne, the Royal Shakespeare Company, the London Mozart Players, Presteigne Festival, Piano Circus, UPROAR, the Berkeley Ensemble, O Duo, Okeanos, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and the BBC Singers.

Awards include a British Composer Award (2003) for her first opera, *Gwyneth and the Green Knight*, for family audiences, described in the Times as “One of the most brilliantly accomplished new operas I have heard in many a year”. A further three operas were created in the following years, including commissions from Welsh National Opera and Glyndebourne. A ‘Creative Wales Award’ in 2012 supported Lynne’s orchestral writing - *Catching Shadows* was premiered by the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. “The result is a thrilling muscularity and sureness of design.” (Wales Arts Review, 2016)

Lynne Plowman is a composition tutor and Honorary Fellow of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, and resident composer for the Dyfed Young Composers scheme, which encourages and supports music composition in schools across West Wales. Her work is published by Chester Music and Composers Edition.

## Artist biographies

Michael Bennett, tenor

Michael Bennett sang as a chorister at Westminster Abbey, continuing his studies at Durham University, and at the RNCM in Manchester. In 1998 he sang the role of the Madwoman in Yoshi Oida's production of Britten's *Curlew River* at the Aix-en-Provence festival, as well as performances in Vienna, Brussels and New York. He returned to Aix to sing Mercurio in *L'incoronazione di Poppea* conducted by Mark Minkowski.

Recently he has sung Don Basilio in *Le Nozze di Figaro* for the Winteroper in Potsdam, the Male Chorus in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* for Opéra de Tours, Goro in *Madama Butterfly* and the First Witch/Spirit in Sasha Waltz's production of *Dido and Aeneas* at the Staatsoper in Berlin, Stravinsky's *Renard* in Helsinki and at the Chatelet in Paris, Peter

Quint in Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* in Tel Aviv and Bob Boles in Britten's *Peter Grimes* for Basle Opera House.

Known for his performances of contemporary music, he has premiered works by composers such as Marc Monnet, Param Vir, Ahmed Essyad and Giovanni Verrando. He sang the role of Arlecchino in the world premiere of *Signor Goldoni* by Luca Mosca at Teatro La Fenice, the title role in the European premiere of *The Tyrant* by Paul Drescher in Bolzano, and the role of the servant in the acclaimed UK premiere production of Salvatore Sciarrino's opera *Luci mie traditrici* for Music Theatre Wales, for whom he also sang the role of *The Visitor* in *From the Penal Colony* by Philip Glass. He sang in the premiere stage version of Glass's *Hydrogen Jukebox* for Opera de Nantes, and most recently the roles of Block and Franz in the world premiere production of Glass's latest opera, *The Trial*, for MTW.

Sandrine Chatron, harp

Based in Amsterdam since 2009, Sandrine Chatron is the solo harpist of the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra and a member of the teaching staff at the Amsterdam Conservatoire. In 2018 she became Harp professor at the Geneva Conservatoire. She studied at the Paris Conservatoire with M.C Jamet, winning first prize for harp and chamber music in 1995. After further studies with F. Cambreling and G. Lorenzini, she won first prize at the Cité des Arts Competition, and the Chamber Music Competition in Arles. She has appeared both as a soloist and as a chamber musician across Europe, Asia and North America including appearances at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Aix-en-Provence Festival, the Pablo Casals Festival, and the Festival Messiaen. She is a member of the Trio Polycordes, and plays regularly with musicians such as Ophélie Gaillard, Nicolas Dautricourt, Gordan Nikolić, and the Elias String Quartet.

She performs regularly with the Ensemble Intercontemporain, with whom she recorded Pierre Boulez's *Sur Incises* (Deutsche Grammophon) with Boulez conducting. She has worked with the principal French orchestras, such as Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre National de France, as well as the Klangforum Wien, The Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, the Berliner Philharmoniker, and the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, under such conductors as C Abbado, R. Muti, and G. Prêtre. Solo recordings include a recital disc of French Music (Caplet, Debussy) for Naïve-Ambroisie, a disc played on an 1798 Erard Harp « Le salon de musique de Marie Antoinette » for Naïve, and the premiere recording of concerti by the composers Kristof Marátka and Ricardo Nillni. She recently released a CD of 20th Century English music for Harp for Aparte. She has premiered works composers such as P. Boulez, S. Yoshida, R. Nillni, K. Mařatka, F. Martin, F. Ibarrondo, A. Markeas, and Robin de Raaff.

Oliver Cox, percussion

Oliver has performed in many of the world's finest concert halls and recital venues as both concerto soloist and chamber musician, primarily with his percussion duo, O Duo, which he co-founded with Owen Gunnell in 2000 at the Royal College of Music, London.

O Duo have had a huge impact on the UK music scene, performing three times at the BBC Proms, giving several recitals at the Wigmore Hall, starring as concerto soloists in the BBC Symphony Orchestra's 80th Birthday celebration concert at the Barbican Hall in London, and broadcasting live on both national TV and Radio several times. In addition, they have

released two critically acclaimed discs of percussion duo music and have given countless other performances around the globe. They are past prizewinners of YCAT, Tunnell Trust, Making Music and the Edinburgh Fringe best music act.

Inspiring the next generation of musicians has always been high on Oliver's agenda and he has been heavily involved in several music education programs over the years. From 2008 – 2018, Oliver was the co-artistic director of Children's Classic Concerts (CCC), Scotland's best loved series of family concerts, and during his 10 year tenure, the organisation went from strength to strength, diversifying their concert and workshop programme, expanding their reach across Scotland as well as forging a new and highly successful partnership with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. In addition, Oliver has led workshops with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, the National Youth Choir of Great Britain, and many others.

He has held several teaching posts, most recently Visiting Professor of Percussion at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff, specialising in Solo Performance, Chamber Music and Latin Percussion.

Oliver's compositions and arrangements have featured in many of his performances with both O Duo and Children's Classic Concerts, and from November 2018 he is stepping back from both of these projects in order to focus fully on his creative path as a composer.

Owen Gunnell, percussion

Owen graduated from the Royal College of Music with first class honours in 2003. Since then he has had an extremely busy and varied career. He has made solo appearances with the BBC Philharmonic, BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Philharmonia, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Sinfonia Viva, Orchestre de Picardie (France), De Doelen Ensemble (Holland) and many others. He has performed and been broadcast on TV and radio across Europe, the USA, Mexico, Hong Kong, Singapore, China, Japan, Russia, Australia and the UK. Owen has worked closely and played/recorded new commissions by many composers including Steve Reich, George Benjamin, Brett Dean, Thomas Adès, Unsuk Chin, Aphex Twin, David Lang, Nico Muhly, Michael Nyman, Oliver Knussen, Donnacha Dennehey and Benjamin Wallfisch. He has also been involved in numerous studio recordings in London, New York and Dublin.

In addition to his work with O Duo, Owen is a member of the Colin Currie Group and Crash Ensemble. He has given masterclasses at the Royal Academy of Music, Royal College of Music, Guildhall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and Morelia University (Mexico). He currently teaches percussion at RWCMD and Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, as well as being Artistic Director for Children's Classic Concerts and Children's Musical Adventures. He has worked on many education projects with dozens of organisations, including the BBC, the London Sinfonietta, the Proms and Britten Sinfonia.

James Harrison, percussion

James began playing percussion at the age of 10 and graduated from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama with first class honours in 2019. He has performed as a Percussionist and Timpanist with many ensembles across the country including the Welsh National Opera, Ulster Orchestra, Sinfonia Viva, Brecon Baroque Festival Orchestra, The

Heart of England Philharmonic Orchestra and Dartington Sinfonietta. He has performed all over the world including the UK, France, Belgium, Germany, Czech Republic, Spain and America. He has worked on many outreach projects and lead workshops in dozens of primary schools across the country both individually and with organisations like Children's Musical Adventures and Live Music Now. He has also been a part of the Vale of Glamorgan Festival outreach programme which included a children's concert for hundreds of school children with the American percussion ensemble Sandbox Percussion.

James is a member of the percussion ensemble Quartet19 who he founded with three of his colleagues while studying at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. They have performed concerts and lead workshops all over the country - in theatres, concert halls, schools, and at festivals such as; the North Wales International Music Festival, the Cambridge Summer Music Festival, the Cowbridge Music festival and the Penarth Chamber Music Festival.

Joanna Lam, piano

Joanna Lam commenced piano lessons at the age of 8, and proceeded to win prizes at several national music festivals. After leaving Chetham's School of Music, she continued to study with Masayuki Tayama whilst reading Music at King's College London where she received First Class Honours and was further awarded the Purcell Prize for gaining the highest mark in the degree 2016-7. She has subsequently been awarded the Licentiate Diploma in Piano Performance by both Trinity College London and the ABRSM with Distinction.

Joanna has since appeared in Masterclasses with Noriko Ogawa, Vanessa Latache, Kate Elmitt, Norma Fisher and Frédéric Aguessy. She has performed at the Victoria Hall in Hanley, the Annual EPTA conference at the University of York and at the Steinway Hall in London. Joanna was also awarded the Ongar Round Table Medal for Essex Young Musician of the Year. She has become a regular soloist at Hitchin Festival and the Iris Axon recital series in London, and delivered one of the opening concerts for Stockport's latest Music on the Moor recital series.

She has appeared as the soloist in performances of concertos by Fauré and Saint-Saëns with the Eagle Chamber Orchestra and Arlesey Symphony Orchestra respectively, working with conductors Daniel King-Smith and Levon Parikian. As a chamber musician, she has collaborated with the renowned clarinetist and Principal of the Royal Northern College of Music, Linda Merrick, and with recorder virtuoso John Turner.

In 2017, Joanna was awarded the prestigious Jellinek Prize as a winner of the Una Clark Young Artists' Competition, leading to a performance of Rachmaninov's first Piano Concerto with Guildford Symphony Orchestra. Summer 2018 saw her performing with The Chineke! Foundation at the Ryedale Festival and in 2020, she will be directing the Music Academy at the Felsted International Summer School for the third year running.

Jinny Shaw, oboe d'amore

Jinny Shaw is Director and a founding member of Okeanos Ensemble, with whom she has commissioned and premiered over 100 works. She has appeared as soloist with the Bournemouth Symphony, North South Chamber Orchestra, London Pro Arte, Orchestra of the Swan and Britten Sinfonia Soloists; she has given solo recitals at the Wigmore Hall and Purcell Room as well as at major festivals, including radio broadcasts in Tokyo,

Vancouver, New York City, Slovenia, Australia, and the UK. Her recently released Guild CD with Nova Chamber Orchestra includes concertos by John Joubert, John McCabe, Kenneth Leighton and chamber music by Cecilia McDowell and Benjamin Britten. Jinny is a member of the Hallé Orchestra.

Lucy Wakeford, harp

As well as being a member of the Nash Ensemble, Lucy is currently principal harp with the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and a member of the Britten Sinfonia. She was previously principal harp with the Philharmonia Orchestra for from 2001 to 2011. After studying at the Royal College of Music with Marisa Robles, Lucy continued her studies in Paris with Gerard Devos and in London with Skaila Kanga. She has been a prize winner in several international competitions including 2nd prize in the Israel harp competition 1st prize in the Cité des Arts international competition held in Paris. Lucy was selected for representation by the Young Concert Artists Trust in 1998. Concerto appearances include the Ginastera with the Israel Philharmonic and Royal Philharmonic orchestras, the Debussy Dances with the London Symphony Orchestra, and the Mozart flute and harp concerto with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and the Britten Sinfonia.

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