

WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 5 November 2023
3.00pm

Alessandro Fisher tenor
Libby Burgess piano

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

8 chansons polonaises (1934)

*Wianek • Odjazd • Polska młodość • Ostatni mazur •
Pożegnanie • Białą chorągiewką • Wisła • Jezioro*

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Wie Melodien zieht es mir Op. 105 No. 1 (1886)

Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer Op. 105 No. 2 (1886)

Klage Op. 105 No. 3 (c.1888)

Auf dem Kirchhofe Op. 105 No. 4 (c.1888)

Verrat Op. 105 No. 5 (1886)

Cheryl Frances-Hoad (b.1980)

Magic Lantern Tales (2015)

*Marching Through Time • Lily Maynard •
The Ballad of Harry Holmes • Mabel Walsh •
Marching Through Time*



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Poulenc composed *8 chansons polonaises* in 1934 at the request of Polish soprano Maria Modrakowska, a performer he much admired. She provided Poulenc with the original melodies and assembled the poems, most of which date from a turbulent period of Polish history: the (ultimately unsuccessful) November Uprising of 1830-1. As such, it is an unusual group for the composer, who otherwise set the French language almost exclusively, and who generally composed his own original *mélodies*. In typically insouciant manner, he liberated himself from any attempt at Polish 'authenticity': 'I didn't aim for local colour and originality,' he wrote. 'I simply imagined, in a French manner, a Polish atmosphere.' Each song is dedicated to an expatriate Polish woman, including harpsichordist Wanda Landowska and pianist Misa Sert.

Chopin's pianistic style weaves in and out of the songs, yet Poulenc's idiom is never far from the surface. It is particularly evident in the postludes at the end of numbers 1 and 5, and richly indulgent at the end of 7. He was rarely given to straightforward repetitions of musical material, and in the strophic songs mixes up the tempo, or has the piano cheekily disrupting the melody with off-beats and dissonance (notably in number 3), or a witty coda (number 6). Number 5 sounds more like one of his own *mélodies*, with its achingly beautiful vocal line and sensual accompaniment. Number 8 is the most radical departure from the source material, with an uncharacteristically (for Poulenc) sparse accompaniment and icy dissonances, which punctuate the melancholy poem until the end.

In his study of **Brahms's** songs, Eric Sams noted that a key feature of the composer's vocal output was 'nostalgia,' and that is certainly true of Op. 105, as well as the other works in this programme. For Brahms, nostalgia was not generally of the 'fond memory' kind; rather, as Sams put it, it is often 'coupled with misfortune and lamentation.' Yet Op. 105, while certainly dealing with both of these elements, contains some of the most purely lyrical songs of his output. He composed most of the set in 1886 while staying in Thun in Switzerland, a place he later wrote was 'so full of melodies that one has to be careful not to step on any.'

It is not a song cycle, but a series of tableaux which share general themes. 2, 3 and 5 are concerned with heartbreak and bitter betrayal, while 1 is gently regretful, and 4 portrays a pragmatic, peaceful acceptance of death. 'Wie Melodien zieht es mir', in which melody is the poetic subject, contains one of his most beautiful tunes, and was clearly a favourite (echoes of it found their way into his Violin Sonata, composed around the same time). In its depiction of a dying, heartbroken figure the mood darkens in 'Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer', with thickly harmonised, sometimes dissonant chords in the

piano, and irregular, breathless phrases for the voice. It builds in intensity in the final verse, the vocal line rising from its gravelly depths to the highest point of the cycle at a dramatic key change. 'Klage' is a deceptively simple fusion of folk melody and light-touch art song. It is a straightforward telling of a tale, yet the combination of the sad story with its pretty melody gives it a wrenching poignancy. 'Auf dem Kirchhofe' opens dramatically, setting the scene of a whirling storm and a figure among the gravestones, both verses beginning 'heavy with rain'. Yet the last lines 'heal' the minor mode, transitioning into a peaceful major key. The final song, with its tale of bloody revenge, is something of a departure from the mature resignation of the previous one. Brahms appears to relish the ballad-style unfolding of the narrative, providing more than a hint of melodrama throughout.

Cheryl Frances-Hoad's *Magic Lantern Tales* time travel from the trenches of World War I to a care home in the 1990s, via a collection of evocative poetry published in 2014. Ian McMillan's poems were based on interviews carried out by Ian Beesley in the Moor Psychiatric Hospital with a group of residents – some aged over 100 – who related their memories of World War I (Beesley later wrote of a sense of urgency to capture these stories before time ran out). Frances-Hoad's sensitive settings allow their words to unfold against a shifting backdrop of bugle calls, clocks ticking, and echoes of marching songs.

The longest song relates the wartime experience of Harry Holmes, transferring the camaraderie of the trenches to a postwar friendship with Harry Ramsden, and a determinedly peaceful life. Frances-Hoad's setting channels the kind of determinedly upbeat marching songs which flourished at the time, albeit with more ominous, spiky harmonies and tolling bass notes. This gentle epic is a fitting tribute to someone who otherwise would have remained unheralded, his medals lying quietly in a chest of drawers. Either side of Harry's tale are two reminiscences of women, whose sweethearts died in battle before they had the chance to marry. Lily Maynard barely knew the young vulnerable man who went off to war; their embryonic romance is played out in a sweetly harmonised opening, becoming more fragmented as time – for Lily – 'breaks' at the moment of his death. Mabel Walsh's song is also sparsely accompanied, almost unbearably poignant in her sense of loss of what might have been. Framing the whole cycle are two settings of the same verse. The first is hushed and delicate, the voice often flying solo with its vocal lines reminiscent of the 'Last Post'. The second – the final song in the cycle – has a richer, more insistent (even angry) accompaniment to begin with, yet ultimately is a heartfelt plea to remember these stories, which are 'as brittle as glass.'

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Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

8 chansons polonaises (1934)

Wianek

Franciszek Kowalski

Targa swój wianeczek
W rzewnych łzach
dziewczyna,
Że jej
kochaneczek
Idzie do Lublina.

Bo w Lublinie są Krakusy,
Żwawe chłopcy i
wiarusy.
'Nie idz, nie idź Janku,
śmierć tam grozi tobie,

Czyż ja bez ustanku,
Płakać mam w żałobie?
'Uśmierz dziewczę swe
katusze,
Ja Ojczyźnie służyć muszę.'

'Więc ty z sobą razem,
Zabierz swą dziewczynę,
Jak zginiesz żelazem,
I ja z tobą zginę.'

Odjazd

Stefan Witwicki

Rzy koniczek mój bułany,
Puśćcie, czas już
czas!
Matko, ojciec mój kochany,
Żegnam, żegnam was.

Cóżby życie warte
było,
Gdybym gnuśnie zgasł?
Dosyć, dosyć się marzyło,
Teraz nie ten czas.

Zdala słyszę trąb hałasy,
Dobosz w bęben
grzmi,
Rzucam, rzucam słodkie
czasy,
Błogostawcie mi!

Polska młodzież

Anonymous

Polska młodzież niech nam
żyje,
Nikt jej nie przesadzi,
Bo jej ręka dobrze bije,
Głowa dobrze radzi,

The Head Wreath

Distressed maiden weeps
pulls apart her head
wreath,
shedding tears for her
beloved
who departs for Lublin.

Cracovians stand in Lublin,
jaunty fellows and old
campaigners.
'John, do not go, please stay
your life will be in peril there,

Must I forever
weep in mourning?'
'My maiden, soothe your
pain and torment
I must serve my Country.'

'So, when you depart,
take your maiden with you,
if you die by the sword,
I shall die with you.'

The Departure

My dun horse neighs,
the time has come, let me
go!
My dear mother and father,
I bid you goodbye.

What would my life be
worth,
had I died idle and indolent?
Enough, no more dreaming,
no time for that now.

From afar I hear a bugle,
drum-major's drum
thunders,
I shun, I abandon sweet
life,
give me your blessing!

Polish Youth

Long live the Polish
youth,
no one shall uproot her,
for her arm fights valiantly,
her head counsels wisely,

Pognębieni, zapomnieni,
Od całego świata,
Własnych baliśmy się
cieni,
Brat unikał brata.

Niech do boju każdy biegnie,
Piękne tam skonanie,
Za jednego, który
legnie,
Sto mścicieli
wstanie.

Zawsze Polak miał nadzieję
W mocy Niebios Pana,
On w nas jedność, zgodę
wleje,
A przy nas wygrana.

Ostatni mazur

Anonymous

Jeszcze jeden mazur
dzisiaj, nim poranek
świta,
'Czy pozwoli Pana Krzysia?'
młody ułan pyta.
I tak długo błaga, prosi, boć
to w polskiej ziemi:
W pierwsza parę ją
ponosi, a sto par za
niemi.

On coś pannie szeptem
w uszko, i ostrogą
dzwoni,
Pannie tłucze się serduszko,
i liczko się płoni.
Cyt, serduszko, nie
płoń liczka, bo ułan
niestały:
O pół mili wre potyczka,
słysząc pierwsze
strzały.

Słysząc strzały, głos
pobudki, dalej na koń,
hurra!
Lube dziewczę porzuć
smutki, dokończym
mazura.
Jeszcze jeden krag dokoła,
jeden uścisk bratni,
Trabka budzi, na koń
woła, mazur to
ostatni.

Oppressed, forgotten,
by the entire world,
we were afraid of our own
shadows,
brother avoided brother.

Let us all go into battle,
where death is glorious,
for every one who falls in
battle,
a hundred avengers shall
arise.

A Pole always puts his hope
in the Heavenly Father,
He will imbue us with
unity and reconcile,
and the victory shall be ours.

The Last Mazurka

Let us dance one more
mazurka before the
morning dawn,
'Krzysia, will you dance with
me?' asks young ułan.
He begs and pleads, on
this Polish soil:
sweeps her off to dance
as first pair, a hundred
others follow.

He whispers something
into her ear, clanking
his spurs,
girl's heart is pounding,
cheeks blush.
Be still heart, do not blush
cheeks because ułan
is inconstant:
battle rages half a mile
away, first shots are
heard.

Shots are heard, reveille
is sounded, mount
horses, hurrah!
My dear girl, do not be
sad, we shall finish the
mazurka.
Just one more circle, one
more brotherly embrace,
the bugle sounds wake-
up call, this is the last
mazurka.

Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have ended.

Pożegnanie

Maurycy Gosławski

Widzisz dziewczę
chorągiewkę,
Co przy mojej lancy drży?

Zaśpiewam ci o niej
śpiewkę,
Ona piękna tak jak ty.

Nie płacz luba, bywaj
zdrowa,
Łzy na cięższe zostaw
dnie:

Co Bóg sądzi, bywaj
zdrowa,
Może wróć, może nie.

Białą chorągiewka

Rajold Suchodolski

Warszawianka dla
kochanka szyła białą
chorągiewkę,
To płakała, to wzdychała,
śląc modły do Boga.
Warszawiaczek zrzucił
fraczek
Przeciw cara jest
czamara,
Kulka w rurkę, proch w
panewkę,
I dalej na wroga.

Wiśła

Anonymous

Płynie Wiśła płynie,
Po polskiej
krajnie,
A dopóki płynie,
Polska nie zaginie.

Zobaczyła Kraków,
Wnet go pokochała:
I w dowód miłości
W stęgą
opasała.

Bo ten polski naród
Ten ma urok w sobie,
Kto go raz pokochał,
Nie zapomni w
grobie.

Farewell

Girl, do you see the
standard,
trembling on my lance?

I will sing you a song
about her,
she is as beautiful as you.

Do not cry my dear, keep
well,
save your tears for worse
times:

Let God's will be done,
keep well,
I may come back, I may not.

White Standard

A Varsovian lady was
sewing a white standard
for her beloved,
she cried and sighed,
supplicating God.
A Varsovian discarded his
dress coat
civilians in overcoats
oppose the tsar,
bullet in the pipe, gun
powder in the pan,
let us fight the enemy.

The Vistula River

Vistula flows and flows,
through the Polish
countryside,
and for as long as it flows,
Poland will not perish.

She saw Cracow,
and it was love at first sight:
as a token of her love
she adorned Cracow with
a sash.

For this Polish Nation
has such bewitching charm,
that once loved,
it is never forgotten, even
in a grave.

Jezioro

Anonymous

O jezioro, jezioro:
Bystra woda w Tobie
jest.
Wionku z maryjonku,
Na głowie mi więdniesz.
Jakże ja nie mam więdnąć?
Gdy już nie jestem cały.
Zielone listeczki,
Modre fijołeczki
Ze mnie już opadają.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Wie Melodien zieht es mir Op. 105 No. 1

(1886)

Klaus Groth

Wie Melodien zieht es
Mir leise durch den
Sinn,
Wie Frühlingsblumen blüht
es
Und schwebt wie Duft
dahin.

Doch kommt das Wort und
fasst es
Und führt es vor das
Aug',
Wie Nebelgrau erblasst es
Und schwindet wie ein Hauch.

Und dennoch ruht im Reime
Verborgen wohl ein Duft,
Den mild aus stillem Keime
Ein feuchtes Auge ruft.

Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer Op. 105 No. 2 (1886)

Hermann Lingg

Immer leiser wird mein
Schlummer,
Nur wie Schleier liegt mein
Kummer
Zitternd über mir.
Oft im Traume hör' ich
dich
Rufen draus vor meiner Tür,
Niemand wacht und öffnet
dir,
Ich erwach' und weine
bitterlich.

The Lake

O lake, lake:
fast waters flow through
you.
Marjoram head wreath,
you wilt on my head.
How can I not wilt?
I am no longer intact.
Green leaves,
blue violets
keep falling from me.

Thoughts, like melodies

Thoughts, like melodies,
steal softly through my
mind,
like spring flowers they
blossom
and drift away like
fragrance.

Yet when words come
and capture them
and bring them before
my eyes,
they turn pale like grey mist
and vanish like a breath.

Yet surely in rhyme
a fragrance lies hidden,
summoned by moist eyes
from the silent seed.

My sleep grows ever quieter

My sleep grows ever
quieter,
only my grief, like a veil,
lies
trembling over me.
I often hear you in my
dreams
calling outside my door,
no one keeps watch and
lets you in,
I awake and weep bitterly.

Ja, ich werde sterben müssen,
Eine andre wirst du küssen,
Wenn ich bleich und kalt.
Eh die Maienlüfte wehn,
Eh die Drossel singt im
Wald;
Willst du mich noch einmal
sehn,
Komm, o komme bald!

Yes, I shall have to die,
you will kiss another
when I am pale and cold.
Before May breezes blow,
before the thrush sings in
the wood;
if you would see me once
again,
come soon, come soon!

Klage Op. 105 No. 3

(c.1888)

Anonymous

Feins Liebchen, trau du nicht,
Dass er dein Herz nicht
bricht!
Schön Worte will er geben,
Es kostet dein jung
Leben,
Glaubs sicherlich!

Lament

Dearest, do not trust him,
then he won't break your
heart,
he'll speak fine words,
they'll cost you your
young life,
believe me!

Ich werde nimmer froh,
Denn mir ging es also:
Die Blätter vom Baum
gefallen
Mit den schönen Worten allen,
Ist Winterzeit!

I'll never be happy again,
for that is what happened:
the leaves have fallen
from the tree
with all those fine words,
it's winter!

Es ist jetzt Winterzeit,
Die Vögelein sind weit,
Die mir im Lenz gesungen,
Mein Herz ist mir gesprungen
Vor Liebesleid.

Now it's winter,
the little birds are far distant
that sang to me in spring,
my heart is broken
with the sorrow of love.

Auf dem Kirchhofe

Op. 105 No. 4 (c.1888)

Baron Detlev von Liliencron

Der Tag ging regenschwer
und sturmbewegt,
Ich war an manch vergessnem
Grab gewesen.
Verwittert Stein und Kreuz,
die Kränze alt,
Die Namen überwachsen,
kaum zu lesen.

In the churchyard

The day was heavy with
rain and storms,
I had stood by many a
forgotten grave.
Weathered stones and
crosses, faded wreaths,
the names overgrown,
scarcely to be read.

Der Tag ging sturmbewegt
und regenschwer,
Auf allen Gräbern fror das
Wort: Gewesen.
Wie sturместot die Särge
schlummerten -
Auf allen Gräbern taute still:
Genesen.

The day was heavy with
storms and rains,
on each grave froze the
word: Deceased.
How the coffins slumbered,
dead to the storm -
silent dew on each grave
proclaimed: Released.

Verrat Op. 105 No. 5

(1886)

Karl Lemcke

Ich stand in einer lauen
Nacht
An einer grünen Linde,
Der Mond schien hell, der
Wind ging sacht,
Der Giessbach floss
geschwinde.

Betrayal

One mild night I was
standing
by a green linden tree,
the moon shone brightly,
the wind blew softly,
and swiftly flowed the
torrent.

Die Linde stand vor
Liebchens Haus,
Die Türe hört' ich knarren.
Mein Schatz liess sacht ein
Mannsbild 'raus:
„Lass morgen mich nicht
harren.

The linden tree stood
before my love's house,
I heard the door creak,
cautiously my love let a
man out:
'Don't keep me waiting
tomorrow.

Lass mich nicht harren,
süsser Mann,
Wie hab ich dich so gerne!
Ans Fenster klopfte leise
an,
Mein Schatz ist in der Ferne.“

Don't keep me waiting,
sweet man,
I love you so very dearly!
Tap gently against the
window-pane,
my sweetheart's far away.'

Lass ab vom Druck und
Kuss, Feinslieb,
Du Schöner im
Sammetkleide,
Nun spüte dich, du feiner
Dieb,
Ein Mann harrt auf der Heide.

Leave your cuddling and
kissing, my dear,
and you, you handsome
man in velvet,
make haste, you cunning
thief,
a man awaits you on the
moor.

Der Mond scheint hell, der
Rasen grün
Ist gut zu uns'rem Beegnen,
Du trägst ein Schwert und
nickst so kühn,
Dein' Liebschaft will ich
segnen! –

The moon shines bright,
the green turf
is fit for our encounter,
you wear a sword and
nod so boldly,
I shall bless your
liaison! –

Und als erschien der lichte
Tag,
Was fand er auf der
Heide?
Ein Toter in dem Blumen
lag
Zu einer Falschen Leide.

And when the light of
dawn appeared,
what did it find on the
moor?
A dead man lay among
the flowers,
to a false woman's sorrow.

Cheryl Frances-Hoad (b.1980)

Magic Lantern Tales (2015)

Ian McMillan

Marching Through Time

They marched through the streets
Of these Northern towns
And their winding-sheets
And their hospital gowns
Are not all we remember of these marching men
Because their stories get told again and again.

From these Northern towns
They marched through the streets
And the terrible sounds
Of advances, retreats
Are not all we remember of these innocent boys:
Stories rebuild just what wartime destroys.

And a photograph is a kind of map;
A map of where we've been, where we heard
That story lifting up the tentflap
Of history, that story that hinged on a word
From a 100 year old woman, a 95 year old man
That turns and returns to where stories began.

They marched through the light
In these Northern places
To a bomb-blasted night
And the fear on their faces
We should remember as the years slowly pass;
Stories as brittle as glass
Stories as brittle as glass...

Lily Maynard

Come on Lily,
Let's go walking.
Let's talk as we're walking
And pretend you're young again,
Lily.

Show us where you found him
In the hedge bottom; he was cowering,
Lily, wasn't he? Cowering, Lily.
But you coaxed him from the greenery,
Love him, taught him how not to cower,
Lily, didn't you? He was smiling.

Come on, Lily,
Let's go walking.
Let's talk as we're walking
And pretend you're young again,
Lily.

Show us where you walked together,
By the meadows. He held your hand
Lily, didn't he? Holding, Lily.
And the sun that spring was amazing
Hearing up the air something magical,
Lily, didn't it? He was singing.

Come on, Lily,
Let's go walking.
Let's talk as we're walking
And pretend you're young again,
Lily.

Show us the letter they sent him,
Dragged him over to France,
Lily, didn't they? Dragging, Lily?
And you pictured him in a deep trench
Cowering and crying like a baby,
Lily, didn't you? He was weeping.

Come on, Lily,
Let's go walking.
We'll talk as we're walking
And pretend you're young again,
Lily.

Show us his last letter, unfold it
Carefully along the creases,
Lily, won't you? Carefully, Lily.
He writes of the wide sky and the stars
And the sunrise like fire,
Lily, doesn't he? He is shining.

Come on, Lily,
Let's go walking.
We'll talk as we're walking
And pretend you're young again,
Lily.

Show us the past now, hold it
Tightly along its faultlines,
Lily, can't you? Tightly, Lily.
Your life has been waiting for him,
And the clock stayed silent,
Lily, didn't it? Time is broken.

Come on, Lily,
Let's go walking.
We'll talk as we're walking
And pretend you're young again,
Lily.

The Ballad of Harry Holmes

I'll tell you a tale of Harry Holmes
Who fought in the First World War
Who stared through a barbed wire window
At his mates dropping through Death's Door

*And said 'All I want when I get through this
Is a stroll, and a pint, and a kiss.'*

One night when the bombs were falling
He carried his mates through Hell
The sky lit up like a bonfire night
His head rang like a bell

*And said 'All I want when I get through this
Is a stroll, and a pint, and a kiss.'*

I guess Harry was a hero;
Well, they all were and so was he
But in the stinking night he spoke to the dark
And whispered 'don't take me...'

*He said 'All I want when this war is done
Is to sit by the sea in the Yorkshire sun'*

Someone shouted 'Harry, it's over!
A bird sang in the silent sky.
The men in the mud shook hands and thanked
Summat that they didn't die

*And said 'All we want now the war is done
Is to sit by the sea in the Yorkshire sun'*

Harry came home to Bradford
And he gazed out from the train
Glad to be back in God's County
Well, the bits he could see through the rain

*And he said 'All I want now I'm back here
Is a stroll and a kiss and a pint of beer'*

He came back to England to win the Peace
Picked up his painting brush
Dragged his ladders through the Yorkshire streets
'Tek yer time' Harry smiled, 'no rush...'

*And he said 'All I want now I'm back here
Is a stroll and a kiss and a pint of beer.'*

Harry was a decorated soldier
Awarded the Military Cross
Now he decorated people's houses
He was the worker and the boss

*He said with a shrug and a cheeky grin
'A medal's just a gaudy lump of tin'*

He fell in with Harry Ramsden
Of chip shop fame, and so
Harry said 'Hello Harry,
Where's that pub I used to know?'

*Harry said with a shrug and a cheeky grin
'A pub's just a palace they keep beer in'*

Harry and Harry: peas in a pod,
One talked paint and one talked chips
But all the words ground to a halt
When the first pint passed their lips

*They sang 'I say, this is the life,
Pass me a beer and find me a wife'*

Harry Ramsden married quite late on
Long after the flush of youth
But his wife didn't like him drinking
So he swallowed the bitter truth

*And sang 'I say, that was the life
'I'll pass on the beer now I've a wife...'*

Harry H missed Harry R
So he hit on a daring plot
Said: Buy a dog to walk each night.
Can she stop yet? She can not!

*And the dog took 'em both to the old Crown Inn
Where they glugged strong ale and the odd neat gin*

They drank and talked for many a day
With the dog sat by their side
Harry R spoke of perfect batter
Harry H spoke of gloss with pride

*And the dog took 'em both to the old Crown Inn
Where they glugged strong ale and the odd neat gin*

Then Harry R he passed away
To the chip shop in the sky
Harry H went to his funeral
And said Old lad, goodbye

*'I've lived through Ypres and life's been good
But I shut my eyes and I'm slumped in't mud.'*

Then Ramsden's widow took the dog
For an evening walk, and it
Dragged her straight to the Crown Inn tap room
Where her husband used to sit

*'I've lived through Ypres and life's been good
But I shut my eyes and I'm slumped in't mud.'*

I've told you the tale of Harry Holmes
From the War to end all Wars
To a quiet life with a paintbrush
And a medal in a chest of drawers

*He said 'You could say my life was small
But I faced a lot of things and I beat them all'*

Harry was a hundred when he died
A century: caught and bowled.
Harry's was a story like so many others
Now Harry's tale's been told.

*He said 'You could say my life was small
But I faced a lot of things and I beat them all..'*

Mabel Walsh

Mabel Walsh sits by the door,
Comfortable in her century's skin.

Strong voice in the Yorkshire air,
Memories bringing back again

The gentle man, his smiling face;
Loading a truck then dropped down dead.

Forgotten in loud History's noise
As life goes by and takes no heed,

But how the moment lingers still
In all the movements of her face

How shrapnel, smaller than a thought,
Had made his heart stop there and then.

Now Mabel sits there in the light
And dreams about what might have been:

Their times together through the years
Their children growing strong and tall.

A picnic in a moorland breeze.
He was standing there. And then he fell.

The war locked up so many rooms
And left them just as they once were.

The ticking clock, the hourly chimes
Struck silent by that bastard war.

Marching Through Time

They marched through the streets
Of these Northern towns
And their winding-sheets
And their hospital gowns
Are not all we remember of these marching men
Because their stories get told again and again.

From these Northern towns
They marched through the streets
And the terrible sounds
Of advances, retreats
Are not all we remember of these innocent boys:
Stories rebuild just what wartime destroys.

And a photograph is a kind of map;
A map of where we've been, where we heard
That story lifting up the tentflap
Of history, that story that hinged on a word
From a 100 year old woman, a 95 year old man
That turns and returns to where stories began.

They marched through the light
In these Northern places
To a bomb-blasted night
And the fear on their faces
We should remember as the years slowly pass;
Stories as brittle as glass
Stories as brittle as glass...

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