

WIGMORE HALL

Wednesday 8 March 2023
1.00pm

Héloïse Werner soprano

Tippett Quartet

John Mills violin

Jeremy Isaac violin

Lydia Lowndes-Northcott viola

Bozidar Vukotic cello

Kate Whitley (b.1990)

3 Charlotte Mew Settings (2019)

I So Liked Spring • Absence • Moorland Night

Doreen Carwithen (1922-2003)

String Quartet No. 1 (1945)

I. Allegro moderato • II. Lento • III. Allegro

Héloïse Werner (b.1991)

Les Leçons du Mardi (libretto by Dr Emma Werner) (2022)

world première

Co-commissioned by Wigmore Hall, supported by The Marchus Trust, Hinrichsen Foundation and the Vaughan Williams Foundation

Caroline Shaw (b.1982)

Entr'acte (2011)

Freya Waley-Cohen (b.1989)

Spell Book (Volume 2) (2020)

spell for women's books • spell for joy



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Kate Whitley 3 Charlotte Mew Settings (2019)

These Charlotte Mew settings were suggested by Steven Oliver, and put together with the support of poet Julia Copus. I really enjoyed getting to know Charlotte's poetry, which I knew nothing about before. I love how strange and dark poems like *Moorland Night* are as well as how simple and beautiful poems like *Sea Love* are. My favourite in the set is 'I So Liked Spring' – it's such a straightforward, understandable poem but with a really poignant and beautiful, sad message behind it. The original version of the first 3 poems was for male singer and string quartet before I wrote 3 more for soprano and string quartet, but I like how the gender of the speaker in Mew's poems is often ambiguous, so it has seemed to make sense. This version has been re-done so the set is all for soprano.

© Kate Whitley

Doreen Carwithen String Quartet No. 1 (1945)

The string quartet held a special place in Doreen Carwithen's heart - she thought it 'the most perfect of mediums.' She wrote two, leaving her third unfinished at the time of her death in 2003, and they include some of her most intense and complexly wrought music. She had only been composing for a few years when she completed her String Quartet No. 1 in 1945, and it made her the first woman to win the prestigious Alfred J Clements Chamber Music Prize.

Each of the three movements is brief and concise. She opens the quartet with an optimistic, lyrical theme that quickly changes direction to become something more ambivalent, perhaps a little sinister. The theme is developed over the course of the movement, broken down and reshaped as Carwithen drives inexorably to the dramatic close. Carwithen was a cello player herself (she nicknamed her own cello 'Perky'), and her affinity for the instrument comes across clearly in the second movement. The cello opens the *Lento* and has some of the most heartfelt material throughout. The final *Allegro* is more playful, with a jovial, sprightly theme passed between the quartet. Vaughan Williams attended the première of this quartet, and loved it - except for her use of *sul ponticello* in this movement, which he described as a 'nasty noise'.

© Dr Leah Broad, 2023

Héloïse Werner Les Leçons du Mardi (libretto by Dr Emma Werner) (2022) *world première*

Les Leçons du Mardi for soprano and string quartet is a new work exploring themes of sexism in medical history centring around the now obsolete concept of 'female hysteria'. Bridging music and science, the piece is a creative take on the infamously voyeuristic 'Tuesday Lectures', once held at the Salpêtrière Hospital in 19th-century Paris. Led by neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, the lectures saw 'hysterical' women, institutionalised at the Salpêtrière, forced to act out their symptoms before an eager Parisian public. This work reinvents the lectures in a new setting; this time, it is the woman performer who holds the agency and controls the presentation. Throughout the work, she makes the string quartet players recite quotes taken from outdated scientific texts on female hysteria as well as 21st-century everyday sources. Gradually, their words and sounds fade into nothingness while she delivers an imagined testimony from a female patient at the Salpêtrière. It was a joy to work with Emma on this highly collaborative project, aiming to fully integrate scientific discourse into new music. We hope this work will reflect on the continued issue of gender inequality in science and society.

© Héloïse Werner

Caroline Shaw Entr'acte (2011)

Entr'acte was written in 2011 after hearing the Brentano String Quartet play Haydn's String Quartet in F Op. 77 No. 2 - with their spare and soulful shift to the D flat major trio in the minuet. It is structured like a minuet and trio, riffing on that classical form but taking it a little further. I love the way some music (like the minuets of Op. 77) suddenly takes you to the other side of Alice's looking glass, in a kind of absurd, subtle, technicolor transition.

© Caroline Shaw

Freya Waley-Cohen Spell Book (Volume 2) (2020)

Rebecca Tamás's poetry collection *WITCH* contains several spells, each one a 'small, bright, filthy song' that 'clings to your body like sweat'. When I first read them, I started to dream witchy dreams of them. Tamás writes that 'Spell-poems take us into a realm where words can influence the universe'. A spell asks to be performed out loud in a ritual setting, and so I took Tamás's spell-poems and made them into songs; a sung *Spell Book*. These two songs make up the second volume of this spell book.

At the opening of 'spell for women's books' a viola line coils around a list of three 'vellums'. Each conjures a story that a reader might become trapped in, but as the spell continues, its subversive lines take us on paths that might lead us to escape these fates.

'spell for joy' is a pure conjuring. Each sentence gives action, movement, and imagery, creating a collage of yesses that add up to a total and reckless joy.

© Freya Waley-Cohen

Kate Whitley (b.1990)

3 Charlotte Mew Settings (2019)

I So Liked Spring

I so liked Spring last year
Because you were here; –
The thrushes too –
Because it was these you so liked to hear –
I so liked you.

This year's a different thing, –
I'll not think of you.
But I'll like the Spring because it is simply Spring
As the thrushes do.

Absence

Sometimes I know the way
You walk, up over the bay;
It is a wind from the far sea
That blows the fragrance of your hair to me.

Or in this garden when the breeze
Touches my trees
To stir their dreaming shadows on the grass
I see you pass.

In sheltered beds, the heart of every rose
Serenely sleeps to-night. As shut as those
Your garded heart; as safe as they from the beat, beat
Of hooves that tread dropped roses in the street.

Turn never again
On those eyes turned blind with a wild rain;
Your eyes; they were stars to me. –
There are things stars may not see.

But call, call, and though Christ stands
Still with scarred hands
Over my mouth, I must answer.
I will come - He shall let me go!

Moorland Night

My face is against the grass
- The moorland grass is wet -
My eyes are shut against the grass,
Against my lips there are the little blades,
Over my head the curlews call,
And now there is the night wind in my hair;
My heart is against the grass and the sweet earth,
- It has gone still, at last;

It does not want to beat any more,
And why should it beat?
This is the end of the journey.
The Thing is found.

This is the end of all the roads -
Over the grass there is the night-dew
And the wind that drives up from the sea
Along the moorland road,
I hear a curlew start
Out from the heath
And fly off calling through the dusk,
The wild, long, rippling call -:

The Thing is found and I am quiet with the earth;
Perhaps the earth will hold it or the wind, or that bird's cry,
But it is not for long in any life I know.
This cannot stay,
Not now, not yet, not in a dying world, with me, for very
long;
I leave it here:

And one day the wet grass may give it back -
One day the quiet earth may give it back -
The calling birds may give it back -
To someone walking on the moor
Who starves for love and will not know
Who gave it to all these to give away;
Or, if I come and ask for it again
Oh! then, to me.

Doreen Carwithen (1922-2003)

String Quartet No. 1 (1945)

I. Allegro moderato

II. Lento

III. Allegro

Héloïse Werner (b.1991)

Les Leçons du Mardi (libretto by Dr Emma Werner) (2022)

[compiled and written by] Dr Emma Werner

INTRODUCTION

In the last decades of the 19th Century, neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot held public theatrical demonstrations on hysteria, at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris. These 'hysteria shows' became known as 'Les Leçons du Mardi', or 'The Tuesday Lectures'. Patients interned at the hospital, almost all of whom women, were brought in front of an eager Parisian audience to act out their symptoms.

QUOTES

Places in Man

Hippocratic text

5th Century BC

'The womb is the origin of all diseases'

A brief discourse of a disease called the Suffocation of the Mother

Edward Jorden

1603

'The passive condition of womankind is subject unto more diseases [...] than men are especially in regarde of that part from whence this difference which we speak of doth arise [...] we do observe that maidens and widowes are most subject thereunto'

A Treatise of the Spleen and Vapours: Or Hypochondriacal and Hysterical Affections

Richard Blackmore

1726

Women have 'a more volatile, dissipable, and weak Constitution of the Spirits, and a more soft, tender, and delicate Texture of the Nerves'

Traité des maladies nerveuses ou vapeurs: et particulièrement de l'hystérie et de l'hypocondrie

Jean-Baptiste Louyer-Villermay

1816

'A man cannot be hysterical, he has no uterus'

A treatise on the nervous diseases of women; comprising an inquiry into the nature, causes, and treatment of spinal and hysterical disorders

Thomas Laycock, MD

1840

'women in whom the generative organs are developed or in action, are those most liable to hysterical diseases. [...] Indeed the general fact is so universally acknowledged, and so constantly corroborated by daily observation, that anything in the shape of proof is unnecessary'

A treatise on the nervous diseases of women; comprising an inquiry into the nature, causes, and treatment of spinal and hysterical disorders

Thomas Laycock, MD

1840

'Second Principle: Hysteria is peculiar to Females'

Diseases of woman: their causes and cure familiarly explained, with practical hints for their prevention, and for the preservation of female health

Frederick Hollick

1849

'Hysteria: We now come to the most mysterious, confusing and rebellious of all female diseases. Almost every woman has either experienced or seen what is called hysterics'

Diseases of woman: their causes and cure familiarly explained, with practical hints for their prevention, and for the preservation of female health

Frederick Hollick

1849

'Women disposed to hysteria are generally capricious in their character, and often whimsical in their conduct'

Diseases of woman: their causes and cure familiarly explained, with practical hints for their prevention, and for the preservation of female health

Frederick Hollick

1849

'In regard to the starting point, or original seat, of Hysteria, there seems to be no doubt of its being the Uterus [...] The Uterus, it must be remembered, is the controlling organ of the female body'

L'hystérie viscérale: nouveaux fragments de clinique médicale

Auguste Fabre

1883

'As a general rule, all women are hysterical and [...] every woman carries within her the seeds of hysteria'

L'hystérie viscérale: nouveaux fragments de clinique médicale

Auguste Fabre

1883

'what constitutes the temperament of a woman is rudimentary hysteria'

On insanity and nervous disorders peculiar to women, in some of their medical and medico-legal aspects

Thomas More Madden

1884

'Amongst the moral pre disposing causes of [...] hysteria must be included [...] the ill-directed tendencies of female education [...] to force woman's intellect into channel and pursuits which nature has obviously intended for the opposite sex'

Nervous Disorders of Women

Bernard Hollander

1916

'Women suffering from disordered nerves usually show a loss of control over their emotions [...]. When married they are the terror of husbands [...] False accusation of sexual nature are common with them. All is caprice with them'

Urban Dictionary - Bitches be crazy (definition)

2011

'Not a rude utterance, or misogynistic remark, merely a statement of fact, alluding to the widely accepted and scientifically proven postulate that states women are crazy'

PMSBuddy app

2010

'An app [...] for all guys out there suffering the monthly Psychotic Mood Shifts from their better halves'

Fredrick app

2016

'Track her cycle, keep your sanity.'

WikiHow Article

2021

'How to Recognize the Potential Crazy Girlfriend'

POEM

Les Leçons du Mardi

Dragged from the ward to the stage
of insanity - I bow my body

to please upright men
gathered for the trial of a sanitised
witch;

I stare into their lens - immortalised
in labelled lunacy and silenced
pain.

They doctor
shouts into shrieks and
drown

the freak in formallin. I
am a medical muse
for the beautiful time
trapped

in the male
museum of curiosities.

How spectacular the dissection of a damaged
mind - how easily words

erase
the patient.

Caroline Shaw (b.1982)

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Spell Book (Volume 2) (2020)

Rebecca Tamás

spell for women's books

the cat shit vellum

the bad storm coming in over the flatlands vellum

the old murderer's vellum

the poet moves their hips like someone on a tram about to
vomit

Athena still and glacial in her blue ice-bath
fresh as a painted door

spell for joy

THESUN THESUN THESUN

nothing can be trusted!

raise up your rinsed hands!

terribly fury and becoming!

Take off your clothes!

one colossal owner of the voice

brightness folding into itself

again and again vulval or filo

I see a shaking which is total and absolute fear

one day yr gonna die

the hot impossible apple of
your perfection

you freckled you covered in something
you utter

just open up your face
light's ice cream cone coming
on the inside of yr eyelids

say yes five thousand times
(o love)

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