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# *Magic Lantern Tales*: A Music/Text Analysis of the Vocal Works of Cheryl Frances-Hoad

A DOCUMENT

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*Magic Lantern Tales*: A Music/Text Analysis of the Vocal Works of Cheryl Frances-Hoad

A DOCUMENT

APPROVED FOR THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

BY

Dr. Elizabeth Avery, Committee Chair

Professor Lorraine Ernest, Committee Co-Chair

Dr. Eugene Enrico

Dr. Roberto Pesce

Dr. Jeffrey Swinkin

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**Abstract**

This document explores Cheryl Frances-Hoad's song cycle *Magic Lantern Tales,* as a highlight of her *oeuvre* as well as of contemporary art song. Each song in the cycle, and a select few of Frances-Hoad's other vocal works, will be studied from a performer's perspective to identify Frances-Hoad's compositional approach to song, as well as her individual style in *Magic Lantern Tales*. The document examines stylistic features and unifying elements of Frances-Hoad's vocal repertoire, with particular emphasis on music/text relationships.

Art song can be defined as the amalgamation of music and text, working hand in hand, functioning together, and serving one another. While song usually consists of a singer and piano accompaniment, the intimacy inherent to the genre can be achieved with any form of instrumentation. As a genre, it has the unique ability to invite the listener into the world that the singer is bringing to life, and to experience that world from their own perspective. One could argue opera could be defined in the same way, but there is one crucial difference. Opera is representational, and art song is invitational. While an opera is a production which is viewed, the characters interacting with each other as the audience watches, art song is experienced. Through a synthesis of text and music, the singer communicates directly with the audience, inviting them in to inhabit the world that they, together with the accompanist and the composer, have created. The audience not only listens, but participates, interposing their own experience into the performance and stories told. The connection developed from this shared experience between performer and audience truly sets art song apart as a unique and remarkable genre.

The symbiotic relationship that exists in art song between text and music is largely attributed to Franz Schubert. Schubert developed a way of expressing the text not only by assigning it a melody and harmonies, but also concerning himself with how the piano would

reflect on what the text was saying. Taking a deep dive into the poetry he set, he started a tradition of musically characterizing what happened in the poetry. Going beyond representing general emotional states, Schubert found ways to bring the text to musical life. Robert Schumann took Schubert's developments one step further, elevating the piano to become a full participant with the voice. Furthermore, Schumann was among the first composers to successfully diffuse not only story and emotion into his music, but philosophy and the metaphysical experience as well. These composers, and many others after them, did not simply set text to music. Rather, they took the time to craft thoughtful musical settings that matched and, in some instances, elevated the text, creating a more perfect union of art. As music and text represent and fortify each other, a powerful synergism occurs that, to such a degree, can only be experienced in art song.

This document is motivated by a desire to raise awareness of Frances-Hoad's vocal literature. Serving as an introduction to Frances-Hoad and her vocal music, this document offers a biography of the composer and a music/text analysis of some of her vocal works, specifically *Magic Lantern Tales*. For each of her songs examined, background, compositional style, and text setting will be considered. A study of each of these elements, combined and in conjunction with the context of the poetry, will reveal Frances-Hoad's approach to portraying a story, especially through text painting. It will also explore the role this particular cycle plays as a historical commemoration of World War I. As the proverbial saying goes, "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn." Music not only involves, but has the power to move and change us. The commemorative nature of this song cycle in accordance with compositional and performance devices that carry the power of the words, and ultimately the stories, to the hearts of the listener, can create an experience of remembrance that ensures

historical preservation through music. Ultimately my intention is to demonstrate the significance of *Magic Lantern Tales* to the genre of modern art song, and perhaps more importantly, to demonstrate Cheryl Frances-Hoad's merit as a living song composer. In addition, this study of Frances-Hoad's compositional style and approach to storytelling will hopefully bring a wider awareness of her vocal music as a whole, and will promote more frequent performances of this music among students and professionals alike.

My research for this project has consisted mainly of analyzing the music and preparing it for performance myself, as well as studying the composer's career and style. Critical resources have included her biography, reviews of her music, as well as several written and podcast interviews with Frances-Hoad. When I became interested in performing *Magic Lantern Tales* and researching the work, along with its composer, I reached out to Frances-Hoad via e-mail requesting an interview. Fortunately for me, Frances-Hoad was more than happy to oblige, and, in the end, I was able to conduct two interviews with her via zoom. Because, as of yet, there are no scholarly articles on Frances-Hoad or her music, the most important avenue of my research has been these interviews, which explore her life as a composer as well as her thoughts regarding *Magic Lantern Tales*. Both interviews greatly contribute to a more complete understanding of *Magic Lantern Tales*, Cheryl Frances-Hoad's vocal music as a whole, and her compositional style. This document's focus is an analysis of *Magic Lantern Tales*, which will especially highlight Frances-Hoad's approach to the blending of text and music so inherent to art song as a form. The commemorative nature of the topic, and a living composer's firsthand perspective will also be paramount.

When Frances-Hoad was commissioned to write a song cycle for the 2016 Leeds Lieder Festival, she was given full freedom regarding topic, subject, and style. She was immediately

drawn to a group of poems she had been given by poet and broadcaster Ian McMillan years previous. The poetry was based on social documentary photographer Ian Beesley's interviews of World War I survivors in their final years. Inspired by their stories, and by wartime music of the time, Frances-Hoad enthusiastically set *Magic Lantern Tales* to music. This document will provide an analysis of the cycle in which intricate details of melody, harmony, rhythm, and structure will be addressed, especially in relationship to the text. Furthermore, the consistent stylistic inclinations revealed in Frances-Hoad's writing will provide insight into the composer's own interpretation of the text, as well as her approach to communicating through song.

This document is divided into four main sections or chapters. The first is a detailed biography of Cheryl Frances-Hoad's path to becoming a composer, her exposure to and affinity for music as a child, her education, employments, commissions, and overall development. The second chapter is dedicated to Frances-Hoad's song cycle, *Magic Lantern Tales*. Following an introduction to the book of poems on which the cycle is based, the second chapter will outline each song in the cycle. The three individuals whose representative poems Frances-Hoad chose to set will be introduced, including excerpts from their interviews conducted by Ian Beesley in 1996. As Frances-Hoad chose wartime songs as inspiration, in part to pay homage to the composers, each World War I song, and especially the composers lives and contributions, will be explored. Most importantly, an analysis of the musical devices Frances-Hoad uses to express the stirring stories of these individuals through music will culminate this chapter. Chapter three will explore a select few of Frances-Hoad's other works, simultaneously featuring her breadth of style, and corroborating her unique quality revealed in the analysis of *Magic Lantern Tales*. Lastly, chapter four will provide a brief conclusion summarizing how Frances-Hoad's approach reveals her propensity for storytelling through music.

## Chapter 1: Cheryl Frances-Hoad: Biography and Background

Award-winning composer Cheryl Frances-Hoad has been composing by commission since age fifteen. Admired for her original, communicative style, within the framework of classical technique, Frances-Hoad's works are represented in every genre. Having attended a boarding school for music from a young age, her extensive classical training has afforded her a well-crafted technique evident in all her music. Her traditional classical background combined with contemporary interests in science, literature, painting, and dance have cultivated what has become the composer's uniquely evocative style. Emotion, character, and storytelling at the forefront of all her works, Frances-Hoad has demonstrated a particular gift for setting texts of diverse type and era to vocal music. Throughout her education, the frequency of commissions Frances-Hoad received in every genre only increased, and she has since enjoyed numerous composer residencies and associate composer positions throughout the UK. Having earned the good fortune of opportunities to hone her craft, her compositions have become increasingly considerate toward audience and performers, always maintaining the delicate balance between pure artistic expression and relatability.

Five albums of Frances-Hoad's works have been produced by Champs Hill Records label, and performances of her pieces range from the BBC Proms to children's outreach programs. Recent works include "Your servant, Elizabeth," commissioned by the BBC Proms for Queen Elizabeth II's "Platinum Jubilee" prom in July 2022, *Everything Grows Extravagantly*, a half hour song cycle commissioned as part of her Merton College Oxford post (2019-2022), and *Scenes from the Wild*, a seventy-minute song cycle for tenor and chamber orchestra commissioned to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the City of London Sinfonia. In

May 2023, Frances-Hoad's newest work, a cello concerto, will be premiered by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and Laura van der Heijden.

## Early Compositions and Education

Born in 1980, in Southend-on-Sea, Essex England, Frances-Hoad began her musical journey at age six when she heard a cello being played on the radio, and immediately knew that was the instrument she wanted to pursue. Her mother was a flute teacher and Frances-Hoad was surrounded by classical music at home. By age seven, after about a year of proving she would keep up with practicing her recorder, her mother purchased the instrument Frances-Hoad truly wanted —the cello— and the budding musician began to study it. As she recalls, she "fully intended to just become an internationally famous concert cellist (as you do!), but gradually composing took over."[1] Within weeks of starting on the cello, Cheryl had produced her first composition, one for open strings.

As a child, Frances-Hoad studied cello and piano on scholarship at the Yehudi Menuhin School in Surrey, where she also continued composing. Having the opportunity to study at a music school at such a young age helped her to advance quickly, composing pieces for her school's orchestra by age nine. Frances-Hoad wrote music enthusiastically, even composing during school holidays with the unfailing support of her mother, who as Frances-Hoad describes it, "just let me get on with it and didn't try to make me do anything else."[2] Her music was performed by school groups and local choirs.

[1] "Crosseyedpianist.com," *Crosseyedpianist.com* (blog), January 2013, https://crosseyedpianist.com/2013/01/24/meet-the-artist-cheryl-frances-hoad/.
[2] Cheryl Frances-Hoad, in discussion via Zoom with Jenna Black, The University of Oklahoma, January 5, 2023.

## ***Concertino for Cello, Piano, Percussion, and Orchestra***

At age fifteen, after working tirelessly through the summer on her composition *Concertino for Cello, Piano, Percussion and Orchestra,* Frances-Hoad won the prestigious BBC Young Composer of the Year Competition with the piece, which was then performed by the BBC Philharmonic. Frances-Hoad described the *Concertino* as starting off in a very melancholy vein, becoming more and more frenzied until eventually turning violent, and ultimately building into something twisted and evil. Upon hearing the performance, with cellist Peter Dixon as the solo cellist, Frances-Hoad "became convinced that her life had to be in composition."[3] She said of the experience, "The buzz of knowing I'd written all those notes that everybody was playing was more thrilling than any performances I'd done as a cellist. It was just mind-blowing to hear something that I'd only heard in my head played by a massive orchestra…. The experience was spine-tingling and convinced me that this was what I had to do for the rest of my life." [4]

In the television program that covered her and other young composers' experiences with the BBC Philharmonic, workshop composer John Casken opined, "I think the ability to write a large-scale piece like that at that age, to structure it so fantastically… and the quality of orchestral writing I thought was just magnificent. I was thrilled."[5] The solo cellist, Peter Dixon, was complimentary as well, exclaiming, "I think it's tremendous and it deserves to be played again to the general public, because they shouldn't be deprived of a work like this. I think it's really special."[6]

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[3] Cheryl Frances-Hoad, "Informal Bio," Cherylfranceshoad.co.uk, 2019, https://www.cherylfranceshoad.co.uk/informal-bio.
[4] Compositiontoday.com, (Composition: Today, July 28, 2009), http://www.compositiontoday.com/interviews/cheryl_frances-hoad.asp.
[5] *Settling New Scores Part 2 - Young Composers Workshop 1996, YouTube.com* (Andrew Toovey, 2020), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKCyCC4kxMk.
[6] Ibid.

In the same year (1996), after the success of her *Concertino,* Frances-Hoad received her first professional commission from the Manchester International Cello Festival, for which she wrote *The Prophecy* for cello and piano. Richard Whitehouse of *Gramophone Magazine* said of *The Prophecy*, "Drawing on human irrationality in the face of death, [it] evinces a propulsion and cumulative intensity that speaks very much of youthful uninhibition."[7] Soon after, at the age of sixteen, Frances-Hoad hit writer's block. She was asked to write a few pieces that year and simply never did, a time she describes as having gotten quite stuck. However, her composition teacher at the time, David Knotts, encouraged her to carry on and he helped her out of her temporary slump. Because of that experience at such a pivotal phase in her life, Frances-Hoad has said Knotts may well be the most influential instructor she has ever had. Cheryl's mother also never stopped believing in her abilities. Frances-Hoad remarks, "My mother was just amazing…. I suppose her belief in me helped me to think I really could do this as a career. I didn't have anyone questioning me about how I was going to make a living; she believed that I would be able to make it as a musician."[8]

## University and Professional Era

Empowered by scholarships, Frances-Hoad continued her studies at Gonville and Caius College at Cambridge University, graduating with double first honors in composition (2001), and then a Master of Philosophy degree in composition in 2002. During her time at Gonville and Caius, Frances-Hoad won the Cambridge Composer's Competition and was awarded both the Sir Rudolph Peters' Prize for Music and The Master's prize. In large part, Frances-Hoad's

[7] Richard Whitehouse, "FRANCES-HOAD The Whole Earth Dances," *Gramophone*, accessed January 13, 2023, https://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/frances-hoad-the-whole-earth-dances.
[8] Cheryl Frances-Hoad, in discussion via Zoom with Jenna Black, The University of Oklahoma, January 5, 2023.

instructors gave her freedom in compositional assignments; because she was so frequently commissioned, her professors became more like mentors. Frances-Hoad then attended King's College, where she received her PhD in composition. During her time there, she was awarded the Arthur Bliss Prize for Composition, the Harriet Cohen International Music Award, and the Mendelssohn Scholarship. She also won two competitions during her PhD studies: the International String Orchestra Festival Composition Competition in Malta, and the first ever Robert Helps International Composition Competition in the US. Soon after receiving her PhD, Cheryl Frances-Hoad won the Cheltenham Festival Commission and the Royal Philharmonic Society Composition Prize. Since graduating in 2007, Frances-Hoad has received several more awards, grants, and accolades, including The Sun River Prize (China), three Ivor Novello British Composer Awards (for *Psalm 1* and *Stolen Rhythm* in 2010, and *Scenes from the Wild* in 2022), and two awards from the PRS Women Make Music Fund (for *The Madness Industry*, a brass quintet for Onyx Brass, and *Sailing to the Marvelous*, a ninety minute oratorio for four choirs and ensemble for Bridlington Priory).

## ***From the Beginning of the World***

Cheryl Frances-Hoad continues to compose by commission, receiving requests in nearly every musical medium. Her works include everything from opera, ballet, and concerto - to song, chamber, and solo music. She has produced several large-scale works, including the aforementioned oratorio and multiple works involving young musicians, such as *A Young Person's Guide to Composition*, composed for the London Chamber Orchestra and 150 voice children's chorus. Her choral music is widely revered, and in 2015, Frances-Hoad made her BBC Proms debut with her work, *From the Beginning of the World*, for prestigious and innovative vocal ensemble, The Cardinall's Musick. An homage to Thomas Tallis with text taken from

Tycho Brahe's *German Treatise on the Great Comet of 1577,* this work was undoubtedly a success. Matthew Wright from *The Arts Desk* described the performance as follows: "What a sound…. Dissonant chords of breathtaking complexity squirmed and spun, while exposed vocal lines, pitched and balanced perfectly by this core of singers, weaved an astonishing tapestry of vocal and emotional colours. And amongst the delirious power of the music, little Tallis quotations glimmered teasingly.[9]

## "Your Servant, Elizabeth"

More recently, Frances-Hoad was again commissioned by the BBC Proms for the Queen's "Platinum Jubilee" in July of 2022 at Royal Albert Hall, for which she wrote "Your Servant, Elizabeth" for choir and orchestra. The prompt of the commission was to write something that was a reaction to William Byrd's *O Lord, make thy servant Elizabeth,* which the composer found incredibly difficult at first saying, "It's so perfect, I wondered 'what can I add to it?' I felt I was going to mess it up."[10]Although she felt the music was perfect, she did see an opportunity to add something to the text. While Byrd's original text only spoke of the Queens' relationship with God, Frances-Hoad wanted to democratize that, expanding it to include the Queen's relationship with everybody.

Unsure of how to move forward with her idea, she asked the Chaplin at Oxford for advice, which proved to be immediately fruitful. She said, "he just came up with this genius idea of intersecting the Byrd with lines from Queen Elizabeth II's speeches, and it was like somebody lit a match, it was just amazing. Suddenly that gave me the whole idea for the piece, the

[9] Matthew Wright, "Prom Chamber Music 1, The Cardinall's Musick, Carwood," *The Arts Desk*, July 21, 2015, https://theartsdesk.com/classical-music/prom-chamber-music-1-cardinalls-musick-carwood.
[10] Ibid.

narrative, even things like the orchestration, and what to do with the singers."[11] The result was an incredibly moving juxtaposition of Byrd's words from Psalm 21 and Queen Elizabeth II's speeches in Frances-Hoad's own unique style. "Your Servant, Elizabeth" was chosen by Ivan Hewitt in *The Telegraph* as the highlight of the 2022 Proms season. Hewitt wrote, "This intermingled the words of two Queen Elizabeths in music which moved from quiet intimacy to a radiant mystery, as if the two Queens were communing with each other. Like all the best "classical music," it was fresh and surprising, yet rooted in tradition, and gave plenty of hope that an embattled art form has plenty of life in it yet."[12]

### ***Everything Grows Extravagantly***

Cheryl Frances-Hoad has enjoyed several posts as composer in residence from 2009 to present, her current position being that of a visiting fellow at Keble College, Oxford. Many of her commissions have come in conjunction with these employments. For example, Frances-Hoad's opera, *Amy's Last Dive,* was composed as part of her DARE Cultural Fellowship in Opera-Related Arts at Opera North and the University of Leeds (2010-2012). More recently Frances-Hoad was Associate Composer at Oxford Lieder Festival, 2019–2021, as well as a visiting research fellow in the creative arts at Merton College, Oxford, 2020–2022.

These appointments resulted in a co-commission between Oxford Lieder for their 20th anniversary, and Oxford Botanic Garden for its 400th anniversary celebration: Frances-Hoad's *Everything Grows Extravagantly.* The 30-minute song cycle for baritone and piano, with poetry by Kate Wakeling, encapsulates not only the atmosphere of the iconic garden, but its history as

[11] Ibid.
[12] Ivan Hewett, "How Classical Music Said Thank You to the Queen in 2022," *The Telegraph*, December 15, 2022, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/classical-music/classical-music-came-surging-back-2022-said-thank-queen/.

well. Richard Morrison of *The Times* described it thus: "For a song composer to draw inspiration from flowers and trees is almost a cliché. Rarely, however, have I heard a new vocal excursion into nature's realm that satisfies on so many levels — musical, verbal, emotional, and philosophical."[13] Frances-Hoad remarked that the work was quite easy to write as it involved two of her favorite elements of composing: working with another artist (poet Kate Wakeling), and having a source of inspiration outside of herself."[14]

The opening song in the cycle, "For a Garden," whimsically describes a garden as "fixed but never still," and comically reminds us that, "a garden does what it is told, but a garden of course does not." The cycle also explores the tremendous labor involved in creating a garden, as well as provides an account of Oxford's military actions during the Civil War, contrasted with a catalogue of plants compiled during the same period. Frances-Hoad's keen ability to rapidly alter the musical mood emphasizes the poem's central metaphor: mankind's ability to create chaos and beauty simultaneously. Other songs traverse wood libraries, threatening storms, and plants that engage the senses. Frances-Hoad takes advantage of the text's imagery with painstaking text-painting throughout the music.

In a pre-concert discussion, Frances-Hoad described *Everything Grows Extravagantly* as the most "lieder-like" of her song cycles, and Eric McElroy of Cherwell Newspaper, who was present at the festival, said, "One can understand why. Each song features its own distinctive character and mood while simultaneously contributing to the impression of an organic whole."[15]

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[13] Richard Morrison, "Oxford Lieder Festival Review - A Wonderful Premiere Inspired by Nature," The Times, October 21, 2021, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/oxford-lieder-festival-review-a-wonderful-premiere-inspired-by-nature-5jckdq2rl.
[14] Black, Jenna. Cheryl Frances-Hoad Biography Interview. Personal, January 5, 2023.
[15] Eric McElroy, "A Review of Cheryl Frances-Hoad's *Everything Grows Extravagantly*," *Cherwell*, November 29, 2021, https://cherwell.org/2021/11/29/a-review-of-cheryl-frances-hoads-everything-grows-extravagantly/.

He went on to respond to Frances-Hoad's claim that the cycle "more or less wrote itself" by adding, "[It's] a humble way of saying that she has absorbed the techniques of composition so thoroughly that they have become indistinguishable from instinct. But beyond the manner and materials of music-making, Frances-Hoad has what matters most in a composer: she has *soul*."[16] The cycle, which was premiered at Saint John the Evangelist Church in Oxford, received five stars by *The Times* and was chosen by Richard Morrison as one of his top five classical music and opera highlights of 2021.

### ***Scenes from the Wild***

Another of Cheryl Frances-Hoad's works to have, as she says, "written itself," is her song cycle for tenor and orchestra, *Scenes from the Wild.* Frances-Hoad explained, "This piece was a total joy to write… the songs composed themselves really. [The] words are so evocative and inspiring that the orchestral colors came very easily."[17] While the idea of any of Frances-Hoad's works "composing themselves," is obviously metaphorical, it can be a problematic expression. The phrase itself suggests the compositional process did not require effort, but rather that ideas flowed purely out of the subconscious. Although a romantic notion, the concept of such effortlessness in any composition is simply impossible. The mythical "my music writes itself" trope has been used by many composers, in one way simply because the creative process of writing music can be difficult to describe.

Frances-Hoad herself has described composing as very hard work, and her process (which will be discussed at length later on in the chapter), involves a great deal of research before the ease she describes is able to manifest. Commissioned by City of London Sinfonia to

[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

commemorate their 50th anniversary, *Scenes from the Wild*, was meant to thematize dementia or teenage mental health, two areas in which the Sinfonia has served extensively through community outreach programs. Frances-Hoad reflects on her experience finding inspiration for the work saying, "It proved incredibly hard to find a subject that worked for a dramatic/operatic song cycle. I must have read about thirty books on these subjects, fascinating books, but not suitable."[18] She describes turning on the radio one morning when Dara McAnulty's '*Diary of a Young Naturalist'* was being featured as book of the week, going on to say, "After about a year of searching, this was just the most wonderful experience to hear this novel-diary by a fifteen-year-old about his experiences in nature, and how being in the natural world had helped him greatly as a teenager with autism."[19]

Only after working extensively with late writer and poet, Amanda Holden, to adapt McAnulty's book into song form, were the musical ideas able to follow. Furthermore, there is something to be said for Eric McElroy's previous comment regarding technique. It's because of years of technical development and practice that said musical ideas are translated with relative ease, particularly in comparison to what was likely a more difficult process earlier in the composer's career, when she would have been less experienced. Indeed, one could attribute the facileness Frances-Hoad describes experiencing as an ever-expanding skillfulness which naturally increases the composer's efficiency, rather than an obscure effortlessness composers can tend to relate. Described as "a stunning new orchestral song-cycle…. A raw work, painfully

[18] *Cheryl Frances-Hoad on Ivor Novello Nominated Scenes from the Wild, YouTube.com* (Ivors Academy, 2022).
[19] Ibid.

so at times, but richly rewarding and ultimately restorative,"[20] the cycle went on to win the large ensemble award at The Ivor Composers Awards in 2022.

## Albums Released

Cheryl Frances-Hoad has released five celebrated albums through the Champs Hill Records label and her music has been featured on dozens of others. Her 2011 CD of chamber works and first album, *The Glory Tree,* was selected as "Chamber Music Choice" by BBC Music Magazine. Largely inspired by literature and art, *The Glory Tree* was described as, "like a declaration of faith in the eternal verities of composition."[21] In a more recent album of chamber works *Stolen Rhythm* (2017), Frances-Hoad paid homage to composers from the past explaining, "Each piece, although I hope clearly recognizable as my own, involved immersing myself in the language of another composer to write it."[22] Pieces featured on this album are all commissions in which Frances-Hoad drew inspiration for from composers of the past who have influenced her writing in some way, specifically Bach, Beethoven, Britten, Bartok, Mendelssohn and Stravinsky. Successfully achieving a balance between honoring these composers and conveying her own unique style, *Stolen Rhythm* received glowing reviews. Andrew Clements with *The Guardian* raved, "Frances-Hoad's implicit trust in the expressive power of her melodic invention and harmonic thinking is paramount...That may seem to be an old-fashioned approach, but

[20] Claire Seymour, "Scenes From the Wild a Stunning New Orchestral Song-Cycle from Cheryl Frances-Hoad," *Opera Today*, November 28, 2021, https://operatoday.com/2021/11/scenes-from-the-wild-a-stunning-new-orchestral-song-cycle-from-cheryl-frances-hoad/.
[21] Paul Driver, "Classical Roundup, Cheryl Frances-Hoad - The Glory Tree: Chamber Works," *The Times*, June 26, 2011, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/classical-round-up-june-26-x86nmnlxhm9.
[22] Cheryl Frances-Hoad, "Stolen Rhythm," Cheryl Frances-Hoad.co.uk, 2019, https://www.cherylfranceshoad.co.uk/stolen-rhythm.

nothing in Frances-Hoad's music ever sounds secondhand."[23] Critic Robert Hugill wrote, "In each *homage* the original composer's signature can be detected, but Cheryl Frances-Hoad's personality is to the fore too, creating a sequence of delightful character pieces which can be enjoyed without worrying who was inspired by what."[24]

In response to her first album of vocal and choral works, *You Promised Me Everything* (2014), Claire Seymour with *Opera Today* remarked, "It's clear Frances-Hoad is able to fuse Romantic and Modernist sensibilities, and to compose music which sings with naturalness and honesty, which communicates richly and deeply."[25] From *There is No Rose,* an a cappella part song Frances-Hoad wrote for SATB choir at the early age of fourteen, to *One Life Stand,* a modern woman's take on Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben* (Women's Lives and Loves), Frances-Hoad's works on the album are said to have shown, "a keen instinct for text-setting within a fundamentally conventional, but often surprising, harmonic world."[26] The album also features the comical *Don't* and more epic in nature, *Beowulf.* According to Helen Wallace with BBC Music Magazine, the album, "reveals a dramatic instinct straining at the leash."[27]

Frances-Hoad's more recent vocal music album has also received numerous accolades and will be the focus of chapter 2. *Magic Lantern Tales,* which was released in 2018, has been

[23] Andrew Clements, "Frances-Hoad: Stolen Rhythm Review - Melodic Invention from Distinctive Composer," *The Guardian,* July 6, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/jul/06/cheryl-frances-hoad-stolen-rhythm-review-champs-hill?CMP=gu_com.
[24] Robert Hugill, "Planet Hugill," *Planet Hugill* (blog), December 5, 2017, https://www.planethugill.com/2017/12/stolen-rhythm-instrumental-orchestral.html.
[25] Claire Seymour, "Review: You Promised Me Everything," *Opera Today*, August 2015, https://operatoday.com/2015/08/review_you_promised_me_everything/.
[26] Helen Wallace, "Frances-Hoad: You Promised Me Everything Last Night," Classical-Music.com (BBC Music, June 5, 2015), https://www.classical-music.com/reviews/franceshoad-choral-onelifestand/.
[27] Ibid.

described by *Opera Today* as to, "disorientate and delight in equal measure,"[28] and *Treffpunkt Klassik* in Germany said, "The longer you listen to this beautifully crafted CD, the deeper you fall under its spell."[29] This album takes its title from Ian McMillan's poetry cycle *Magic Lantern Tales,* inspired by World War I survivors in their final years of life. Other offerings on the album include varying subjects from online dating in "Love Bytes," to the interaction between parent and child in "Autistic Bedtimes." Upon his hearing of the album Arnold Whittall said of the composer, "At her best, Cheryl Frances-Hoad is immediately accessible without being ephemeral… the overall effect is touching and strongly characterized."[30] He goes on to describe her as "unsparingly honest and clear."[31]

In her latest album, *The Whole Earth Dances,* Frances-Hoad's originality shines through with chamber works, drawing upon everything from Dante and The Prodigy to the Commodore 64 game console, and environmental issues. The title work was the final commission of The Schubert Ensemble in 2016 and was based on two Ted Hughes poems, "Thistles," and "Ferns." As Cheryl describes it, *The Whole Earth Dances* "is a single slow movement divided into five continuous parts: thistles, ferns, thistles, ferns, thistles."[32] This sentiment no doubt came across to Richard Whitehouse with Gramophone Magazine, who described the work as juxtaposing

[28] Claire Seymour, "Magic Lantern Tales: Darkness, Disorientation, and Delight from Cheryl Frances-Hoad," *Opera Today*, September 26, 2018, https://www.operatoday.com/content/2018/09/magic_lantern_t.php.
[29] "Cheryl Frances-Hoad," Oxford Lieder, September 2019, https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/artist/309.
[30] Arnold Whittall, "Frances-Hoad Magic Lantern Tales," *Gramophone.co.uk* (Gramophone Magazine), accessed February 10, 2023, https://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/frances-hoad-magic-lantern-tales.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Cheryl Frances-Hoad, "The Whole Earth Dances," Wisemusicclassical.com, 2016, https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/58053/The-Whole-Earth-Dances--Cheryl-Frances-Hoad/.

"stark declamation with easeful contemplation through to the somberly cathartic close."[33] George Hall with *The Guardian* described the work as having the "intricate interweaving of lyrical lines and a *steady* infusion of super-enriched, Messiaen-like harmony,"[34] and Colin Clarke with *Seen and Heard International* remarked, "Frances-Hoad often sets up expectations only to gleefully confound them."[35] "Game On" which is essentially a three-movement sonata for piano and computer (Commodore 64), could not be more different in sound or sentiment. In reaction to the album, Nick Boston from Gscene Magazine wrote, "I'm always struck in Frances-Hoad's music by how, despite some common devices, such as the contrast between slow, long chords and spikier rhythmic movement, with great use of pregnant pauses, the atmospheres evoked are incredibly varied and individual to each piece."[36]

## Compositional Style and Approach

Cheryl Frances-Hoad's ability to draw inspiration from seemingly anywhere has made her compositions extremely varied and quite difficult to categorize, but perhaps all the more commissionable. In a recent survey of her music Guy Rickards with *Gramophone* said, "Frances-Hoad adopts a free approach to compositional style to meet the expressive needs of each piece."[37] Other composers and reviewers have described her style as "melodic, passionate, equal

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[33] Richard Whitehouse, "FRANCES-HOAD The Whole Earth Dances," *Gramophone*, accessed January 13, 2023, https://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/frances-hoad-the-whole-earth-dances.
[34] George Hall, "Schubert Ensemble Review - In Perfect Harmony with Nature and Ted Hughes," *The Guardian*, June 14, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/jun/14/schubert-ensemble-review-frances-hoad.
[35] Colin Clarke, "Psappha' s Fabulous Songs of the World Concert at Manchester's Hallé St. Peter's," *Seen and Heard International*, January 12, 2019, https://seenandheard-international.com/2019/12/psapphas-fabulous-composing-for-concert-at-manchesters-halle-st-peters/.
[36] Nick Boston, "Cheryl Frances-Hoad The Whole Earth Dances," *Classical Notes By Nick* (Gscene Magazine, December 2020), https://issuu.com/gscene/docs/12_gscene_dec2020/s/11415978.
[37] Guy Rickards, "Cheryl Frances-Hoad," *Gramophone*, January 2023, pp. 84-85.

parts humor and reverence,"[38] as well as having "a sense of the inexhaustible lure of the diatonic and the consonant."[39] Her use of harmony has been described by multiple sources as akin to Oliver Messiaen and her breadth like unto Benjamin Britten. Comparisons aside, her style is decidedly unique, being described as to have "an open-mindedness and curiosity that keeps [her] material enterprising and fresh,"[40] as well to be "frequently challenging, always original, and deeply moving."[41]

## Research

A major part of Frances-Hoad's process is the research she does before she even begins writing a piece. In an interview given in 2015, as she was writing the Thomas Tallis homage piece that would be her Proms debut, she described the impact taking the time for research up front can have, saying, "I'm almost a bit freaked out about how easily it's writing itself. But I have spent I would say a month reading a pile of books eight high on Tallis. I've listened to hours and hours of Tallis. So, I've kind of imbibed it all to such a degree that I think my brain started working on it before I actually started composing."[42] Frances-Hoad has said her compositions have helped her learn so many other things about the world across sciences,

[38] Ates Orga and American Record Guide, "Cheryl Frances-Hoad," Wisemusicclassical, accessed February 10, 2023, https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/composer/5085/Cheryl-Frances-Hoad/.
[39] Arnold Whittall, "Frances-Hoad Magic Lantern Tales," *Gramophone.co.uk* (Gramophone Magazine), accessed February 10, 2023, https://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/frances-hoad-magic-lantern-tales.
[40] Paul Conway, "The Whole Earth Dances: Cheryl Frances-Hoad," *Musical Opinion,* December 2020, p. 47.
[41] Richard Hanlon, "Even You Song," MusicWebInternational, accessed February 10, 2023, https://www.cherylfranceshoad.co.uk/even-you-song.
[42] Ibid.

history, art, literature, and more. She says, “If I’m going to write a piece inspired by something, I become very interested in that thing whatever it is, science or nature. And so I learn a lot.”[43]

In 2017, Frances-Hoad’s alma mater, Gonville and Caius College Cambridge, commissioned her to write a piece of music for Stephen Hawking’s 75th birthday celebration with the theme being “the universe.” Having only ever attended music specialist schools, Cheryl had never really studied sciences. Still, as is her practice with any commission, she dove headfirst into researching. As she read Professor Hawking’s book, A Brief History of Time, she enlisted a theoretical cosmologist at Caius to help her understand some of the more complex ideas, and even consulted Hawking’s daughter Lucy Hawking to learn more about the type of music he preferred. She read and read in search of a text for the piece but couldn’t find much in the scientific language that was all that poetic. Ultimately, she settled on a short children’s poem, Universe, by American poet Stephen Schnur. She said, “It talks about the farthest reaches of the mind and the last word is “everything.” It just seemed to tie in so immediate and touching.”[44] Frances-Hoad interposed questions from Hawking’s book about the nature of the universe over a loop of one line from the poem, “sun, moon, stars,” remarking, “To me those questions are so overwhelming and awe inspiring and I really wanted to convey that in my piece.”[45]

[43] Cheryl Frances-Hoad, in discussion via Zoom with Jenna Black, The University of Oklahoma, January 5, 2023.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

# Universe

BY STEVEN SCHNUR

**U**p beyond the
**N**ight sky, an
**I**ndigo darkness like
**V**elvet
**E**mbraces the farthest
**R**eaches of the mind,
**S**un, moon, stars,
**E**verything.[46]

"Beyond the Night Sky" for SATB begins with shushing sounds before incorporating the opening melody, which is almost immediately complicated by compellingly close harmonies, as well as satellite-like whistling noises. Frances-Hoad had gleaned inspiration for these effects by listening to NASA's recordings of space. Her hope was to convey a musical sense of wonder in the face of a seemingly infinite universe. Upon hearing the premier performance, Hawking responded, "I am honored to have this piece dedicated to me on my birthday celebrations this year… Listening to her [Frances-Hoad's] music captures the vastness of space and a sense of wonder at the universe and the earth. It takes us all on a mental journey around the universe." He added, "I probably won't need to take up my promised space on Richard Brandon's spaceship now. It puts into lyrical form one of my quotes: "Try to make sense of what you see and wonder about what makes the universe exist." Perhaps I can be forgiven for saying that tonight I am wondering no longer."[47] The scientist and author even noted he heard the hidden quotes from

[46] Steven Schnur, "Universe," in *Autumn: An Alphabet Acrostic,* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1997).
[47] Adam Care, "Listen to the Haunting Space-Themed Music That Will Be Sung at Stephen Hawking's Funeral," *Cambridge News,* March 31, 2018, https://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/news/cambridge-news/stephen-hawking-funeral-choir-caius-14478897.

"Happy Birthday," sung to words from his book; a nod from Frances-Hoad to Hawking's famous sense of humor.

## Interweaving Technicality and Artistry

Frances-Hoad values both emotion and constructional technique in her work, a goal she clearly achieves time and time again, as is evidenced by largely positive reviews and frequency of commissions. In response to her album *The Glory Tree,* Kenneth Walton at *The Scotsman* remarked, "What comes out of these pieces is a voice overflowing not only with ideas, but also with the discipline and artistry necessary to harness them."[48] Frances-Hoad compares composition to architecture: the mixture of artistic vision and practicality is what makes a beautifully contemporary building work. She explains, "You look at it and you think 'How does this stand up?' or 'How is that roof shape possible?' And it's because underneath that amazing roof shape is something like twenty billion calculations."[49] Although most of the time she tries to write original music that is stretching, the composer describes this balance of creativity and sensibility as being her greatest strength. Describing her newer music as being slightly easier than older compositions, she has realized along the way that sometimes when you give space to the performer, it is not only better for the performer, but better for the music as well. She explains, "I think a lot more about the human being behind the performer than I used to, and about how to write music that would be satisfying for them to play as well as to be my grand artistic statement."[50]

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[48] Kenneth Walton, "Album Reviews," *The Scotsman*, July 17, 2011, https://www.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/album-reviews-wolfmen-big-talk-danny-champions-world-classical-folk-jazz-world-1667964.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

## Inspiration

When asked what composers have influenced her work in general, Frances-Hoad responded that it is not something she thinks about much. She rarely studies scores of other composers or even listens to other composers for inspiration. One contemporary composer Frances-Hoad looks up to, Judith Weir, offered this advice: "Don't worry about listening to other composers, just write your own music."[51] However, Frances-Hoad does feel the composers she performed as a young cellist have innately influenced her. She loved playing "all the B's,"[52] Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, and Britten. Particularly inspired by Britten's breadth, she says, "I love his music, and to me his music is very emotional but very well crafted. He's probably been the biggest influence on me. I love the way he wrote his grand operas, but he also wrote pieces for local primary children."[53] She explains how having spent a lot of time playing Bach in her formative years, and studying his techniques in school has influenced her as well. She says, "In my work I often try and write phrases like Bach, you know, where you never know where they end or begin. So even if I'm writing in a very different language, I'm still looking to that."[54]

In her Suite no. 1 for Solo Violin, commissioned by Fenella Humphreys for her Bach to the Future project, Frances-Hoad said that while she wrote something inspired by Bach, it wasn't at all in quotation. She describes the process as follows: "Rather than base my work on any specific motives or harmonies, I simply listened and listened to the Bach, identified what really appealed to me, then tried to forget Bach's music and write a work which had similar feelings,

[51] Cheryl Frances-Hoad, in discussion via Zoom with Jenna Black, The University of Oklahoma, January 5, 2023.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.

melodic shapes, and moods, or employed a similar striking violin technique for example."[55] In contrast are pieces like "Beyond the Night Sky," and "Everything Grows Extravagantly," in which no composers were commemorated or served as inspiration. Instead, the subjects of influence were science, history, or nature, requiring an entirely different style of intensive research.

## Clarity

When asked if she felt she had a particular style, Frances-Hoad describes herself as a contemporary classical composer, adding, "Portraying emotion and communicating is of primary importance to me. My style is naturally quite accessible; there is a range, but I guess there's just an emphasis on storytelling and portraying emotion. I think quite a lot of the harmonies are similar. When I'm writing more harmonically complex music I still think in terms of major and minor chords it's just I sort of color it in a bit more really.[56] When asked further about the accessibility of her works, Frances-Hoad says she hopes there is a clarity to her writing that makes it as easy as possible for the performer to convey what she is trying to say. In other words, if there is a complicated musical concept she has in mind, she tries to write it in as simple a way as possible, to make it as easy as possible for the performers to perform. If she does write a complicated rhythm or texture, she says it is because "there is no other way to write [it].[57] Over time, Frances-Hoad has learned to eliminate unnecessary complexity in her music that would get in the way of performer and audience understanding what she has intended.

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[55] Cheryl Frances-Hoad, "Suite No. 1," Wisemusicclassical.com, 2014, https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/58373/Suite-No-1--Cheryl-Frances-Hoad/.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Cheryl Frances-Hoad, in discussion via Zoom with Jenna Black, The University of Oklahoma, January 5, 2023.

Ultimately Cheryl Frances-Hoad's ability to combine accessibility with surprising modernities not only gives her relevance in today's musical climate, but will no doubt allow her music to stand the test of time. Furthermore, her desire to consider and appeal to the humanity of those performing her works as well as the audiences who will receive them, gives her music a uniquely approachable quality, while still being full of excitement and sophistication. With representation in nearly every genre, Frances-Hoad's captivating melodies and enriching harmonies, curated in her own individual style, combine to create works that set her apart as one of the foremost composers of her generation, not to be overlooked. The following chapter will further explore Frances-Hoad's compositional style through a music/text analysis of her five-piece song cycle, *Magic Lantern Tales*.

## Chapter 2: Magic Lantern Tales

In 2016, Cheryl Frances-Hoad was commissioned by Joseph Middleton and the Leeds Lieder festival to compose a song cycle. Frances-Hoad was drawn to a particular group of World War I poems she had received from poet and broadcaster Ian McMillan a few years prior. McMillan had heard one of Frances-Hoad's pieces online and paid her a compliment via Twitter. She tweeted back, and they ended up meeting for coffee, where he gave her some of his poetry. Cheryl was ecstatic, describing McMillan as "quite a famous poet in the UK and affectionately referred to as "The Bard of Barsley."[1] One of the things Frances-Hoad loves most about her work is collaborating with other artists, and having an opportunity to set McMillan's poetry was no exception. She was inspired by his materials and kept one group of poems at the forefront of her mind.

*Magic Lantern Tales* is a collection of poems by McMillan, written in response to interviews conducted by social documentary photographer Ian Beesley. Beesley Recalls:

> In 1994 I was appointed artist in residence at the Moor Psychiatric Hospital in Lancaster and worked on the unit specifically for the care of the extreme elderly. The majority of the patients suffered from senile dementia or Alzheimer's, many had been in the Moor for decades, many still held memories of the First World War. The hospital was in the process of closing down and a number of wards in the unit were being emptied. On one such ward I found a chest of drawers. In the top drawer was a selection of old glasses; in the drawer beneath was a collection of old photographs (see Figure 2-1). Many of the photographs were related to WW1, soldiers in uniform, family gatherings, and weddings with the grooms in uniform. The ward orderly told me the glasses and photographs were those of patients who had died in the hospital and who unfortunately had no living relatives. Their last few personal possessions were placed carefully into the drawers. These glasses were the glasses they must have used to look at their fading photographs perhaps to attempt to pull back some fading memory. Two simple wooden drawers containing a visual eulogy to forgotten lives. This experience prompted me to photograph and interview as many men and women who had experienced the First World War before it was too late. These are some of their stories.[2]

[1] Frances-Hoad, Cheryl. Interview. Conducted by Jenna Black. April 12, 2022.
[2] Ian Beesley and Ian McMillan, *Magic Lantern Tales* (The Darkroom Press, 2014), pg. 5.

**Figure 2-1. Two Wooden Drawers, Ian Beesley**



Together, Beesley and McMillan presented a magic lantern show using lanterns dating from the early 1900s to project pictures of the men and women Beesley interviewed and photographed (see Figure 2-2). A precursor to the slide projector, magic lanterns used a concave mirror behind a light source to produce images from small painted sheets of glass. Being the first apparatus of its kind, the device was branded "magic," and upon its invention in the 17th century it quickly became a popular source of entertainment. The magic lantern was used into the mid-20th century when it was eventually replaced by the more compact and convenient slide projector. In their show, McMillan and Beesley used photographs and poetry to tell the story of the First World War, "from the point of view of men who survived it and lived on to old age and a changing world."[3] Also included were the tales of women who worked in the factories that "oiled the

[3] Ibid.

wheels of war."[4] They explained, "we often view war as a series of huge historical sweeps, and this show reminds us that war is made by people who each have their own narrative of what happened."[5] Their production consisted of short excerpts from Beesley's interviews, accompanied by projections of the interviewees, followed by recitations of McMillan's corresponding poetry; it was presented numerous times across England between 2014 and 2015.

**Figure 2-2. Magic Lantern used by Ian McMillan and Ian Beesley from *Magic Lantern Tales***



Frances-Hoad recalls that leading up to 2015 when she wrote her song cycle, World War I had been on her and many people's minds, as the centennial of the Great War breaking out had just come and gone.[6] The time was right to set *Magic Lantern Tales* to music, at least some of it.

[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Frances-Hoad, Cheryl. Interview. Conducted by Jenna Black. April 12, 2022.

With great care, the composer chose four of the ten poems to develop into a song cycle, and has described the cycle as some of her most accessible vocal music. She really wanted to tell these people's stories and express the empathy she felt as she sat with the poetry and photos. She found the poetry to be quite emotive and didn't want to overcomplicate it with overtly modern musical ideas. One way she managed to accomplish the touching simplicity she wanted to convey was by drawing inspiration from popular music of that era. She spent a lot of time listening to popular World War I music, and ultimately decided to pay homage to those pieces of music, and their composers, some of whom did not survive the war. Each piece in the cycle is loosely based on the tunes or sentiments of popular songs from wartime. The idea that each song draws upon elements of the music the interviewees likely listened to and felt a connection to during such a dark and troubling time, makes each individual's story and the cycle as a whole all the more moving.

## I. "Marching Through Time"

The first piece and introductory poem, "Marching Through Time," is inspired by composer George Butterworth's classical folk song, "The Lads in their Hundreds." Born in July 1885 in Paddington, London, Butterworth became friends with fellow composer Ralph Vaughan Williams at Oxford. Together, the two composers made several trips to the countryside to collect folk songs. Both composers' works were strongly influenced by the songs they collected on those trips. After leaving Oxford, Butterworth had a promising career as a composer as well as a music critic for *The Times*. Butterworth stepped away from composing to enlist in the British army soon after the outbreak of the First World War, eventually becoming a lieutenant. After leading his platoon to successfully capture a series of trenches near Pozières, France, on The Somme, Lt. George Butterworth was wounded in action and awarded the Military Cross. As the

Battle of the Somme intensified, Butterworth's division was ordered to attack a communications trench known as Munster Alley, which was under German control. His platoon dug an assault trench, terming it 'Butterworth Trench' in their officer's honor. Butterworth and his men captured and held Munster Alley, but not without sacrifice. On August 5, 1916, at the age of thirty-one, George Butterworth was shot and killed by a German sniper. Many of the men in his command also met their end that day, while the remaining made a hasty burial of their comrades in the side of the trench. Butterworth's body was never recovered for a formal burial.

His orchestral idyll, *The Banks of Green Willow*, which he composed just three years prior, has become a symbol of the sacrifice of his generation as well as an anthem for all "unknown soldiers." Butterworth's unidentified remains likely lie at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery, a memorial in Pozières, and his name appears on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme in Picardy France. Upon writing to inform Butterworth's family of his death, his brigade commander General Page Croft was surprised to learn Butterworth was one of the most promising English composers of his generation. He later wrote, "The trench was very low and broken, and [Butterworth] kept urging me to keep low down. I [soon] heard poor Butterworth, a brilliant musician in times of peace, and an equally brilliant soldier in times of stress, was shot dead by a bullet through the head. So, he who had been so thoughtful for my safety had suffered the fate he had warned me against only a minute before.[7]

While one cannot speculate as to the works Butterworth may have composed had his life not been lost to war, one can assume his output would have met and eventually exceeded the quality of compositions he was able to publish before his death. Fellow composer and friend

[7] Henry Page Croft, "Australian Hunters," in *Twenty-Two Months under Fire* (London: Murray, 1917), p. 237, https://archive.org/details/twentytwomonthsu00crof/page/237/mode/1up.

Ralph Vaughan Williams dedicated his *London Symphony* to Butterworth's memory. Of Butterworth's surviving works, his settings of A.E. Housman's poems from *A Shropshire Lad* are among the most well-known and frequently performed. Of all the the songs in *Magic Lantern Tales,* "Marching Through Time" draws the most parallels with its wartime inspiration, Butterworth's, "The Lads in Their Hundreds."

The main element Frances-Hoad's opening song has in common with Butterworth's song is the somberness of the text. "The Lads in Their Hundreds" speaks of the hundreds of men who visit the fair in Ludlow; they are there for the girls and the liquor, but as the poem states, many of these young vibrant men "will die in their glory and never be old." It is especially chilling that the phrase would end up applying to the composer himself. "Marching Through Time" calls to mind these same men, only this time marching off to war. It serves as an introduction to the stories that will be told throughout the rest of the cycle, as well as a reminder to never forget what took place for the people who were affected by the First World War: "We should remember as years slowly pass; stories as brittle as glass…" These stories were and are fragile indeed, especially considering the interviews which resulted in McMillan's poetry took place when the subjects were at an advanced age, their stories nearly lost.

Musically, "Marching Through Time" has perhaps the strongest, most striking similarity to its wartime inspiration of all the songs in the cycle. The opening ascending motive and turn at the end of the phrase are nearly identical between the two songs, as is referenced in Figures 2-3, and 2-4. The only difference is Frances-Hoad employs a dotted rhythm at the beginning of the phrase and omits the sequence of the turn figure at the end of the phrase to accommodate for fewer syllables. As a result, the folk-like feeling, that is so palpable in Butterworth's tune, is equally palpable in Frances-Hoad's. The dotted rhythm in "Marching Through Time" offers a

more declamatory impression; an apt choice, as the song serves as the narrative introduction for the rest of the cycle.

**Figure 2-3. Opening phrase from "The Lads in Their Hundreds," George Butterworth mm. 1-2**

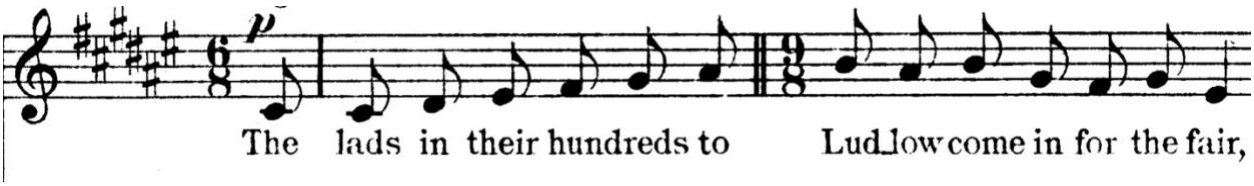
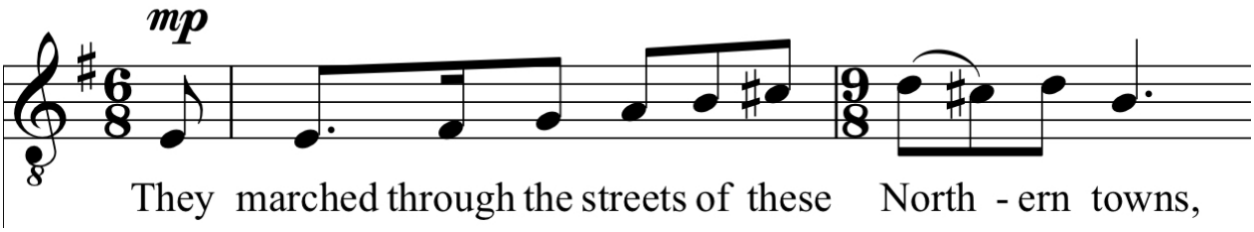



**Figure 2-4. Opening phrase from the second "Marching Through Time," Cheryl Frances-Hoad mm. 1-2**

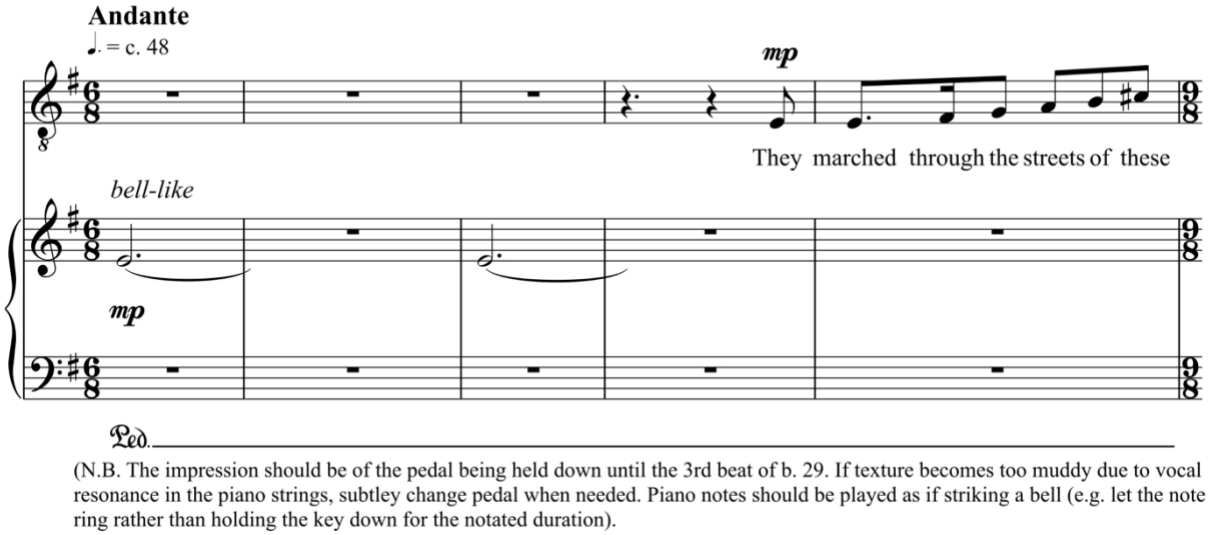



In an interview about the song, Frances-Hoad described it as being akin to a play, where a narrator describes the scene before the action takes place, inviting the audience in to "the song cycle proper."[8] She wanted it to come across as if only slightly removed from speech and was very intentional about moving through the text quickly and simply, wanting to get the story across such that the listener would stay engaged, not forgetting what came in the first line by the time the fourth arrives. She included specific instructions for the pedal tone (see Figure 2-5), which is present for the majority of the piece. The "vocal resonance in the piano strings" is a purposeful effect, which Frances-Hoad expounded on as follows: "I really had the image of almost some kind of Disney movie opening the book at the beginning of Snow White or something, and that you have this sort of bringing back of a memory. There's often a quite

[8] Frances-Hoad, Cheryl. Interview. Conducted by Jenna Black. April 12, 2022.

echoey voice coming from the past. So, I wanted to sort of create that image of drawing the audience in as if the voice was coming from the past."[9]

**Figure 2-5. Pedal tone performance instructions from "Marching Through Time," Cheryl Frances-Hoad mm. 4-5**




(N.B. The impression should be of the pedal being held down until the 3rd beat of b. 29. If texture becomes too muddy due to vocal resonance in the piano strings, subtley change pedal when needed. Piano notes should be played as if striking a bell (e.g. let the note ring rather than holding the key down for the notated duration).

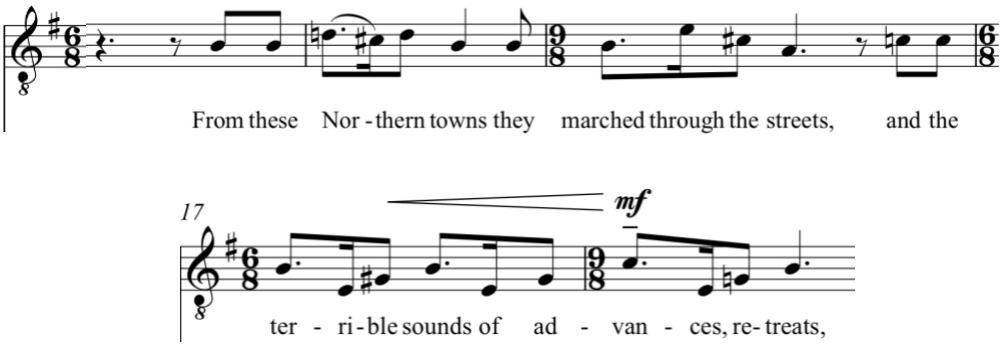
Frances-Hoad goes on to describe the images that come to her as she's writing and how those images influence what ultimately ends up on the page. She wanted "Marching Through Time" to be very naturalistic, as if conjuring a scene; something authentic like a soldier singing. She explains, "It's almost as if the mist is clearing on the film set or something and then there's the action proper that happens. In a film version of a piece, you might get somebody going along whistling or singing to themselves."[10] She continues, illustrating the purpose behind notating a bell-like strike for the pedal tone: "I am almost imagining a church bell or town hall bell, or something conjuring somebody's memory and then they start singing. I wanted to imagine that this was in real time, as close as possible to if someone is telling that story in real time. Because

[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.

it is like you're being spoken to directly."[11] Both the bell and the voice echoing in the strings of the piano are highly effective, as they create distinct images for the listener, even for those without access to the score.

Text painting and wartime imagery are present throughout the cycle, beginning strongly in the first song. While some occurrences of word painting and imagery are obvious, others are more subtle. Still, all combine to create an effective atmosphere. Perhaps the clearest use of text painting in "Marching Through Time," is the consistent dotted rhythm that occurs each time the word "marching" appears. One can almost hear the drums that might have sounded as the men marched through their hometowns on their way to war. The most noticeable occurrence of Frances-Hoad's use of the dotted rhythm comes in mm. 16-18 where it appears in succession, an apt choice considering the text: "From these Northern towns they marched through the streets, and the terrible sounds of advances, retreats…" This time, the soldiers are marching off not merely to war, but into battle. The dotted rhythm indicates the sharp beat of a steel drum, and the arpeggiations in the second phrase (mm. 17), immediately bring to mind a bugle call, as is demonstrated in Figure 2-6.

**Figure 2-6. Drum-like rhythm in "Marching Through Time," Cheryl Frances-Hoad mm. 14-18**




[11] Ibid.

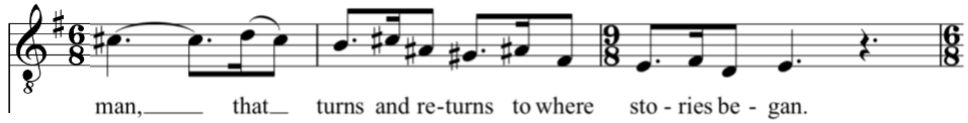
This type of text painting appears again and again in the short song. For example, in mm. 21-22 the vocal line ascends to a climax in the phrase, “stories rebuild just what wartime destroys,” illustrating the word, “rebuild” (see Figure 2-7. A), or the turn of phrase created melodically by repeated escape tones in the phrase, “that turns and returns to where stories began” (see Figure 2-7. B), seem so innate that they could not have been written any other way. Another simple but effective instance is in mm. 49, when the composer employs a lengthened triplet figure over the word “slowly” (see Figure 2-7. C). On the last page, the phrases “fear on their faces,” and “stories as brittle as glass” sport a lowered Phrygian ^2. Although the melody has incorporated chromaticism throughout, ^2, F#, has remained unaltered. Not until the very end is it flatted, where it intensifies the songs folk-like flavor. This unexpected chromatic moment naturally emphasizes the word “brittle,” and creates a quality of instability that the word suggests. The phrase is repeated diatonically, with ^2 back to F# followed a G# (refer to Figure 2-10). With the accentuated F natural and frequent oscillations between G# and G natural, perhaps the insinuation is that the notes themselves are fickle; they could go this way, or that way, just as the stories could have been told, or lost.

**Figure 2-7. Text painting in “Marching Through Time,” Cheryl Frances-Hoad**

**A. mm. 21-22**




**B. mm. 39-41**



**C. mm. 49-50**




Along with the initial phrase from George Butterworth's "The Lads in Their Hundreds," there is one other quotation Cheryl Frances-Hoad has included in "Marching Through Time." Like she did earlier in m. 17, Frances-Hoad hints at a bugle call in m. 28, only this time a specific one. "The Last Post" is a bugle call that was first played in British Army camps in the 1790s signifying the end of the military day. Over time, it has come to mean much more than that. In the 1850s, the call began to be used at funerals, no longer only signifying the end of a day, but the end of a life. By the time the Great War broke out, "The Last Post" was already a part of British culture for the funerals and memorials of servicemen. In November 1919, one year after the end of the war, King George V instituted an annual remembrance of all who died in the conflict. Huge crowds assembled at the Cenotaph memorial in London and took part in two minutes of silent remembrance, which would then be broken by the bugle call.

Since that first Remembrance Day, "The Last Post" has become a formal salute in several nations to those who have died for their country. Bill McStay with BBC news wrote, "The sound of a lone bugler playing the Last Post has become one of the most distinctive sounds in the world. Eerie and evocative, it exists beyond all the usual barriers of nation, religion, race and class, charged with the memory of generations fallen."[12] The pedal which persists throughout "Marching Through Time" in the accompaniment, conjuring that voice from the past through a resonant echo in the strings, is silenced for six measures while the voice represents the

[12] Alwyn W. Turner, "The Story of The Last Post," BBC News, November 11, 2015, https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-34768398

bugle call. The completely unaccompanied succession of major fifths, eventually followed by fourths, and finally a full arpeggiation when the major third is added, is a clear manifestation of a bugle call (see Figure 2-9). Although the specific call is perhaps not immediately recognizable, an awareness of the composer's choice to incorporate "The Last Post" as a quotation (refer to Figure 2-8), makes this song all the more meaningful.

The concept of a bugle call is present throughout the piece, not only in the melody, but the accompaniment as well. Even before the quotation of "The Last Post," Frances-Hoad incorporates frequent fourths and fifths, hinting at a bugle call early on. In fact, we encounter the figure immediately after the initial phrase quoting the Butterworth piece. The imitation of a bugle call echoing through the silence is fostered by the sparse accompaniment throughout "Marching Through Time." Beginning with the simple pedal tone in m.1, there are only seven notes comprised of two pitches in the accompaniment within the first twelve measures, six of which are the tonic. When Frances-Hoad first strays from the tonic in the accompaniment with a ^5-1 motion in m.10, it is preceded by a mirrored inversion in the melody; the combined effect of the figures solidifying the bugle-like music that infuses the rest of the piece. As minimal as the accompaniment is, it effectively contributes to the naturalistic character Frances-Hoad is aiming for.

**Figure 2-8. "The Last Post," Military Bugle Call**



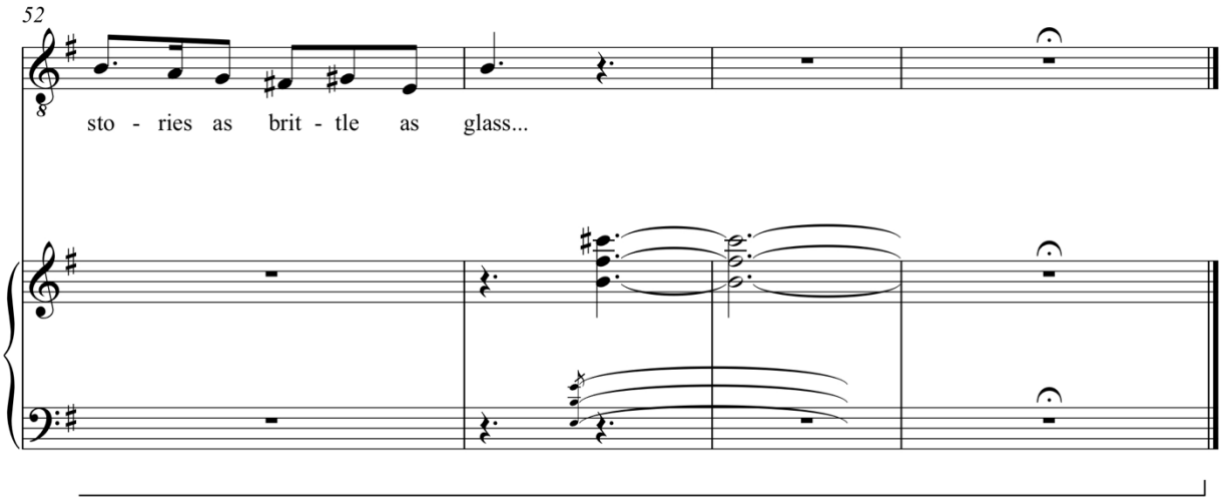
**Figure 2-9. Measures 27-34 in "Marching Through Time," Cheryl Frances-Hoad**




As the pedal persists, the chords encountered in the remainder of the piece, which are relatively few, are largely tonic chords that omit the third, creating open fourths and fifths. The vacancy created by the sparseness of the piano and open chord structure illustrates the sense of loss inherent in the poetry. The final chord is what could be called a hollowed-out $13^{th}/9^{th}$ chord; without the third and the seventh, the audience is left with two open fifths, added to a previous fourth and fifth still resonating in the strings (see Figure 2-10). Built on the dominant, this final tolling of the bell leaves one feeling that hollowness with no promise of resolution. Such a lack of conclusion not only indicates there is more to come, but also perhaps conveys an element of

dissatisfaction or pain associated with the telling of these heart-rending stories, most of which will not have happy endings.

**Figure 2-10. Final chord of "Marching Through Time," Cheryl Frances-Hoad mm. 52-55**



**The Lads in Their Hundreds**
**Alfred Edward Housman**

The lads in their hundreds to Ludlow come in
for the fair,
There's men from the barn and the forge and the
mill and the fold,
The lads for the girls and the lads for the liquor
are there,
And there with the rest are the lads that will
never be old.
There's chaps from the town and the field and
the till and the cart,
And many to count are the stalwart, and many
the brave,
And many the handsome of face and the
handsome of heart,
And few that will carry their looks or their truth
to the grave.

I wish one could know them, I wish there were
tokens to tell
The fortunate fellows that now you can never
discern;
And then one could talk with them friendly and
wish them farewell
And watch them depart on the way that they will
not return.
But now you may stare as you like and there's
nothing to scan;
And brushing your elbow unguessed at and not
to be told
They carry back bright to the coiner the mintage
of man,
The lads that will die in their glory and never be
old.

**Marching Through Time**
**Ian McMillan**

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.

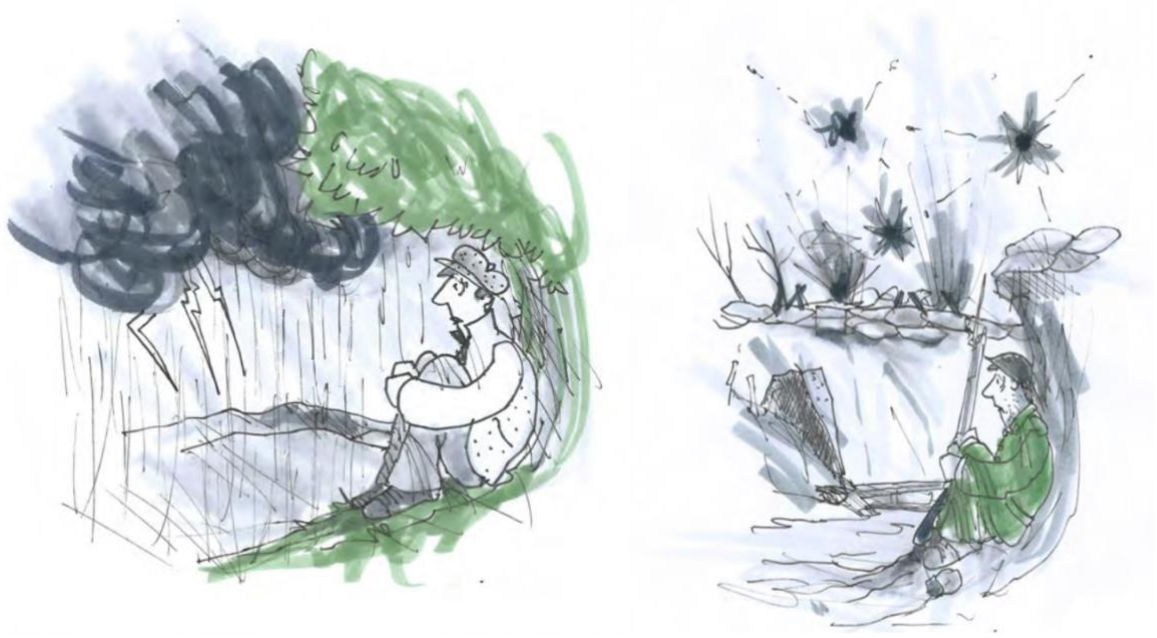
They marched through the light
In these Northern places
To a bomb-blasted night
And the fear on their faces
We should remember as years slowly pass;
Stories as brittle as glass
Stories as brittle as glass...

## II. "Lily Maynard"

The next piece in the cycle and the first story we encounter is "Lily Maynard." Lily Maynard was 101 years old at the time of her interview in 1996. Lily was a resident in the geriatric unit of the Moor Psychiatric Hospital in Lancaster, and as was the case with most of the individuals Ian Beesley interviewed, she likely had some form of senile dementia or Alzheimer's disease. However, her memory of the loved one she lost in the war remained remarkably intact. She shared with Beesley:

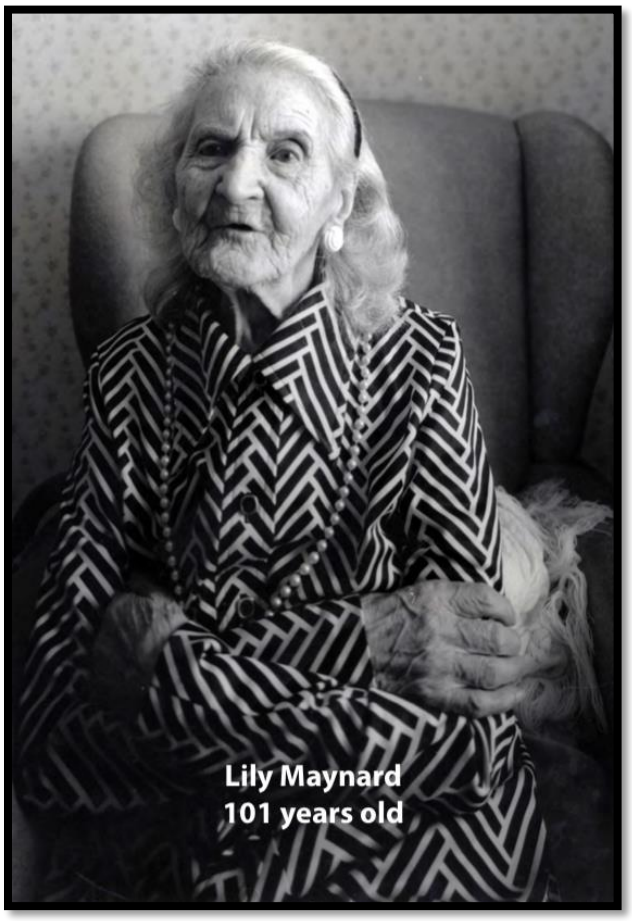
> I was walking back from the fair during a thunderstorm and I could hear this crying coming from under the hedge. Well, it was a young man. He was petrified of the thunder. Well, I managed to coax him out and took him home. I liked him. He was a good looking lad, and ever so nice; we started going out. We were thinking of getting married when he went off to France, the Somme. He never came back. I can't bear to think about it. No, I never married, couldn't. Some nights I still see him cowering under that hedge… Oh no, that's enough, you're here to take my photo. I have had my hair done and bought a new dress; I've borrowed the pearls. You tell me about your love life. Let's cheer up. Know any jokes?[70]

**Figure 2-11. Cartoon of Lily's Beau from *Magic Lantern Tales*, Artist: Tony Husband**



[70] Ian Beesley and Ian McMillan, *Magic Lantern Tales* (The Darkroom Press, 2014), pg. 13.

**Figure 2-12. Lily Maynard photo from *Magic Lantern Tales*, Ian Beesley**




Wanting a song about Lily to reflect a woman's experience of World War I, Frances-Hoad chose Ivor Novello's song, "Keep the Home Fires Burning" as her inspiration. First published as "Till the Boys Come Home" in October of 1914, "Keep the Home Fires Burning" was printed in a new edition in 1915 and would become incredibly popular throughout the war effort. The attitude of the text is that of strength, support, and hope for those sending loved ones to war: "Let no tears add to their hardships as the soldiers pass along, and although your heart is breaking, make it sing this cheery song." Used as a British patriotic anthem, the song was frequently recorded and sung and would have undoubtedly been heard by Lily herself on numerous occasions.

"Lily Maynard" starts out with a whimsically arpeggiated accompaniment, marked *dolce,* that anticipates Lily's story beautifully. The initial melody, also marked *dolce,* mimics the tune of the refrain from "Keep the Home Fires Burning," but in a lilting short-long rhythmic pattern (see figures 2-13 & 2-14). As with "Marching Through Time," the melody departs from

**Figure 2-13. Refrain from "Keep the Home Fires Burning," Ivor Novello**



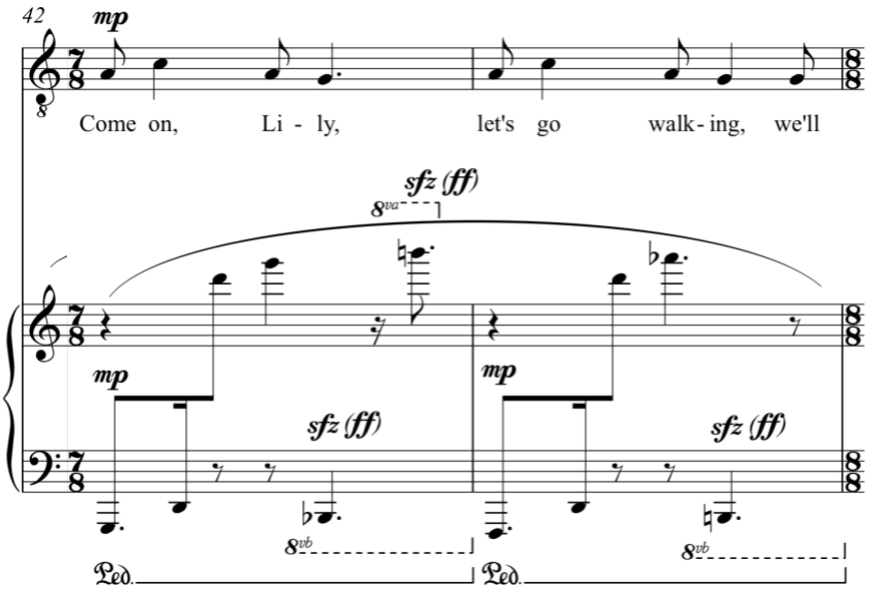

**Figure 2-14. Opening phrase from "Lily Maynard," Cheryl Frances-Hoad mm. 5-7**




its war song inspiration after the first part of the initial phrase. Because Lily's memory was most lucid when she walked, McMillan repeats the phrases "Come on Lily, let's go walking, let's talk as we're walking and pretend we're young again, Lily" six times throughout the poem, and Frances-Hoad repeats it four times in the song. Each instance has the familiar lilting melody in the first half of the phrase, but then something slightly altered in the second. The accompaniment

is also different with each recurrence of the phrase. For example, in m. 28 an expanded version of the G major arpeggiations from the opening phrase appears, but with a startlingly prominent lowered ^6 in the final beat of m. 28 and lowered ^7 in m. 29. These uncharacteristic pitches borrowed from the parallel minor are an omen of the future bad news Lily will receive. The most striking departure is the third rendition, beginning in m 43. While the original presentation of the phrase is underscored by pleasant harp-like arpeggiations, this version interrupts those arpeggiations with sudden chromatic sforzandos/ff in the lower and upper extremities of the piano. Not only are the range and dynamics of these interruptions a shock to the system, but the juxtaposition of the ominous mood they create against the rise and fall of a sweetly familiar melody is deeply unnerving.

**Figure 2-15. Measures 43-44 from "Lily Maynard," Cheryl Frances-Hoad**




In a recent interview, Frances-Hoad recalled the imagery that led to such an emotional contrast. Following the phrase, "And you pictured him in a deep trench, cowering and crying like a baby, Lily, didn't you? He was weeping…," the composer wanted to evoke an image of what

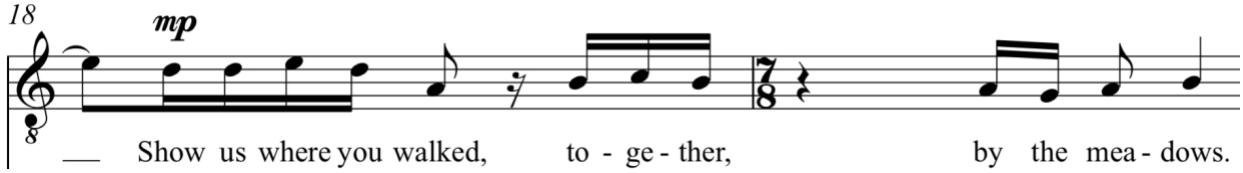
Lily's young beau experienced. She describes the sforzandos as bombs: "I'm literally portraying a sort of memory of the bombs… because he's got shell shock."[71] Frances-Hoad also foreshadows the loss indicated in the coming phrase, "show us his last letter." As with "Marching Through Time," Frances-Hoad was thinking of the moment in a filmic sense:

> You know if somebody is walking down the street whistling a happy tune, and then there's this sort of low ominous tone underneath you're like, "Oh my goodness, something terrible is going to happen," right? Or something just really obvious and basic like in those horror films where somebody's singing a nursery rhyme or something and you sort of just know something terrible… Hopefully not as basic as that, but if you can put the tune into some sort of different relief by the way you accompany it, [that] will color the text in a slightly different way. [72]

The foreboding air Frances-Hoad generates in this passage is unmistakable, illustrating the imagery of the moment, while simultaneously anticipating the young man's fate of which we learn in the coming phrase.

Overall, Lily's song ebbs and flows seamlessly between being conversational and pictorial. While the text seems to portray the narrator as someone speaking to Lily, the climactic moments and more intimate descriptions carry a feeling that perhaps Lily could be talking to herself. Frequent rests in the melodic line create fragmentation which contributes to the idea of Lily suffering from memory loss (see Figure 2-16). It's as if either she herself or her companion pauses repeatedly, allowing her the time and space to remember. When asked for her opinion

**Figure 2-16. Fragmentation in "Lily Maynard," Cheryl Frances-Hoad mm. 18-19**




[71] Frances-Hoad, Cheryl. Interview. Conducted by Jenna Black. April 12, 2022.
[72] Ibid.

regarding the character of the song, Frances-Hoad agreed that the line could be blurred between Lily and her companion. She says, "I imagine that Lily has dementia, and this person is reminding Lily…. If I had to pick something I'd say it's someone who knows Lily's story, and has such a huge amount of empathy for her that they really feel those emotions."[73] She goes on to explain how that same feeling of empathy influences her writing… "Essentially that's what I do in my music; I try and really feel the emotion of that character and then think, "how is that represented in notes and rhythms?" So, the way that one might say a word if one is saying it in a different emotion. It's really weird; I do get super emotional because you just sort of almost try and feel as deeply as you can how that person's feeling in order to translate it into music."[74]

As Lily's story becomes more and more emotional, the harmonies mirror the feeling of the poetry, continually expanding to create a rich, affecting sound. For example, in m. 22 as we reach the climax of Lily reminiscing on the time she spent with her beau before the war, Frances-Hoad adds a 7$^{th}$ to the G major (I) chord in the accompaniment. The following measure leads to an E major (VII) 7$^{th}$ chord which appears to be a V7/ii, leaving the listener expecting a movement to ii or back to I. However, by the time we reach m. 24 the G major 7$^{th}$ chord returns, only it is saturated further with an infused A major chord. Frances-Hoad employs both, resulting in what could be termed a "double" or "super" major chord. The thickly textured chord creates a strikingly rich and colorfully full sound, replicating the warmth and fulfillment Lily experienced in that time of her life.

As with all the songs in the cycle, many of the more emotional moments in "Lily Maynard" are made pictorial with text painting. From a plunging interval on the words

[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.

"dragging" and "deep," in mm. 35 and 38, to musical illustrations of "crying" and "weeping," (mm. 39 and 42), much of Frances-Hoad's word painting is unmistakable. Still, all conspicuous word paintings are skillful enough, and few and far enough between, to avoid becoming tawdry. For example, while "crying" and "weeping" appear only a few measures apart, they feature entirely different musical depictions. Although the words are synonymous, Frances-Hoad has composed the first as a desperate cry and the second in a more mournful tone (see Figure 2-17).

**Figure 2-17. Crying vs. Weeping in "Lily Maynard," Cheryl Frances-Hoad mm. 39-42**



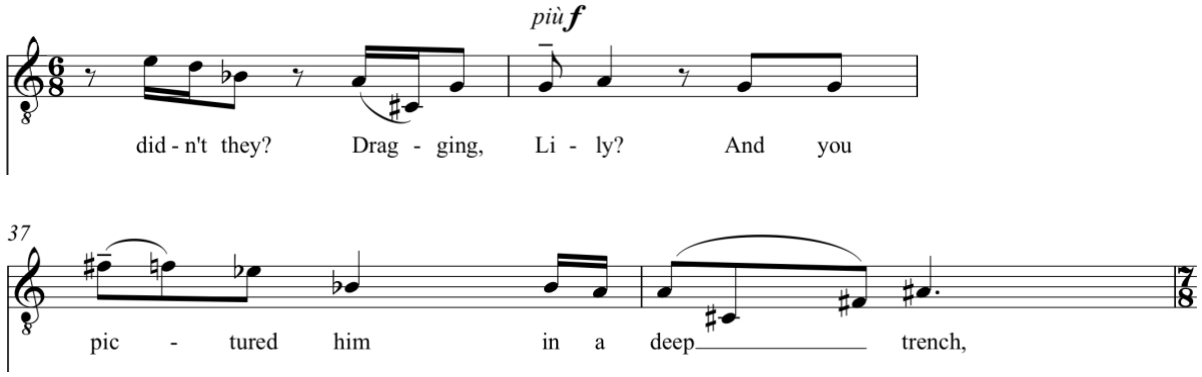
Frances-Hoad describes that familiar balance between the inspired and the practical as being especially delicate with text painting: "I find it quite easy with choral music and vocal music (because you've got all these images); it's quite easy to almost start writing Mickey Mouse music describing the words. So, you think "okay, I want to get across the mood of the poem, not just write an ascending scale when it says, "going upwards" or something." It's trying to stop yourself from becoming too inspired by the moment by moment."[75] Looking to Schubert as a model, she ventures to portray the mood of the overall feeling of a poem, rather than getting too caught up in illustrating the shape or feeling of every word.

Frances-Hoad prevents her text painting from being overemphasized or pedantic by rendering much of it fairly inconspicuous. Describing her word painting in a short section of "Lily Maynard," Frances-Hoad states, "Looking at bar 49, I am thinking those piano chords are gently unfolding this letter. So that's very descriptive, I'm basically unfolding [arpeggiating] a B flat major chord there. And then the wide sky is you know… a wide sky. And the sunrise is in A major because A major is yellow to me. You know, that is very sort of obvious word painting really. I try to be as obvious as I can without being too 'Disney' about it."[76] (See Figure 2-18). Of these examples of text painting the composer cited, it is safe to say that to most listeners only the large interval over the word "wide" would be fairly apparent; few would pick up on the "unfolding" of a B flat major chord, and certainly even fewer if any would recognize A major as being "yellow." In the end, Frances-Hoad achieves the precarious balance between overt and nuanced text painting in "Lily Maynard" and throughout the cycle.

[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

**Figure 2-18. Text painting in "Lily Maynard," Cheryl Frances-Hoad**

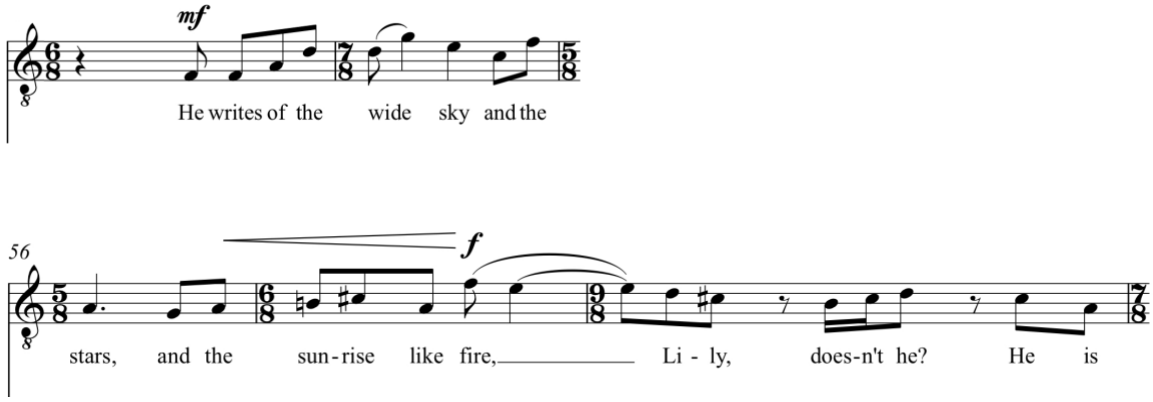
**A. mm. 35 - 38**




**B. mm. 49-51**




**C. mm. 54-58**



**Keep the Home Fires Burning**
**Lena Guilbert Ford**

They were summoned from the hillside
They were called in from the glen,
And the country found them ready
At the stirring call for men.
Let no tears add to their hardships
As the soldiers pass along,
And although your heart is breaking
Make it sing this cheery song

Keep the Home Fires Burning,
While your hearts are yearning,
Though your lads are far away
They dream of home.
There's a silver lining
Through the dark clouds shining,
Turn the dark cloud inside out
'Til the boys come home.

Overseas there came a pleading,
"Help a nation in distress."
And we gave our glorious laddies
Honour bade us do no less,
For no gallant son of freedom
To a tyrant's yoke should bend,
And a noble heart must answer
To the sacred call of "Friend."

Keep the Home Fires Burning,
While your hearts are yearning,
Though your lads are far away
They dream of home.
There's a silver lining
Through the dark clouds shining,
Turn the dark cloud inside out
'Til the boys come home.

**Lily Maynard**
**Ian McMillan**

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,
Loved 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
Heating 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 fault-lines,
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.

## III. "The Ballad of Harry Holmes"

Based on Felix Powell's "Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit-Bag, and Smile, Smile, Smile," "The Ballad of Harry Holmes" is an uptempo addition to the cycle that serves as a cheerful contribution to the stories. "Pack Up Your Troubles" was written by Welshman George Henry Powell and set to music by his brother, Felix. The song was published in 1915 and shortly thereafter entered into a wartime competition for "best morale-building song" where it won first prize. It was noted as "perhaps the most optimistic song ever written."[77] Stating, "What's the use of worrying? It never was worthwhile," the Powell brothers' carefree tune became immensely popular during a dark time. Referred to as a "marching song" or "trench song," "Pack Up Your Troubles" is still one of the more recognizable anthems from World War I. While George Powell was a pacifist who became a conscientious objector during the conscription, Felix Powell served as a staff sergeant. Felix served again as part of the Peacehaven Home Guard during World War II where he took his own life while on duty in 1942, aged 63.

Bearing the least amount of resemblance to its wartime inspiration of any song in the cycle, "The Ballad of Harry Holmes" doesn't follow any melodic or even rhythmic patterns from "Pack Up Your Troubles," but rather captures the same jovial mood. Frances-Hoad wanted to convey a similar lighthearted atmosphere and patter song style, especially as Harry's story/poem has by far the longest text to get through. Although the composer made several cuts to the text before setting it to music, "The Ballad of Harry Holmes" is still the longest song in the cycle. Serving as the comic relief of the book as well as the song cycle, Harry's tale is quite humorous while still touching on the devastation of war. Harry Holmes was a salient at Ypres and was a decorated war hero when he returned home to Bradford. Decorated for bravery, in one instance

[77] Terry Breverton, *Breverton's First World War Curiosities* (Stroud: Amberley, 2014).

single-handedly captured five German soldiers while trying to recover wounded colleagues from no-man's land.

**Figure 2-19. Harry Holmes (center) and his brother (left) at a training camp in Halifax from *Magic Lantern Tales***

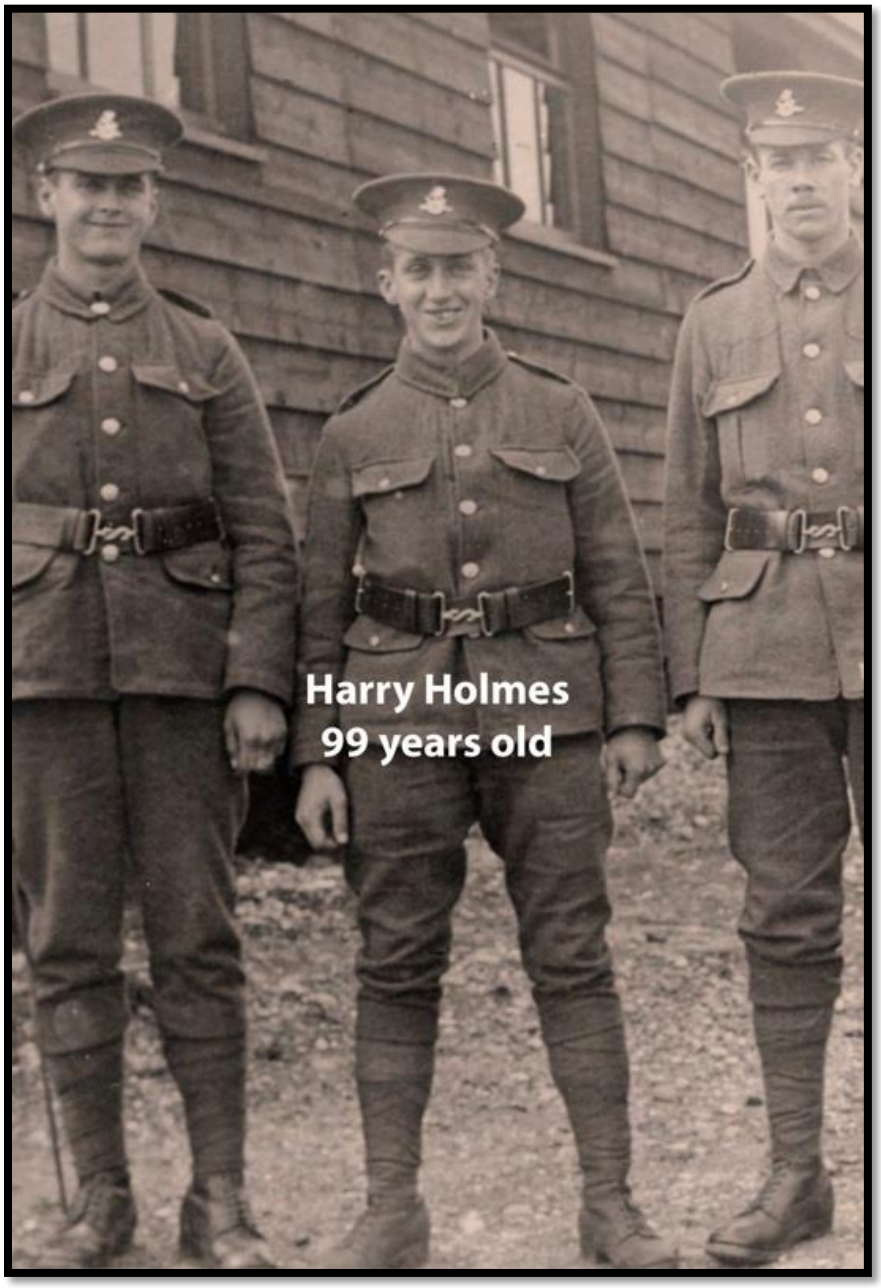


**Figure 2-20. Harry Holmes looking at a photograph of The Duke of Wellington's West Riding Regiment, *Magic Lantern Tales***



After the war, Harry became a painter and decorator back in Bradford where he befriended Harry Ramsden "of fish'n chip shop fame."[78] Both Harrys would meet daily down at the pub where they would drink and talk for hours. Harry Ramsden married late in life and his wife was "tee total," meaning she abstained from alcohol. She of course objected to her husband's drinking and put a swift stop to it. Feeling the loss of his drinking companion, Harry Holmes told Harry Ramsden to buy a dog. This way Harry R. could walk the dog each night and meet Harry H. at the pub for a couple of pints, which he did for several years. When Harry Ramsden died, his widow had to take over walking the dog. Much to her surprise, Harry R.'s hound led her straight round to the taproom of the local pub where sat Harry Holmes! Harry Holmes was 99 years old at the time of his interview, where he remarked, "I have had a fantastic

[78] Ian Beesley and Ian McMillan, *Magic Lantern Tales* (The Darkroom Press, 2014), pg. 11.

life; I would do it all again including the war. I will hang on until I reach 100 and then I'll call it a day."[79] Harry celebrated his 100th birthday and died two days later.

**Figure 2-21. Ballad of Harry Holmes cartoon from *Magic Lantern Tales*, Tony Husband**




Of all the poems in *Magic Lantern Tales*, "The Ballad of Harry Holmes" is one Frances-Hoad imagined being spoken by a storyteller. She explains that when writing a song with a clear story she often treats it like a mini opera. An operatic approach to the text is evident in all the songs in the cycle, but perhaps most strikingly in "The Ballad of Harry Holmes." Even with cuts to the poem, Harry's story is remarkably complete, taking us from his service in the war through to his death as a 100- year-old man, his cheeky personality evident throughout. With dynamic contrasts and frequent tempo changes, the mood shifts in accordance with Harry's experiences.

[79] Ibid.

His story is portrayed quickly but thoroughly, with all the essential elements of a plot present, including a climax (or in this case, "punch line" might be a more accurate term). Hearing the song, one can easily imagine the story as a comic opera or operetta.

Between text painting and characterizing the piano accompaniment, the composer vibrantly brings the story to life in just over eight minutes. Although relatively long for a song, Harry's story is so engaging and told with such vivid imagery the time flies by. Between Ian McMillan's masterful text and Cheryl Frances-Hoad's skillful musical adaptation, every phrase brings a distinct picture to mind. Frances-Hoad employs a Schubertian approach of characterizing the accompaniment, adding a great deal to the imagery that results. For example, when Harry learns the war is over, the poetry reads, "a bird sang in the silent sky." In mm. 31-33, The voice exhibits a bird-like tune, centering around a minor third, but what is even more pictorial is the trill and major arpeggio in the piano, both of which are demonstrated in Figure 2-22. Hinted at before it appears in the text and continuing into the next page, the twittering and whistled melody of a bird is unmistakable. On the next page, Harry returns home by train. The poetry reads, "Harry came home to Bradford, and he gazed out of the train, glad to be back in God's country. Well, the bits he could see through the rain." The quip about the rain is in a patter style, all on one note, bringing the attention to the joke rather than an elaborate or exciting melody. The rolling quintuplets in the accompaniment mimic the continuous hum of a train and suggest to the mind the beautiful country landscape quickly passing by (see Figure 2-23).

**Figure 2-22. The bird in "The Ballad of Harry Holmes," Cheryl Frances-Hoad mm. 30-33**

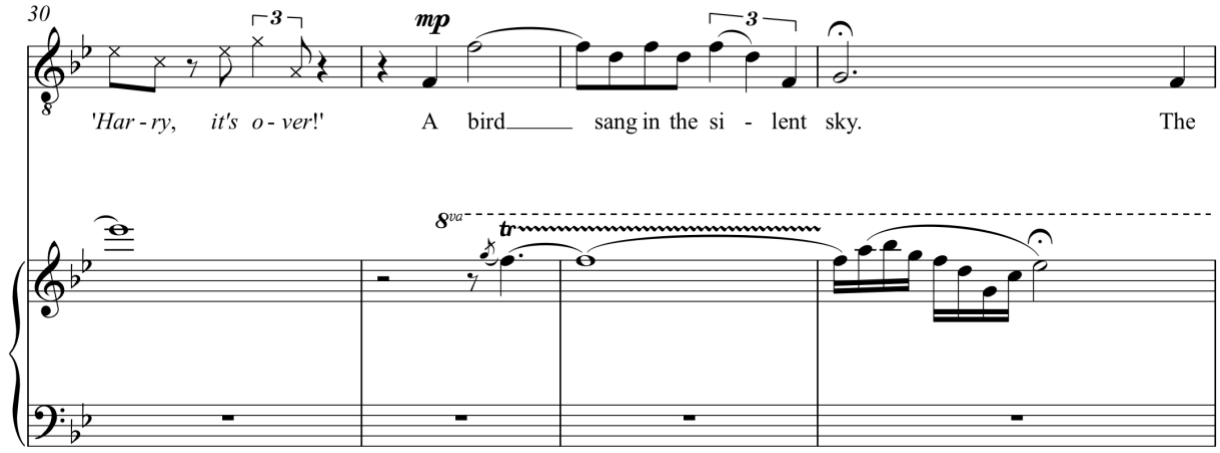
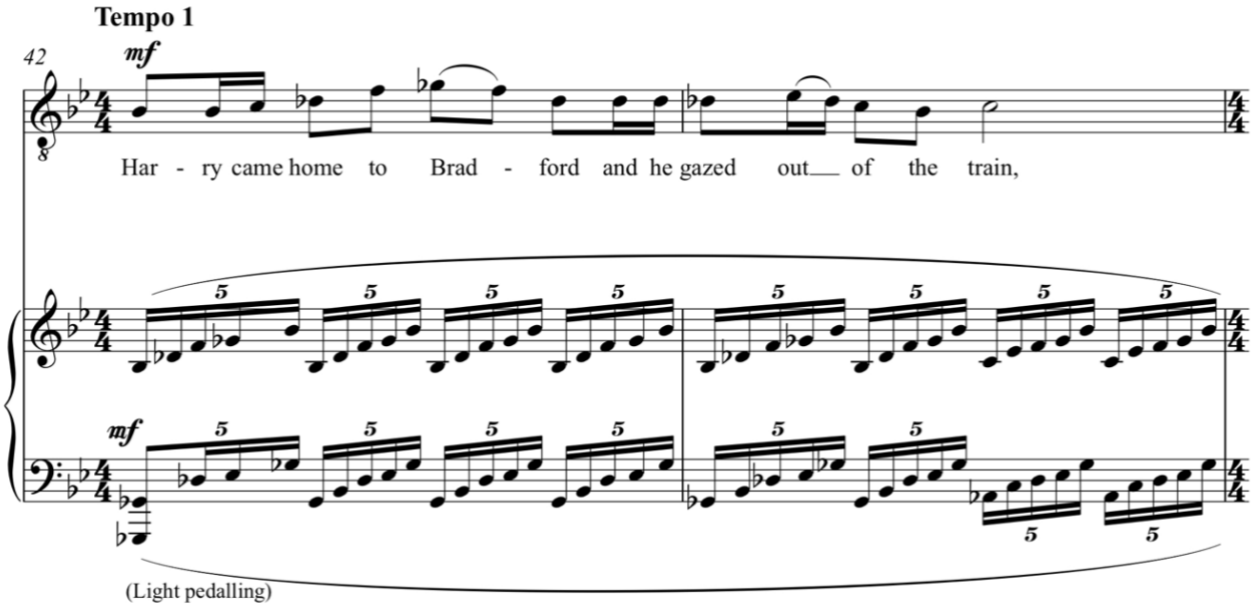



**Figure 2-23. The train in "The Ballad of Harry Holmes," Cheryl Frances-Hoad mm. 42-43**




Much of the accompaniment in "The Ballad of Harry Holmes" does not create such specific imagery, but instead evokes a distinctive mood. Frances-Hoad remarked that she didn't have a lot to say about the song with how straightforward it is, other than that she had great fun writing the "drunk music." Because the story in this poem is so direct, she had the freedom and ease of almost improvising the music, without worrying too much about the nuances of the music

interpreting the text. The "drunk music" she spoke of is hinted at from the very beginning as Harry says early on and through the poem, "All I want when I get through this is a stroll, and a pint, and a kiss," but the obviously swinging boom-chuck motion of the pub music arrives in full force when Harry H and Harry R get together. The cheerful pub piano music starting in m. 83 sounds all the tipsier when atypical pitches in the left hand emerge, as if the player is occasionally missing notes or chords (see Figure 2-24).

**Figure 2-24. Drunk music in "The Ballad of Harry Holmes," Cheryl Frances-Hoad mm. 82-87**



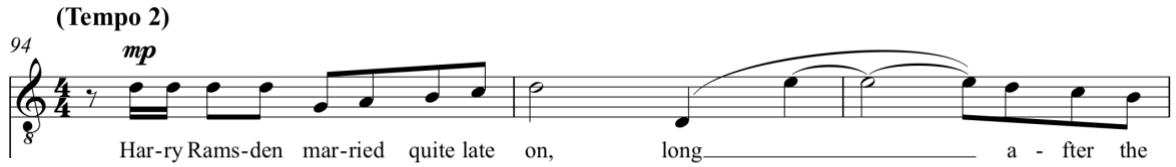
With the overall atmosphere at the forefront in the story of Harry Holmes, and really Harry Ramsden as well, the moments of text painting are less prevalent than in the two songs that precede it. Still, the instances of word painting the composer does employ are very effective. Most of the text painting we do encounter all appears within the same section, making each occurrence compound upon the previous, creating in this case a distinct feeling, rather than evoking images. The phrase beginning in m. 86 says, "All the words ground to a halt when the first pint passed their lips." Indicating that after the first pint their conversation turns to drunken singing, the phrase "ground to a halt" is made sensate with a ritardando and descending octave triplet figure followed by a fermata (see Figure 2-24). Later, in m. 99, when Harry Ramsden "swallows the bitter truth" that he will have to quit drinking for his wife, that same tune returns, this time with the descending octave on "swallow" cleverly representing the action of a gulp. (See figure 2-25. A). When Harry Ramsden is described as having married "quite late on," the composer adds a little humor to the next phrase with her extension of the word "long" in mm. 95-96. He did not marry just after the flush of youth, but "long after the flush of youth," which Frances-Hoad humorously makes a point of accentuating (see Figure 2-25. C).

**Figure 2-25. Text painting in "The Ballad of Harry Holmes," Cheryl Frances-Hoad**

**A. mm. 99**



**B. mm. 95-96**



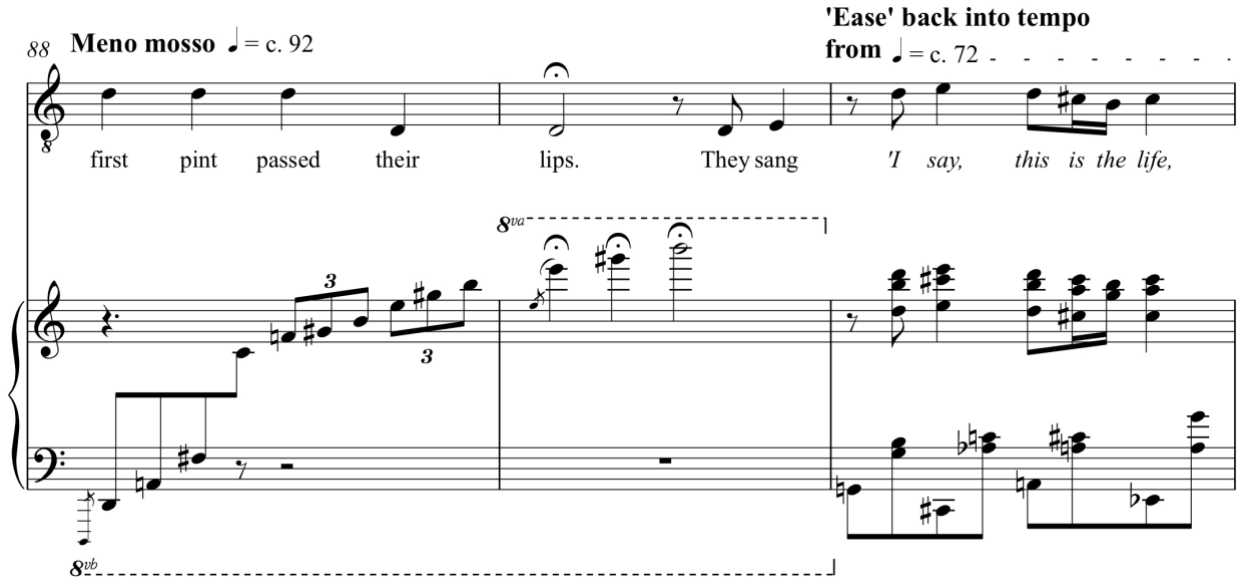

As is demonstrated in Figures 2-24 and 2-25, "The Ballad of Harry Holmes" features several recurring melodic ideas; a feature which contributes to the song's accessibility. Similar to "Lily Maynard," many of these phrases start out the same, but finish differently, a tactic that allows the music to more closely follow the mood or direction of the poem, something exact repetitions might fail to do. For example, after the similar triplet-dominated phrases represented in Figure 2-25 are another two similar lines (see Figure 2-26). Frances-Hoad could have easily given these lines the exact same music. However, while she retains enough of the same material to afford the listener a comfortable sense of familiarity, she also instates enough alterations as to follow the changes in character, and to allow the listener to remain engaged.

In the first example of Figure 2-26, the drunken music appears again in the accompaniment and the melody is a peppy presentation of the G Lydian mode as both men are singing about their idyllic life drinking beer together, the only thing missing being a wife. Later when Harry Ramsden does get married, he sings a melancholy version on his own. Again based on G, this time the tune starts out monotone and turns minor as he sings "I say, that was the life, I'll pass on the beer now I've found a wife." Juxtaposed against the same gleeful pub accompaniment, as though he is bidding his friend and the taproom farewell, this second rendition is also slower in tempo. Again, the composer leans into the comedy of the poem by giving Harry Ramsden a somber "careful what you wish for" moment concerning his marriage.

Harmonically, “The Ballad of Harry Holmes” is the most straight forward in the cycle, but it is not without its subtle surprises. The accompaniment and vocal line both begin distinctly in B-flat major introducing the cheerful melody that provides the foundation for the rest of the piece. The composer incorporates Lydian mode almost immediately with an E natural in m.1, adding interest as well as a sense of merriment. Also alternating between major and minor as led by the text, in m. 69, a minor scale beginning on the third scale degree ascends until reaching a raised fourth. Although that Lydian-like raised fourth has already been encountered once, and will continue throughout the song, its occurrence following a minor scale is unexpected yet fitting, as it comes after the word “cheeky” in the text. Furthermore, that same raised fourth sets up a shift to major in the coming phrase, “A medal’s just a gaudy lump of tin.” In another instance (m. 97), Phrygian harmonies make a brief appearance, bringing a mystical element to the words “flush of youth” and vehemence to the next phrases, “but his wife didn’t like him drinking, so he swallowed the bitter truth.”

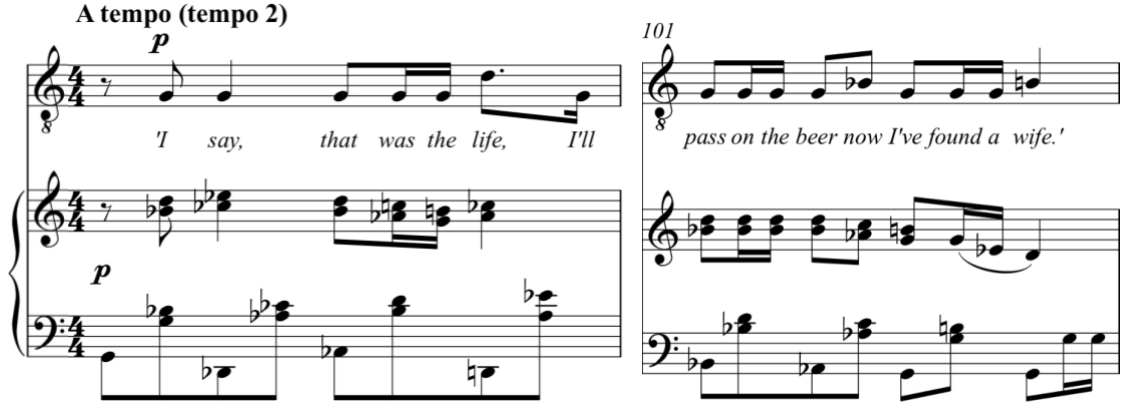
**Figure 2-26. Character in “The Ballad of Harry Holmes,” Cheryl Frances-Hoad**

**A. mm. 88-91**




Tempo 1
91
= c. 106
pass me a beer and find me a wife.'

**B. mm. 100-101**


A tempo (tempo 2)
p
'I say, that was the life, I'll
p
101
pass on the beer now I've found a wife.'

**Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit-Bag and Smile, Smile, Smile**
**George Henry Powell**

Private Perks is a funny little codger
With a smile a funny smile.
Five feet none, he's an artful little dodger
With a smile a funny smile.

Flush or broke he'll have his little joke,
He can't be suppress'd.
All the other fellows have to grin
When he gets this off his chest, Hi!

Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag,
And smile, smile, smile,
While you've a lucifer to light your fag,
Smile, boys, that's the style.
What's the use of worrying?
It never was worth while, so
Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag,
And smile, smile, smile.

Private Perks went a-marching into Flanders
With his smile his funny smile.
He was lov'd by the privates and commanders
For his smile his funny smile.

When a throng of Bosches came along
With a mighty swing,
Perks yell'd out, "This little bunch is mine!
Keep your heads down, boys and sing, Hi!

Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag,
And smile, smile, smile,
While you've a lucifer to light your fag,
Smile, boys, that's the style.
What's the use of worrying?
It never was worth while, so
Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag,
And smile, smile, smile.

Private Perks he came back from Bosche-shooting
With his smile his funny smile.
Round his home he then set about recruiting
With his smile his funny smile.

He told all his pals, the short, the tall,
What a time he'd had;
And as each enlisted like a man
Private Perks said 'Now my lad,' Hi!

Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag,
And smile, smile, smile,
While you've a lucifer to light your fag,
Smile, boys, that's the style.
What's the use of worrying?
It never was worth while, so
Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag,
And smile, smile, smile.

**The Ballad of Harry Holmes**
**Ian McMillan**

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.'

This is the story of Harry Holmes
Who sat in the mud and cried
As the bullets whizzed past his ear'ole
And he shrivelled up a bit inside;

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 bonfire night
His head rang like a bell

He said 'I told them if we get through
The first pint of bitter's on you'

A general came from miles away,
Stuck a medal on Harry's chest
But because he wasn't very bright
The pin went through his vest.

And Harry thought: 'if we get through
The first pint of bitter's on you. Sir.'

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 Country
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...'

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 peoples' 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 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 yer? 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 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 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 lots 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 lots of things and I beat them all...’

## IV. "Mabel Walsh"

The fourth song in the cycle and final story from the interviews and poetry is "Mabel Walsh." At the time of her interview Mabel Walsh was an incredible 104 years old. She said to Beesley:

> I used to go out with Jack (J.B.) Priestley before he was famous. He was an argumentative bugger; he would argue black was white just for sheer enjoyment. Well, I had to jack him in. I met my fiancé in 1916; he was more my type - quiet, a bit shy really, but a gentle soul. He was called up the year after. I was worried sick for him; he wrote as regular as he could. In 1918 he was loading a truck when he dropped down died; there wasn't a mark on his body. Then a medic noticed a mark on the back of his head; a small piece of shrapnel had hit him and he died instantly. I never married and have always kept his photograph on my bedside table, I have often wondered what might have been had he survived, I would have loved to have had some children.

**Figure 2-27. Mabel Walsh and her fiancé's portrait from *Magic Lantern Tales,* Ian Beesley**



Inspired by Cecil Coles' touching song "Elegy," from his cycle *Three Thomas Moore Songs*, Frances-Hoad once again simply hoped to convey the mood above all else. While there aren't many similarities beyond the tone of the pieces, "Elegy" proves to be an apt influence, especially for a story as affecting as Mabel's. Moved not only by the words and music of "Elegy" itself, but also by the story of the composer, Frances-Hoad felt compelled to select Coles' piece as her source of inspiration.

Born in Scotland (1888), Cecil Coles showed an aptitude for music at a young age. By the age of sixteen he had already composed his first orchestral work and later went on to study composition at Edinburgh University. In 1907 Coles joined the Morley College orchestra where he met the newly appointed Director of Music, Gustav Holst. The two formed a close friendship and Coles would often seek Holst's opinion on his compositions. Holst was impressed with the promising young composer, later writing, "his genuine love and talent for music, combined with his never-failing geniality, enthusiasm and energy, worked wonders at a time when wonders, of that sort, were badly needed."[80] Coles joined Queen Victoria's Rifles as bandmaster and was immediately called up when war was declared. His bandmaster post entitled him to the rank of Sergeant, and although his position did not engage him directly in the fighting, he was never exempt from the ravages of war. In a brief biography Robert Weedon explained, "Bands and music were regarded as important to morale throughout the war, and while band musicians were non-combatants in the sense of firing guns, military musicians were often called upon to work in dangerous roles such as stretcher bearers, which involved going to pick up injured soldiers often

[80] John Purser, "A Genius and a Hero: Cecil Coles" (The National, November 10, 2016), https://www.thenational.scot/news/14895601.a-genius-and-a-hero-cecil-coles/.

in the middle of heavy gunfire."[81] Remarkably, Coles continued to compose during his military service, sending manuscripts back to Holst as often as he could. Holst said of their correspondence, "I could fill a whole number of magazine with extracts from his splendid letters. They were always full of bravery and music, of details of impromptu concerts, of his band, of rejoicings over the Morley programmes."[82]

Most significantly, Coles sent Holst a portion of his final orchestral suite *Behind the Lines* dated "February 4th 1918, In the Field."[83] Unfortunately, at some point during a withdrawal, a shell destroyed all the bands' instruments and several of Coles' manuscripts, including the second and fourth movements of *Behind the Lines*. The surviving two movements include the first, "Estaminet de Carrefour" ("Tavern of Crossroads"), described by Hyperion Records as providing "a sketch of a northern French pastoral landscape," and the third movement "Cortège" ("Procession"), "a heroic picture of a military funeral."[84] Two months after completing the orchestral suite, Coles was fatally wounded while recovering injured soldiers and casualties from a wooded clearing at the Somme, an assignment for which he volunteered. Initially unaware of the seriousness of his injuries he was said to have been humming Beethoven and asking whether his piano playing would be affected.[85] A fellow soldier in Coles' regiment wrote of him, "Cecil was a genius before anything else, and a hero of the first water. I admired him more than anyone, highly strung and sensitive, but with a fine, firm, noble will, and able to

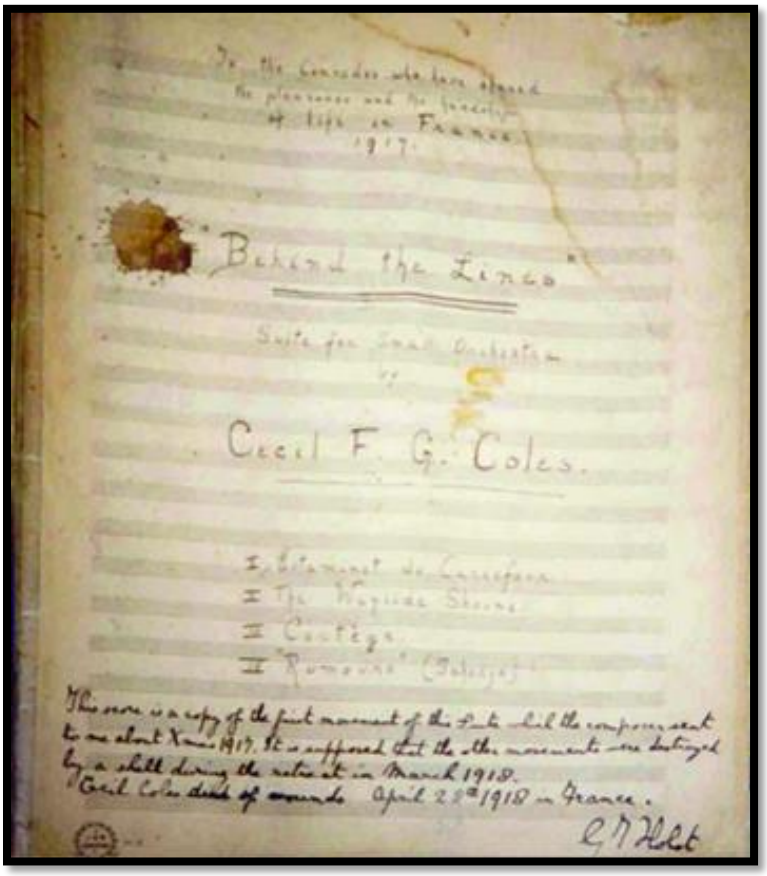
[81] Robert Weedon, "Cecil Coles - A Biography" (War Composers, 2013), https://www.warcomposers.co.uk/.
[82] John Purser, "A Genius and a Hero: Cecil Coles" (The National, November 10, 2016), https://www.thenational.scot/news/14895601.a-genius-and-a-hero-cecil-coles/.
[83] John Purser, *Music from Behind the Lines* (Hyperion Records, 2002), https://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dc.asp?dc=D_CDH55464.
[84] Ibid.
[85] John Purser, "A Genius and a Hero: Cecil Coles" (The National, November 10, 2016), https://www.thenational.scot/news/14895601.a-genius-and-a-hero-cecil-coles/.

bring it into force at the critical moment."[86] Cecil Coles was one of the most talented composers of his generation, and his premature death was a great loss to the world of music.

Shockingly, the works of Coles that did survive went largely unknown for the better part of a century. His wife Phoebe didn't speak of him after his death and his daughter Penny didn't learn that her father composed until she was in her seventies. Making it her mission to find what she could of his compositions, Penny eventually discovered forty of his manuscripts stored in a cardboard box at George Watson school in Edinburgh. Coles' music finally made a well-deserved return in the twenty-first century with a masterful album through Hyperion records made possible by Martyn Brabbins and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, as well as musicologist Professor Jeremy Dibble. The late composer gained further exposure in 2003 when his music was featured at the BBC Proms as well as in the Channel four documentary, "The First World War." In an article about the newly discovered composer and his works Iain Colville states, "As poignant as some of the music is the fact that some of Coles' manuscripts were pocked by shrapnel, and still stained with blood and the mud of the Somme."[87] Describing the pictures from *Magic Lantern Tales* in a similar fashion, Cheryl Frances-Hoad says "the photos that came with this book… They're just so emotive, and there's something about these stories from these women."[88]

[86] Ibid.
[87] Iain Colville, October 7, 2011, http://iainthepict.blogspot.com/2011/10/cecil-frederick-gottlieb-coles.html?m=1.
[88] Frances-Hoad, Cheryl. Interview. Conducted by Jenna Black. April 12, 2022.

**Figure 2-28. *Behind the Lines* Manuscript, Cecil Coles**




"Mabel Walsh" begins with an economical accompaniment of staccato quarter notes marked sixty beats per minute, representing a ticking clock. The texture soon becomes more complex when the left hand enters with contrasting rhythms, almost as if at another tempo. The imagery of a clock is magnified later in the piece when pedaled treble chords again play at a steady pace, reminiscent of chimes as is demonstrated in Figure 2-29. The composer's choice of bringing a clock to the forefront of the song may seem obvious from the final stanza of the poem, "The ticking clock, the hourly chimes, struck silent by that bastard war."[89] But her motivation behind the clock being so prominent went slightly beyond the poetry. She says, "This is based on

[89] Cheryl Frances-Hoad, *Magic Lantern Tales,* Cadenza Music Limited, 2018.

the idea of a ticking clock and a chiming clock, and the photograph really; just imagining that lady sitting there in silence with a ticking clock most of the time."[90] Explaining the offset rhythms, she continues, "Basically there are three different clocks going on. I don't know quite why, but I was thinking of a woman in a room with a ticking clock, and then I was thinking of other women in rooms with ticking clocks… who are in the same situation perhaps."[91] Joking

**Figure 2-29. The ticking clock and hourly chimes in "Mabel Walsh," Cheryl Frances-Hoad mm. 67-70**




about how that may be incorrect because all clocks tick at sixty beats per minute, she goes on, "They could be offset, and I mean I didn't have any sort of coherent reason for doing that in my head other than that it would make an interesting texture."[92] An interesting texture indeed, and at times a difficult one. Recognizing how challenging some of the rhythmic oppositions are, particularly starting in m. 57 with the 5/4 time signature, Frances-Hoad laughed, saying, "Why did I do that? I was just being cruel… It's really difficult. It's as if there were two clocks and one is in the foreground, and then you focus on the other."[93] She goes on to explain that she was once

[90] Frances-Hoad, Cheryl. Interview. Conducted by Jenna Black. April 12, 2022.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.

again imagining the scene in a filmic sense: "You know those shots in films where you focus on the person and then that person will become blurred as the camera focuses on the other person? It's that hint of changing perspective. I was imagining that sort of effect… but I realize now how awfully hard that is."[94]

**Figure 2-30. Opposing clocks in "Mabel Walsh," Cheryl Frances-Hoad mm. 60-62**



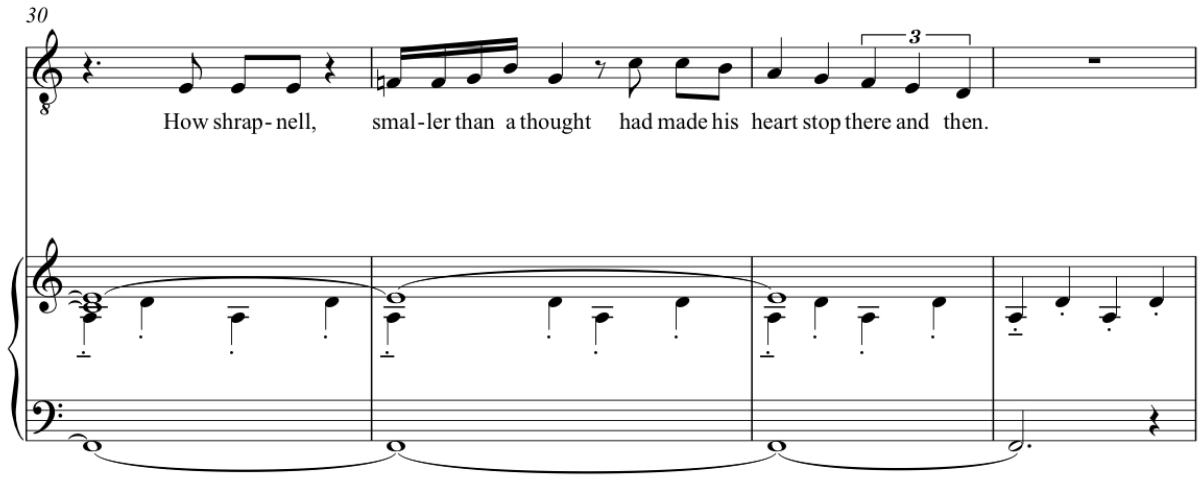
Although the listener or performer might not grasp that different women are sitting in their respective rooms with nothing but the sound of their ticking clocks, such a texture allows for other compelling interpretations. For example, one might recognize the presence of a ticking clock, and take the contrasting rhythmic patterns to represent Mabel vacillating between existing in and out of time. This sentiment is particularly evident when in the poem she reminisces about what could have been had her fiancé not been killed. The melody shifts from A minor to A major as the poetry reads, "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..." In those moments it is as if she has forgotten the ticking of the clock and, although it is ever-present in the background, she herself is lost in the fantasy of what her life could have been like had he returned.

The texture created by the clocks dominates the text painting in "Mabel Walsh," but there are other interesting occurrences of word painting that the composer manages to weave into the

[94] Ibid.

complicated texture. For example, in m. 31 when the poem describes the shrapnel that killed Mabel's fiancé as "smaller than a thought," the composer employs a fleeting sixteenth note pattern for the first and only time in the song. Soon after, at "had made his heart stop," "heart" and "stop" get two even quarter notes, placing a clear emphasis on these two words and painting the cessation of his heartbeat (see Figure 2-31). Remarking on how easy McMillan's poetry made it for her to set this and all the stories to music, the composer states, "When you look at these poems, there's no particularly complicated words in them, but he's just got that knack for really putting emotion across. There are no particularly special words in this, it's just the way he does it is so effective."[95] A critical addition to the cycle, "Mabel Walsh" was one of the photos in the *Magic Lantern Tales* collection that Frances-Hoad found herself especially drawn to. Out of all the photos and poems in the collection, Frances-Hoad felt it essential to include Mabel Walsh's "unbearable"[96] story in her cycle.

**Figure 2-31. Text painting in "Mabel Walsh," Cheryl Frances-Hoad. mm. 30-33**




[95] Frances-Hoad, Cheryl. Interview. Conducted by Jenna Black. April 12, 2022.
[96] Ibid.

## Elegy
## Thomas Moore

When wearied wretches sink to sleep,
How heavenly soft their slumbers lie!
How sweet is death to those who weep,
To those who weep and long to die!

Saw you the soft and grassy bed,
Where flowrets deck the green earth's breast?
'Tis there I wish to lay my head,
'Tis there I wish to sleep at rest.

Oh, let not tears embalm my tomb, —
None but the dews at twilight given!
Oh, let not sighs disturb the gloom, —
None but the whispering winds of heaven!

## Mabel Walsh
## Ian McMillan

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,

The statement's tragicomic, all
Those d-d-d's as down he goes.

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.

## V. "Marching Through Time"

Cheryl Frances-Hoad begins and ends *Magic Lantern Tales* with "Marching Through Time." Apart from some alterations in the piano and slightly different melodic endings, this final "Marching Through Time" is an exact repetition of the opening piece. Although the songs are nearly identical, the effect of "Marching Through Time" has a completely different impact after experiencing the three individual stories included in the cycle. "These marching men" are no longer far-removed figures from the past; rather, they have become Harry Holmes, Lily Maynard's sweetheart, and Mabel Walsh's fiancé. Several of the phrases, including the final line, "We should remember as years slowly pass, stories as brittle as glass,"[97] become markedly more

**Figure 2-32. Magic Lantern Slide - Hand-painted on glass circa 1914, from *Magic Lantern Tales***




[97] Cheryl Frances-Hoad, *Magic Lantern Tales,* Cadenza Music Limited, 2018.

poignant following our journey throughout the rest of the cycle. In part, the composer chose to replicate the song because "Mabel Walsh" didn't feel like a proper ending. The final stanza of Mabel's poem reads, "The ticking clock, the hourly chimes – Struck silent by that bastard war." Rather than abruptly end the song cycle with this moving but dark line, Frances-Hoad wanted to end on a more reflective note. Frances-Hoad remarks, "There's something really important about that, isn't there? It almost makes me think about… if you're discussing something really troubling with a friend, you have to take yourself out of that. It's moving out of that emotional space. And sometimes that [discussion] can be really powerful, but you need that sense of closure."[98]

Another factor that influenced Frances-Hoad to bookend the cycle with "Marching Through Time" was the structure of the cycle. Recalling the imagery she had in mind for the beginning of the cycle as an introduction to a fairytale or film, she also wanted to "close the book" and give the cycle that "The End" moment that she didn't feel was present at the end of Mabel Walsh. She continues, "There's something about framing a song cycle. I think of it as a frame and it gives it shape; it gives it structure. It's that sort of telling of a tale."[99] She used the same method in another cycle, *Everything Grows Extravagantly*, and reviewer Eric McElroy called the choice "Lieder-Like," going on to say, "This framing music itself undergoes a subtle transmutation. It is the same song – but different. And this is the magic of such a song-cycle: it offers us a chance to rewild a familiar space."[100]

[98] Frances-Hoad, Cheryl. Interview. Conducted by Jenna Black. April 12, 2022.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Eric McElroy, "A Review of Cheryl Frances-Hoad's *Everything Grows Extravagantly*," *Cherwell*, November 29, 2021, https://cherwell.org/2021/11/29/a-review-of-cheryl-frances-hoads-everything-grows-extravagantly/.

## Performance Considerations and Conclusion

A major element present in "Marching Through Time," and all the songs in the cycle, is frequently changing meter. While so many time signatures on the page can appear daunting at first glance, the composer explains that the frequent changes not only serve the text, but also provide clarity of intention: "I wouldn't want someone to be thinking so much about the rhythm [counting] that they're not thinking about the music, but by following the rhythm, [the music] comes out in the phrasing, and with the meaning that I intended."[101] She continues with a specific example from the first "Marching Through Time": "For instance, bar nine: "all we remember of these marching men," I felt I needed that extra quaver. I wanted to add something a bit weightier to "remember…" there's something about taking a little bit of extra time over those words that perhaps just emphasizes them a little bit."[102]

Wondering if perhaps she is too specific with her rhythms, often fluctuating meters, Frances-Hoad expressed that there is never a right or wrong answer with music; you just have to make a choice. Having received positive feedback from performers, the composer is learning to trust her instincts and for the majority has found that her detailed approach to rhythm and meter works well. She shared, "Somebody said something about my music in that it looks very hard, but if you internalize the rhythms, it feels quite natural."[103] Ultimately, Frances-Hoad's hope for the performer is not that they will be overwhelmed with subdivisions, but rather that they will easily see on the page which moments should be stretched and which words require stress. In other words, the metric fluctuation is meant to accommodate natural speech patterns, and not come across as abstractly complex.

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[101] Frances-Hoad, Cheryl. Interview. Conducted by Jenna Black. April 12, 2022.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.

However detailed her music may be, Cheryl Frances-Hoad describes herself as "unfussy" about different performative interpretations. Describing the experience of handing her music off to the performer as akin to allowing a child to have their own life rather than micromanaging them, what she hopes as a composer is that she puts enough of her intentions in the music to give the performers the insight they need. She says, "What's the most wonderful thing is if I go to a rehearsal, and I don't really have to say anything. Even if there's something the performer is doing that's not exactly how I would have done it I think, "Oh that's really interesting and I really like that interpretation," and you feel that you've put what is needed in the music." She says, she wrote *Magic Lantern Tales* long enough ago that perhaps she's even more open to different interpretations now than she might have been when it was written in 2015. She explains:

> The older a piece is, the less I'm worried about it. There's a couple of cello pieces that I know still from memory, like Brahms' E Minor cello sonata; I still have that in my head. Once you've first written a piece… you have it so specifically in your head, but the longer time passes it becomes like that Brahms E Minor sonata. It's a piece that's almost not yours anymore; it's like a piece you know really well. You might really appreciate different interpretations of Brahms E Minor and not think "oh that's wrong or that's right, or that's a bit faster than I would play it," but actually that brings out [another] quality of it.[104]

Describing herself as being not very analytical, but rather more intuitive, and emotive, Frances-Hoad appreciates the power of nuanced interpretation. After all, *Magic Lantern Tales* is her unique musical interpretation of McMillan's poetry.

Frances-Hoad explained that writing all of the songs in *Magic Lantern Tales* was incredibly instinctual. She recalls, "I wrote it very quickly, I sort of half improvised it really… Because they're fairly simple stories, quite emotive stories, it's important that the story gets

[104] Ibid.

across. Perhaps in another song it might be a more complex poem about some ideas that you might use as a vehicle for doing something in your composition. But with these pieces I wanted them to essentially be stories, just with notes in them."[105] Frances-Hoad places the communication of emotion and storytelling at the forefront in all her music. She describes thinking of all of her music as being in a character. Even if it is something purely instrumental, like a piano trio, she views each instrument as its own character. In the case of *Magic Lantern Tales* much of that work was already done for her; she relates having the text suggest images and ideas, as well as the individuals' stories giving her a glimpse into their character.

Frances-Hoad immersed herself in wartime songs as she wrote *Magic Lantern* Tales, but that was not the only preparation she had for the cycle. Around the same time Cheryl Frances-Hoad wrote *Magic Lantern Tales,* she wrote another World War I commemoration piece called *Last Man Standing.* A thirty-minute song cycle for baritone and orchestra exploring the experiences and emotions of an anonymous British soldier or "Everytommy," *Last Man Standing* marked the centenary of the end of The Great War. More of a monodrama than a song cycle, librettist Tamsin Collison derived the structure for the story from Nicholas Saunder's book *The Poppy*, which follows the flower's cultural and social history. Frances-Hoad spent years investigating novels, poetry, letters, eyewitness accounts and documentaries to inform her compositional approach to the work and describes her researching as having "found its way into the musical language" of the piece.[106] Describing the music of that period as "gut wrenching… because it's life and death,"[107] she hoped to pay homage to those songs and their sentiments.

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[105] Ibid.
[106] Cheryl Frances-Hoad, "Last Man Standing," 2018, https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/58888/Last-Man-Standing--Cheryl-Frances-Hoad/.
[107] Frances-Hoad, Cheryl. Interview. Conducted by Jenna Black. April 12, 2022.

Between *Last Man Standing* and *Magic Lantern Tales,* Frances-Hoad describes her life as being somewhat dominated by World War I for a handful of years. It is because of this that writing *Magic Lantern Tales* came so quickly and easily to the composer.

## Chapter 3: Other Vocal Works

The more one becomes acquainted with Cheryl Frances-Hoad's works, her vocal music in particular, the more evident her unique and particularly varied style becomes. Therefore, this project would not be complete without investigating some of her other songs and song cycles. Frances-Hoad has described *Magic Lantern Tales* as some of her most accessible music to date. Because she wanted the focus to be on the individuals' stories, she made a concerted effort to tell their stories in relatively simple musical language. She felt the poetry spoke for itself in many ways and did not want to overcomplicate it with overtly modernist musical techniques. As a result, *Magic Lantern Tales* is the most tonal of any of her vocal compositions. While the composer views the majority of her music as being quite accessible, some of her works are more challenging than others.

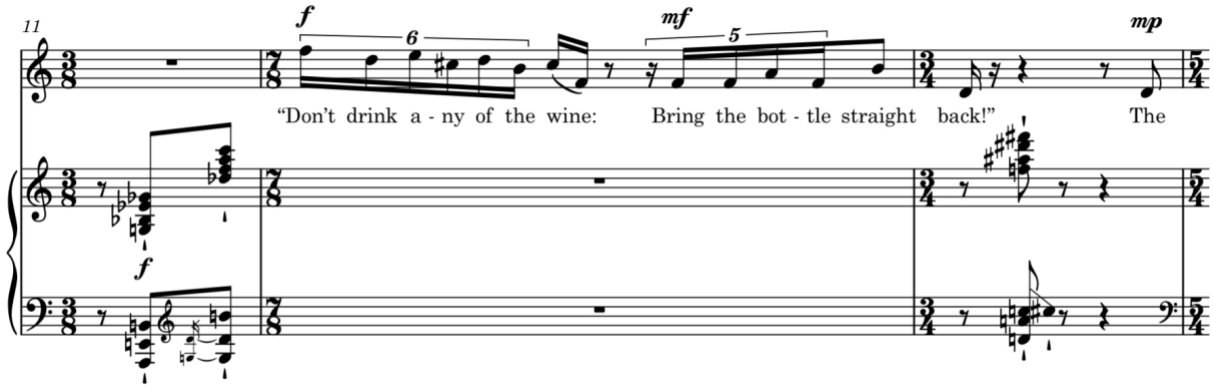
### ***Six Songs of Melmoth***

For example, her *Six Songs of Melmoth* (2020) is based on the gothic novel, *Melmoth the Wanderer* by Charles Maturin, and Sarah Perry's postmodern gothic adaptation *Melmoth*. The story follows a scholar who sold his soul to the devil in exchange for 150 extra years of life. Regretting his choice, Melmoth searches the world over for someone who will assume the pact in his place. In the book, he is ultimately unsuccessful in luring another soul into damnation, but he nevertheless leaves much ruin in his wake. Affectively, this material starkly contrasts with that of *Magic Lantern Tales*, and Frances-Hoad accordingly takes very different compositional approaches to the two works. The novel conveys layers of stories from different individuals' encounters with Melmoth, an aspect that Frances-Hoad and librettist Sophie Rashbrook utilize in

their cycle as well. Described by the composer as a "musical matryoshka,"[1] each of the songs in the cycle exhibits a unique character. However, unlike in the original novel, in *Six Songs of Melmoth*, the condemned is successful in persuading sufferers to take his place. Each song represents a different individual and time period beginning with a narrator in 1816. A student attending to his dying uncle, discovers a painting of Melmoth with which the young man becomes somewhat entranced, later mysteriously seeing Melmoth's damp footprints leave the room.

The opening song begins with what Robert Hugill described as "a clamorous Gothic shudder,"[2] which is followed by an unaccompanied recitative with no discernible tonal center. When the piano reenters in m. 11, it is with startling dissonant chords, setting a frightening scene and telescoping a whimsically horrific story (see Figure 3-1). The song is generally declamatory

**Figure 3-1. mm. 11-13, "The Painting," Cheryl Frances-Hoad**

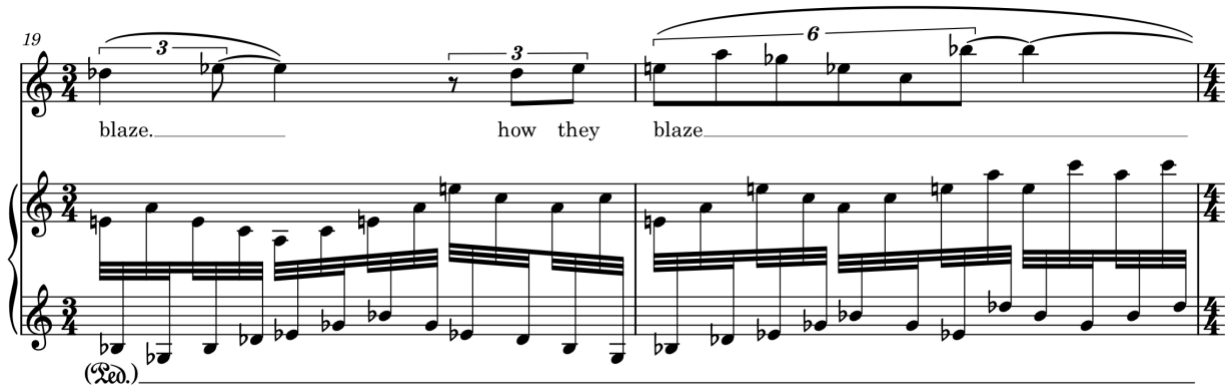



in style, manifesting mainly as a recitative apart from a brief more expressive passage flourishing out of the narrative. This first piece, "The Painting," recounts the student's discovery

[1] Robert Hugill, "Six Songs of Melmoth: Premiere of Cheryl Frances-Hoad's New Song-Cycle at Oxford Lieder Festival," *Planet Hugill.com* (blog), October 17, 2020, https://www.planethugill.com/2020/10/six-songs-of-melmoth-premiere-of-cheryl.html.
[2] Cheryl Frances-Hoad, *Six Songs of Melmoth,* Chester Music, 2020.

and conveys his conversation with his uncle. The recitative, as well as more sonorous moment, have the dramatic qualities of a modern opera, especially as the young man describes Melmoth's unnatural eyes, repeating three times, "How they blaze." With no trace of the folk-like influences and tuneful melodies found in *Magic Lantern Tales*, this introductory song follows speech patterns throughout, and, as with opera, introduces a story and commences a plot. The piano accompaniment does the better part of creating an atmosphere, with its sporadically clashing chords and relentlessly threatening 32nd notes (see Figure 3-2). While the voice seems to be geared toward narration and pure expression, rather than evoking images through text painting, the piano generates the surroundings and trepidation that the text relates.

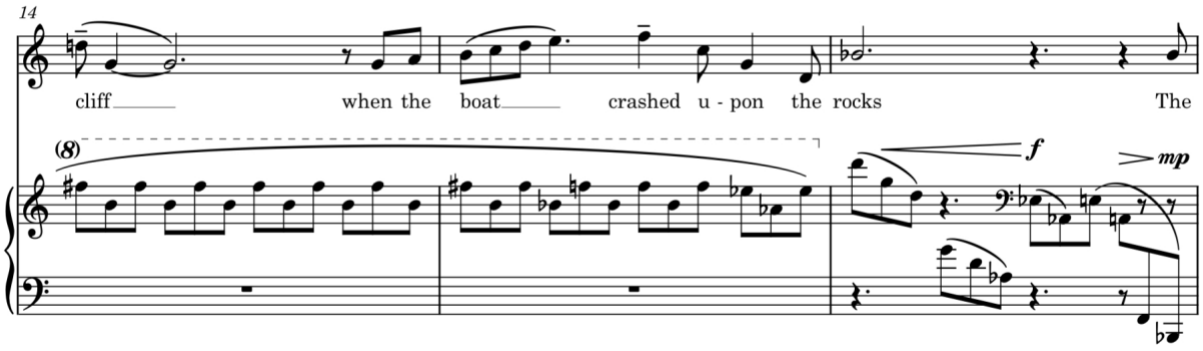
**Figure 3-2. mm. 19-20, "The Painting," Cheryl Frances-Hoad**




Next comes Melmoth's tale of losing his bride to a shipwreck on the eve of their wedding. Having watched helpless from the cliffs of the harbor, Melmoth subsequently hears the voice which coaxes him into damnation. Told by Old Biddy Brannington, "Shipwreck Gossip" begins with vacillating eighth-note figures illustrating the chaos of the waves (see Figure 3-3). Again with no discernible tune, the new character conveys the story with unexpectedly wide intervals, creating strange vocal flourishes as she conveys Elinora's tragic death. The eighth-note figure that has continued to vamp beneath the old crone's arioso, ceases in m. 19 as she quotes

the voice Melmoth heard. The accompaniment becomes sparse, allowing the voice to lyrically and eerily ask, "Will you come with me? I promise deliverance."[3] Chaos resumes as Old Biddy Brannington tells of Melmoth's fate, "condemned to wander the earth independent of time and space, taking different forms, but always them blazing eyes." As with the first song in the cycle, the piano creates a visual world for the story, but the voice is mainly recitative-like, interspersed with a few dramatic outbursts.

**Figure 3-3. mm. 14-16, "Shipwreck Gossip," Cheryl Frances-Hoad**

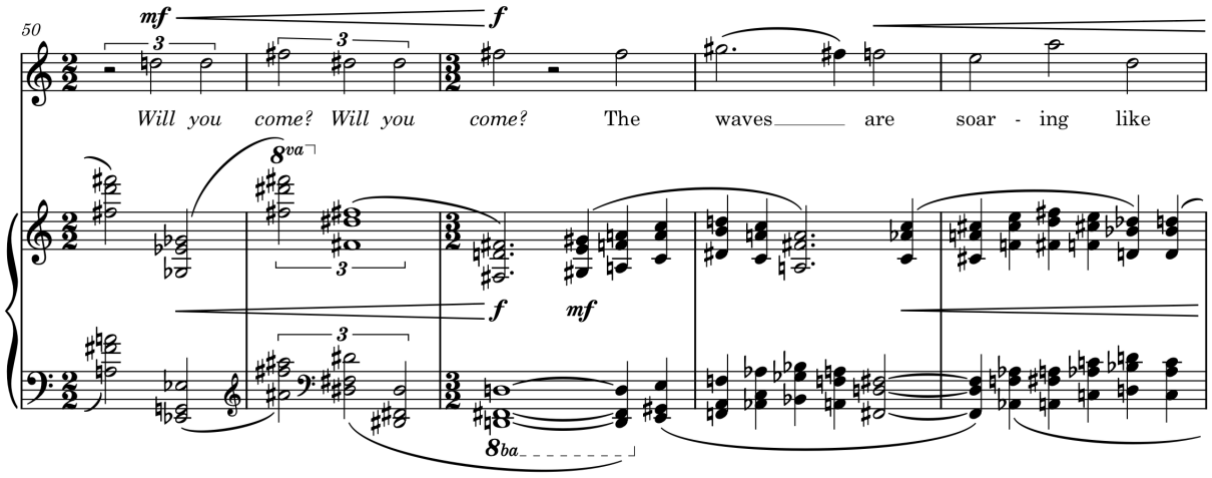



The following piece, "Elinora's letter" dated 1516, follows a more romantic path, and although still intensely chromatic, the character's sweetness is portrayed in both the text and the music. Elinora writes to Melmoth describing the storm she knows will take her life, and how she herself heard a voice from a siren-like woman in the shadows whose eyes were like lanterns; she sang, "Will you take my hand? Will you come? Will you consent?" Elinora tells Melmoth, "I have not consented, but the storm is too great." Although the music exhibits sinister minor intervals and tritones as Elinora describes the voice and the storm, she also spins sweetly melodic lines as she writes of her love for Melmoth, displaying an entirely different character from the first two pieces. The accompaniment grows from gently rocking chromatics to more fully

[3] Ibid.

realized planing chords representing the waves in mm. 53-55, until finally reaching a dramatic fortissimo and suddenly ceasing altogether (see Figure 3-4).

**Figure 3-4. mm. 50-54, "Elinora's Letter," Cheryl Frances-Hoad**




The fourth song is like the first in atmosphere and narrates Melmoth coming upon the City of Song-Ghosts. While there, he finally finds a woman who consents to take his place, which is portrayed in the fifth piece, "Deliverance." The troubling two-page conversation is almost completely unaccompanied, apart from a few shockingly discordant cluster chords, all eventually leading to the climactic high C6 in the voice, being the fifth of six repetitions of the phrase "I consent." The culminating song in the cycle, "Melmoth's Serenade," is as chromatic and dissonant as those preceding it. Taking place in the present day, a now gender fluid Melmoth describes themselves as a "singer of sorrows." Disturbingly, Melmoth turns their attention to the audience sending a shock with the words, "Stay! I know your secrets. I see the shame that torments you at night. Do not be afraid. I promise deliverance. For Melmoth never abandons her friends in misfortune. So, will you take my hand? Will you come with me? Will you consent?"

Having attended the cycle's premier, Claire Seymour of *Opera Today* aptly described Frances-Hoad's illustrative devices that led to such an unsettling invitation, as well as her own

reaction to it. She states, “Pain and weariness intensifies the restless, roving vocal line while the piano’s repeating chords trod the tired steps of endless wandering. As the melody rose higher, in quasi-hysteria, so the piano’s Hadean pounding became more thunderous. And then the song of supplication and desperation-fueled rhetoric was directed at us… a discomforting close to Frances-hoard’s dark, disorientating – and brilliantly dramatic – new song-cycle.”[4] Marked “Lento,” in mm. 18-20, the even, accented chords in the piano veritably represent the slow, tired feet of the cursed wanderer (see Figure 3-5.)

**Figure 3-5. mm. 18-20, “Melmoth’s Serenade,” Cheryl Frances-Hoad**




Darker and more disturbing than *Magic Lantern Tales, Six Songs of Melmoth* contrasts the former cycle in more ways than one. Most predominantly is the style in which the text is set. With so much recitative and unpredictability in the vocal line, along with conversations between characters, the cycle tends to lean more toward the representational, rather than having the immersive communication with the audience which is so desirable in art song. Still, the work may have as much in common with *Magic Lantern Tales* as it does in contrast with it. While *Six Songs of Melmoth* is notably less tuneful, both cycles exhibit Cheryl Frances-Hoad’s emphasis

[4] Claire Seymour, “Frances-Hoad’s Dark, Disorientating - and Brilliantly Dramatic - New Song Cycle.” (Seen and Heard International, October 15, 2020).

on telling stories through conveying characters. Transporting us to the environment and through the experiences and emotions which each character encounters, the composer simultaneously demonstrates her breadth as well as her consistency. Her approach between the cycles varies. While *Magic Lantern Tales* could be described as folk-like, *Six Songs of Melmoth* produces more wandering vocal lines and discordant accompaniments. While it could be argued the composer's approach in *Magic Lantern Tales* is more inviting and therefore more effective, the representational nature of *Six Songs of Melmoth* could also be more appropriate for the climate of its text. Ultimately, the overarching result of two seemingly opposing styles is the same. In Britten-esque fashion, Cheryl Frances-Hoad demonstrates the gift of taking a text and rendering those words in whatever musical character they demand. While her style varies from piece to piece, it is always clearly illustrative.

## **"Love Bytes"**

Placing communication at the fore when she composes, Frances-Hoad focuses a great deal on portraying emotion through storytelling. She has often said she approaches songs as miniature operas. While she has only written and published one complete opera to date, entitled *Amy's Last Dive*, Frances-Hoad has expressed that she composes all her songs/cycles with a dramatic arc in mind. "Love Bytes," a duet for soprano and baritone accompanied by vibraphone and cello, depicts the internal journey of a couple dating online. Their romance is portrayed in less than five minutes as they begin to fall for each other and individually debate whether they should continue to the point of meeting in person, questioning, "what kind of person truly lies behind the cyber mask?" - "Is he fat, is he thin? Is he dumb, dull, useless in bed?" - "Does she pick at her teeth? Does she sweat? Is she weird?" - "If he/she is certifiable perhaps I ought to

know…" Ultimately, not wanting to taint what they've had, they each decide the potential reward is not worth the risk.

Described by BBC Music as "a snappy commentary on cyber-dating,"[5] "Love Bytes" shares an album with *Magic Lantern Tales*, the album in its entirety being described as, "spare, concentrated, engaging music [which] always offers something to intrigue the ear or touch the heart, usually both."[6] Once again, "Love Bytes" is completely different in sentiment from *Magic Lantern Tales,* this time on the opposite end of the spectrum from *Six Songs of Melmoth*. The comically quirky text by Tamsin Collison is brought to life by Frances-Hoad's cleverly written melodic lines, which fluctuate from light-hearted to dramatic and back again. The vibraphone in the accompaniment is distinctly modern, mimicking the beeping tones of a computer and often exhibiting dance rhythms as the cyber lovers go back and forth on their decision. The cello matches at times with pizzicato. In other moments it is altogether more lyric, offering a glimpse into the pair's romantic feelings. As the voices weave in and out of unison, consonance, and dissonance, the harmonies reflect both characters' states of mind.

Critic Robert Hugill described the piece as being an "almost-opera for two voices" despite its short duration, and ultimately found the piece to be "full of striking, magical textures with sting in the tail."[7] Hugill goes on to say of the album in its entirety, "I enjoyed all the pieces on the disc, the sheer diversity of the ideas and wonderful textures form the rich to the spare. But it is the opening sequence [*Magic Lantern Tales*], with their powerful combination of story and

[5] Edward Nieland, "Magic Lantern Tales: Songs by Cheryl Frances-Hoad," classical-music.com (BBC, March 1, 2020), https://www.classical-music.com/reviews/choral-song/songs-by-cheryl-frances-hoad/.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Robert Hugill, "Planethugill.com," *Planethugill.com* (blog), November 6, 2018, https://www.planethugill.com/2018/11/telling-tales-cheryl-frances-hoads.html.

music, that I will come back to."[8] While "Love Bytes" would certainly be fitting in an opera scenes program, it could also be submitted that the work is a unique type of art song. Having developed out of the age-old tradition of spoken storytelling, art song, by definition, is one singer. However, in the unusual setting of this duet, both individuals are telling their story separate from the other. Sitting at their computers in two totally different hypothetical locations, they are each addressing the audience, inviting us into the cyber world created by the accompaniment and online dating conundrums addressed by the text. It is almost as if two individual songs are happening simultaneously (see Figure 3-6). Knowing they are both completely in the dark of the other's true feelings makes their vacillating from excitement to apprehension, in tandem, all the more humorous and relatable.

**Figure 3-6. mm. 103-105, "Love Bytes," Cheryl Frances-Hoad**

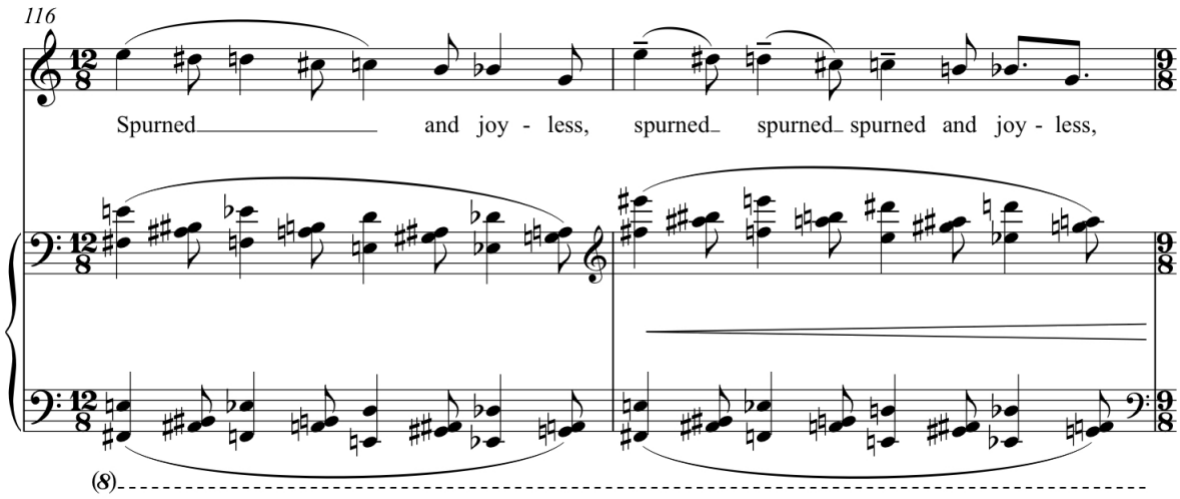



[8] Ibid.

## ***Beowulf***

A stark contrast to the cheeky "Love Bytes," Frances-Hoad's *Beowulf* is a nearly thirty-minute cycle for mezzo-soprano and piano in which the piano takes on its own character. Based on the epic Old English poem, Frances-Hoad describes it as "an opera for two musicians."[9] Having some commonality with *Six Songs of Melmoth, Beowulf* alternates between recitative-like narrative and more lyrically emotional passages, always with the voice being matched by the characterized piano part. For example, in mm. 107-117 as the voice narrates Grendel approaching Beowulf's kingdom, the monstrous creature is fully realized in the accompaniment by long-short limping chords marked, "grotesquely." (See Figure 3-7).

**Figure 3-7. mm. 116-117. "In Off the Moors," Cheryl Frances-Hoad**




Describing her abridged setting of *Beowulf* as a "frustrated opera," Frances-Hoad was inspired by seeing the poem spoken by a storyteller and wanted to "convey the heroism and grandeur of the tale" through music.[10] Saying it was like fitting an opera into a song cycle,

[9] Cheryl Frances-Hoad, "Beowulf," Wisemusicclassical.com, 2010, https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/58036/Beowulf--Cheryl-Frances-Hoad/.
[10] Ibid.

Frances-Hoad went on, "I wanted to retain the drama and immediacy of the words in my setting, which is at times quite sparse and monolithic."[11]Indeed, a large percentage of the piece is recitative, with speech-like rhythms and unpredictable vocal lines. In his review, Nick Boston called *Beowulf* "highly ambitious," saying:

> This is almost a mini-opera in itself, with barely a break for the singer in roughly half an hour of dramatic narrative. Yet Frances-Hoad achieves surprising variety, with passages of largely recitative over chordal underpinning from the piano contrasted with racing rhythms to portray moments of action, and great word-painting for the serpent and the dragon at the climax. The closing moments of wailing grief for Beowulf's funeral pyre are heartbreakingly bleak… This is an impressively individual piece of dramatic vocal writing.[12]

The composer herself has acknowledged the formidable nature of the piece, going so far as to say she likely won't write another piece like it. Admitting she got a bit carried away by the idea of *Beowulf*, she says a song as long and as difficult as it is will likely not be performed often, and a composer naturally wants to write works that will be performed.

*Beowulf* is paired with other vocal and choral works on the album, *You Promised Me Everything.* Departing from the epic nature of the Anglo-Saxon text is the brief song "Don't." A dedication to singer Jane Manning, with whom Cheryl Frances-Hoad has been acquainted since her time at the Yehudi Menuhin School, "Don't" is a comical setting of the 1913 book *Don'ts for Wives*. Set to playful accompaniment, which includes the registrally extreme bass clarinet and piccolo, the vocal line leaves the singer breathless and struggling to sing in tune. Also on the album is Frances-Hoad's *One Life Stand* (2011), which she calls her first serious vocal work. A modern take on Schumann's *Frauenliebe und leben,* op. 42, *One Life Stand* is a fresh take on a present-day woman's life and loves, following her from dating to bereavement. Soprano Jennifer

[11] Ibid.
[12] Nick Boston, "Nicksclassicalnotes.blogspot.com," *Nicksclassicalnotes.blogspot.com* (blog), September 18, 2015, https://nicks-classical-notes.blogspot.com/search?q=Promised.

Johnston informally commissioned the piece when she lamented to Frances-Hoad that she was often asked to perform *Frauenliebe und leben,* and while she enjoyed singing it, she felt Chamisso's text was outdated and overly worshipful. She proposed the idea of an updated version from a modern woman's perspective, countering the arguably misogynistic 19th century point of view in Schumann's cycle. Frances-Hoad's interest was piqued, and she assumed the challenge, collaborating with crime writer and poet Sophie Hannah to accomplish a more contemporary adaptation. Commenting about the pleasure it is to write a new piece based on a great work, Frances-Hoad remarked that she got to know Schumann's cycle from the "inside out."[13] She goes on to say:

> Although the idea for the work originated as a reaction to Chamisso's poetry, in the course of composing the cycle I found much inspiration from Schumann's song cycle… In particular, it has been Schumann's very varied (but always totally appropriate) use of piano textures that has been most inspiring, and the way that he treats the relationship between the voice and piano fascinates me: at times the voice is very independent from the piano, whereas at other points the piano doubles long phrases of the vocal line. However, when the latter occurs there are frequently very subtle differences between the doubled melodic lines: a resolution of a suspension may occur a quaver earlier in the piano than in the voice for instance, and the tension and dissonance these small moments create seem to me to perfectly describe the yearning quality of the poems that this musical device features in.[14]

*One Life Stand* pairs well with, all while while musically contrasting, "Don't," and it demonstrates Frances-Hoad's emotional adeptness even in her first real cycle. Of the album, Nick Boston remarked, "this disc demonstrates an incredibly wide variety of styles and moods, from humor to real depths of human emotion, and shows that Frances-Hoad is a composer of broad-ranging talent."[15]

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[13] Cheryl Frances-Hoad, "One Life Stand," 2011, https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/58032/One-Life-Stand--Cheryl-Frances-Hoad/.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Nick Boston, "Nicksclassicalnotes.blogspot.com," *Nicksclassicalnotes.blogspot.com* (blog), September 18, 2015, https://nicks-classical-notes.blogspot.com/search?q=Promised.

## 4. Conclusion

Based on my analysis of *Magic Lantern Tales* and investigation of a few of Cheryl Frances-Hoad's other vocal works, it can be assumed a full survey of all the composer's songs and cycles would reveal more of the same—of course not in a monotonous sense, quite the opposite actually. The composer's ability to achieve creative variation, all while remaining consistent in communicating and portraying emotion through storytelling, are the two elements that ultimately combine to produce Cheryl Frances-Hoad's unique style. In the balance she strikes between artistic expression and meticulous construction, her works delicately and beautifully dance between modernity and accessibility. Because *Magic Lantern Tales* is one of her more accessible vocal works, perhaps it can't serve as a tidy example of her style in its full scope—no one work can. However, it does lend itself well as a model for Frances-Hoad's skill of portraying a story, as well as her sensitivity toward performer and audience, both priorities the composer herself has proclaimed. She has gone so far as to say, "Without performers I am nothing; I'm sheets of paper in a drawer."[1] Such an awareness could be attributed to her experience performing as a cellist, in addition to her growing experience as a frequently commissioned composer. Regardless, her understanding of performers, vocal as well as instrumental, is evidenced in the specific and excellently crafted manner in which she composes.

Cheryl Frances-Hoad's process is to thoroughly research the topic of the text she is setting—be it historical, literary, scientific, or natural— and then to compose relatively instinctually. Whether humorous or tragic, Frances-Hoad shows the range required to convey a wide array of emotions and moods, from winsome to wit to deep feeling. *Magic Lantern Tales* is

[1] Cheryl Frances-Hoad, in discussion via Zoom with Jenna Black, The University of Oklahoma, January 5, 2023.

a convenient place to find all three sentiments. The five songs traverse an emotional path through time as the music and poetry work in tandem to fully transport the listener. From sparse accompaniment with folk-tinged melodies to more densely underscored, sometimes anguished declamations, each individual's story follows a profoundly moving dramatic arc. Frances-Hoad's seamless flow from diatonic and consonant to dissonant, accompanied with her detailed speech rhythms, provide an ease to the songs while leaving no doubt which words in the poetry are of primary importance. Her ability to present words and music as equal partners is one of the aspects that has earned her a comparison with one of her heroes, Benjamin Britten.[2] Another similarity she shares with Britten is a distinctly English, folk-adjacent sound, a sound that is particularly apparent in "The Ballad of Harry Homes." This carefree and sometimes mischievous character is fully realized through music, and such vivid characterization is an aptitude Frances-Hoad shares with Britten.

Harmonically, Frances-Hoad negotiates contemporaneousness with more traditional approaches. Chromaticism, dissonant seconds and ninths, as well as open fourths, fifths, and octaves intermingle with the wartime songs inspired tunefulness, and heartrending melodies the women's stories in particular seem to demand. Her tendency to expand chords, especially in climactic moments, is yet another element which draws us in emotionally. Adding a dramatic flair, this inclination has sparked comments from several critics about Frances-Hoad having an affinity with not only Britten, but Messiaen as well, and ultimately calling for a full opera from the composer. At the very least one can hope to look forward to more of her "mini operas" as *Magic Lantern Tales* could be described.

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[2] Claire Seymour, "Review: You Promised Me Everything," *Opera Today*, August 2015, https://operatoday.com/2015/08/review_you_promised_me_everything/.

Claire Seymour with *Opera Today* described all elements from the hard-hitting to the tiny and nuanced in *Magic Lantern Tales* as follows: "Such precise musical insight into the relationship between sound, sense, and sensibility is characteristic of Cheryl Frances-Hoad's writing… and the results are deeply affecting."[3] While the commemorative nature of the poetry draws us in, Frances-Hoad's exceptional aptitude with melody, harmony, structure, rhythm, and treatment of text, magnifies the words, making them all the more powerful. It is this relationship, this synthesis of music and text, that is so crucial to art song being what it is meant to be, a communicative shared experience between performer and audience.

Cheryl Frances-Hoad's act of setting *Magic Lantern Tales*, and with as much care as she has, honors the individuals whose stories are portrayed, and in some small way also honors the composers of their generation to whom she looked for inspiration. Subsequently, each performance of this work will continue to honor them through Frances-Hoad's setting in the way only music can. As the composer so humbly commented that she is nothing without performers, so too are performers nothing without the great works we have the privilege of interpreting from extraordinary composers like Cheryl Frances-Hoad. Endlessly curious and inexhaustibly dedicated, Cheryl Frances-Hoad has proven her efficacy as a composer of classical contemporary art song through many estimable contributions to the genre, not the least of which is the enchantingly evocative *Magic Lantern Tales*.

[3] Claire Seymour, "Magic Lantern Tales: Darkness, Disorientation, and Delight from Cheryl Frances-Hoad," *Opera Today*, September 26, 2018, https://www.operatoday.com/content/2018/09/magiclanternt.php.

**Appendix A: Full Interview Transcription – Background and Biography**
**January 5, 2023**

**JB:** What in your life are you proudest of personally and/or professionally?

**CFH:** I think that performing musicians like performing my work. That's the thing I'm proudest of. Because as nice as it is to get prestigious commissions from festivals, I'm proud that I have good working relationships and friendships with performers. I'm very proud of that. That sort of matters to me more in the long term than getting prestigious commissions for festivals or awards.

One of the things that makes me the happiest is that young people are doing my work. In England, in May, at the London school for music and drama… they're doing a project on my songs. The prospect of going in May and meeting all these young people. There's something wonderful about that… It makes me feel like my music isn't going to die, and I'm really proud that it appeals to them. And the fact that I do work repeatedly with people. I mean not religiously, but the fact that a lot of my work comes from performers recommending my work to other performers. That's a really nice thing. I guess it's sort of a bit embarrassing that my proudest thing is something to do with work. But I guess it's that mixture of private and personal, isn't it? You know if you work hard and you're a good person that's what you aim for, I guess.

**JB:** I think the line of work that you're in is more personal maybe than other careers, because it's so much of you that you're putting into your music. Not like a regular nine-to-five.

**CFH:** Yeah, exactly. It's always going to merge, probably too much sometimes. Life and work is never going to be completely separate.

**JB:** Did you have jobs while you were earning your degrees? Or were you completely on scholarship?

**CFH:** It's mad looking back on it, but I don't think I've ever had an odd job. I was completely on scholarship, which is again just astounding to think about now. I was writing to commission very early, I mean I lived at home until I was twenty-six, my mother was just amazing. I was writing to commission in the holiday from when when I was about fifteen. I mean even if the piece was worth 200 pounds. My first commission I think I got paid 200 pounds, which is actually not bad. So, I was earning little bits of money from composing very early on. I was just very lucky that I never did… I mean I did certain things like, I went to music festivals, and I didn't get paid for it, but I did schemes where you would get to go to music festivals as an under twenty-five, and you'd get free tickets to concerts in exchange for serving drinks and stuff. But that wasn't a job you know, it was just a scheme you had to apply for where you got to go to these amazing concerts for helping out, but that's the closest I ever got. I'm very rare in that regard. Most other composers have worked in a coffee shop or a bar. I had a discussion with a group of friends the other day, and I'm very unusual in that basically. It was partly because my mother was so dedicated to helping me do what I wanted to do that she just sort of let me. I did actually want to do some odd jobs, but also, I lived in the middle of the countryside, and I couldn't drive, and my mother basically didn't want to do it. So, she didn't help me in that

regard. So, I did actually want to do these things to sort of have a bit more of a normal life, so she was unsupportive of that but very supportive of me writing, which is probably the right way around.

**JB:** What was the most valuable lesson you learned in your education?

**CFH:** I was really lucky in that my composition teachers just let me compose. Because I started so early, I had composition teachers my entire schooling, but they sort of just let me go and write pieces. I think one very valuable lesson when I was very young, in the days before computers, when I had written a piece for my school orchestra. I had copied the parts out and I'd got them wrong, I think I was only about nine and we had this very fiery music teacher/conductor. I had copied a few parts out wrong, and he basically said, "sorry we can't do this we're not going to do this," and the whole thing was scrapped, and I was nine and incredibly upset by it, but I never made that mistake again.

Also, I went to Cambridge, and I studied a lot of techniques, you know like writing fugues and writing in the style in Palestrina. You know, where there's really strict rules for counterpoint, and I don't really use any of that in my writing. But the way that made me think was probably the most useful musical lesson in that I still use that way of thinking in the way voices are put together, even if I'm not following those rules.

In terms of composition, I was just left to do what I wanted, which I think was really good for me. Even though I had some very eminent, fabulous teachers, I think they were very right in not trying to teach me, just letting me compose, and compose, and compose. And saying certain things, but not a great deal. They sort of had the sense to let me carry on. But all those techniques were really important. That I still look back on, and I only realized after I'd done them, I liked doing them, but just sort of for the fun of it; the puzzle of it. But it wasn't until later years I realized how much of an affect that's had on my writing.

**JB:** It sounds like they didn't give you strict things that you had to write.

**CFH:** No, and I think the fact that I was already writing, and getting commissions… If I hadn't, they probably would have set me something to do. The fact that I already knew what I was going to write meant that they just supported me really, which was great.

**JB:** Did you have any specific professors that were particularly influential?

**CFH:** I think so. There's a professor at Cambridge called Robin Holloway, he's now in his mid-seventies. And I had a teacher at King's College London called Silvina Milstein. Even my teachers at school, they were really helpful. When I was younger, I wrote so fluently, and I remember being about sixteen and getting stuck. I had a composer called David Knotts who just really helped me get out of that stuck stage. I didn't write for about a year when I was sixteen, I think, and it would have been so easy just to stop, but my composition teacher at the time really encouraged me to carry on going. And I failed at quite a few things. I had a few pieces which I'd been asked to write which I didn't write because I just sort of got stuck, and he really sort of got me out of that, so yeah probably him actually.

**JB:** What do you enjoy most about what you do?

**CFH:** In very simple terms the fact that I get to… I mean I'm just incredibly lucky to basically stay at home and do what I like doing all the time. What I would add to that is that probably what I enjoy most is actually writing music. Of course I love going to performances and I love hearing musicians perform my work, but actually I feel very lucky in that (I mean I see people every day so I don't get properly lonely, but a lot of people get lonely just working by themselves most of the day you know? A lot of people would like to work in an office with other people around), I'm just very lucky that I actually really suit the life of a composer. I really suit sitting in a room by myself with a piano most of the day. I don't think it's actually always the case. A lot of people find writing very hard and the vast majority of the time I enjoy the actual writing of it.

**JB:** It's energizing rather than draining maybe.

**CFH:** For the vast majority of the time yeah. I do sometimes find it very hard, but for the vast majority of the time I actually enjoy what I do for a living. Which is actually something that when I consider it, I do know the people who have lovely weekends and they love their families, but actually what they do from nine-to-five they don't enjoy. They do it in order to have the other things in life. The fact that I enjoy it has given me a nice enjoyable life. It's pretty good. It's not the norm so to have that is pretty amazing.

**JB:** What is your favorite thing about the industry?

**CFH:** It has to be working with performers. It has to be that. That is hands down… I mean having people want to play my music, and really want to do it well and want to make the most out of it I think is the best thing. I remember when I recorded my first CD; I had worked really hard to raise the money to do it, and I hadn't thought about actually doing it. It was a time in my life where I'd rarely ever get something to be performed more than once. It would be commissioned, performed, and then nothing would happen. And I had these four days of recording, and I had all these musicians come and record who obviously really really cared… It was really noticeable how much they cared about the music, and it was sort of like an overdose of that in those four days. My life until then had been, work very very hard, write a piece (and it took me longer to write a piece back then just because I had less experience), and then there would be a performance and often that would be a good performance, but the fact is that twenty years ago the people performing pieces were not probably as good as the people performing my pieces now, just because I've got more well known. And to have all these brilliant musicians play my music and really care about it was just amazing. It really consolidated the value of it. I guess it's being able to communicate with other people and other musicians, right? That moment where you know that the performer's really understood what you want, and the performer knows that they've really done what you want. I mean that's like the whole point of music I guess, isn't it? That gets better and better for me. I mean I've always had wonderful musicians play my music, but the older I've got, the more aware of the human being behind the music I've become. Obviously, the vast majority of the time I'm still trying to write original music that stretches me. But my music is slightly easier than it used to be, because I've realized sometimes when you give space to the performer it's better for the performer and better for the music if you know

what I mean. A lot of my old music was quite a lot more complicated. I think a lot more about the human being behind the performer than I used to, and about how to write music that would be satisfying for them to play as well as to be my grand artistic statement, I guess.

**JB:** You've mentioned how gratifying it is to work with other artists. Tell me more about that.

**CFH:** Yes, that is another favorite thing. Getting to work with people like that and of that caliber. And at Oxford getting to work with people. My job at Oxford here, I have a PhD, but I'm not an academic, and this job at oxford gave me access to some of the most brilliant people across sciences, astronomy, history, and the fact that I was able to meet these people and talk to them, and in some cases write pieces inspired by what they told me. That's quite fantastic actually. My compositions have helped me learn so many other things about the world basically, because it's given me access to collaborating with these brilliant people. I didn't have a particularly comprehensive education at school because it was all music, music, music, and so the fact that now in later life I'm getting to meet these people who are willing to talk to me about their disciplines in language that I can understand and get hold of. I mean these are people I would never meet otherwise. That is one of the best things actually.

If I'm going to write a piece inspired by something, I become very interested in that thing whatever it is, science or nature. And so I learn a lot. Sadly, I don't think I would be bothered to learn otherwise. I'm not one of these people who at the end of the day sits and reads a complicated book, you know? I sort of watch the television and switch my brain off. Because I'm getting musical ideas from this, I become very very interested. So, the breadth of knowledge I have has grown because of my music. It's something I never expected.

**JB:** That's so interesting. I was reading about your commission for Steven Hawking's birthday. You said something about that, how you learned so much about this science that you never probably would have thought about otherwise.

**CFH:** Exactly, and it's a tremendous privilege. You know, I had a one-one one lunch with this professor who was studying the very beginnings of the universe! I get chances like that, that people rarely get. It's true to say that because I've sort of attached myself to universities, in one way just because of the money it gives me to allow me to compose, but it gives me this rich life in terms of meeting these amazing people. In Merton, apart from members of the administrative staff, I was the only non-academic in that surrounding, so it's a tremendous privilege.

**JB:** I think I would find that intimidating at times!

**CFH:** The great thing is though because I'm a musician nobody expects me to say anything clever. But nobody really understands music. Nobody expects anything of me, it's great! They've just really welcomed me actually, and it was amazing. I thought it would be terribly intimidating but it wasn't because I basically had this sort of free pass to ask stupid questions and not know anything because I was a musician. And then I wrote a trumpet fanfare for the Christmas dinner and everybody's like, "Oh my God that's so amazing." So, it's great when these people don't understand music. They just sort of… I don't know it's amazing.

**JB:** That is great because you can appreciate their genius and they can recognize and appreciate your genius!

**CFH:** Exactly.

**JB:** What's your favorite memory from your career?

**CFH:** The strongest memory is when I was fifteen and I had submitted a cello concerto I'd written when I was fourteen. I entered it for a competition. It got selected and was played by a very very good orchestra in the UK. I had never ever written anything that big. I sort of worked the whole summer on it really intensively, and it did get played. To this day that was the thing that made me decide that I wanted to be a composer for the rest of my life. At the time I was playing the cello a lot as well, and I didn't stop the cello because I wanted to become a composer, but composition became gradually more and more important. And hearing this big piece that I'd written performed by an orchestra… because I had never had anything performed by anyone other than people in my school or a local choir before that, and that really changed my life, I think. It was just THE thing; I mean there have been lots of other lovely memories, but I think that is the main thing.

**JB:** Yeah, it kind of has to be the favorite one because it was so pivotal right?

**CFH:** Yeah, absolutely. So, this year I wrote a piece for the platinum jubilee. You know the late English Queen, she was on the throne for seventy years, so I wrote a piece for the BBC proms commemorating that. That's a recent memory which was pretty amazing. That was terrifying to be able to do something like that because it was something so public, but also amazing. So that's a recent memory. That was just six months ago.

**JB:** What kind of piece was it?

**CFH:** It was a five-minute piece for choir and orchestra. I'll send you a video that explains it all.

**JB:** Do you have any awards or commissions that made a particularly big impact on you?

**CFH:** Oh my goodness. It's more the combination of everything. It's more the combination of all the things coming together and building. Every piece seems like the most important at the time, within reason. But up until a couple of days before Christmas I was writing a cello concerto for an orchestra in Scotland, and that feels very important. I'm talking to my publishers at the moment, and I'd like to write more orchestral music basically. I don't have so much of a profile there, so I'm not getting a lot of very impressive commissions, simply because I haven't written as much. I get lots of people asking about songs, which I love writing, and choral music, but I want to develop that area of my career. I want to be writing more orchestral music. Hopefully this cello concerto that I've written, it was the last four months of last year, so to me it's the most important piece that I've written. Hopefully having that piece will help guide my career in a certain direction. I was talking to my publisher the other day and saying I'd really love to be a composer in residence with an orchestra. So, there are these jobs in the UK, some of the big orchestras will have a composer in residence for three years where you write an orchestral piece

every year and they perform it. My publisher says if I have a couple more orchestral pieces, I will probably be in a position to get one of those positions, but at the moment it's probably quite unlikely for me.

I've never had a piece which has given me a massive amount of publicity. There's a composer called Philip Venables, and he wrote an opera called *448 Psychosis*. It's an amazing opera, it's very depressing. That opera got so much press, and in the headlines, it said, "this is the best opera of the 21st century." That one piece changed his career. I've never had anything like that. So, I'm sort of glad of it in a way, because now anytime he writes a piece everybody says, "well is it as good as that first opera?" It's like somebody having a very successful first novel or something that they never equal. So, for me it's more about hopefully the frequency of the pieces I write help to progress my career in a certain way. But I've never had a piece that's won me loads of important prizes or anything. It's always just sort of been building and building.

**JB:** Was this cello concerto commissioned?

**CFH:** Yeah, by the BBC Scottish symphony orchestra. So, I think the BBC in the UK has five orchestras. They have one in Scotland, one halfway up the country in Manchester, two in London, and one in Wales. It's the Scottish one that's commissioned me, and it's really exciting. It's a big deal for me because I haven't had much of that kind of work.

**JB:** It sounds like your career has been rewarding throughout. Have you ever had a time when it was unrewarding?

**CFH:** I have had quite a few failures and things that I haven't written. But that's not really unrewarding. There were a couple competitions that I won, and I never wrote the piece because I did all my studies in one go without a break, and I think it just got to be a bit much. That hasn't happened since. Now my life is really quite easy. I have a publisher who does everything for me. I wouldn't say it's unrewarding, but I have spent a lot of time applying for funding. A lot of things I didn't get the first time. Recently I applied for some funding, and I had to apply four times before I got it. So that always does feel fairly hideous to do. I wouldn't say it's unrewarding because you have to get used to rejection and trying again. You have to get a very hard skin that way, and then eventually you usually get there. It's a very small inconvenience really for basically doing what you want all the time. A lot of this stuff is a pain, and you're filling in endless forms, but it's all for a good purpose, so I find it easy to put up with doing that kind of stuff.

I mean there have been a few experiences with performers that haven't been positive, but they've also taught me lessons. It hasn't always gone brilliantly. I remember once I wrote a big piece called Beowulf. I basically wrote it for completely the wrong voice type. In my youth I just didn't understand voice types well enough I guess, so I wrote a piece that just didn't suit her voice at all. It was incredibly awkward, and she didn't sing it. It got done by somebody else years later, but that was fairly terrible. Things like that have happened. I think I just got so carried away by the idea of Beowulf. I think the person who was supposed to be singing it was quite a light soprano. In hindsight I should have listened to lots of her singing, but because Beowulf impressed me so much, I must have just forgotten about who I was writing for. Really,

it's a piece for Mezzo Soprano or Alto, a very different voice type than the person I should have written it for. And we had this meeting and she basically said, "I can't do this" and I really thought my career was over at that point. It did teach me a good lesson though because I know a lot more about voice now, and I understand voice types much more. So, in the end, I mean it was terrible, but in the end it was very valuable.

**JB:** It kind of make sense for a story like Beowulf to be in a Mezzo voice, so maybe it worked out in the end for the piece.

**CFH:** Yeah maybe.

**JB:** That might answer my next question which is, what is a valuable lesson you've learned in your career?

**CFH:** I think that was probably one of the best lessons because I've just really have never ever done that again. And now… the cello concerto is for a young cellist called Laura van der Heijden. And she's wonderful. She's a particular kind of cellist. She loves big expressive melodies, basically what she likes fits with my music. But with this cello concerto I really took into account her, and her character, and her as a person and that has shaped the music. It's still definitely my piece, but now I'm just super conscious of all that stuff.

The other valuable lesson, having recorded my CDs and raised the money for it, I had a lot of success, but quite a lot of rejection as well. I mean that's just the other thing is being able to withstand rejection, just carry on going and realizing that it's not personal.

**JB:** What influence would you like to have on your industry?

**CFH:** I don't think about it very much actually. I mean It really pleases me that it seems like the next generation are enjoying my work or playing my work. I've got a young saxophonist, he's probably thirty, and he wants to commission a piece from me. It really pleases me that the younger generation wants to play my music. Do I want to influence them? I'm not sure I really do. What I'm proud of in my work and what often gets said about it is that it's very well crafted. I do know how to write for instruments, and I do know how to write for the voice. And obviously you don't want to limit your ideas to what's practical for performers, but I think what I really value about my work is that hopefully it's sort of emotional, and speaks to the audience as well as the performer, but it's also practical and well written. Sort of like a really beautiful table that has fine carving or inlay; like a really beautiful piece of furniture that's a work of art, but also practical and well-constructed. That's what I'm really aiming for, and I guess it would be nice if other people were to see that and try to emulate that, but I've never really thought about it actually.

I really like it when I get nice reviews. I really value and I crave respect from my peers. It's not that I don't care, but I'm not sure that I care that much.

To a certain degree maybe not thinking about it is healthy, because if you do think about it too much it does sometimes feel faintly ridiculous really that I spent four months writing a cello

concerto that takes twenty minutes to play. And okay it will be there forever, but if you think about it too hard perhaps it sometimes seems a bit pointless. So, I don't. I mean the people who developed the COVID vaccine are here in oxford, and there are people curing cancer and all this kind of stuff. I try not to think about it too much.

**JB:** But I think music has more of an impact than we realize sometimes.

**CFH:** Yeah, as the pandemic proved right? I mean listening to music went up a huge amount.

**JB:** If you could give a younger version of yourself advice, what would it be?

**CFH:** Don't give up and all that kind of stuff.

**JB:** But you never did anyway.

**CFH:** Yeah, I never did anyway. I mean, I used to be terribly terribly shy, I mean really shy. And basically it was composition that helped me. I mean I won a prize in Florida and in order to accept the prize I had to do a talk, and I was terrified. It actually went well, and people were very nice about it. It's a weird thing because composition has helped give me confidence as a person, so now I'm quite good about it. I like informal speaking like this. I don't like giving lectures. But now I enjoy this kind of thing whereas before, twenty years ago, I would find it so hard. I guess it's the advice that any older person would give the younger person, "don't care about what people think about you so much." I was so riddled with insecurities about myself as a person, and actually it didn't really hold me back though because I did quite a lot of composing. Even today, I rarely have problems that my other female friends get about being looked down on. When I sent my proms piece for instance… when I came to the rehearsal they had already played it through once and everything worked very well, so the people treated me with a lot of respect because they'd seen my work go before me. It's difficult, I'm trying to think of something I would say to myself because basically it's all worked out very well. I think I would just say worry less. I sort of worked too hard as a much younger composer, and I think my life balance was completely off when I was younger. But you know in retrospect that was actually quite good because now my life is relatively easy, so it sort of all worked out in the end.

**JB:** It seems like, "I could have given myself this advice, but I had to go through that natural progression of things anyway."

**CFH:** Yes, exactly.

**JB:** What do you feel are the best skills you have as a composer?

**CFH:** So, I guess it's the stuff we were talking about earlier. Particularly now with my cello concerto that I've written, and some of my recent choral music. I think that my music is very clear, there's a clarity to the writing that hopefully makes it as easy as possible for the performer to convey what I'm trying to say. If there is complicated music, I think I manage to write that in as simple a way as possible to make it as easy as possible for the performers to perform. I don't think there's any unnecessary complexity in my music that gets in the way of the performer and

the audience understanding what it is. When I write a complicated rhythm or a complicated texture, I really write them because there is no other way to write that.

The thing that was really great about my prom piece, which I'm really proud of… It was a five-minute piece, and it was for a big jubilee occasion. This is not my most contemporary piece that I've ever written, but it had the effect that I wanted it to have. Basically, the orchestra played it through three times and then it worked. I remember the conductor turned around to me and he was slightly confused by this. Because I'd thought so clearly about how to translate what I have in my head to the page and to the audience that everything actually really works, and I've taken a lot of care in that. I had written it in the simplest way possible and I also really thought really carefully about what to put on the page so that when the third trombone player plays that part, what comes out is what I intended. Even down to the dynamics you give tuba and the flute, so they just play it, and it comes out how you want it. I guess for me it's the combination and the mixture of artistic vision and practicality of knowing how things work. So, like a really contemporary piece of architecture… you look at it and you think, "how does this stand up?" Or "how is that roof shape possible?" Because underneath that amazing roof shape is something like twenty billion calculations. That's sort of what I'm most proud of. You learn that more and more as you get older as a composer. But I would say that quite a few people don't get that; the ability to translate what's in your head to the page, to the performer, to the audience. You have to be quite humble in a way to sort of really get good at that, because you have to really take feedback, and you have to be willing to realize and admit when you've written something that doesn't quite work. Or to be in a rehearsal and to ask somebody, "Is there a way that I could have done that better?" and for them to maybe give you feedback, and to really take that on board and do that in the next piece.

**JB:** So it's been a honing process.

**CFH:** Yeah, and to be endlessly curious about things so you're forever learning. I think the best sort of people have a childlike curiosity about everything. I mean the minute you think you know everything you may as well give up. Obviously you want to be confident and assured in your ability, but I think one of the things my upbringing has given me, and my opportunities in life, is that (and I feel this about myself personally and professionally) I'm quite good at fitting in anywhere. Because I've had access to places like Oxford, I'm relatively comfortable in that situation, but I'm also very happy talking to school children about music. I think I'm very good about writing for all different abilities and kinds of people. I have written pieces for professional orchestras and very young children, and you put yourself in the minds of the people playing it so you understand how you can get the best out of them.

I watched this amazing program on the telly with my mum over Christmas. It was an architect, and he talks about when he designs buildings. He was designing a library and he said something like, "I try and imagine the different people coming into that room and how they experience the room, and where they want to be. So maybe somebody wants to sit in the desk in the center of the library, maybe somebody wants to sit on the balcony so they can see everything going on, maybe somebody else works best if they're tucked in the corner." And so, he tried to design a library that would suit all those different kinds of people, so everybody who came into that building could make the most of their reading time or research. That's sort of how I think about

music, not all the time, but if I'm writing for an amateur choir I think, "How can I write music that I want to write, but write it in a way that they're comfortable, and they feel secure, and they feel happy, and they enjoy it." And I think that even with professional musicians, even with this cellist. How do I write a piece that is me and is something I'm proud of, and something I want to say, but also is something that she loves and makes the most out of her, and will be really satisfying for her to play? Also, obviously if I can do that then it means that my piece sounds better in the end anyway. I want to be remembered as a composer who wrote original music, but I also want to be remembered as somebody whose music was really written for human beings to play. I love that balance, and I think the architecture thing is the best way to express it. You can build this beautiful building that actually never gets too hot, and it never gets too stuffy, and there's places for different kinds of people to go sit in and enjoy.

**JB:** It's true. Like the library. It's architecturally impressive but not something unusable.

**CFH:** Yeah, it's important right? And if I'm being nasty about other composers, I think there are composers who don't think like that, and in the end it reflects badly on their music because it doesn't sound how they want it to sound. It's a weird thing, isn't it? Being confident in yourself, but not being arrogant. I think in the past I was much too doubtful in myself and that's not helpful, but theres' a fine line between being really confident but not being arrogant. Everything in life and music is sort of the same, isn't it? Everything that makes you a good musician makes you a good person.

**JB:** What other composers have influenced your writing and how?

**CFH:** It's not something I think about a great deal. I don't study scores of other composers unless... my next piece I'm going to write is an accordion piece, and because I've not really written for the accordion, I will look at other composers' scores and I will listen to other pieces. But that's more for getting to know the accordion than looking at the composer's works. I think basically when I was young, and I was a cellist, I played Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, and Benjamin Britten. Those were composers that I played, and they had the most effect on me. Benjamin Britten was a British composer who wrote for a varied… he wrote for children, he wrote grand operas, he wrote many songs. That's something that has really inspired me. I love his music and to me his music is very emotional but very well crafted. He's probably been the biggest influence on me. I love the way he wrote his grand operas, but he also wrote pieces for local primary children. I really like the music of Ligeti. I don't know a great deal of it though. But the music I grew up playing was Brahms, Beethoven, and Bach. In my work I often try and write phrases like Bach, you know where you never know where they end or begin. So even if I'm writing in a very different language, I'm still looking to that. It's not something I think of a great deal. A lot of composers are really influenced by other composers and are very aware about what's going on, and I'm not actually. I think because I spend so much time writing, and I don't teach, it's one thing that I'm quite insecure about. I'm not very knowledgeable about contemporary music.

**JB:** You just do it!

**CFH:** I just do it yeah!

**JB:** I read somewhere that you said something about Judith Weir?

**CFH:** Judith Weir! Yeah. I mean she's a wonderful composer. Do I think she influenced me? I mean she was very kind to me in that she said, "don't worry about listening to other composers, just write your own music." And I do intend to start studying scores. Another thing is just from a practicality standpoint. Now I'm getting paid more per minute than I was ten years ago. This year I'm thinking about actually not writing quite so much just because financially I can, and actually thinking about listening to more music and having the head space. I'm very glad I did, but I have worked very hard, perhaps too hard, and now I think maybe I can have a bit of shift in that regard because I would like to know more music than I do. If I had one thing that I could change about myself, it would be spending more time listening to and studying other people's music.

**JB:** You've never had time to!

**CFH:** I've never had time to and also, I'm not one of those people who spends a holiday doing music and then wants to go and listen to music. I've just you know; I've had enough by the end. So that is something I do want to adjust a bit.

## Appendix B: Full Interview Transcription – *Magic Lantern Tales* & Compositional Approach – April 12, 2022

**JB:** Tell me about what you're doing now.

**CFH:** I'm living in Oxford at the moment as a composer in residence at Merton College, Oxford and it's just sort of this year of heaven basically that's probably never going to happen again. So I'm here, and my role is to talk to the other academics and hopefully write some music inspired by talking to them. One of the things I've done recently is set some Chaucer, some very old text, having talked about it to one of the Medieval English people here. I guess one of the things that I love doing the most is collaborating with other artists, which is why this song cycle was so pleasurable. Ian McMillan… In England he's called… there's a place up north called Barnsley which is probably in the middle from the top of Scotland to the bottom of England, and he's known as "The Bard of Barnsley." He's sort of one of our most famous poets, and he's always on the radio. He's done everything from writing poems to football chants, to very high up stuff. Working with him was just lovely on this. I really love working with, and writing pieces inspired by other things. As part of my year here I wrote a song cycle for baritone and piano inspired by… there's a very posh old garden here, and it was the 400th anniversary, so I wrote a piece inspired by that. That's the sort of thing that really gets me going.

**JB:** What was your first vocal work?

**CFH:** I wrote a piece which has never been performed. What was it called? … I started composing when I was tiny; I was eight, and I remember that when I was about thirteen a singer called Jane Manning came to school, and she was famous in the UK for singing Pierrot Lunaire. I wrote a piece called something like "Sunblast" or "Sunshine," and I remember her singing it and taking it really seriously. It was for something like soprano, violin, cello, and piano. I have the score in my mum's loft somewhere. That must have been the first time. I had written a few Christmas carols before that, but that was the first.

**JB:** Oh, Christmas carols! How nice.

**CFH:** Yeah. When I was fourteen, I did win a competition with a Christmas carol, and I think I'd written some other fairly depressing ones about people who couldn't celebrate Christmas, which although very well intentioned didn't really get anywhere because they were just really depressing. I came to writing songs fairly late to be honest. I wrote a song cycle called *One Life Stands* Which is a reaction to Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben*. I went to the Yehudi Menuhin School, which is a school for strings and piano, but then I went to Cambridge where I was asked to write quite a lot of choral music because of the choir system there. So, the first proper thing I wrote was in 2011 which is really recently, this *One Life Stands*.

**JB:** It seems like you've written a little bit of everything, or maybe a lot of bit of everything. How is writing for the voice different from other compositions? Are there specific challenges that are unique to writing for the voice?

**CFH:** I think so. A lot of my earlier vocal stuff is probably very tiring because when I write I sing all the time (of course I mean, my vocal technique is terrible, I always end up with a sore throat), but I'm having lots of breaks. Because I went to the Yehudi Menhuin school, I was used to writing music for very advanced people. So, I had this idea that I could sort of write anything for the voice like I could for the violin, cello, and piano in a way that perhaps didn't take into account how the voice is part of a person. Not saying I couldn't write difficult music, but I think I remember writing something fairly early on for Tenor that was just too consistently high. And I do this more and more as I get older, trying to write something with the person in mind. Not so specific that nobody else can do it. Now I really think of the person singing or playing the music and, in a way, perhaps some of my most… generally my music has been received well by performers. Some of the negative comments I've had are from singers that I've written too high consistently or something. So that helped me really think more about the person playing the music. In order to… not to write easier music, but to get the best out of them so that you get the best of what you want to hear. Because on the cello if you play a high note you can stay up there… not forever, but it doesn't work in quite the same way. I can play the lower notes and the high notes on the piano forever, for a half an hour and it won't be more tiring.

In terms of the actual music, I don't really think of it differently. I think of almost all of my music as being in a character. If I write a piano trio I often think of the violin as a character, the cello as a character, and the piano as another character. So, in that way I kind of think operatically all the time if you see what I mean.

**JB:** Yeah, and that lends itself really well to song.

**CFH:** Yeah, and I think also the other thing is that… I mean I was really proud of myself in that I wrote a big piece for baritone and orchestra, and the singer said it was one of the few pieces where he didn't feel like he had to always be straining. I had basically scored it so there was a gap between the notes that the baritone was singing so he could not be covered by the orchestra. That's another thing that you have to be aware of with vocal writing. It's wonderful because writing vocal music has helped me develop those technical aspects of my writing, and I love writing vocal music as well because of the words. You have all these images and ideas and the opportunity to work with all these new poets which I love.

**JB:** I honestly can't imagine. I'm not a composer, so I guess I just feel like it's some kind of God given gift or form of genius.

**CFH:** It's a weird thing. I'm learning to trust it more and more. I'm trying to work better and less if you know what I mean. As a younger composer you always feel the need to be clever, and you realize that if you're working on something and you just leave it for a bit and go and do something else, it's amazing how you can come back, and your brain has somehow worked it out. Learning to trust… I mean it must be the same I'm sure with performing. I do remember performing. I haven't performed as a professional at all. I basically gave up performing when I left school. But it's just not overthinking things I guess.

**JB:** What is your approach to creating a melody?

**CFH:** Specifically with vocal music, I often just sing it a lot. I do take inspiration from the sound of the words, and the melodic content of the words, not all the time obviously. The poetry shapes it. The thing is, you don't want to get trapped in that, because otherwise you end up writing something that just sort of sounds like a chant. When I'm writing I have this continuous loop between singing something and noodling around on the piano, and then I sort of try and analyze it and think, "How could I develop that?" Or simple things like, I've got several phrases, but I want the climatic point to be here, so I'm not going to use that high note until that point, but can I use that high note on that word? So, then I'll sing it and try it. Basically, I'm taking inspiration from the words. I often write out the poetry so I can really get it in my head, and really think about the imagery in the poem, if that suggests anything to me, and then taking into account the shape of the words. As a composer, I'm always thinking, being aware… it's so easy if you're setting a text, I guess you could go through and set it entirely to what the shape of the words was, but then when you get to the end of it, individually each line might be interesting, but has it gotten boring because there isn't a shape to it? Do you need to go away from that? You find every bar has something interesting in it, but when they're all joined up together is it too much of the same thing? Or does it get boring? Does it have too many ideas? I think it's very much from the words. What you'll find is that you'll come up with some kind of motive through just improvising that you can then look at, and think about, and develop somehow. Just thinking about the notes and how that fits into the next line. It's very intuitive.

Magic Lantern Tales is quite accessible for me. None of my music is super modern, but that's probably one of my most accessible. Because they're fairly simple stories in a way, quite emotive stories, it's important that the story gets across. Perhaps in another song it might be a more complex poem about some ideas that you might use as a vehicle for doing something in your composition. But with these pieces I wanted them to essentially be stories, just with notes in them. With these I very much just sang them really. But the Harry Holmes, that's a really long text. I think it probably is a bit too long anyway, but with that one I had to cut it quite a lot, but I felt I couldn't cut any more. So, you have to get through the text at a certain pace, so that sort of dictated the style of the music. It's sort of a patter song or whatever you call them. So, there's lots of considerations, but I often find that you sort of continually go back and forth between the inspiration and the technique. And then of course obviously thinking about ranges, because my singing range is sort of in the range of a soprano with a terrible range. So, when I'm singing, I have to think, "Am I writing these notes just because I'm comfortable with them?" I need to be writing for "this" person. So, there's that to take into account as well. It's sort of continually checking on yourself and thinking, "Will that work practically?" "Will that bring the emotion across?" I find it quite easy with choral music and vocal music, because you've got all these images, it's quite easy to almost start writing Mickey Mouse music describing the words. So, you think, "Okay, I want to give across the mood of the poem, not just write an ascending scale when it says, "going upwards" or something," trying to stop yourself from becoming too inspired by the moment by moment. It's a weird balance between the inspired and the practical. I think of it like designing a beautiful table or something, so it looks beautiful but functions. It's that kind of mindset.

**JB:** These pieces you based off of some World War I songs. What aspects of those songs did you use?

**CFH:** One thing I used in "Marching Through Time," in bar twenty-eight… that's based on "The Last Post," the trumpet fanfare that's played for memorials. I hinted at that. Otherwise, it's just taking the melodies as inspiration. It really was just listening to the songs and taking some melodic fragments. In some ways it was just a way in because I wanted them to be accessible, and I wanted them in some way to pay homage to those songs. I'd written another big world war piece. The baritone and piano piece was this big half hour sort of monodrama about a soldier in the war, and I'd really done a lot of research. My whole life had been dominated by World War I for a long time. So, it was very intuitive, nothing more complex than that.

**JB:** I saw in an interview that you described the opening pedal tone (E4) as green.

**CFH:** Yeah. I don't have synesthesia, but I associate certain colors with certain notes, so E minor is green to me, G minor/major is red, F is brown, D is blue, C is white, E flat major is purple… Are there any descriptions of colors in the text? I'm not sure there particularly was.

**JB:** I don't think so, but maybe the Northern towns are green?

**CFH:** Unfortunately, I think they're very un-green. I have certain associations. For instance, if I wrote a Christmas carol that featured holly, I'd find it very difficult not to write it either based around G or E because it's green and red. So, to write a Christmas carol about holly in F major would be stupid.

**JB:** Because that would be brown right?

**CFH:** Right. Dead holly. And that's just all wrong.

**JB:** But there wasn't a particular reason that this piece was green?

**CFH:** No, so actually the first two movements were originally a tone lower, and Nicky Spence asked for them to go up a tone. So, they're originally in D and I don't know why that was. And I realized I was perfectly happy for them to remain up. It was better structured. I've done that more recently. I do have quite a few songs which are in slightly different transcriptions because singers have asked for them, and that's been quite a weird thing to get my head around. I strongly associate certain keys with certain things that they often sound wrong.

**JB:** So interesting. The pedal tone is there almost all the time.

**CFH:** Yeah. I was thinking of those as bells.

**JB:** Okay, and the voice is supposed to ring in the strings?

**CFH:** Yeah. I realized it wouldn't be a massive affect, but that's what I would like. It sounds a bit weird, but you get such a variety of images in your mind when you write, and some of them are really sort of intellectual, and some of them are not so intellectual. I really had the image of almost some kind of Disney movie opening the book at the beginning of Snow White or something, and that you have this sort of bringing back memory. There's often a quite echoey

voice or something coming from the past. So, I wanted to sort of create that image of drawing the audience in, being as if the voice was coming from the past. That was the intention. It's interesting because this song gets done quite a lot by itself in things like auditions, and I don't even really think of it as a song, I think of it as an introduction to the song cycle proper. So, I think of it in terms of setting the scene.

There's an exhibition of Frances Bacon's work in London at the moment, and there's this fascinating thing about his workshop where he would have various things pinned up and he would have a Michael Angelo or something, and then he'd have Muybridge photos of animals moving, where they realize how horses and dogs run and all those kind of things, and then he'd have a page from a magazine or something with some Hollywood model or something. And they made a real point of how he, like a magpie, took ideas from high and low culture, from here and there, and made it into something coherent. I sort of often think that sort of thing when I'm writing. Sorry, that wasn't what you asked, slightly random.

**JB:** No that's great. I love it. I was also going to ask about the accompaniment. It's relatively sparse in this piece. Was that so that the voice could resonate in the strings?

**CFH:** Partly. Yeah, mostly. But I also wanted it to be almost like a Shakespeare play. You'll have somebody come along and say, "This is the story." You know, "This is going to happen, and that's going to happen, here's the play." Almost like that first page in the fairytale book, "Once upon a time there was a prince and a princess." Almost like those films where you get the narrator at the beginning saying, "Once upon a time." I wanted it to just be very simple, almost perhaps as if the music is just one level up from speech, so it's sort of drawing you in. Not like a musical where there'll be a spoken introduction and then the song proper, but almost like that. Something very simple that sort of creates the scene. I know this is a proper song, but I do think of it as an introduction. Also, I wanted the text to be very clear. I wanted to get through the text fairly quickly because sometimes if you want to get the story across, you want to get through the text fairly quickly in a fairly simple way, because you don't want to be at line four and have forgotten what the beginning of the sentence is. I just wanted it to be very naturalistic, as if waking up I guess, as if conjuring the scene. It's weird, you have these images. It's almost as if the mist is clearing on a film set or something, and then there's the action proper that happens. I just wanted something very simple, very folky. Not folky so much, but simple like a soldier singing. In a film version of a piece, you might get somebody going along whistling or singing to themselves, you know diegetic and non-diegetic music in films. So, it would seem perfectly natural if somebody is walking along singing to themselves and then twenty seconds later they're underscored by an orchestra. Because of the language of film, it feels very natural. Not like, "Where is the orchestra?" Almost that kind of feeling, I guess. And the bells… I am almost imagining a church bell or town hall bell or something, conjuring somebody's memory and then they start singing sort of thing. I wanted to imagine that this was in real time. As close to possible as if someone is telling that story in real time. Because it is like you're being spoken to directly.

**JB:** I think that all comes across really naturally. So well done.

**CFH:** Thank you.

**JB:** I was curious. There are a lot of moments where there isn't a lot going on in the piano. Do you feel like it should stay in tempo or is it more like opera, where if there's nothing going on beneath you, you have full license to be as free as you want.

**CFH:** That's very interesting! It's a mixture between being naturalistic and being based on the lads in their hundreds. But "The Lads in their Hundreds" isn't dotted rhythms, that's just straight quavers so I don't know why I did that. I've got a bit less fussy about this in recent times. The fact that your time signature is changing virtually every bar… I wouldn't want someone to be thinking so much about the rhythm that they're not thinking about the music, but by following the rhythm it comes out in the phrasing and with the meaning that I intended. I've been thinking about this a lot recently, and I don't think this is too complex. For instance, in bar nine, "all we remember of these marching men," I felt I needed that extra quaver. I wanted to add something a bit weightier to "remember." I could have written that in 6/8 with "of these" as semi-quavers, but there's something about just taking a little bit extra time over those words that perhaps just emphasizes them a little bit. In comparison, if everything else was very fluid rhythmically, then that wouldn't quite come across if you see what I mean. But I do sometimes wonder if I'm too specific, I don't know. I go backward and forward about these things.

**JB:** But you have to notate something right? So, you have to make a choice.

**CFH:** Yeah, and the other thing is… like in bar forty-nine, "the years slowly pass," I mean it's fairly obvious word painting, so I would like the feeling of the triplet crotchet rather than it being quavery. Somebody said something about my music in that it looks very hard but if you internalize the rhythms, it feels quite natural if you see what I mean. Perhaps the fact that me writing triplet crotchets there, once you have that in your head, I wouldn't want you to be thinking, "Oh God I've got to subdivide this." You just want to think "oh that's a little longer, a little bit more stretched," sort of thing, and I wouldn't be worried. I'm not wanting it to be metronomic. I feel that you can never get right. And also, the older a piece is the less I'm worried about it. There's a couple of cello pieces that I know still from memory, like Brahms E minor cello sonata, I still have that in my head. And this piece becomes… once you've first written a piece, not any tiny deviation because I'm much more relaxed the older I get, but you have it so specifically in your head. But the longer time passes it becomes like that Brahms E minor sonata. It's a piece that's almost not yours anymore, it's like a piece you know really well. You know how you might really appreciate different interpretations of Brahms E minor and not think, "Oh that's wrong or that's right, or that's a bit faster than I would play it, but actually that brings out that quality of it." I start thinking about that in my pieces as well. So, I get less fussy basically.

**JB:** Well, that's comforting to hear.

**CFH:** It's like letting your child have its own life rather than micromanaging. And what you hope as a composer is that you put enough in the music that it gives the performer the insight. What's the most wonderful thing is if I go to a rehearsal, and I don't really have to say anything. Even if there's something the performer is doing that's not exactly how I would have done it, I think, "Oh that's really interesting and I really like that interpretation." And you feel that you've put what is needed in the music.

**JB:** Last question about this piece. You've sort of book-ended the cycle with this piece again, which I think is really impactful because it has a completely different effect after you've heard the three stories, but did you have a specific intention with putting it again at the end?

**CFH:** Actually, I've done this with another song cycle, which I've only just realized. I think there's something vaguely prosaic about the fact that I got to the end of the song about "Mabel Walsh" and it didn't feel like an ending. And that happened recently with my song cycle about the botanic garden. There's a similar… actually its very similar. It talks about a garden and it's that sort of thinking of a film. You know those beginning of fairytales where there'll be a book that opens and at the end, they'll close the book, and it will say "The End." And like you said, I like the idea of what's gone before it affecting… you know bringing out something differing. Because I think it is very slightly different. I can't tell you how at the moment, but I think there's something different in the piano part.

**JB:** Yes, and I know it ends differently.

**CFH:** Yes. Just those last few notes. It's just that though. It didn't feel like it was a proper ending, and there's something about framing a song cycle. I think of it as a frame and it gives it shape; it gives it structure. It was that sort of telling the tale. And that often happens in plays doesn't it? Where you'll have somebody tell a story. Does that happen in Shakespeare? It does, right?

**JB:** Yeah, I think so. They come and remind you what the moral of the story was.

**CFH:** Yeah basically. It just seems to work really well. I do think of the songs, obviously they have their own musical structure within the song, but then I do think of them as a larger thing as well, and how that works. It's just that really.

**JB:** Okay, great. "Lily Maynard." Did you have a specific reason why you chose "Keep the Home Fires Burning" for that one? This is a gorgeous piece by the way.

**CFH:** Thank you! I'm sorry this is not fresh in my memory. But "Keep the Home Fires Burning" is very much telling the women to keep the fires burning. It's that keeping the memory alive. Have you seen the photos that came with this book? They're just so emotive, and there's something about these stories from these women. There was a sort of sentiment that tied in somehow. Just an instinctive thing. I think Lily was somebody who could only remember things when she was walking, or things would come back to her. I also had a finite number of songs. I wanted well known songs. Because I wanted to pay homage to those popular songs. I know "The Lads in their Hundreds" isn't, but the other ones. That music at that time is just so sort of gut wrenching because it's… I mean it's life and death stuff, isn't it? So, there was a certain sense of, "Okay, these are the most famous songs, I'm going to match that song to this because that theme is sort of similar." So, it's very unscientific. So, for instance with "Harry Holmes," it's "Pack up your Troubles," and I wanted a happy-go-lucky song for that. It would have been completely weird to base that on "Keep the Home Fires Burning." This song cycle… I wrote it

very quickly. I sort of almost half improvised it really. It was just very intuitive really, so it's no more complex than that basically.

**JB:** Who do you feel is the character in "Lily Maynard?" The poem itself says, "Come on Lily," but it almost feels like at certain points in the song the character becomes Lily.

**CFH:** Yeah. That's really interesting. Bizarrely that's something I've not really thought about. I almost think of it as somebody who obviously knows Lily's story really well. I don't know how much you've seen of the book that these poems come from. What happened was there was this dementia home in England and the photographer Ian Beesley was talking to the residents before it was closed down. So, I imagine that Lily has dementia and this person is reminding Lily. I guess it's somebody with a huge amount of empathy for Lily's story, that's so empathic that they feel it. Essentially that's what I do in my music. I try and really feel the emotion of that character and then think, "How is that represented in notes and rhythms?" So, the way that one might say a word if one is saying it in a different emotion. And it's really weird, I do get super emotional because you just sort of almost try and feel as deeply as you can how that person's feeling in order to translate it into music. So, I can see how the lines between the characters are blurred. If I had to pick something, I'd say it's someone who knows Lily's story and has such a huge amount of empathy for her that they really feel those emotions. It's weird that I haven't thought of that. I just didn't think of that question. I just wrote the song. Because you are really feeling Lily's emotions, but it's somebody else talking about it. That's interesting. You'd think I would have thought about that frankly, wouldn't you? But I didn't. That's really got me thinking. Some of it is just so intuitive. I find I'm not naturally a very analytic person. I'm not the kind of person who can take an overall message from a piece of text and say to you, "Well it's about this. These issues are being discussed," or "This story is actually about this," because I respond to emotion. It's amazing the stuff I can miss actually. That's quite nice, that's going to make me think.

**JB:** I feel the same way actually. A lot of times in my performance classes it gets so deep intellectually, and I'll just be thinking, "Oh I was just feeling this as I was singing."

**CFH:** No, I'm totally with you on that.

**JB:** I love the initial motive that comes back again and again. The "Come on Lily, let's go walking," but then it's slightly altered each time. I think the most interesting one for me starts in measure forty-three because it's that same lilting melody again, but the accompaniment is so, almost foreboding.

**CFH:** Yeah. I mean I think those are… I mean I'm literally sort of portraying… Are they bombs? Let me have a look here. Because he's got shell shock basically.

**JB:** That makes total sense after what has just been sung, but I think the juxtaposition is so cool, because every other time it's been a little more lighthearted.

**CFH:** It was definitely inspired by the bombs, a sort of memory of the bombs. I have less of a fear of repetition than I did when I wrote this, but in some ways you're doing something musically different. If you're widening the range of a piano and developing/having a variation of

the material in a sort of technical way, sort of expanding it, the two things can go hand in hand. If you're doing something that's pictorial at the same time as creating variety in a technical way, then that's good.

**JB:** And I think it's interesting because the war songs are naturally accessible, they're popular, they're folky. But you just seem to use a few bars of them and then kind of do your own thing. And the accompaniment is obviously much more modern than the simplistic accompaniment of the war songs.

**CFH:** Yeah, that's exactly right. Again, I almost think of that in a filmic sense. You know if somebody is walking down the street whistling a happy tune, and then there's this sort of low ominous tone underneath you're like, "Oh my goodness, something terrible is going to happen" right? Or something just really obvious and basic like in those horror films where somebody's singing a nursery rhyme or something, and you sort of just know something terrible… hopefully not as basic as that, but if you can put the tune into some sort of different relief by the way you accompany it. So hopefully that bit you pointed out will color the text in a slightly different way.

**JB:** It's effective for sure.

**CFH:** And just looking at bar forty-nine, I am thinking those piano chords are gently unfolding this letter. So that's very descriptive, I'm basically unfolding a B flat major chord there. And then the wide sky is you know… a wide sky. And the sunrise is my A major because A major is yellow to me. You know that is very sort of obvious word painting really. I try to be as obvious as I can without being too "Disney" about it.

**JB:** I think that's my favorite aspect of art song in general is the text painting.

**CFH:** Yeah! And it's hard because you can get carried away by trying to portray everything and you have to reign yourself in. I remember some lecture about Schubert saying he tried to portray the mood of the overall feeling of the poem, and really thinking about that.

**JB:** I think it's great. There are certain things that are obvious. I mean, "cowering and crying" in measure thirty-nine, how could you not? You couldn't avoid it, I'm sure. But the unfolding of the B flat chord I probably wouldn't have necessarily picked out unless you told me.

**CFH:** Yeah no, exactly. And I'm not worried about that being picked up.

**JB:** But it's cool that it's there.

**CFH:** I was watching a video the other day of another composer and they said that they can put the intent into it, but they can't guarantee… It's this weird sort of job where you put lots of intention into the music but when it comes out the other end you can't guarantee that people are going to get that. But hopefully they'll get something of it right? I mean that's the wonderful thing about music, you can relate it to your own life.

**JB:** Right. So, "The Ballad of Harry Holmes." This is hilarious. I don't even know what to ask about it because I feel like it's sort of straightforward.

**CFH:** I don't know what to say about this either really. I just had a lot of fun writing it. I do worry sometimes whether it's too long. This is the one that I imagine most of all that could almost be spoken by a storyteller. I had great fun writing this sort of "drunk" music.

**JB:** Did you just sort of take the mood from "Pack up your Troubles?" Or was there a specific melodic feature? I've listened and it's not quite as obvious as the other two. Maybe a rhythmic motive… Or just the mood and the patter song feeling?

**CFH:** Yeah, it's just the mood and the atmosphere. It's a bit wrong to say, "after Pack up your Troubles" it's just inspired by it really.

**JB:** Right. There's definitely some great text painting in here. I love the tempo changes.

**CFH:** Thank you.

**JB:** Yeah, they're really effective. And there are certain things that just work so well, like in bar forty-two, the train.

**CFH:** Yeah, I had great fun doing that.

**JB:** It's a great comic relief piece… And Mabel Walsh is after Cecil Coles' "Elegy." I feel like "Marching through Time," and "Lily Maynard" had some obvious melodic excerpts from the war songs, but this one was a little trickier to discern.

**CFH:** I can't remember the tune. It might be something as simple as a rising force, or something to do with the mood.

**JB:** The ticking clock is very effective, sort of haunting.

**CFH:** Yeah. I sort of had this idea to base them on songs and then as time went on… I mean this is just really based on the idea of a ticking clock, and a chiming clock, and the photo really. Just imagining that lady sitting there in silence with a ticking clock most of the time. So, what may have happened is that I had this grand intention to really closely base them on the songs, and then that sort of fell by the wayside a bit. And there would have been something, but it may have been something as simple as a rising interval or something. Basically, there are three different clocks going on. I don't know quite why, but I was thinking of a woman in a room with a ticking clock, and then I was thinking perhaps of other women in rooms with ticking clocks. And obviously it's not correct because every single clock ticks at a crotchet equals sixty.

**JB:** They could be offset though slightly.

**CFH:** They could be offset, and I mean I didn't have any sort of coherent reason for doing that in my head other than that it would make an interesting texture. And maybe something about thinking of all the other women who are in that situation perhaps.

**JB:** I think it's kind of interesting with the text actually, especially in bar thirty-eight when she starts dreaming about what life might have been like had he not died. I think it works well with that because it's sort of like she's existing out of time.

**CFH:** Yes. And also, the end. I realize how hard it is in bar fifty-seven. Why did I do that? I was just being cruel. I guess I was just turning the perspective a bit, I don't know. What should happen is that the pulse of the left hand motive should remain the same. That motive you've got in the left hand right in the very beginning that F – E – D – E – C, that is the same speed because what was a dotted quaver equals a crotchet. So, it's like that becomes the beat. It's really difficult. It's as if there were two clocks and one is in the foreground and then you focus on the other. You know those shots in films where you focus on the person and then that person will become blurred as the camera focuses on the other person? It's that hint of a change in perspective. I was imagining that sort of effect. Because this is the poet speaking, isn't it? It's not so much her telling the story as a general thought. So, it's that changing of perspective, but I realize now how awfully hard that is.

**JB:** This one is so sad.

**CFH:** The thing is, when you look at these poems there's nothing particularly… there's no particularly complicated words in them or anything, but he's just got that knack for really putting the emotion across. You know there's no particularly special words in this, it's just the way he does it is so effective.

**JB:** Yeah. And the fact that she still has his picture. It's definitely one of the more evocative photos of the collection.

**CFH:** Yeah, it's unbearable isn't it?

**JB:** And I do think having "Marching Through Time" again… you're right. "Struck silent by that bastard war," if that was the last thing I sang it would be a little rough.

**CFH:** Yes. It's interesting. I wrote a very long piece. I wrote an eighty-minute thing for tenor and chamber orchestra last year, and there's a bit in the middle where there's not much going on. Basically, it's sort of just chords because singing it through, feeling it through, you just sort of need an opportunity to exhale. And I feel you need to be brought out of that.

**JB:** That's so interesting. I took an acting and emotions class, and the whole idea was evoking the emotion of whatever the scene or monologue was, and we had a ritual to get into the emotion. Then you'd do the scene or monologue and then you had to have a ritual to get out of the emotion, so you didn't go through the rest of your day angry or whatever the emotion was.

**CFH:** Yeah. It's really interesting to think about these things. There's something very important about that isn't there? It almost makes me think about if you're talking to someone about a problem, you have to sort of come out of that. If you're discussing something really troubling with a friend, you have to take yourself out of that. It's moving out of that emotional space. And sometimes that can be really powerful if there's a shocking event or something, but you need that sense of closure, don't you? So interesting doing talks like this because you put into words the things that you feel instinctively, and that sort of informs what you do in the future. You think, "Ah-ha."

**JB:** Well, thank you so much for your time. I'm just going to ask you one last question. I've been listening to a lot of your vocal music, and you have quite a range. Like you said this cycle is very accessible, and probably contrasts some of your other works. Do you feel that you have a particular style?

**CFH:** Yes, I feel everything is very me. Portraying emotion and communicating is of primary importance to me. I feel it's all sort of like shades. I feel a similar way when I write educational pieces or pieces for children. You know you just have to simplify the language otherwise they won't enjoy it and it won't sound good. I know my stuff has varied, but essentially I do feel it is all me. I guess the thing is that my style is naturally quite accessible. There is a range, but I guess there's just an emphasis on storytelling and portraying emotion. I think quite a lot of the harmonies are similar. When I'm writing more harmonically complex music I still think in terms of major and minor chords, it's just that they have more notes in them. So, I guess a piece like "Harry Holmes" is really just very tonal, but I do still think in that way. It's just I sort of color it in a bit more really. And I think just always… not always being in service of the text, I don't think that simply, but thinking what does the text need? Sometimes that's simple and sometimes that's more complex.

In all honestly, I don't think about it too much, because it can tend to sort of cripple you. Lots of things affect it. I've written something for a singer who has very good perfect pitch for instance, and that will affect the way I write. Nicky Spence, who sang this, doesn't have perfect pitch, so that sort of thing shaped it. So many things coming into play. Basically, my style… I grew up playing Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, and Britten, all the B's. I do feel like that is my sort of language. Because I have written a lot of music for a long time, I don't really listen to that much music. So, it's still very much from the music I've played. I just try not to think about it too much. I tend to write slightly more accessible vocal music than other stuff for various reasons. It is harder to pitch if you're doing something very chromatic in a group of singers. It just doesn't work so well as it would on a piano for instance. So, you just realize that can't go from complex chord to complex chord like you would on a piano. It's not effective; it's not idiomatic, so that sort of thing shapes it as well. But I try not to think about it.

**JB:** Well, I feel like you're right there on that perfect balance. The other day I was listening to "Love Bytes," and I've been looking at "Six Songs of Melmoth," and I feel like they're right at that good balance of being interesting and modern, but without being too weird where you lose interest because you're wondering what the heck is going on.

**CFH:** Yeah, well I think that's basically my aim. I do think about the audience a lot. You have to write for yourself as well, but you know. And you have to write for performers as well, right? Without performers I am nothing; I'm sheets of paper in a drawer. So those are the sort of concerns.

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## Appendix D: Complete List of Cheryl Frances-Hoad's Vocal Works to Date

*Amy's Last Dive,* an opera for mezzo-soprano, soprano, tenor, chorus and orchestra – 2012

"A Song Incomplete" for soprano, mezzo-soprano, and countertenor – 2013

"Asphodel" for mezzo-soprano French horn and piano – 2020

"A Thousand Sev'ral Ways" for soprano and piano – 2020

*Beowulf* for mezzo-soprano and piano – 2010

"Don't" for soprano, piccolo, and bass clarinet – 2009

*Endless Forms Most Beautiful* for soprano and string quartet – 2019

*Everything Grows Extravagantly* for baritone and piano – 2021

"How to Win an Election" for mezzo-soprano and bass clarinet – 2016

"I'll have the Whetstone" for soprano and recorder ensemble – 2017

"Invoke Now The Angels" for soprano, mezzo-soprano, countertenor, and piano – 2013

*Scenes form Autistic Bedtimes* for soprano, vibraphone, piano, and cello – 2013

*Scenes from the Wild* for tenor and orchestra – 2021

*Six Songs of Melmoth* for soprano and piano – 2020

"Small Journeys" for mezzo-soprano and piano – 2022

"Lament" for mezzo-soprano and piano – 2012

*Last Man Standing* for baritone and orchestra – 2018

"Le Vampire" for baritone and piano – 2021

"Love Bytes" for soprano, baritone, vibraphone, and cello – 2012

"Love (of the sort I'm after)" for tenor and piano – 2017

*Magic Lantern Tales* for high voice and piano – 2015

*One Life Stand* for mezzo-soprano and piano – 2011

“Something More Than Mortal” for soprano – 2016

*The Glory Tree* for soprano, clarinet, violin, and cello – 2005

*The Thought Machine* for soprano, baritone, and piano – 2016

*Two Shakespeare Songs* for soprano – 2014

“Une Charogne” for contralto and piano – 2019

“Vocalise” for soprano, flute, and harp – 1994

“You Promised Me Everything Last Night” for soprano, tenor. piano, and cello – 2011

“Your servant, Elizabeth” for soprano, tenor, choir, and orchestra – 2022

# Appendix E: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

**Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects**

**Approval of Initial Submission – Exempt from IRB Review – AP01**

**Date:** February 03, 2023 **IRB#:** 15410

**Principal Investigator:** Jenna Michele Davis

**Approval Date:** 02/03/2023

**Exempt Category: 2**

**Study Title:** Magic Lantern Tales: A Performer's Analysis of the Vocal Works of Cheryl Frances-Hoad

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed the above-referenced research study and determined that it meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review. To view the documents approved for this submission, open this study from the *My Studies* option, go to *Submission History*, go to *Completed Submissions* tab and then click the *Details* icon.

As principal investigator of this research study, you are responsible to:

- Conduct the research study in a manner consistent with the requirements of the IRB and federal regulations 45 CFR 46.
- Request approval from the IRB prior to implementing any/all modifications as changes could affect the exempt status determination.
- Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the HRPP Quality Improvement Program and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
- Notify the IRB at the completion of the project.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB @ 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

Lara Mayeux

Lara Mayeux, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

**Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects**

**Approval of Study Modification – Expedited Review – AP0**

**Date:** April 19, 2023 **IRB#:** 15410

**Principal Investigator:** Jenna Michele Black **Reference No: 747177**

**Study Title:** Magic Lantern Tales: A Music/Text Analysis of the Vocal Works of Cheryl Frances-Hoad

**Approval Date:** 04/19/2023

**Modification Description:** Study title and PI name update

The review and approval of this submission is based on the determination that the study, as amended, will continue to be conducted in a manner consistent with the requirements of 45 CFR 46.

To view the approved documents for this submission, open this study from the My Studies option, go to Submission History, go to Completed Submissions tab and then click the Details icon.

If the consent form(s) were revised as a part of this modification, discontinue use of all previous versions of the consent form.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the HRPP office at (405) 325-8110 or irb@ou.edu. The HRPP Administrator assigned for this submission: Kat L Braswell.

Cordially,

Lara Mayeux

Lara Mayeux, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

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