

Ernest John Moeran (1894-1950)

Six Folksongs from Norfolk (1923)

Folksong

Down by the Riverside

One morning in the month of June,
down by the riverside,
There I beheld a bold fisherman
come rowing by the tide.

Come rowing by the tide -
There I beheld a bold fisherman
come rowing by the tide.

He lashed his boat up by the stern,
and to his lady went.
He took her by the milk-white hand,
for she was his intent.

For she was his intent -
He took her by the milk-white hand,
for she was his intent.

"I'll take you to my father's hall,
and there make you my bride.
Then you will have a bold fisherman
to row you on the tide."

To row you on the tide -
Then you will have a bold fisherman
to row you on the tide.

The Bold Richard

Come all my brisk young seaman lads that have a mind to enter
On board a famous frigate your precious lives to venture,
On board a famous frigate she's Richard called by name,
And she's cruising with the Shannon all on the French main.
Singing "What Cheer O!"

Now we'd not been sailing many leagues before we did espy
Three lofty sails to windward, they came bearing down so nigh.
And two of them were merchantmen came bowling from the west,
But the convoy was a frigate that did sail out of Brest.
Singing "What Cheer O!"

Now we bore down upon them with high and lofty sails;
For broadside for broadside we soon o'er them prevailed
When he lashed his helm o' weather, not thinking we could fly.
When they found their ship was sinking for quarter they did cry.
Singing "What Cheer O!"

Now we launched out our longboats and the others did likewise,
To save all those prisoners that ever we came nigh.
And those which we saved, they vow and protest
We sunk the finest frigate that did sail out of Brest.
Singing "What Cheer O!"

So come all my brisk young fellows now to Kingston we have got;
Let each of a hearty fellow drink out of a hearty pot,
For some unto their sweethearts and others to their wives.
So we'll sing Hallelujah to all England, my brave boys.
Singing "What Cheer O!"

Lonely Waters

As I walked out one bright May morning
For to view the fields and to take the air,
There I espied a fair young damsel,
She appeared to me like some angel bright.

I said "My dear, where are you going,
What is the cause of all your grief?
I'll make you as happy as any lady,
If you'll once more grant me relief."

"Stand off, stand off, you are deceitful,
Stand off you are a deceitful man.
'Tis you that have caused my poor heart to wander,
And to give me comfort is all in vain."

Then I'll go down to some lonely waters,
Go down where no one they shall me find,
Where the pretty little small birds do change their voices,
And every moment blows blustering wild.

The Press-gang

As I walked up of London street
A press-gang there I did meet:
They asked me if I'd join the fleet
And sail in a man-o'-war, boys.

Pray, brother shipmates, tell me true
What sort of usage they give you,
That I may know before I go
On board of a man-o'-war, boys.

Why the sort of usage they'll give you
Is plenty of grog and bacca too:
That's the usage they'll give you
On board of a man-o'-war, boys.

But when I went, to my surprise
All that they told me was shocking lies:
There was a row and a bloody old row,
On board of a man-o'-war, boys.

The first thing they did they took me in hand,
They flogged me with a tar of a strand:
They flogged me till I could not stand,
On board of a man-o'-war, boys.

Now I was married and my wife's name was Gray,
'Twas she that led me to shocking delay:
'Twas she that caused me to go away,
On board of a man-o'-war, boys.

So when I get my foot on shore,
Those Irish girls to see once more,
I'll never go to sea any more,
On board of a man-o'-war, boys.

The Shooting of His Dear

O come all you young fellows that carry your gun,
I'd have you get home by the light of the sun,
For young Jimmy was a fowler and a-fowling alone,
When he shot his own true love in the room of a swan.

Then home went young Jimmy with his dog and his gun,
Saying, "Uncle, dear uncle, have you heard what I've done?
Cursèd be that old gunsmith that made my old gun,
I have shot my own true love in the room of a swan."

Then out came bold Uncle with his locks hanging grey,
Saying, "Jimmy, dear Jimmy, don't you go away.
Don't you leave your own country till your trial come on,
For you never will be hangèd for shooting a swan".

So the trial came on and pretty Polly did appear,
Saying, "Uncle, dear uncle, let Jimmy go clear,
For my apron was bound round me and he took me for a swan.
And his poor heart lay bleeding for Polly his own."

The Oxford Sporting Blade

I am an Oxford sporting blade,
likewise a gallant hero;
I've just come down from London town
for to view the hills of Dear Oh.

The very first man I chanced to meet
he was a lord of honour;
I did insult this noble lord
all in such roguish manner.

I drew my pistol to my breast
and didn't I make him shiver;
Five hundred pounds all in bright gold
to me he did deliver.

Beside the gold a Geneva watch
to me he did surrender;
And I thought it was a splendid prize
the very first time I did venture.

I took a handful of the same
and I bought a slashing gelding;
And he could go and jump a five-barred gate
and I bought him off Mister Sheldon.

So up to London I will go
as fast as the wind can blow me:
I am resolved on liberty,
there's none up there to control me.

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

4 Poems by Fredegond Shove (c.1922)

Fredegond Shove

Motion and Stillness

The sea shells lie as cold as death under the sea,
The clouds move in a wasted wreath eternally;
The cows sleep on the tranquil slopes above the bay;
The ships like evanescent hopes vanish away.

Four Nights

O when I shut my eyes in spring
A choir of heaven's swans I see,
They sail on lakes of blue, and sing
Or shelter in a willow tree:
They sing of peace in hear and mind
Such as on earth you may not find.

When I lie down in summertime
I still can hear the scythes that smite
the ripened flowers in their prime,
And still can see the meadows white.
In summertime my rest is small,
If any rest I find at all.

In autumn, when my eyes I close
I see the yellow stars ablaze
Among the tangled winds that rose
At sunset in a circled maze;
Like armoured nights they ride the skies
And prick the closed lids of my eyes.

But when in wintertime I sleep
I nothing see, nor nothing hear;
The angels in my spirit keep
A silent watch, and being there
They cause my soul to lie as dead
A stream enchanted in her bed.

The New Ghost

And he cast it down, down, on the green grass,
Over the young crocuses, where the dew was.
He cast the garment of his flesh that was full of death,
And like a sword his spirit showed out of the cold sheath.

He went a pace or two, he went to meet his Lord
And, as I said, his spirit looked like a clean sword,
And seeing him the naked trees began shivering
And all the birds cried out aloud as it were late spring.

And the Lord came on, He came down, and saw
That a soul was waiting there for Him, one without flaw,
And they embraced in the churchyard where the robins play,
And the daffodils hang down their heads, as they burn away.

The Lord held his head fast, and you could see
That He kissed the unsheathed ghost that was gone free
As a hot sun, on a March day, kisses the cold ground;
And the spirit answered, for he knew well that his peace was found.

The spirit trembled, and sprang up at the Lord's word,
As on a wild April day, springs a small bird,
So the ghost's feet lifting him up, he kissed the Lord's cheek,
And for the greatness of their love neither of them could speak.

But the Lord went then, to show him the way,
Over the young crocuses, under the green may
That was not quite in flower yet, to a far distant land:
And the ghost followed like a naked cloud holding the sun's hand.

The Water Mill

There is a mill, an ancient one,
Brown with rain, and dry with sun,
The miller's house is joined with it,
And in July the swallows flit
To and fro, in and out,
Round the windows, all about;
The mill wheel whirrs and the waters roar
Out of the dark arch by the door,
The willows toss their silver heads,
And the phloxes in the garden beds
Turn red, turn grey,
With the time of day,
And smell sweet in the rain, then die away.

The miller's cat is a tabby, she
Is as lean as a healthy cat can be,
She plays in the loft where the sunbeams stroke
The sacks' fat backs, and beetles choke
In the floury dust. The Wheel goes round
And the miller's wife sleeps fast and sound.

There is a clock inside the house,
Very tall and very bright,
It strikes the hour when shadows drowse,
Or showers make the windows white;
Loud and sweet, in rain and sun,
The clock strikes, and the work is done.
The miller's wife and his eldest girl
Clean and cook, while the mill wheels whirl.
The children take their meat to school,
And at dusk they play by the twilight pool;
Bare-foot, bare-head,
Till the day is dead,
And their mother calls them in to bed.

The supper stands on the clean-scrubbed board,
And the miller drinks like a thirsty lord;
The young men come for his daughter's sake,
But she never knows which one to take;
She drives her needle, and pins her stuff,
While the moon shines gold, and the lamp shines buff.

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Vol. 4 Moore's Irish Melodies (1957)

Thomas Moore

How sweet the Answer

How sweet the answer Echo makes
To Music at night,
When, rous'd by lute or horn, she wakes,
And far away, o'er lawns and lakes,
Goes answering light!

Yet Love hath echoes truer far,
And far more sweet,
Than e'er beneath the moonlight's star,
Of horn, or lute, or soft guitar,
The songs repeat.

'Tis when the sigh, in youth sincere,
And only then, -
The sigh that's breath'd for one to hear,
Is by that one, that only dear,
Breath'd back again.

At the mid hour of night

At the mid hour of night, when stars are weeping, I fly
To the lone vale we loved, when life shone warm in thine eye;
And I think oft, if spirits can steal from the regions of air
To revisit past scenes of delight, thou wilt come to me there,
And tell me our love is remember'd even in the sky.

Then I sing the wild song it once was rapture to hear,
When our voices commingling breathed like one on the ear;
And as Echo far off through the vale my sad orison rolls,
I think, O my love! 'tis thy voice from the Kingdom of Souls
Faintly answering still the notes that once were so dear.

The last rose of summer

'Tis the last rose of summer,
Left blooming alone;
All her lovely companions
Are faded and gone;
No flow'r of her kindred,
No rosebud is nigh
To reflect back her blushes,
Or give sigh for sigh.

I'll not leave thee, thou lone one,
To pine on the stem;
Since the lovely are sleeping,
Go, sleep thou with them;
Thus kindly I scatter
Thy leaves o'er the bed,
Where thy mates of the garden
Lie senseless and dead.

So soon may I follow,
When friendships decay,
And from Love's shining circle
The gems drop away!
When true hearts lie wither'd.
And fond ones are flown,
Oh! who would inhabit
This bleak world alone?

Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)

Let us garlands bring Op. 18 (1929-42)

William Shakespeare

Come away, come away, death

Come away, come away, death
And in sad cypress let me be laid;
Fly away, fly away, breath;
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.

My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,
O prepare it!
My part of death, no one so true
Did share it.

Not a flower, not a flower sweet,
On my black coffin let there be strown;
Not a friend, not a friend greet
My poor corpse, where my bones shall be thrown:

A thousand, thousand sighs to save,
Lay me, O where
Sad true lover never find my grave,
To weep there!

Who is Silvia?

Who is Silvia? what is she,
That all our swains commend her?
Holy, fair and wise is she;
The heavens such grace did lend her,
That she might admirèd be.

Is she kind as she is fair?
For beauty lives with kindness.
Love doth to her eyes repair,
To help him of his blindness,
And being helped, inhabits there.

Then to Silvia let us sing,
That Silvia is excelling;
She excels each mortal thing
Upon the dull earth dwelling;
To her let us garlands bring.

Fear no more the heat o' the sun

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages:
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great;
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;
Care no more to clothe and eat;
To thee the reed is as the oak:
The sceptre, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning flash,
Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone;
Fear not slander, censure rash;
Thou hast finish'd joy and moan:
All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

No exorciser harm thee!
Nor no witchcraft charm thee!
Ghost unlaid forbear thee!
Nothing ill come near thee!
Quiet consummation have;
And renownèd be thy grave!

O mistress mine

O mistress mine, where are you roaming?
O stay and hear, your true love's coming
That can sing both high and low.

Trip no further, pretty sweeting;
Journeys end in lovers' meeting,
Ev'ry wise man's son doth know.

What is love? 'Tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter;
What's to come is still unsure:

In delay there lies no plenty;
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty;
Youth's a stuff will not endure.

It was a lover and his lass

It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino
That o'er the green corn-field did pass.
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding a ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

Between the acres of the rye,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
These pretty country folks would lie,
In the spring time ...

This carol they began that hour,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
How that a life was but a flower
In the spring time ...

And therefore take the present time
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
For love is crownèd with the prime
In the spring time ...