

**HARK – Listening Research
Centre for Cosmopolitan Studies, Dept. of Social Anthropology
& Music Research.**

***A Day with Errollyn Wallen.
Saturday October 14th 10.00-15.00
Younger Hall. St Andrews.***



The music of Errollyn Wallen embraces the sounds and the rhythms of the world around us. Her motto for her work with performers is 'we don't break down barriers in music....we don't see any'. She says of her composing 'I am looking for something, like an unwisely curious explorer. I have the faintest scent, a curling wisp on the air, a trill caught in the breeze...I am inching my way along a long misty road, half blind I navigate the unknown'. She has composed fourteen albums, and *Photography* is her latest and dedicated to orchestral works. She was the winner of the Radio 3 Listeners/British Composer Award, was the first black woman to have her work performed at the Proms, won the Ivor Novello Award for Classical Music and is an Honorary Fellow of Mansfield College Oxford.

Errollyn will spend a day with us at HARK exploring her compositions in performance and listening. We will do this by:

*****A Performance Workshop on her Song Cycle "*Are You Worried about the Rising Cost of Funerals*", five simple songs: *Beehive, Mary, White Christmas, Guru, and End of My Days*. Student sopranos will work with Errollyn and a string quartet on a performance of these songs.

*****A *Performance Ethnography* of listening responses to her four-movement piece '*Photography*' with string orchestra and Voices. Followed by a Panel Discussion chaired by Michael Downes.

Artistic Direction: Bede Williams and Huw Lloyd-Richards.

Buffet Lunch will be provided. Entry is Free, please register at the Music Centre. 60 places are available by going to music@st-andrews.ac.uk, or 01334 462226.

Programme Note for the Performance Ethnography of ‘Photography’ by Errollyn Wallen. October 14th 2017.

This *performance ethnography* is one outcome of a three-year collaborative research project between anthropology and music research at the University of St Andrews entitled HARK: Listening Research. The full outcome documentation of the project will be published as *An Ethnography of Listening* in 2018. Information is available on the website HARK.org.uk.

This performance ethnography is a vignette of responses to a particular piece of music – “Photography”, a four-movement, 14 minute, piece by Errollyn Wallen. This performance script is derived from the source text which was collated from transcripts of the HARK Project Listening Groups taped discussions on “Photography”. This text is available on the HARK website. In total 40 listeners gave their responses to the piece in three modes: firstly as a reaction to each movement without knowing what the piece was; secondly by giving responses having heard the piece and learnt something of its provenance; thirdly in further posts on the website and communications after further listenings.

In this performance the audience will first hear the piece played by the orchestra. After a period of silence, two ‘soloists’, the ‘voices’ will take their places out front. They will perform this script within the time signature of the piece, and when that is finished there will be a second silence and the whole piece will then be played again. This triadic structure is intended to retain the integrity of the musical composition and its autonomy; allow the overlay of words derived from listening responses to be brought into relation with the music in a middle section; and exemplifies the experience of listening for the first and subsequent times to a piece of music likely to be unfamiliar to some of the audience.

The four movements are:

- I: Vivace (4’26),
 - II: Quite Slow (3’02),
 - III: Slow, trance-like (2’09),
 - IV: Moderato, keep very rhythmic (3’11),
- with a total duration of just under 14 minutes.

After the performance there will be a discussion with the audience, animated by Michael Downes, and a panel of Errollyn Wallen the composer, Bede Williams the conductor; Peter Sutton and Laura Briody the two voices/speakers; Huw Lloyd-Richards, the Ethnographer who wrote the performance script; and the HARK Listening Group members who generated the source text from their responses.

In general terms, an ethnographic account, in whatever medium, is an attempt to describe and evoke the character and nature of an everyday experience. It is a detailed, phenomenological, in–depth ‘thick description’ of a cultural practice in such an evocative way, in real time, that it may become possible for the reader/listener/viewer to engage with, and enter into, the experience in

some measure. This entails a real-time engagement, a suspension of certain other modes of engagement with art-works, and a 'negative capability'. Here you are invited to listen to the words, images, and feelings that were engendered by the music at the same time as listening to the music. If you wish to explore more what is meant by 'performance ethnography' and our theory in practice approach please go to the relevant methodology section in the thesis "*The Place that Words Come from.....*" on the HARK website, and also see Bede Williams' forthcoming work on 'auto-ethnography' in interpretive performance.

This event, and the 'performance ethnography' is intended as a kind of experimental sound installation of the relationship between words and music. It is a dramatised ekphrasis, that is, it evokes and (re)imagines one art-work in another form, one genre is transfigured as another. It is not programmatic in the sense of trying to re-present the musical work, Neither does it appropriate the work for other purposes. It is not libretto or a proto song. In a sense it is not attempting a transforming of the music but adding a transfiguring verbal/visual perceptual layer to the sound/music. It attempts to evoke the listening experience, constellated as words and images, engendered by the music, and shows an endless celebration of listening responsiveness that also suggests the actuality of multiple readings and interpretability. Both the source text and script cannot 'live', have their full significance, therefore, without the music. The words (as source text and performance script) are dialogical, that is, they have been produced by group processes of listening and group interaction.

As the ethnographer/author I worked dialogically with the words of others, had an editorial task and also added my personal responses to the music. It was clear to me in reading the source text that I was using an implicit criteria for selecting material from the listening groups based on its visual and atmospheric quality. This had the effect of leaving out more structural responses, although these were few. The ethnography does, under the influence of the title of the piece, "Photography", foreground visual responses to listening – images, word-pictures, narratives of place, landscape and journeys through them. However there were also strong affective responses to the music – which appear in the script as: the tenderness felt in the second movement and the glancing/dancing of lovers; the playfulness of a jester's fleeting appearance; the menace in the third; the 'northern' landscape feel of openness and spring awakening/deliverance and the triumphal sense in the fourth. These visual and affective responses culminate in the injunction/invitation, shared by both voices, to "Behold".

When I started writing the performance script for two speakers, m/f, the script had two fairly distinct strands. The first, derived from first listening responses of the groups, tended to keep the flow and energy going, in a present tense sense – a 'stream of consciousness' feel. The second strand was the material from the second listenings, tending to the past tense, with more discursive word-pictures. I have, as the piece progresses, increasingly intermingled these two strands, mirroring the layered polyphony of the music as motifs inflect one another. These two strands reflect two senses of engagement with

music: that which seems found, discovered as 'there', inhering in the object of attention, the music as art-work, and that which flows creatively, as a gain to the artwork, something engendered and added. This speaks to creativity and its relationship with discovery – interpretively, what is 'read onto' and what is 'read off' in a playful gestalt. This practice problematizes notions of subjectivity and objectivity. The ethnography plays with these modes of aesthetic engagement.

Initially I wrote the script so that one performer read the present tense text on the left and the other performer read the past tense text on the right. The disadvantage of this was that 'present' and 'past' voices were then gendered. The two voices (female/male) are now much less strongly associated with an 'immediate' reaction, and a 'reflective' response, as reflecting the first and second listenings of the HARK groups. They now function more like a conversation (not quite a duet) with the sense of immediacy and commentary moving between them. This means that each speaker may deploy, as it were, two registers: immediacy and reflection, amongst their wider repertoire.

The main performance challenge is in timing and expressiveness, giving space both to the musical stimulus, and then to the evocation of the listening experience and its imagery and feeling. The movement between the voices became increasingly important in the writing, handing over and back, amplifying the other and in some 'call and response' moves. As for the voices expressiveness I have had senses of the text being: sometimes simply and evocation of what is being heard (but certainly falling short of any literal programmatic descriptive representation); sometimes a kind of reverie or day-dream that is stimulated by the atmosphere of the music – bringing in extra-musical images from the listening groups' responses; sometimes an imposition of an associated artwork but still stimulated by the music – formal quotation from poems.

There have been some influences upon me while writing this script this summer which have been serendipitous. I have been interested in reverie, free-association, and day-dreaming, for some time, and particularly as a way of framing visual attention. I have been developing this in my approach as *Soundscape Haiku*, and in particular in a 12 minute film of a study of the surface of the river Tay and its play of light and movement. This ongoing exploration and some of the ideas can be found on the HARK website. So, analogously, I am interested in what modes of (in)attention appear when we listen to music. I find useful some of the ideas and work of the Situationists and the meanderings of the *derive*. How we compose ourselves for listening and how we move in music. This links with the work of Ian Sinclair, Sebald and other 'psycho-geographic' writers, and particularly with the films of Patrick Keiller and his Robinson sequence – giving rise to the 'framing' created by the train windows in bar 6 of movement IV. This ethnography could be a contribution to the fictitious Robinson Institute! This is not new territory and indeed Jacques Brissot produced a film along these lines with a 'music concrete' soundtrack by Pierre Schaffer on the 1950s. Here I am exploring in a small way the relationship between sound/music and movement through a visual landscape. There are other contrasting linkages of words and music,

notably in Morton Feldman's music to Samuel Beckett's Words and Music. There are some references and quotations. The source of "I am going to show you as mystery..." is apparent, as is the feel towards the text by Henry Newman in Elgar's Dream of Gerontious, as he is held and pulsed by some benign power. The repeated use of the word 'Behold!' is derived from its use in Meister Eckhart where it exhorts an engagement that is not mistaken for entertaining an idea, and suggests a liminal transfigured perception. The latter poetry quotations are from Gregory Corso's soaring poem *One Day* which evokes the panoramic feel of the first movement at bar 41 like a figure flying through a Chagall painting, and in the bitter-sweet movement II, I quote two lines from A.E. Houseman which play with the visual trope of narcissus – the reflection of one's image, in the eyes of another. There are oblique references to the title 'Photography', as a train window frames a passing scene, but its influence seems to be felt throughout the emerging visual narrative through the underlying sense of an invitation to imagine, to 'see' in the hearts eye, in reverie, and in being transported/moved by the music in its atmospheres and directions.

The ethnographic performance script is as follows:

First Movement: Vivace. 4 mins 26 secs.

1st Listening Voices

2nd Listening Voices

Wait for 3 secs:

Calls
Are you calling me?

clarion calls,

Coming and going
a conversation

an echo layer

a message

At bar: c. 20 secs.....

Dropping, dropping

somebody else is treading in
Listening here to there

captivated?.. captured?

At bar: c 25 secs.....

Flashing, Scaling up,
I am pulsed, soaring
I am caught in it.

what's coming next
a dance, for me
I am a part of it.

spring-like bursts of urgency
industrious energy,

I see a river coming,
dancing down a hill
jerking round rocks and rapids.

like a painting, someone was applying different
colours. With a brush.. a bright red colour over
here, or a dark green around here. The sounds
were becoming more colourful. You were seeing
somebody paint.

I see the instruments dancing.

dancing together
they have their own spirit

The dancing bows

At bar: c.57 secs

I am sliding back
I am falling backwards

At bar: c.1 min 05 secs

ticker tape messages
Calls keep coming

A morse code

**At bar: c.1 min 08 secs.
25 secs. to read till next phase.**

One Day while Peter-Panning the sky
I saw a man,
A man dying over the Eastern Gulph,
And I said to this man:
– The light that makes us a friend of eagles
Has made our poor wounds an interval of clouds,
Slow and creeping, calm and sad,
In this skyful dungeon of things –

At bar: c. 1 mins 33 secs.

A shadow falls in answer
now laborious, presaging,
anxious,

– The sky is awful! The sky undarkens!
Hermes his wing-ed foot, rests old in China!
Rests uncontested while cloudbuds burst
And windleaves fall!
my tired hands hold back
The violent skirt of night!
my moss-covered feet crush
the seaports of day!

At bar: 2 mins 05 secs.

But, a jester, prancing, fiddles, defies the game,
is gone...

from dance from energy,
untamed to the unsettling
and a creeping coexistence
An insistent plucking
There is no breaking free

At bar: c. 2 mins.17 secs

But soon a more troubling note is sounded, more
disjointed, jarring, perhaps a little sinister. But the
dance is still there.

These intense images of stalking, of predatory
menace, can only end in death.

At bar: 2 mins 34 secs.

after the darkness of arctic winter, brilliant sunshine
and warmth hits the wide open landscapes of arctic
Scandinavia... vigorous growth....gamboling
reindeer calves...everywhere life in
abundance.....growling bears emerging from their
winter dens.....bird life.

Our interweaving flights
are held in the landscape,

our lines live in bigger harmonies

The calls of sky and earth,
the flickering frames from the window of the train
washed with cloud and water, blurring, compressing

At bar: c. 3 mins 19 secs.

Its limbs are rising,
the shape is waking,
pulling itself together,
Angel of the North.
And I am hurtling with the clouds

Am I running away from it
or is it running towards me

At bar; c.3 mins 40 secs.

And this is the plateau!

This is where we are!

This is what I told you!

This is what is show you!

(Each voice in turn, keep repeating till end)

like the film broke
I am just dropping, coming down in silence....

Second Movement: Quite Slow. 3 mins 02 secs.

1st Listening Voices

2nd Listening Voices

On the 5th note of the opening phrase:

Line drawing...

Drawing me out

Intimate,
conflicting relations
of 'wooing' harmony

too close

sweet possibilities

exiguous

and plaintive.

26 secs:

Our eyes meet

[But only] in intersecting

We gaze

(in expectation)

It looked like love

but was not

We stare inside

I will look for you

Bar: 49 secs

Are you in an interlude?
a hymn,

a prayer

Through tree-lined avenues

These instrumental tales of wandering

Unable to breathe,

Curious crossings of the sedate dance

In the wistful bitter
Dance,

corseted

sweet

cast a wandering gaze
On some vantage point
lost in the stepping

of my backward glance

“Look not in my eyes for fear you see
the sight I see, and love it and get lost
like me”

I will give you a white border

I, you, a trace

you dropped something

a nutshell
(containing all I know)

at the summit :

of a pause.....

At Bar: c. 1'49secs.

I left the dying man,
and he must always die,
For Solitude refuses to lower a gentle
hand
Upon his long sad face.

2.09 secs.

along the top

of what is concealed below

Of what moves unseen	but heard
its presence	
It holds me	
away	it keeps me from falling
not loud	leaves me
as an absence	
reliable	liable,
liable	to reappear
What developed?	Another image
	not the photograph you took

Third Movement: Slow, trance-like. 2 mins 09 secs.

1st Listening Voices

2nd Listening Voices

I am going to show you a mystery	
In a darkened room	
	even darker
	without the blindfold
	There is no trance

27 secs.

Come with me.....	
	arresting/arrested
Give me your hand.....take my hand (spoken as one)	
This way	
Do not be afraid	
Come towards the gaps	
between the notes	
	bring us the next note
	that never comes

At Bar: 1 min 02 secs.

Oh, fear

What impending
Surrounds me

Things are getting out of control

to as high and to as low

Troubling images

Dark forces

Rising up
Growing figures

My crescendoing nightmare

Forming a circle

21 Secs

Step up
Look, look!

I can't see

I won't look

you will not see

This silence

Fourth Movement: Moderato, keep very rhythmic. 3 mins 11 secs.

1st Listening Voices

2nd Listening Voices

On the 12th note of the melody. At 6 secs.

Wake up. (softly)

Open the curtains

10 Secs.

on a train?.

Morning presses on

Frames shape the sky

23 secs.

Wake up! (louder)

look out

the desolate industry

smooth machinery

in the countryside

springs in spring

37 secs.

Poles string by

threaded

Dreams fly

sleepers in the sky

traces for the day of

chasing

musings in the gallery of
'whatever happens'

Miro, Chagall

Bar: 51 secs.

The days tramp begins
habitual demands

Walking to work

Walking me to work

dreams

In my slippers

As Calendars days flip by

Bar: 1'05 secs

open spaces

reindeer crossing

broad rivers,

over stony ground to linger
on new grass...

everywhere the pulse of life....

escaped the wolf,
the reindeer, fully grown,
back with the herd.

Swirling, mingling
through the oncoming

crowd

with the flow

Head up

In rain

Bar: 1'26secs.

The demand
polarity

fateful attraction

Repeats itself
Gaining beat

military

The human traffic flows
it crowds

it suffocates

closes

as it disperses

The flag is carried up the hill
Pulled towards some gathering

never completely leaving
this feeling
that there was something else.
I have not seen or heard

Did I miss it?

find it?

Or invent it?

Look! over your shoulder

Bar: 1'59 mins.

The image!

The hieroglyphs (whispered)

The figure?

The inscription!

Bar: 2'06 secs.

The sunlit uplands

The plateau

This is where we are

Point, line and plane!

The world below
with a white border

Wave!

Take flight!

Dilate

My ears

hold the image

in my pupil

Bar: 2'30 secs

Welcome to the Ark

Two by two

Heroic by

Just Being here

A triumph

Bar: 2'54 (6 seconds to the end)

Huw Lloyd-Richards.
19/9/17.

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