

KINDRED SPIRITS

RUBY HUGHES AND ERROLLYN WALLEN IN RECITAL

Errollyn Wallen

Guru
On the Mountain
Timeless
North
How Sweet the Answer

Benjamin Britten

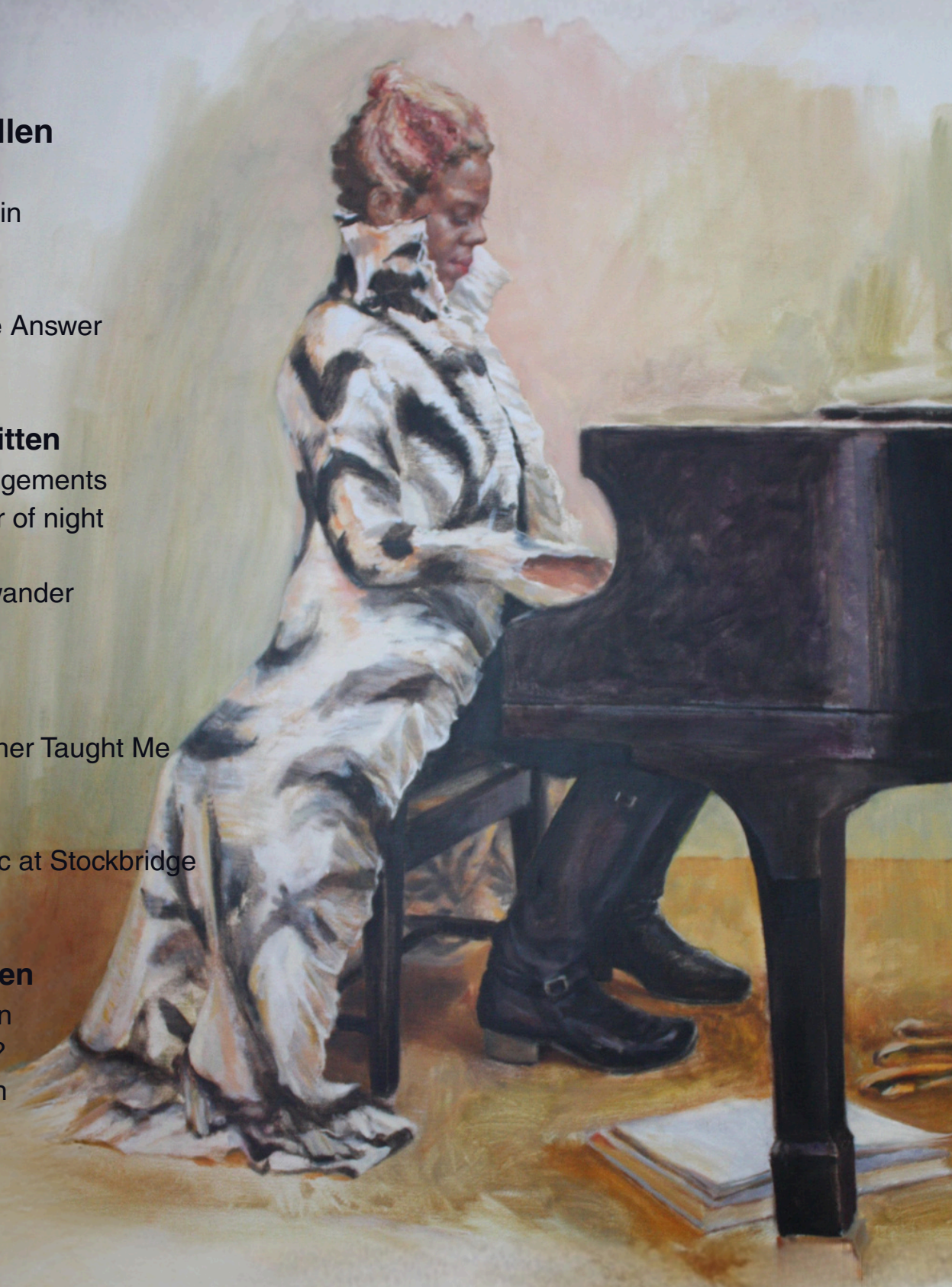
Folksong arrangements
At the mid hour of night
Ca the yowes
I wonder as I wander

Charles Ives

Songs My Mother Taught Me
Serenity
Mists
The Housatonic at Stockbridge

Errollyn Wallen

Jesus on a train
What's up doc?
Peace on Earth
Rain



INTRODUCTION

A MEETING OF KINDRED SPIRITS: BRITTEN, IVES & WALLEN

I am delighted to join forces with composer-pianist Errollyn Wallen CBE, recently appointed Master of the King's Music for a recital program performing some of our favourite songs for voice and piano.


This collaboration grew out of my deep admiration for Errollyn's songwriting having sung her music many times in concert. Each time performing her songs I was struck by how audiences responded with such elation and excitement to her music's huge emotional power, brilliant humour and playfulness. Our friendship began in our shared neighbourhoods of Deptford and Greenwich in South East London, and over the years it has grown into a rich artistic partnership. I have been fortunate to perform Errollyn's music with orchestras, as well as in more intimate settings. We have performed together at the Wigmore Hall and at St Magnus Cathedral in Orkney, and it's incredibly inspiring sharing the stage together.

In this programme, we explore the songs and arrangements of two composers we both love: Benjamin Britten and Charles Ives, alongside Errollyn's own music. I have always been drawn to Britten's extraordinary sensitivity to text; the clarity of his vocal writing, the psychological insight, and the way the piano part is an equal expressive partner in illuminating the poetry. Ives fascinates us both for his fearless originality; his relationship to landscape, culture and memory together with such bold harmonies creates music that feels both nostalgic and strikingly modern.


There is something very precious about hearing a composer in a live capacity interpret their own work together with other music that's inspired them, and for me, singing with Errollyn at the piano in this repertoire is unbelievably exciting.

We are thrilled to bring this recital to audiences across the UK and internationally.

Artist Links:

 [Errollyn Wallen - Peace on Earth](#)

 [Charles Ives - Mists](#)

 [Errollyn Wallen - End of my days](#)

REVIEWS

“Admire how vocally responsive Hughes is in the Purcell, how fragile and precious she sounds in Errollyn Wallen’s Peace on Earth and how much she can communicate with barely a whisper of sound. Marvellous.”

Geoff Brown, *The Times*

“Storm Henk was battering southern England ... Hughes’s marvellously rounded high notes rang out... Wandering at times into blues, lament and vocalise, Errollyn Wallen’s eloquent music generated genuine poetry ... Nothing could hide Hughes’s sensitive and shapely phrasing ... firepower under firm control.”

Wigmore Hall recital

The Times

“Here is the heart of the evening, a rare and exclusive moment in which the British soprano Ruby Hughes has been anointed queen. God save Ruby the 1st! ... All throughout the eight numbers of Britten’s opus 18, Hughes alternates between frenzy and deploration, rage and prayers, provocation and pain.”

Roland Duclos, *Bachtrack*

“One of the voices that touches me the most... each of her projects is original and sensitive, while she herself could be taken right out of a Renaissance tableau.”

Emilie Munera and Rodolphe Bruneau-Boulmier, *France Musique*

“Osvaldo Golijov’s Three Songs, are also heard here for the first time with string orchestra accompaniment. They are sung here by the wonderful soprano Ruby Hughes, an artist with an endless assortment of vocal colours and a flawlessly instrumental technique.”

Rafael de Acha, *All About the Arts*

“5* ...soloist and composer make Clytemnestra’s wrenching drama something tangible. When Hughes sings of fire, you feel the heat. At the word “weeping”, your heart breaks. Her eloquence is always unfussy and direct.”

5* *The Times*

“Wallen’s musical range is ambitious, eclectic, often immediately appealing and expressive.”

The Guardian

“Wallen’s By Gis and by St Charity is a short and effective setting of Shakespeare, compellingly delivered by Ruby Hughes, with the orchestral players’ chants of “shame!” drawing us into Ophelia’s claustrophobic inner world.”

Erica Jeal, *The Guardian*

“Music seemed to yank me towards it, and the unselfconscious plainspeak of her work chimes true with that statement. Her writing sounds instinctive. Moods are blatant, gestures are unambiguous, she pinches from baroque, jazz, film, romantic and minimalist idioms and wears those influences bright and proud on her sleeve.”

Kate Molleson, *The Guardian*

The Observer



A different mood, intimate and reflective, lit up a lunchtime recital given by the soprano Ruby Hughes and the pianist-composer Errollyn Wallen, master of the King's Music. Wallen started writing songs at the age of nine, for her and her sisters to sing on the way to school. She has not stopped since. She and Hughes performed works from her successful 2006 collection *The Errollyn Wallen Songbook*, ranging from *On the Mountain* (2010), a soulful ballad in memory of Martin Luther King, to the jazzy, high-energy *What's Up Doc?* and the prayer-like *Peace on Earth*. Other songs included Britten's *I Wonder as I Wander*, haunting and rapt, and Ives's mistily expansive *The Housatonic at Stockbridge* ("Contented river! In thy dreamy realm / the cloudy willow and the plummy elm"). They made ideal musical partners in this recital, with folk origins and quiet hearts.

Hughes can turn her voice from tender to raw, revealing different colours like a glass held to the light. As pianist, Wallen keeps a persuasive reserve, poetic and unforced, making you listen all the harder. Hear them on BBC Sounds for the next month.

Fiona Maddocks

