



Soundstreams presents *Garden of Vanished Pleasures* Program Note by David Jaeger

Garden of Vanished Pleasures is a unique work of digital music theatre devised for Soundstreams by director Tim Albery. In early 2020, as the worldwide pandemic forced arts presenters to rethink strategies to serve their audiences, Soundstreams' founder and artistic director Lawrence Cherney turned to his trusted colleague and collaborator, Tim Albery, the renowned stage director. Cherney invited Albery to devise a work for a digital musical stage that could be presented online as the lead production in Soundstreams' 2021/22 season.

Albery responded with *Garden of Vanished Pleasures*, a multimedia presentation described as an emotional journey inspired by the details of the life and work of the English artist, author, film maker, stage designer, experimental gardener and queer rights activist, Derek Jarman. It's a journey guided by the poetry and other diverse writings Jarman left in his many journals, and staged with the full range of digital stagecraft to enhance the live action and performance. Jarman died at age 52 in 1994, from AIDS-related complications. He left a legacy of feature films, short films, music videos and both published and unpublished writings.

The principal musical elements of this emotional journey are works for four voices and three instruments by two women: English composer Donna McKevitt and Canadian Cecilia Livingston. Albery studied the music of both composers extensively, and consulted with them as he began to assemble his scenario for the piece, intertwining the music as he felt, accordingly, would advance the scenario.

McKevitt's pieces come from her *Translucence*, a collection of her settings of the writings of Jarman. McKevitt had worked on Jarman's last film, *Blue*, setting writings from Jarman's journals, which had been brought to her by Simon Fisher Turner, another composer working on the film. She found Jarman's writings powerful, compelling, even transformative and she continued to work with them for five years. For *Translucence*, she scored some of the music for three women's voices, as this was the makeup of the group she was with during that time, *Miranda Sex Garden*. She added countertenor, viola and cello for other settings. Jarman's texts cover a wide range of expressions, from longing and loss, to anger over society's inequities. Some of McKevitt's settings are a cappella, others are accompanied. There are purely instrumental pieces as well.

Albery studied the works of Cecilia Livingston carefully, choosing just the right expressions to fit the arc of his scenario. He said as he became more familiar with her music, he sensed Livingston was, "a woman of the theatre." The works of hers he selected to include in his interweaving of music are settings of poetry by Walter de la Mare, Duncan McFarlane as well as two poems by Livingston herself. He chose a wide range of her works, many of which focus on intimacy and stillness, but some which support the moments of agitation, uneasiness and conflict in the unfolding story.

Both Livingston and McKevitt found it easy to trust Albery to work creatively with their music. Livingston was pleased to discover he had studied her music thoroughly, and she was convinced he had a deep understanding of its inner workings. McKevitt said, "Tim is a genius at seeing the bigger picture and especially good at finding things that even the author of a work hasn't seen."

Albery describes his visual concept as, the spindly white metal furniture, the off-white floor and back drop, dress and shawl, the grey rocks - all to create something of a spectral, ghostly atmosphere: "a phosphorescent apparition translucent in my ghostly eye." He hopes the audience will be open to the performances from the excellent cast, and the work of a strong creative team that helped him to devise a unique online presentation. "Open your mind, open your heart, enjoy what you see and hear."



Text for *Garden of Vanished Pleasures*

Editor's Note: Every effort was made to copy the text from the songs. They may differ slightly from original poetry.

Garden of Vanished Pleasures

Text

The lyrics for Cecilia Livingston's songs are written by her and by poets Duncan McFarlane, Walter de la Mare and Janey Lew.

For her songs Donna McKevitt uses poems by Derek Jarman. Jarman was an English filmmaker, visual artist, diarist, gardener and queer rights activist.

He lived the last few years of his life by the sea at Prospect Cottage next to Dungeness Power Station on the south coast of England, where he created a beautiful garden out of the shingle. He gradually lost his sight before dying of Aids in 1994.

Silver

Spoken

Silver fox, silver leaf, silver weddings.
The silvery moon, silvery seas.
Silver is for the night.

What If?

Sung

What if the present were the world last night?
Your love stabbed in the setting sun dies in the moonlight fails to rise thrice denied by cock crow in the dawn's first light.

Silver

Sung

Slowly, silently, now the moon walks the night in her silver shoon:
This way and that she peers and sees silver fruit up on silver trees;
One by one the casements catch her beams beneath the silvery thatch;
Couch'd in his kennel, like a log, with paws of silver sleeps the dog;
From their shadowy code the white breasts peep of doves in a silver feather'd sleep;
A harvest mouse goes scampering by,
With silver claws and a silver eye;
And moveless fish in the water gleam
By silver in a silver stream.

Translucence

Sung

A phosphorescent apparition translucent in my ghostly eye shimmers in the star-lit sky the starts shine through him, bright as a child's sparkler
The ghost, a Mister See-through from somewhere back before tiptoes across sea horses drifts along the corridor.
A bubble in a breath of cold, I've never seen a ghost before
Mister See-through is a transparent pellucid as a shrimp lustrous glass aorta opening and closing
Diaphanous Medusa Umbrella of the deep



Ghosts I'm told take flight in dawn's half light, as the black bird sings they spread their wings and
flit like bats to the attic
But See-through dazzles even on sunny days dancing in the ripples of a June heat haze.
Glittery ghost.
He waits for the sun to set, then walks the corridor again.
Today he's changed his sex.
She wears a dress of silk gossamer so fine that any bride could pull it through a wedding ring
A dragonfly with ultraviolet wings, her dress rustling as she vanishes behind the diamond window
pane.
In the mirrors on the wall she is not seen at all.
Will she be my Mister See-through next time she floats this way?
One of Della's ladies crossing gender in time.
With a beard of spun glass she slips between my fingers rippling with laughter
I thought that Ghosts were silent, as slow-worm lamps that spark.
Opalescent creatures of shadow and the dark.
Oh how they chatter debutantes on crystal stairs.
Iridescent matter.
Flaring glassy chandeliers they dance a tinsel quick step pianola phantoms swaying seaweed
sarabands.
As she disappears I toast my ghost in acqua vite
Luminous presence.

Here and gone

Spoken

I will tell you.
The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,
Burn'd on the water; the poop was beaten gold,
Purple the sails, and so perfum'd
The winds were love-sick with them

Parting

sung

Before I ever leave how I imagine returning to you,
Before I ever leave how I imagine returning to you,
Like the chipped edge of a ceramic dish fitted perfectly into place.
Not a speck of dust disturbed in the break,
not a speck of dust disturbed in the break
speck of dust,
speck of dust,
speck of dust,
speck of dust,
Absence is a measurement calibrated to memory,
A scale of units smaller than the sound of an inhale,
only as wide as the quarry between us when we lie,
when we lie
clavicle to clavicle,
hip bone to hip bone
Every breath,
every breath a coax,
a grain of silent mending



Nature

sung

Nature the unnatural red in tooth and claw
Out to destroy me
In the good old days you went mad
I've kissed the scarlet lips of insanity and sent him on his way

Kalypso

sung

I don't know why my skin seems thin, or why I'm tired all the time.
I wish the rain could break this heat;
there's not a cloud left in the sky,
the sky,
I don't know why I should repeat this sad old fallacy:
somehow the weather thinks that we should be together;
night,
night comes around,
but it's too hot for me to sleep,
now so much of what we had you took-
took with you, when you were away.
I know I sound-
I know I look like I've got something on my mind;
there's really nothing left to say or raise in vain against the tides.
It's nothing never-mind; it's just a wish,
That if it's not too much, if it's alright, some night,
night,
some night I'd like to walk out in the rain,
rain, rain, again, come home,
come home to sleep, to drift and dream off to a world else-where,
with, you, with you, with you,
where it keeps raining all the time.

Grey

Spoken

Grey is the world
Into which the colours fall -
The dream ends in grey

I Sit Here Immobile

sung

I sit here immobile
The winter sun luminous
Over the darkening waves
Your dreams laughter lost in the wind
The heavens are fallen
The closed gates ruse
The rainbow is broken
All our memories wasted
Salt tears wound my blind eyes



As I write these words
Fires stoked by strangers
Consume your heart
I stumble through the day of your passion
Did you imagine one morning the sun would not rise,
That I would be left to bear witness?

Two Dreams

sung

I, I, I stand,
I, I, I stand,
I stand, I stand,
I stand at the edge,
I stand at the edge of the sea,
The grey, the grey sky
The grey, the grey sky flames and then grows dark.
In the gloaming, in the gloaming,
in the gloaming, the surf aches my knees,
the surf aches my knees.
My feet,
My feet like two fish, like two fish, below me.
I stand,
I stand at the edge of the sea,
I stand at the edge.
I stand.

Sebastiane

sung

Sagita funesta acu tetigit
Umbraque tegit aquas
Et aura tacet
Aves non canunt
Deficit ab orbe color
Sebastianus
De mundo discessit
Ad solem modo sagittae advolat
Nox non umquam eum occupabit
Discessit ab horis orbis atris
Ecce vulnera sagittarum
Sanguis vitae fluit in harena
Calthae solis in radis folia
Explicantes surgunt,
Flores apollinis aureos
Sebastiane
Sebastiane
Da iuveni deo qui luminibus aureis est multa basia
Da amatori multa basia
Et vesperis in luce
Mundum hunc recordare



I Am A Mannish Muff Diving Size Queen

sung

I am a mannish muff diving size queen with bad attitude
An arse licking psycho fag molesting the flies of privacy
balling lesbian boys
A perverted hetero demon crossing purpose with death.

Adam & Eve & Punch-Me-Not

sung

Adam delved and Eve span
Who was then the gentleman?
Adam and Eve and Punch-me-not went down to the river to bathe
Adam and Eve were drowned
Who do you think was saved?
Ring a ring a roses pocket full of posies
ti-shoo a ti-shoo we all fall down.

Impatient Youths

sung

Impatient youths of the sun burning with many colours
Flick combs through hair in bathroom mirrors
Fucking with fusion and fashion
Dance in the beams of emerald lasers mating on suburban duvets
cum spattered nuclear breeders
What a time that was.

Yellow

spoken

Yellowbelly's snake eyes poison.
He crawls over Eve's rotting apple wasp-like.
He stings you in the mouth.
His hellish legion buzz and chuckle in the mustard gas.
They'll piss all over you.
Sharp nicotine stained fangs bared.

Mercy

sung

Your mercy's nothing: worthless.
Save it.
With ev'ry second's twitch you change your minds;
how soon and easy you forget your fears,
the desp'rate hungers in the hollows of your bodies, the press
of bones inside your sliding skin:
slide,
sliding as easily as lies that slip between your lips like breath and bile.
You jig and you spin and you lisp,
and you pseudonym your sins and your desires,
and your desires are a sick man's thirst,



craving, craving most the thing that poisons.
There is another justice, yet you want this vicious chase:
the slit throats,
the bracelets smeared with blood, the touch of steel, the sudden eyes ...
eyes.
And still this planet dances on around its seething, heedless fire,
your justice shining and drying and spinning in the sun:
turning your ignorance to cruelties,
so what should make you shiver makes you smile.

The System

sung

The system left me with such a profound dislike of my own
I would be quite happy to see the young businessmen who sit behind their papers on the Ashford
train
liquidated
with the Xeroxed boys from the city wine bars
Spoilt baby faces
loathsome suits ties and collars
Ordering people about
I can't abide the English system
that has everyone queuing except those that have no need to as they jumped it long ago
Nor can I abide the values of this repression
its false houses marriages families
The church of England,
sport, All the rotten paraphernalia
The anger fizzes on below the surface waiting to explode ... destroy
How many people feel the same way? Blue
spoken
I have walked behind the sky.
What are you seeking?
The fathomless blue of bliss.

No Dragons

sung

No dragons will spring from these circles
These stones will not dance and clap hands
At the solstice beached on the shingle they lock up their memories upright as sentinels in the dry
grass
Rolled by the sea down the centuries they wait for the great tide
that will come up second time calling them back to the depths
where the salt sea will unlock them
They'll talk to strange creatures of their time here
telling them how the postman came up the path with your letter
how I could not conceal my happiness
and walked backwards and forwards skipping
How when you came we set off under a full moon to watch the patient fishermen throwing handfuls
of pebbles in a shower of sparks
under a starlit sky



of your face lit by the beam of the lighthouse every ten seconds a little from green eyes
a wink holding hands

Kiss Goodnight

sung

(doom doom too-doom refrain)

When I was a child,

I was afraid of the dark,

but now, Love, I see that night, that night, is a time for peace.

(here side by side refrain)

we sleep, each with an arm around each other,

drifting side by side,

drifting far but never untethered, always together

Snow

sung

No breath of wind, No gleam of sun,

Still the white snow, Still the white snow whirls, whirls softly down.

Twig and bough and blade and thorn

All in an icy quiet forlorn

Whisp'ring, whisp'ring, rustling through the air,

on till and stone, roof ev'ry where,

It heaps its powdery, powdery, powdery crystal flakes,

of ev'ry tree a mountain makes;

'Til pale and faint at shut of day

Stooops from the West one wint'ry ray,

And feather'd in fire

Where ghosts the moon,

A robin shrills, shrills, shrills his lonely tune.

I Walk In This Garden

sung

I walk in this garden, holding the hands of dead friends

Old age came quickly for my frosted generation

Cold, cold, cold they died so silently

Did the forgotten generations scream?

Or go full in resignation

Quietly protesting innocence

Cold, cold, cold they died so silently

I have no words, my shaking hand, cannot express my fury

Sadness is all I have

no words.

Cold, cold, cold you died so silently.

Linked hands at 4 a.m., deep under the city you slept on

Never heard the sweet flesh song.

Cold, cold, cold they died so silently.

Matthew fucked Luke fucked Mark fucked John.

Who lay on the bed that I lie on.

Touch fingers again as you sing this song.

Cold, cold, cold we die so silently.



My gilly flower, roses, violets blue,
sweet garden of vanished pleasures.
Please come back next year
Cold, cold, cold, I die so silently.
Good night boys, Good night Johnny.
Good night, Good night.

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Donna McKeivitt, composer
Rachael Kerr, music director and piano
Michelle Tracey, production designer
Cameron Davis, projection designer and video editor
Wesley McKenzie, lighting designer
Dennis Patterson, sound engineer
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Daniel Cabena, countertenor
Brenna Hardy-Kavanagh, viola
Amahl Arulanandam, cello

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THEATRE

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