



# SONGS FROM A SHROPSHIRE LASS

Holly Teague  
& Jonathan French





Shropshire born Soprano Holly Teague was first introduced to A.E. Housman's "A Shropshire Lad" at school. Now, just over ten years later and living far far away from "those blue remembered hills," this, her first CD, features a collection of songs handpicked by Holly to best represent the beauty of her home county. Included are both better and lesser-known songs, as well as a brand-new setting of "Along The Field" by composer Ashley Thompson, written especially for this recording.

A versatile performer, Holly's enthusiasm for music encourages her to explore a vast range of repertoire and style, and has lead to performances all over the UK and Europe. Recent highlights include an early renaissance lute song programme with Myles Payne and a recital programme exploring the works of W.H. Auden by Britten, Barber and Stravinsky. She performs regularly as a soloist with world-renowned choirs and choral societies, and appears often with midlands-based Ensemble Echos: recent discography credits include Bach's Coffee Cantata BWV 211.

Holly completed her training at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, where she studied with Amanda Roocroft and Catherine Benson. Whilst at Birmingham, Holly took a study year to CNSMD (Paris), where she was taught by Elene Golgevit and Anne le Bozec. In 2019, she won the RBC Singing Prize, the inter-departmental 2019 Doris Newon Music Club Award and the Cecil Drew Oratorio Prize, came second in the Edward Brookes Lieder Prize and the Mario Lanza Opera Prize, and was a semi-finalist in the Bromsgrove International Musician Competition.

In September 2020, Holly intends to move to London to continue her tuition with Amanda Roocroft at the Royal College of Music.



Published in 1896, Housman wrote most of "A Shropshire Lad" the previous year, and before he had visited Shropshire. Inspired by many of the unique town names and the view of the hilly landscape from his home in Worcestershire, the poems are in many different voices and follow no particular narrative, but link together with a military theme, a sense of idealism, nostalgia and longing for home. These colours, woven beautifully into Shropshire's landscape, went on to inspire many poets of World Wars I&II, and have been set by hundreds of composers across the globe since publication. Many of these song settings have a folk-like feel, perhaps inspired by wholesome pastures and descriptions of a countryside idyll. In contrast, others choose to use rich harmonies in the piano accompaniment, harnessing the dynamic emotional content present throughout the collection.

Choosing which settings to include, and the order in which I wanted them to appear, took much longer than expected! Only two of the songs featured were actually written for the soprano voice (Barber's "With Rue My Heart Is Laden" and Ashley Thompson's "Along the Field" which was composed especially for me!) – given the title of the collection, all other cycles were for tenors and baritones. I chose the poems that I felt were most appropriate, and having now performed and recorded them, I think much of the text holds gravitas further up the stave!

I really wanted this CD to feel rounded in itself, almost as if it could stand alone as a cycle; many of these composers chose to ignore the original chronology of the poetry in favour of compositional scope, so I felt that I had "permission" to rearrange the order! Vaughan William's "From Far, From Eve and Morning" brings a sense of wistful anticipation, and I feel it captures all themes presented in all the poetry that follows, making it a nice way to begin. I felt that John Ireland's arrangements needed to feature towards the end of the CD as they are the most harmonically dense (and handily, he had set one of the last poems, "Epilogue"). I hope that both composers help the listener to focus on the emotional intricacy that features in all of the other songs.

Perhaps most heart-breaking is the simplicity of Butterworth's "Loveliest of Trees" and "The Lads In Their Hundreds," when he himself would perish four years later at the Battle of the Somme aged just 31. His friendship with Vaughan Williams and Cecil Sharp is so clear in these compositions, but his approach to text is so signature. I hadn't heard of Graham Peel before this project, but found his setting of "Reveille" particularly rousing, and "When The Lad For Longing Sighs" almost whimsical, and although lesser-known, I enjoy the relief they provide following the terrible narrative and sparseness of Vaughan Williams' "Bredon Hill."

I am I think, most grateful for Arthur Somervell, again, a composer who I knew little of prior to my research. "When I Was One And Twenty" is finally punctuated with the humour that I believe it deserves, and the piano introduction to "Into My Heart An Air That Kills" is actually the main theme from his setting of "Loveliest of Trees," the first in his cycle set in 1904: Schumann-esque in style. Without this prior knowledge, I still believe that by the time we hear the line "*that is the land of lost content*" we are *all* thinking of home, wherever that may be, as intended by both composer and poet.

Had I had the time and the space available to record all of these cycles in full, I really would have! No setting here "wins" over any other, I have simply selected the sound that reminds me most of a county that I treasure so much. If you are listening to this CD and you are from Shropshire, I hope that some of it reminds you of how lucky we are to have the landscape that we do, and perhaps you'll feel motivated to walk over and around one of the many beautiful locations we have quite literally, on our doorstep. If you are a tourist, or perhaps haven't even heard of Shropshire before, I hope that you enjoy a musical journey around our county, and perhaps feel inspired just enough to make a visit.

Holly Teague, March 2020

Jonathan French was born in Stockport, Manchester, but lives now in Banbury, Oxfordshire. In demand as both a soloist and an accompanist, he has given recitals and performed concertos across many prestigious venues, including Bridgewater Hall, Symphony Hall Birmingham, Liverpool's Philharmonic Hall and Southwark Cathedral. He combines a busy performing career with his full-time position as Head of Accompaniment in Vocal Studies at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, where, as a former student, he won every keyboard prize before gaining a First Class Honours Degree and a Diploma of Professional Studies with Distinction.





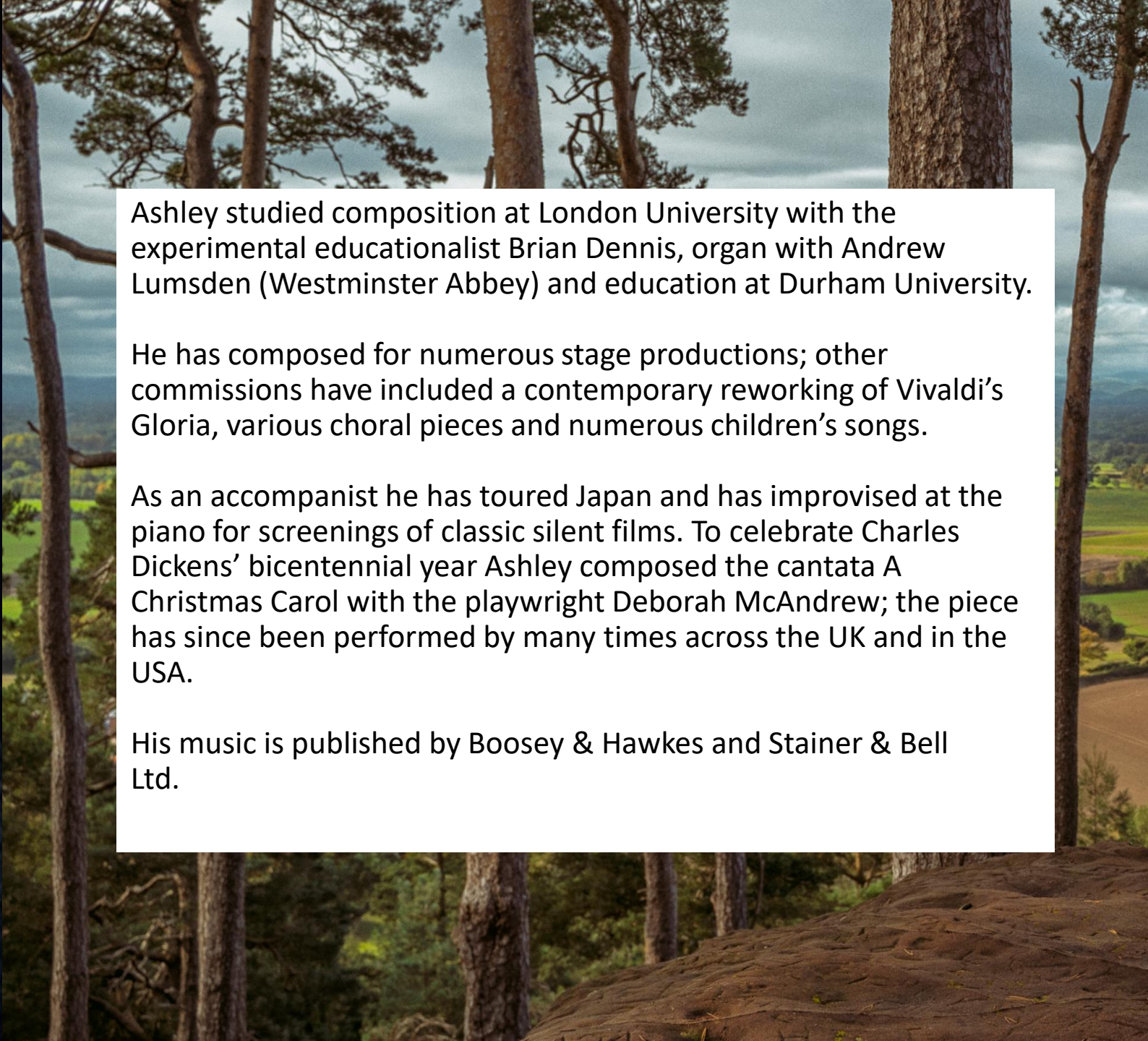


Ashley studied composition at London University with the experimental educationalist Brian Dennis, organ with Andrew Lumsden (Westminster Abbey) and education at Durham University.

He has composed for numerous stage productions; other commissions have included a contemporary reworking of Vivaldi's Gloria, various choral pieces and numerous children's songs.

As an accompanist he has toured Japan and has improvised at the piano for screenings of classic silent films. To celebrate Charles Dickens' bicentennial year Ashley composed the cantata A Christmas Carol with the playwright Deborah McAndrew; the piece has since been performed by many times across the UK and in the USA.

His music is published by Boosey & Hawkes and Stainer & Bell Ltd.





Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)  
**1. From far, from eve and  
morning (XXXII)**

And yon twelve-winded sky,  
The stuff of life to knit me  
Blew hither: here am I.

Now-- for a breath I tarry  
Nor yet disperse apart--  
Take my hand quick and tell me,  
What have you in your heart.

Speak now, and I will answer;  
How shall I help you, say;  
Ere to the wind's twelve quarters  
I take my endless way.





**Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)**

## **2. Bredon Hill (XXI)**

In summertime on Bredon  
The bells they sound so clear;  
Round both the shires they ring them  
In steeples far and near,  
A happy noise to hear.

Here of a Sunday morning  
My love and I would lie,  
And see the coloured counties,  
And hear the larks so high  
About us in the sky.

The bells would ring to call her  
In valleys miles away:  
'Come all to church, good people;  
Good people, come and pray.  
But here my love would stay.

And I would turn and answer  
Among the springing thyme,  
'Oh, peal upon our wedding,  
And we will hear the chime,  
And come to church in time.

But when the snows at Christmas  
On Bredon top were strewn,  
My love rose up so early  
And stole out unbeknown  
And went to church alone.

They tolled the one bell only,  
Groom there was none to see,  
The mourners followed after,  
And so to church went she,  
And would not wait for me.

The bells they sound on Bredon,  
And still the steeples hum.  
'Come all to church, good people,'  
Oh, noisy bells, be dumb;  
I hear you, I will come.



Graham Peel (1877-1937)

### 3. Reveille (IV)

Wake: the silver dusk returning  
Up the beach of darkness brims,  
And the ship of sunrise burning  
Strands upon the eastern rims.

Wake: the vaulted shadow shatters,  
Trampled to the floor it spanned,  
And the tent of night in tatters  
Straws the sky-pavilioned land.

Up, lad, up, 'tis late for lying:  
Hear the drums of morning play;  
Hark, the empty highways crying  
"Who'll beyond the hills away?"

Towns and countries woo together,  
Forelands beacon, belfries call;  
Never lad that trod on leather  
Lived to feast his heart with all.

Up, lad: thews that lie and cumber  
Sunlit pallets never thrive;  
Morns abed and daylight slumber  
Were not meant for man alive.

Clay lies still, but blood's a rover;  
Breath's a ware that will not keep.  
Up, lad: when the journey's over  
There'll be time enough to sleep.

Graham Peel (1877-1937)

### 4. When the lad for longing sighs (VI),

Mute and dull of cheer and pale,  
If at death's own door he lies,  
Maiden, you can heal his ail.

Lovers' ills are all to buy:  
The wan look, the hollow tone,  
The hung head, the sunken eye,  
You can have them for your own.

Buy them, buy them: eve and morn  
Lovers' ills are all to sell.  
Then you can lie down forlorn;  
But the lover will be well.





Arthur Somervell (1863-1937)

## 5. When I was one-and-twenty (XIII)

I heard a wise man say,  
“Give crowns and pounds and guineas  
But not your heart away;  
Give pearls away and rubies  
But keep your fancy free.”  
But I was one-and-twenty,  
No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty  
I heard him say again,  
“The heart out of the bosom  
Was never given in vain;  
'Tis paid with sighs a plenty  
And sold for endless rue.”  
And I am two-and-twenty,  
And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true.



Arthur Somervell (1863-1937)

**6. On the idle hill of summer (XXXV),**

Sleepy with the flow of streams,  
Far I hear the steady drummer  
Drumming like a noise in dreams.

Far and near and low and louder  
On the roads of earth go by,  
Dear to friends and food for powder,  
Soldiers marching, all to die.

East and west on fields forgotten  
Bleach the bones of comrades slain,  
Lovely lads and dead and rotten;  
None that go return again.

Far the calling bugles hollo,  
High the screaming fife replies,  
Gay the files of scarlet follow:  
Woman bore me, I will rise.

Arthur Somervell (1863-1937)

**7. White in the moon the long road lies (XXXVI),**

The moon stands blank above;  
White in the moon the long road lies  
That leads me from my love.

Still hangs the hedge without a gust,  
Still, still the shadows stay:  
My feet upon the moonlit dust  
Pursue the ceaseless way.

The world is round, so travellers tell,  
And straight though reach the track,  
Trudge on, trudge on, 'twill all be well,  
The way will guide one back.

But ere the circle homeward hies  
Far, far must it remove:  
White in the moon the long road lies  
That leads me from my love.



Arthur Somervell (1863-1937)

## 8. Into my heart an air that kills (XL)

From yon far country blows:

What are those blue remembered hills,  
What spires, what farms are those?

That is the land of lost content,  
I see it shining plain,  
The happy highways where I went  
And cannot come again.





Ashley Thompson (1968)

**9. Along the field as we came by  
(XXVI),**

A year ago, my love and I,  
The aspen over stile and stone  
Was talking to itself alone.  
'Oh who are these that kiss and pass?  
A country lover and his lass;  
Two lovers looking to be wed;  
And time shall put them both to bed,  
But she shall lie with earth above,  
And he beside another love.'

And sure enough beneath the tree  
There walks another love with me,  
And overhead the aspen heaves  
Its rainy-sounding silver leaves;  
And I spell nothing in their stir,  
But now perhaps they speak to her,  
And plain for her to understand  
They talk about a time at hand  
When I shall sleep with clover clad,  
And she beside another lad.

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

**10. With rue my heart is laden (LIV)**

For golden friends I had,  
For many a rose-lipt maiden  
And many a lightfoot lad.

By brooks too broad for leaping  
The lightfoot boys are laid;  
The rose-lipt girls are sleeping  
In fields where roses fade.



George Butterworth (1885-1916)

**11. Loveliest of trees, the cherry now (II)**

Is hung with bloom along the bough,  
And stands about the woodland ride  
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,  
Twenty will not come again,  
And take from seventy springs a score,  
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom  
Fifty springs are little room,  
About the woodlands I will go  
To see the cherry hung with snow.

George Butterworth (1885-1916)

**12. The lads in their hundreds (XXII) 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.





John Ireland (1879-1962)

**13. We'll to the woods no more,**

The laurels all are cut,  
The bowers are bare of bay  
That once the Muses wore;  
The year draws in the day  
And soon will evening shut:  
The laurels all are cut,  
We'll to the woods no more.  
Oh we'll no more, no more  
To the leafy woods away,  
To the high wild woods of laurel  
And the bowers of bay no more



John Ireland (1879-1962)

### 14. The Lent Lily (XXIX)

'Tis spring; come out to ramble  
The hilly brakes around,  
For under thorn and bramble  
About the hollow ground  
The primroses are found.

And there's the windflower chilly  
With all the winds at play,  
And there's the Lenten lily  
That has not long to stay  
And dies on Easter day.

And since till girls go maying  
You find the primrose still,  
And find the windflower playing  
With every wind at will,  
But not the daffodil,

Bring baskets now, and sally  
Upon the spring's array,  
And bear from hill and valley  
The daffodil away  
That dies on Easter day.

John Ireland (1879-1962)

### 15. Ladslove (XV)


Look not in my eyes  
For fear the mirror true the sight I see,  
And there you find your face too clear  
And love it and be lost like me.

One the long nights through must lie  
Spent in star defeated sighs,  
But why should you as well as I perish?  
Gaze not in my eyes.

A Grecian lad a I hear tell,  
One that many loved in vain,  
Looked into a forest well,  
And never looked away again.

There, where the turf in spring time flowers  
With downward eye and gazes sad,  
Stands amid the glancing showers  
A jonquil, not a Grecian lad.





**John Ireland (1879-1962)**

**16. Epilogue (LVII)**

You smile upon your friend today,  
Today his ills are over.  
You hearken to the lover's say,  
And happy is the lover.

'Tis late to hearken,  
Late to smile,  
But better late than never:  
I shall have lived a little while  
Before I die forever.



A portrait of a woman with long, wavy red hair, looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. She is wearing a dark top. The background is a soft, misty landscape with trees and hills.

## THANKS TO

A vertical photograph of a forest. Tall, thin trees with green foliage are visible against a cloudy sky. The lighting is soft, suggesting an overcast day.

Jonathan French for patience and collaboration/Ashley Thompson for my song!/Joseph Ockford for all recording and mastering/Sally Sparrow Photography for the images for the CD and this booklet/Alicia Taylor for the artwork she painstakingly put together/Gareth Howell Videography for promotional videos and artwork/The Royal Birmingham Conservatoire for the use of the Organ Studio that we recorded in, and help with funding through "Dragon's Den"/Amanda Roocroft, Helen Yorke and Robin Bowman for tuition and coaching/Mark Elliott at BBC Radio Shropshire for advice and help with advertising/Wendy Gonsalkorale for help with the launch and use of rehearsal space/Audiences who attended the "Shropshire Lass" recital series in 2019/John & Donna Teague/Friends and family who have offered advice and motivation over the past 12 months!©Holly Teague 2020