

Janet Graham

Cradle Song

Some notes on Gordon Hodgeon and Cradle Song

I first met Gordon in 2010 in the Spine Injury Unit at The Hawthorns, Peterlee, where I was working as music therapist. He was unable to move his limbs and often needed a ventilator to help him breathe. In our first session he told me he liked classical music and that he had sung in a choir. We sang a few traditional folk songs together, but this was an effort for him because of his breathing difficulties. As Gordon was not able to access any of the musical instruments, "mainstream" music therapy was not going to be possible, but music was important to him so I decided to offer him weekly sessions and find a way we could work together. We listened to a wide range of music, talking about it afterwards. We also discussed literature, and I read some poems to him from a book a friend had brought as a present, as he was unable to hold it and turn the pages.

As well as being a well-known and highly respected teacher, teacher trainer and schools advisor in the Teesside area Gordon was a published poet himself, and he seemed frustrated and depressed that his physical disabilities made it impossible for him to be creative. I encouraged him to keep composing poetry and offered to act as his amanuensis. He would hold the first drafts of new poems in his memory until I could write them down from dictation. I typed them up at home and printed them off so that they could be placed in front of him for reading and editing. Later, Gordon was equipped with a voice recognition computer programme and I was able to copy the poems from a memory stick onto his laptop so that he could edit and add to them himself.

Although he often became tired, and had several bouts of illness and hospitalisation, Gordon worked at his new poems and put together a new anthology, *Still Life*, which was launched at The Hawthorns in 2012. Shortly after that he was discharged from The Hawthorns and went to live with one of his daughters and her family. Even after losing the power of speech he continued composing poetry with the help of carers, using a system of eye-blinking to communicate, letter by letter.

He published two more anthologies of poetry before his death in 2016 at the age of 75. Although most of Gordon's poems seem so complete in themselves that they do not lend themselves to musical setting, at my request he listed several which he thought might be suitable, including *Cradle Song*. The poem was written on the birth of his grand-daughter Ferne in 2013. My first setting was for unaccompanied choir and there is also an arrangement for soprano, recorder and piano.

Gordon Hodgeon

for Ferne, born November 2013

Cradle Song

earth be your cradle
earth be my bed
sky be your morning light
sky my old head
sea be your appetite
sea my salt tears
days be your life to come
days my last years

let us be joined for all
the days we share
in our familial line
who went before
who still may come

and when you are grown
and I am gone
earth be your living room
earth my last house

one earth one sky one sea
our only place
one home

Cradle Song is published in *Talking to the Dead*, Smokestack Books 2015

Cradle Song

(Arranged from a setting for unaccompanied choir)

Gordon Hodgeon

Janet Graham

With a slow lilt ♩ = 80

Soprano

Piano

pp *legato e dolce*

Ped legato sempre *Ped* *Ped* *sim*

Detailed description: This block contains the first four measures of the score. The Soprano part is a single line with rests. The Piano part consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) in 6/4 time. The tempo is marked 'With a slow lilt' with a quarter note equal to 80 beats per minute. The piano part begins with a *pp* dynamic and the instruction *legato e dolce*. Pedal markings are present: *Ped legato sempre* under the first two measures, *Ped* under the third, and *Ped sim* under the fourth. Dynamics in the piano part include *pp*, *p*, and *p* with an accent (>).

5

p

earth be your

Detailed description: This block contains measures 5 through 8. The Soprano part has rests in measures 5-7 and then enters in measure 8 with the lyrics 'earth be your'. The piano accompaniment continues with a *p* dynamic. Pedal markings are present under measures 6 and 7.

9

mp *mf*

cra- dle earth be my bed sky be your

Detailed description: This block contains measures 9 through 12. The Soprano part has lyrics 'cra- dle earth be my bed sky be your' across the four measures. The piano accompaniment features dynamics *mp* and *mf*. Pedal markings are present under measures 10 and 11.

13 *mp* *mf*

mor-ning light_ sky my old_ head

17 *p* *mf* *mf*

sea_ be your ap-pe- tite_ sea_ my salt tears

20 *mp* *p*

days be your life to come_ days my last

24 *mp* *mf*

years_ let us be joined for all the days_ we

pp *mp*

Ped Ped Ped Ped sim

28 *p* *pp*

share in our fa - mi - lial line who went be - fore who still may

Ped

33 *p*

come

Ped Ped Ped sim

37 *mp*

and when you are grown and I am gone

mp

41 *mf* *p subito*

earth be your liv - ing room earth my last

mf p subito

Ped

45

house one earth one sky one

pp

p

Ped

49

sea our only place one home

pp

pp

53

rit.

rit.