

'As the very rocks themselves'

PROGRAMME NOTE

On December 12th 1988, four young men from the Hebridean island of Iona were lost at sea on their way back from a dance in the mainland village of Bunessan. Donald Atkinson's text is based on this event and draws on a remarkable piece of journalism by Max MacLeod published in 'The Independent' on December 15th 1988.

The headline of Max MacLeod's article is thus:

'The Lost Sons of Iona'

Hay, Kirkpatrick, Dougal, MacFayden - 'They were as much a part of the island as the very rocks themselves'.

The article ends:

At this moment on Iona the tiny community is suffering a downturn in its fortunes. The school is under threat of closure. The people are suffering from bad seasons in tourism and farming while the price of housing is now equal to that in London. But the community will survive. It will survive because it is built from people like the ones who were lost on Saturday night. Decent, hard working people who are prepared to take a risk. People who love the place. People who deserve our admiration. Let our prayers be with them this Christmas.

'As the very rocks themselves' intended for ambitious amateur choirs like the Hepton Singers and is dedicated to them. During a brief period last year when I stood in for Roger Scaife as director of the Hepton's I found it difficult to find pieces of substantial length around which shorter works might be placed. I have always found concerts comprising of long strings of madrigal length pieces a little tiresome. 'As the very rocks themselves' is an attempt to provide a substantial piece and the running time is around 20 minutes. There is a small but significant spatial element to the work, with some singers placed offstage.

The piece was commissioned by the Hepton Singers with funds made available from Yorkshire and Humberside Arts Association to whom I am grateful.

'As the very rocks themselves'

Iona: 12th December 1998

White Bird

A white bird has flown
from grey hills away;
by the sea-loch, lover
stands dreaming.

A snell wind has blown
from the skerries all day;
of his dark wound the Silkie
lies bleeding.

Their bight faces gone
on the waters astray;
with fulmar and blackback
wheeling.

White bird alone
to the far hills away;
from the sea-loch, tide-water
streaming.

Loose threads of cotton
drawn through a cloud;
the grey goose, the grey-lag
are flying

Against that green island
five fishermen rowed;
in the tide-run, the silver-folk
gleaming.

Frost in the sunlight,
smoke in the air;
flower of the hazel glade
leaving.

Strands of torn linen
drawn through a cloud;
the white swans, the white swans
flying.

Bob Hay, Davy Kirkpatrick,
Ally Dougal, Logie MacFadyen,
do you see *the red boats dancing*
over the Sound of Iona?

Bob Hay, Davy Kirkpatrick,
Ally Dougal, Logie MacFadyen,
do you see *the seagulls prancing*
over the Sound of Iona?

Night

Night: whisper of hoar-frost on the grass,
Over the round hill, the moon-horse shakes a silver hoof.
Stars fall: and the Waggoner's child puts out a hand to catch them.
Wheels creak on the axle-tree, as the earth turns.

The Round Dance at Bunessan

With your girl now,
in the round dance at Bunessan,
this moment take her by the left hand,
then you turn her with the other,
and only that moment, a second perhaps,
before she moves on.

And then you are looking across,
to measure, as she comes round,
how long it will be
before that will happen again.

And now you are looking as well
at those in between,
and pleasant to see how some of them,
old or young, are beautiful too,
whose hands you will take in passing
as they come round.

And now you are thinking,
if you could break the chain
and draw her, when she comes round, to the centre,
if you could hold her there, as the dance goes round,
then the moment would last for ever,
lovely sound of Iona - lonely sound of Iona
but the others won't let you.

Under the Moon

Under the moon the small boat dances
 over the Sound of Iona.
Under the moon the bright wave dances
 over the Sound of Iona.

And the five men shout as they go,
 they sing,
 at the plunging stars,
 at the swung moon.

Till clouds darken,
 the flung squall blinds them,
and a freak wave tumbles the boat
 like Leviathan,

A young girl howls in a caravan.
 On the rocks a blue kagoul.

*They say the sea forgives,
but the rocks are merciless.*

Fa'doon

Boats on the lee shore, but gone are the fisherman,
 away from the island, away from the green holm.
 Silent the keel-row, the songs would sing there,
the girls and the men, who laughed as they worked so hard.

Fa'doon is the great house, a door left ajar there,
 Fa'doon is the place for an old man alone now.
There where the grass grows, through the stones of the yard,
 there went my girl, with a song for the milking.

Lost is that tall ship, with her sails in the white clouds.
 Lost is the snow-goose, that swam on the grey loch.
 Dulled is the gold gleam on the scales of the herring.
The gulls will have oil for a shroud, when the tide turns.

Down-fallen the stone wall, in the ben of the blacksmith.
 The fire is gone out now, gone out, and the hearth cold.
 Broken the mill wheel, by the rush of the burn.
And broken the wings of the swan, on the bright wire.

As the very rocks themselves

White Bird

Paul Robinson/text by Donald Atkinson

♩ = 55 but with flexibility

Musical score for the first system of 'White Bird'. It features five staves: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Piano. The Soprano and Alto parts have lyrics: 'White bird has flown from grey hills a - way a - way A' and 'by the sea-loch lov - er stands dream - ing dream - ing'. The Tenor and Bass parts have lyrics: 'White Bird White' and 'White Bird White'. The Piano part has a dynamic marking of *mp*. The score includes triplets and a *rall* tempo marking.

Musical score for the second system of 'White Bird', starting at measure 6. It features five staves: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Piano. The Soprano part has lyrics: 'snell wind has blown from the skerr - ies all day all - day their bright'. The Alto part has lyrics: 'of his dark wound Sil - kie lies bleed - ing'. The Tenor and Bass parts have lyrics: 'Bird White' and 'Bird White'. The Piano part has a dynamic marking of *mp*. The score includes triplets and a *rall* tempo marking.

11

S. fa - ces gone on the wa - ter as - tray *White ff*

A. *White* Bird ful - mar and black - back wheeling wheel - ing *White ff*

T. Bird White Bird *White ff*

B. Bird White Bird *White ff*

Pno

14

S. Bird White Bird Streaming Stream - ing *mp*

A. Bird all a - lone to the far hills a - way *mp* Streaming Stream - ing

T. Bird White Bird from the sea - loch tide wa - ter stream - ing *mp*

B. Bird White Bird from the sea - loch tide wa - ter stream - ing *mp*

Pno

19 *rhythmically and light*

S. *mp*

A. *mp*

T. *mp*

B. *mp*

Pno *mp*

a white bird has flown from grey hills far a-way

white bird

white bird

24

S. *mp*

A. *mp*

T. *mp*

B. *mp*

Pno *mp*

by the sea-loch lo-ver stars dream-ing

by the sea-loch dream-ing

white bird has flown a-way by the sea-loch dream-ing a

white bird has flown a-way by the sea-loch dream-ing (mm)

29

S. *mp*

A. *mp*

T. *mp*

B. *mp*

Pno *mp*

from the skerr-ies all day

from the skerr-ies all day

snell wind has blown from the skerr-ies all day all day

from the skerr-ies all day of his dark wound the

34

S. *f* of his dark wound the Sil-kie lies

A. *f* of his dark wound the Sil-kie lies bleed - ing bleed - ing

T. *f* of his dark wound the Sil-kie lies bleed - ing bleed - ing

B. Silkie lies bleed - ing bleed - ing

Pno

39

S. bleed - ing the grey goose the grey lag are flying

A. loose threads of cott-on drawn through a cloud strands of torn lin-en drawn

T. bleed - ing the grey lag are fly - ing

B. bleed - ing grey lag are fly - ing

Pno

43

S.  the white swans the white swans are fly-ing their bright fa-ces gone

A.  through a cloud are flying fly-ing

T.  the white swans are fly-ing fly-ing fly-ing

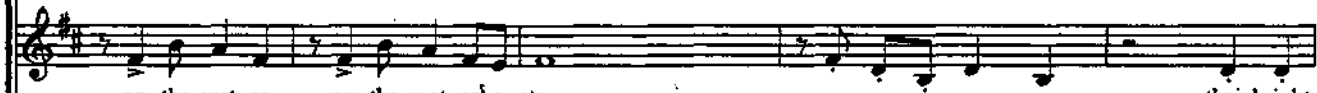
B.  white swans are fly-ing are fly-ing

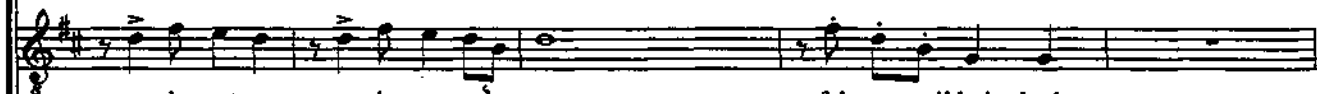
Pno 

Preview File Only

47

S.  with ful-mar and black-back wheel-ing

A.  on the wat-er on the wat-er' a-stray ful-mar and black-back their bright

T.  on the wat-er on the wat-er' a-stray ful-mar and black-back

B.  on the wat-er on the wat-er' a-stray on the wa-ter on the wa-ter a-stray

Pno 

52

S. wheel-ing wheel-ing wheel-ing

A. fa - ces gone on the wa - ter a - stray a - stray

T. wheel-ing wheel-ing wheel-ing

B. wheel-ing wheel-ing wheel-ing

Pno wheel-ing

♩ = 70

59

S. white bird a - lone to the far hills a - way by the sea - loch

A. white bird a - lone to the far hills a - way by the sea - loch

T. white bird a - lone to the far hills a - way by the sea - loch tide wa - ter

B. white bird a - lone to the far hills a - way by the sea - loch

Pno

66

S. stream - ing (mm) a

A. stream - ing (mm)

T. stream - ing *mp* on the wa - ter and in the tide run by the sea - loch tide wa - ter stream - ing

B. stream - ing *mp* on the wa - ter and in the tide run by the sea - loch tide wa - ter stream - ing

Pno *mp* *mp*

71

S. white bird has flown from grey hills far a - way a

A. white bird white bird has flown on the wa - ter white bird

T. on the wa - ter and in the tide run by the sea - loch tide wa ter stream ing

B. on the wa - ter and in the tide run by the sea - loch tide wa ter stream ing

Pno *mp*

75

S. white bird has flown from grey hills a-way a

A. has flown a-way white bird white bird white

T. on the wa - ter and in the tide run by the sea-loch tide wa - ter stream - ing

B. on the wa - ter and in the tide run by the sea-loch tide wa - ter stream - ing

Pno

mp

79

S. white bird has flown from grey hills far a way a-against that green is - land

A. bird a whitebird has flown from grey hills far a way a -

T. white bird has flown a-way has flown from grey hills a-way

B. white bird has flown a-way has flown from grey

Pno

83

S. five fish-er-men row-ing in the tide run sil-ver folk gleam - ing

A. gainst that green is - land five fishermen row ing in the tide run

T. a - gainst that green is - land five fish-er-men row - ing in the tide run

B. hills a - way a - way a - gainst that green is - land five fish-er-men row - ing

Pno

87

S. frost in the sun - light smoke in the air — flower of the haz - el glade

A. sil-ver folk gleam - ing frost in the sun light smoke in the air

T. in the tide run sil-ver folk gleam - ing frost in the sun - light

B. in the tide run in the tide run gleaming frost in the sun - light

Pno

91

S. leav - ing a white bird has flown from grey hills far a way

A. flower of the haz el glade leav - ing a white bird has flown from grey hills far a way

T. smoke in the air flower of the ha - zel glade leav - ing leave - ing

B. smoke in the air flower of the ha - zel glade leav - ing leave - ing

Pno

95

S. Log - ie Mac Fay - den do you see the
All - y Dou - gal do you see the

A. Da - vy Kirk - pat - rick do you see the
Bob Hay do you see the

T. to the grey hills far a - way to the grey hills far a way to the grey hills
mf

B. to the grey hills far a - way to the grey hills far a way to the grey hills
mf

Pno

100 3 offstage sopranos

S. *mf* ov - er the sound of i - o - na

A. red boats dan - cing

T. far a way to the grey hills far a way to the grey hills far a way

B. far a way to the grey hills far a way to the grey hills far a way

Pno *f* Bob

105 3 offstage sopranos

S. *mf* ov - er the sound of i -

group one group two tutti

A. *f* All y Dou - gal Log - ieMac Fayden do you see the sea - gulls pran - cing

T. Hay do you see the sea - gulls pran - cing

B. to the grey hills far a way to the grey hills far a way to the grey hills

Pno

110 3 offstage sopranos

S. *-o na*

T. far a way to the greyhills far a way to the greyhills far a way

B. a - way a - way

Pno



$\text{♩} = 55$

Night

115 2 offstage sopranos *Serenely*

S. *Whis-per of hoar frost on the grass sil-ver*

A. *ov-er the round hill the moon horse shakes a sil-ver*

T. *mp Night*

B. *mp Night*

Pno Bell (otional)

120

2 offstage sopranos

S. *p* stars fall stars fall

A. hoof wagg-on-er's child puts out a hand to
hoof and the wagg-on-er's child puts out a hand to

T. Night Night

B. Night Night

Pno

123

2 offstage sopranos

S. *p* stars fall stars fall stars fall stars fall

A. catch them wheels creak on the ax-le tree as the Earth turns
catch them catch them Earth turns

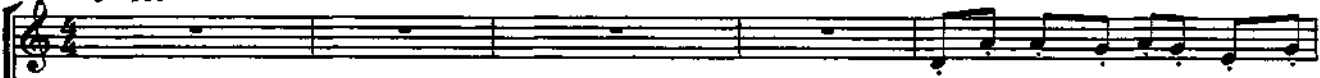
T. Night Night Earth turns

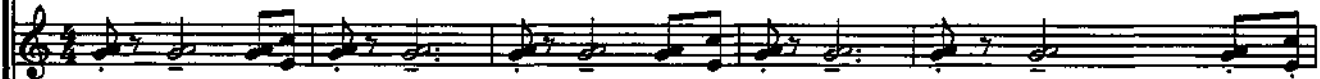
B. Night Night Earth turns


Pno


The Round Dance at Buinessan

127 $\text{♩} = 110$

A.  with your girl now in the round dance

T.  Round Dance in the Round Dance Round Dance with your girl now Round Dance in the

B. *mf*  Round Dance in the Round Dance Round Dance with your girl now Round Dance in the

Pno 

Preview File Only

132

A.  at Bu-ne-ssan this mom-ent take her by the left hand and the

T.  Round Dance Round Dance with your girl now Round Dance in the Round Dance

B.  Round Dance Round Dance with your girl now Round Dance in the Round Dance

Pno 

137

S.

A. next you turn her with the other Round Dance Round Dance with your girl now

T. Round Dance with your girl now Round Dance in the Round Dance Round Dance with your girl now

B. Round Dance with your girl now Round Dance in the Round Dance

Pno



143

S. with your girl now in the round dance at Bu-ne-ssan this

A. Round Dance in the Round Dance Round Dance with your girl now

T. Round Dance in the Round Dance Round Dance with your girl now

B.

Pno

Preview File Only

147

S. *mom - ent take her by the left hand... and the next you turn her with the oth - er*

A. *Round Dance in the Round Dance on -*

T. *Round Dance in the Round Dance on -*

Pno



Staccato - with suppressed anticipation

150

S. *on - ly this ^{that} mom - ent a sec - ond per - haps on - ly this mom - ^{that}*

A. *-ly that mom - ent a sec - ond per - haps on - ly that mom - ent a*

T. *-ly that mom - ent on - ly that mom - ent a sec - ond per - haps on - ly that mom - ent a*

Pno

153

S. ent a sec-ond per-haps be-fore she moves on

A. sec-ond per-haps be-fore she moves on moves on

T. sec-ond per - haps be-fore she moves on moves on *solo* with your girl now ⁱⁿ the round dance

B. will she come

Pno

Preview File Only

158

S.

A. will she come round will she come round in the round dance will she come

T. at ⁱⁿ Bun - e - ssan this_ mom - ent take her by the left hand.

B. round will she come round in the round dance will she come round

Pno

161

S. will she come round will she come

A. round will she come round with your girl now

T. and the next you turn her with the oth - er with your girl now

B. will she come round will she come round with your girl now at the round dance

Pno



164

S. round will she comeround will she come round will she come

A. with your girl now with your girl now with your girl now

T. with your girl now with your girl now with your girl now

B. at Bun - e - ssan this moment take her by the left hand.

Pno

167

S. round will she come round will she come round

A. with your girl now with your girl now will she come

T. with your girl now with your girl now

B. — and the next you turn her with the oth-er will she come

Pno

170

S. will she come round

A. round will she come round and

T. will she come round and

B. round will she come round will she come

Pno

173 Staccato - with suppressed anticipation

S. *mf* and then you're look ing a - cross to mea - sure as she comes round

A. *mf* then you're look - ing a - cross to mea - sure as she comes a - round how

T. *mf* then you're look - ing a - cross to mea - sure a - cross to mea - sure as she comes round

B. *mf* round then you're look - ing a - cross to mea - sure

Pno

176

S. how long it will be be - fore that will happen a - gain

A. long it will be be - fore that will hap - pen a - gain a - gain

T. how long it will be be - fore that will hap - pen a - gain a - gain

B. as she comes round

Pno

180

S. *mf* with your girl now in the round dance at Bu - ne - ssan this mom - ent take her by her left hand

A. *mf* with your girl now in the round dance at Bu - ne - ssan take her by her

T. *mf* with your girl now in the round dance at Bu - ne - ssan this

B.

Pno

183

S. and the next you turn her with the oth - er turn her with your girl now

A. left hand and the next you turn her with the oth - er with your girl

T. mom - ent take her by her lefthand and the next you turn her with the oth - er with

B. with your girl

Pno

186

S. *with your girl now with your girl now with your girl now*

A. *now with your girl now with your girl now with your girl*

T. *your girl now with your girl now with your girl now with*

B. *now with your girl now with your girl now with your girl*

Pno



189

S. *with your girl now with your girl now with your girl now*

A. *now with your girl now with your girl now with your girl*

T. *your girl now with your girl now with your girl now with*

B. *now with your girl now with your girl now with your girl*

Pno

192

S. with your girl now this moment take her by the left hand *mf* and

A. now and with your girl now *subp* and the next you turn her by the oth - er

T. your girl now girl now *subp* and the next you turn her by the oth - er

B. now and with your girl now *subp* and the next you turn her by the oth - er

Pno

195 Staccato - with suppressed anticipation

S. now you're look - ing as well at those in be - tween and pleas - ant to see how

A. *mf* and now you are look - ing as well at those in be - tween

T. *mf* and now you're look - ing as well at those in be - tween and pleas - ant to see

B. *mf* and now you're look - ing as well at

Pno

198

S. some of them old or young are beau - ti - ful too whose hands you will take in

A. and pleas - ant to see beau ti ful too whose

T. how some of them old or young are beau - ti - ful too whose hands you will take

B. those in be - tween old or young are beau - ti - ful too

Pno

202

S. pass - ing as they come round as they come round as they

A. hands you will take in pass - ing as they come round

T. in pass - ing as they come round as they come round as they

B. whose hands you will take in pass - ing as they

Pno

206

S. come round *f* and now you're think-ing if you could

A. and now you're think-ing
mf

T. come round *mf* and now you're think-ing

B. come round *mf* and now you're think-ing

Pno

211

S. break the chain and draw her when she comes round round to the cen-tre if
in

A. and now you're thinking and now you're think - ing

T. and now you're thinking and now you're think - ing

B. and now you're thinking and now you're think - ing

Pno

215

S. *you could hold her there as the dance goes round then the moment would*

A. *could hold her there the dance goes round*

T. *could hold her there the dance goes round*

B. *could hold her there*

Pno

219

cresc piu a piu

S. *last for ev - er mp mp lov - ely sound of*

A. *for - ev - er mp for - ev - er*

T. *but they won't let you mp they won't let you they won't let you they won't let you*

B. *but they won't let you mp but they won't let you mp you but they won't let you*

Pno

224

S. I - o - na lon - e - ly sound of I - o - na

A. for - ev - er for - ev - er
they won't let you they won't let you they won't let you

T. with your girl now at the round dance at Bun - e - ssan this

B. but they won't let you but they won't

Pno



227

S. lov - e - ly sound of I - o - na lon - e - ly sound of I - o - na *ff*

A. for - ev - er
they won't let you they won't let you they won't let you they won't let you

T. mom - ent take her by the left hand and then next you turn her with the other but they won't let you

B. let you but they won't let you but they won't

Pno

231

S. with your girl now in the round dance with your girl now

A. with your girl now in the round dance with your girl now
with your girl now in the round dance with your girl now

T. but they won't let you but they won't let you but they won't let you

B. let you but they won't let you but they won't let you but they won't

Pno

234

S. in the dance the round dance
sub p

A. in the dance the round dance *p* at bu - ne - ssan
(mm)

T. in the dance the round dance
sub p
(mm)

B. let you the round dance
(mm)

Pno

Under the Moon

242 $\text{♩} = 48$

S. un-der the moon the small boat dan-ces ov-er the Sound of I - o - na un-der the moon the
p

A. un-der the moon the small boat dan-ces ov-er the Sound of I - o - na un-der the moon the
p

T. un-der the moon the small boat dan-ces ov-er the Sound of I - o - na un-der the moon the
p

B. un-der the moon the small boat dan-ces ov-er the Sound of I - o - na un-der the moon the
p

bell (optional) *p*

Pno

249

S. bright wave dan-ces ov er the Sound of I - o - na and the five men shout as they go they sing at the

A. bright wave dan-ces ov er the Sound of I - o - na and the five men shout they sing at the

T. bright wave dan-ces ov er the Sound of I - o - na and the five men shout as they go they sing at the

B. bright wave dan-ces ov er the Sound of I - o - na and the five men shout they sing at the

Pno

255

S. *plung-ing moon* *stars* at the swung moon till clouds dark-en the flung-squall blinds them.

A. *plung-ing moon* *stars* swung moon till clouds dark-en the flung-squall blinds them.

T. *plung-ing moon* *stars* at the swung moon till clouds dark-en the flung-squall blinds them.

B. *plung-ing moon* *stars* swung moon till clouds dark-en the flung-squall blinds them.

Pno

262

S. — and a freak wave tum bles the boat like a Lev - i a - than *ff*

A. — and a freak wave tum bles the boat like a Lev - i a - than *ff*

T. — and a freak wave tum bles the boat like a Lev - i a - than *ff*

B. — and a freak wave tum bles the boat like a Lev - i a - than *ff*

Pno

[bell (optional)]

267

2 offstage sopranos

S. *mf* Oh! Oh!

A. *f* a young girl howls in a cara-van

T. *mf* un-der the moon

B. *mf* un-der the moon

Pno



Preview File Only

270

2 offstage sopranos

S. Oh! Oh! *mf* butthey

A. on the rocks on the rocks a blue Ka-goul *mf* butthey

T. un-der the moon un-derthe moon

B. un-der the moon un-derthe moon

Pno

274

S. say that the sea for - gives that the sea for - gives

A. say that the sea for - gives that the sea for - gives ah but the rocks are

T. un - der the moon un - der the moon

B. un - der the moon un - der the moon

Pno

276

2 offstage sopranos

S. the sea for - gives

but the sea for - gives

A. merci - less

T. but the sea for - gives

B. but the sea for - gives

Pno

Fa'doon

278

$\text{♩} = 95$ Hymn like

B.

boats on the lee shore but gone are the fishermen a-way from the is-land a-way from the
mf

Bell (optional)

Pno

286

legato

S.

si-lent the keel row the songs they would sing there the girls and the men who laughed as
mf

A.

si-lent the keel row the songs they would sing there girls and the men who laughed
mf

T.

si-lent the keel row the songs they would sing there girls and the men who laughed
mf

B.

green holm si-lent the keel row the songs they would sing there girls and the men who laughed
mf

Pno

293

S. they worked so hard

A. they worked so hard

T. they worked so hard Fa' doon is the great house a door left a - jar there Fa' doon is the place for an

B. they worked so hard

Pno

301

S. there where the grass grows through stones of the yard there went my girl with a

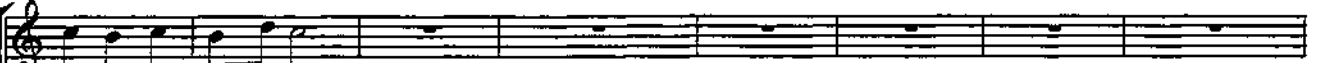
A. there where the grass grows through stones of the yard there went my girl with a


T. old man a - lone now there where the grass grows through stones in the yard there went my girl with a


B. there where the grass grows through stones in the yard there went my girl with a


Pno


309

S.  song for the mil - king

A.  song for the mil - king lost is that tall ship with her sails in the white clouds lost is the snow goose that

T.  song for the mil - king

B.  song for the mil - king

Pno 



317

S.  duded is the gold gleam on the scales of the herr - ing the gulls will have oil for a

A.  swam on the grey loch duded is the gold gleam scales of the herr - ing gulls will have oil for a

T.  duded is the gold gleam scales of the herr - ing gulls will have oil for a

B.  duded is the gold gleam scales of the herr - ing gulls will have oil a

Pno 

325

S. shroud when the tide turns downfall-en the stone wall in the ben of the blacksmith the fire is gone out now gone

A. shroud when the tide turns

T. shroud when the tide turns

B. shroud when the tide turns

Pno

333

S. out and the hearth cold bro-ken the mill wheel by the rush of the burn and bro - ken the wings of the

A. bro - ken the mill wheel rush of the burn bro - ken the wings of the

T. bro - ken the mill wheel rush of the burn bro - ken the wings of the

B. bro - ken the mill wheel rush of the burn bro - ken the wings of the

Pno

341

1 or 2 offstage sopranos

S. *Rall*
bright wire bright wire

A. *Rall*
swan on the brightwire brightwire

T. *Rall*
swan on the brightwire brightwire

B. *Rall*
swan on the brightwire brightwire

Pno

Preview File Only