

Four Sonnets of John Clare (2002)

- 1. Fame**
- 2. The Death of Beauty**
- 3. Memory**
- 4. The Shepherd's Tree**

The *Four Sonnets of John Clare* were completed in April of this year and commissioned by Wigmore Hall, with funds made available by the Ralph Vaughan Williams Trust. The set was written specially for Sir Thomas Allen and Graham Johnson, who gave its premiere on the 16th July 2002 at London's Wigmore Hall. The work was dedicated to William Lyne.

All four sonnets reflect on different aspects of Clare's human experience: the transience of worldly renown, the loss of inspiration, a fear of neglect in death and a love of the numinous in nature.

The music seeks to match Clare's poetic gestures with clarity and economy. In *Fame*, once Clare's initial question is posed, a cumulative harmonic sequence builds to the sonnet's almost bitter conclusion, while in *The Death of Beauty* a fleeting musical texture matches Clare's elusive vision of a world without inspiration. *Memory* is the most substantial song of the set and the most human, its music breaking out from sinewy chromatic lines for its tender close. *The Shepherd's Tree* returns us to the fleeting world of the earlier songs, moving from muscular phrases to lyrical fragments as Clare fixes on the haunting transience of nature's music – a fitting close for the whole set.

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John Clare (1793-1864)

I. Fame

dedicated to William Lyne, MBE

Julian Philips (2002)

Slow, rhetorical
h = 40

Ritenuito

Baritone

f What's fu - ture_ fame?

Piano

f *sempre marcato*

Ped.

Rhythmic, with movement

3 q = 100

Bar.

mf A me-lo- dy_ loud play- ing_ In crowds where one is wan- ting,_ whose es - tee - ming Would

Pno.

mf

6

Bar.

love to hear it best; a sun dis - play - ing A so - li - ta - ry glo - ry, whose

Pno.

9

Bar. *subito p*
 — bright bea - ming, *subito p* Smi - ling on wi - thered leaves and flo - wers de - cay - ing

Pno. *subito p*

11

Bar. *mp* Lin - gers be - hind its world; *mf* a crown vain glea - ming A - round a *mp* shade whose sub - stance

Pno. *mp* *mf* *mp*

14

Bar. death hath ba - nished; *subito mf* A li - ving dream o'er which *mp* hope — once was

Pno. *p* *subito mf* *mp*

17

Bar. *p* drea - ming; *mf* A bu - sy e - cho *mp* on each lip de -

Pno. *p* *mf* *perky* *mp*



20

Bar. lay - ing, *p* When he *mp* that woke it in - to *mf* life is -

Pno. *p* *mp* *mf*



23

rall. **A tempo (q = 100)**

Bar. vanished; *f* A pic - ture that from all hearts -

Pno. *mf* *p* *f*

26

Bar. *—* praise is stea - ling; A sta - tue to - we - ring o - ver glo - ry's

Pno.



rall.

29

Bar. game, *p* That *poco a poco cresc* can - not feel, *mp* when he *mf* that was all fee - ling *mf* Is

Pno. *p poco a poco cresc mp*

Ped.



Molto rubato

32

Bar. past, *f* and *ff* gone, *ff* and no - thing but a

Pno. *mf f ff full tone*

Ped.

Tempo primo

h = 40

34

Bar.

Ritenuato

A tempo

name. _____

Pno.

sempre marcato f

ff

f

Ped.

Preview File Only

II. The Death of Beauty

John Clare (1793-1864)

Julian Philips (2002)

Fast and airy
q = 132

sempre p e leggiero

Baritone

p Now_ thou art gone, the fai - ry rose is fled, ___ That erst gay Fan - cy's

Piano

pp *sempre p e leggiero*



4

Bar.

gar - den did a - dorn. ___ *mp* Thine was the dew on which her fol-ly fed, ___ *p* The sun

Pno.

mp *p*



8

Bar.

by which she gli - ttered in the morn. ___ *mp* Now thou art

Pno.

p *p* *mp*

11

Bar. *piu legato*
gone, her pride is wi-thered; In dress of com-mon weeds she doth ar-ray, And

Pno. *legato (inner line)*

14

Bar. *poco piu f*
va-ni-ty— ne-glects her in its play.

Pno. *poco piu f marcato* *mf* *mp*

Slower and more thoughtful

17

Bar. *q = 88*
< q. = q > *p* Thou wert the ve-ry— in - dex of her praise, *mp* her

Pno. *p* *pp* *p* *mp*

rit. - - A tempo q = 132

20

Bar. *pp* Like dan- cing *playful*

Pno. *p* *pp* *mp playful* *pp*



24

Bar. *p* in- sects which the sun allures, *mp* She li- ttle hee - ded it was gained from thee.

Pno. *p* *mp*



A little slower

28

Bar. *mf* Vain joys! What are they now their sun's a - way?

Pno. *mf* Ped.

Still slower

31 *sotto voce*

Bar. *p* What but poor sha - dows that blank

Pno. *p dolce*



rall.

Now slower and more thoughtful

q = 88

34

Bar. *pp* night ob - scures, *p* As the grave *mp* hides what

Pno. *pp* *p* *mp*



poco rit.

37

Bar. *p* would dis - ho - noured *p* be?

Pno. *p* *mf* *p*

III. Memory

John Clare (1793-1864)

Julian Philips (2002)

Slow and brooding

q = 40

Baritone

p I would not that my being all should die *pp* And pass a-way with *p*

Piano

p legato *pp* *p*



4

Bar.

e - v'ry com - mon lot; *p* I would not that my hum - ble

Pno.

pp *p*



6

Bar.

dust should lie In quite a strange and un - fre - quen - ted spot,

Pno.

mp *mp piu marcato*

8va

2do