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## MADRIGALI DELL'ESTATE

Music for voice by Stephen McNeff  
sung by Clare McCaldin



### **O DUO** Owen Gunnell and Oliver Cox

This virtuosic percussion duo feature Stephen McNeff's "Baristas" on their debut recording, alongside works by Chopin, Back, Miki, Joliffe, Poulenc and more.

"So stylish are O Duo's performances, so kaleidoscopic the colours and so invigorating the rhythms..."  
*The Daily Telegraph*, CD of the Week

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*Classical Music Magazine*

# MADRIGALI DELL'ESTATE

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1	Implorazione	3'24	13
2	La sabbia del Tempo	2'13	14
3	L'orma	2'55	15
4	All'alba	3'44	16
5	A mezzodì	2'41	
6	In sul vespero	1'28	
7	L'incanto circeo	3'34	17
8	Il vento scrive	2'40	18
9	Le lampade marine	3'16	19
10	Nella belletta	3'34	
11	L'uva greca	3'28	
12	<b>FARFALLE DI NEVE</b>	7'01	

## A VOICE OF ONE DELIGHT

Part 1 - Livorno (1)	6'57
Part 2 - Livorno (2)	5'40
Part 3 - Lerici	2'46
Part 4 - Via Reggio	7'50

## THREE ABRUZZO FOLK SONGS

Lu Sant'Antonie	2'45
Tutte li fundanelle	1'51
La fija me	3'27

*Total playing time: 71'16*

With special thanks to:

Paula Anglin, Giuliana Pieri, Daniele Guerra, Cristina d'Eramo and family, Concetta Sirolli, Lindy Tennent-Brown, Emanuele Moris, RVW Trust, Finzi Trust, John Sunderland and George Shishkovsky.

Produced by Michael Ponder

Engineered by Michael Ponder

Edited by Jennifer Howells

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Executive Producer for Champs Hill Records: Alexander Van Ingen

Label Manager for Champs Hill Records: John Dickinson

## COMPOSER'S NOTE

I started visiting Italy regularly in 2004 and have since been fortunate to make it something of a second home for part of the year. I become familiar with some of the many byways and came across the relatively undiscovered Abruzzo region – which at first sight seemed like an untouristic Tuscany with its hill towns and mountains. Abruzzo is actually rather more rugged – some parts almost deserted – and the Apennine mountains dominate the landscape as they reach within 30 miles of the Adriatic coast. I then came across the Abruzzo-born poet, Gabriele d'Annunzio. He was one of Italy's bad boys; lover of actress Eleonora Duse, a collaborator with Debussy and librettist for Mascagni. Also sometime rival of Mussolini (who very probably tried to have him assassinated).

Clare McCaldin had asked me to write something for her to premiere at a Royal Opera House recital and I set short extracts from d'Annunzio's poems *Undulna* and *Psiche Giacente*, which I called *Farfalle di Neve*. I wanted to set them in Italian, partly as an exercise, but more importantly because the language seemed both natural and strangely exotic. Clare and I discovered a shared interest in d'Annunzio's poetry - even though his personal life was farcical and his politics repellent - and we next tackled the rather more ambitious Madrigali dell'Estate poems for another ROH recital. With the help of Italian coach Maria Cleva, I had a verbatim rendition to listen to as I set the poems, initially in Italy and finished in London.

The success of these settings encouraged us to continue the Italian theme, so when the Presteigne Festival commissioned me to write a new work for Clare's residency in 2010 we explored a slightly different angle, this time in English. We created a monodrama about the last days of the poet Shelley, his infatuation with Jane Williams, and his drowning at Livorno.

To round-off the Italian cycle I returned to Abruzzo to write some new settings of traditional folk songs in dialect. I'm indebted to my friends in Italy for their help with this, particularly Cristina d'Eramo – who not only read the texts for me in the Abruzzese dialect, but encouraged her grandmother to sing for me. I have dedicated the Folk Songs to this wonderful woman, Concetta Sirolli, who embodied both the humour and fortitude of the people in the hill towns and who, sadly, died a few weeks after I heard her sing.

*Stephen McNeff, composer*

The works on this CD are fruitful examples of the artistry of a performer provided inspiration for a composer – in this instance the mezzo-soprano Clare McCaldin and composer Stephen McNeff. Their collaboration arose in part too through their shared interest in the Italian poet Gabriele d'Annunzio: *Madrigale dell'Estate*, is an ambitious song cycle setting of eleven of his poems (drawn from a selection from the collection *Alcyone*), which McCaldin commissioned with the support of the RVW Trust. McNeff dedicated the work to her and, together with the pianist Lindy Tennent-Brown gave the premiere at the Royal Opera House, on 2 November 2009.

For McNeff the poems offered 'a very strong series of images which are also highly allusive, hinting of some strange and distant encounter in the steamy last days of summer, combining pin-sharp observation of natural detail with fantastic symbolism and erotic undertones'. They also 'provided an ideal starting place to write a work that showed off every facet of McCaldin's voice ranging from the airy florid upper register of *La sabbia del Tempo*, to the dramatic chest register utterances in songs like *Nella belletta*'.

The sense of a journey characterises many of McNeff's works, as is apparent here with the songs reflecting the passage of the 'slow passing and death of summer', through a division into a three-part narrative comprising poems 1-4, 5-8 and 9-11. 'Implorazione' ('Supplication') has the character of an introduction establishing the summery mood, before fears are voiced in 'La sabbia del Tempo' ('The sands of Time'), and an uneasy encounter experienced in 'L'oma' ('The footprint'). With 'All'Alba' ('At dawn'), the poems start another journey, that of the day, through 'A mezzodi' ('At midday') with its nymph and hot summer rain, to 'In sul vespero' ('Towards evening'). 'L'incanto Circeo' ('Circean Enchantment') is a transitional voyage before 'Il vento scrive' portrays the wind writing on sand, and a descent into the luminous depths follows in 'Le lampade marine' ('Sea-lanterns'). 'Nella belletta' ('In the slime') dwells on the stench of decay, which is offset by the final consolatory 'Luva greca' ('The Grecian grape') and its evocation of a distant Greece.

McNeff provides many memorable music images in the work, from the wistful rocking to and fro idea on the piano almost at the very opening of the work, which recurs as a tender envoi in the final settings, to the impassioned, melismatic vocal line of 'Il vento scrive', and from 'Nella belletta' where the music almost reeks of decay and death like a strange *danse macabre*, to the quality of enchantment that suffuses the lyrical melodic outpouring of 'L'incanto Circeo'.

Although Clare McCaldin had performed in other McNeff works, in particular *Names of the Dead* at the Battersea Arts Centre in 2004, *Farfalle di Neve* was the first of his works composed specifically with her voice in mind. It was written, he comments, partly 'as a challenge to set something in Italian, as well as to show off Clare McCaldin's voice. Clare – who speaks the language herself – commissioned it for a recital at the Royal Opera house where we were fortunate to have the resources of the ROH Italian coach and Italian speaking colleagues. It was also our first encounter with d'Annunzio and I was fascinated by the colour and atmosphere of his words.' Scored for mezzo and string trio, it sets two d'Annunzio fragments from *Undulna* and *Pische Giacente* respectively and was first performed on 30 April 2007 at the Royal Opera House by Clare McCaldin, with members of the Royal Opera House Orchestra – Jake Rea, violin, John Lovell, viola, and Naomi Williams, cello.

The McCaldin/McNeff partnership continued when there was the opportunity for the composer to write her a new piece when she was a resident artist at the 2010 Presteigne Festival. Rather than choose more Italian settings, they opted for English texts by the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, but still with connections to Italy as the work dealt with the poet's death by drowning off the coast of Livorno.

McNeff writes that 'The death of Shelley had fascinated me for some time, not just because of the strange circumstances, but also because the odd collection of characters linked to it suggested a narrative which – although imagined – seemed very clear. Designed as a dramatic monologue where Jane Williams (Shelley's *inamorata* in his last months) retells the story of the last hours, it presented rich

## ARTIST'S NOTE

possibilities in combining quasi recitative and spoken narration with lyrical reflection based on the late poems. Again, this allowed a range of colours and textures, but now with the addition of a small flexible ensemble of flute, viola and harp'. Also important in the conception was the painting by Louis Edouard Fournier *The Funeral of Shelley*.

The premiere of *A Voice of One Delight* took place on 29 August at St Michael's Church, Discoed, when, apart from Clare McCaldin the performers were Kathryn Thomas (flute), Sarah-Jane Bradley (viola) and Suzanne Willison-Kawalec (harp). The work reveals McNeff's natural theatrical flair, and is conceived as an extended scena, which combines vocal settings of Shelley's poems with the spoken description (also performed by the singer) underscored by the ensemble in the manner of traditional melodrama.

During the work's four sections McNeff responds fervently to the subtle ebb and flow of emotions and images within both Shelley's ardent poems, and Jane Williams's harrowing descriptions of the discovery of the washed-up bodies of Shelley and her husband, and their almost ritualistic cremation on the beach. Particularly poignant are the closing pages, where the instruments conjure the 'glisten and quiver' of the yellow flame of the funeral pyre and the mezzo's intensely lyrical melody is a heart-breaking loss.

McNeff composed the 'Three Abruzzo Folk Songs' for Clare McCaldin in 2012, as a *coda* to the Italian settings on this disc. He comments that 'Dialect is still spoken in the hill towns of d'Annunzio's home region of Abruzzo. Away from the main piazza I once came across a family group sitting outdoors after dark on a summer evening – children asleep with grandmothers – gently singing. I wanted to capture this simplicity in the *Folk Songs*. They are not based on any tunes in particular but are my own reflections on the music of the region.' These songs, as with all the works on this CD, demonstrate a composer fluently and confidently in command of his skills to express complex emotional states through the medium of the human voice.

Andrew Burn

Percy Bysshe Shelley was a social and political radical who, despite being philosophically opposed to marriage, twice found himself at the altar. His second wife was Mary Godwin (who later wrote *Frankenstein*) and although they remained together until his death, he had emotional entanglements with other women, inspiring some of his most powerful love-poetry.

Censured by mainstream English society because of their behaviour and his atheism, the Shelleys set up home in Italy as one of a group of exiles, frequently moving house to escape opprobrium, disagreements, creditors or simply to seek new experiences. The core members of this group, sometimes referred to as the 'Pisan Circle', were Shelley and Mary; Edward Williams and his common-law wife Jane; Lord Byron; and Edward John Trelawny, an adventurer who attached himself to the group and wrote profitable memoirs chronicling the events in Italy. They attracted notoriety on all sides: stories of Byron's alleged incest with his half-sister and his child with Mary Shelley's half-sister Claire Clairmont only fanned the flames of lurid rumours about the Shelleys' own conduct and the fluidity of all the relationships within the Circle.

*A Voice of One Delight* retells the events surrounding Shelley's death, along with his friend Williams, in the bay of La Spezia on 8 July 1822. As a result of quarantine laws the men's bodies could not be repatriated to England and arrangements were made to cremate them on the beach where they had been washed ashore. Louis Edouard Fournier's highly romanticised painting *The Funeral of Shelley* (1889) provided the original inspiration for *A Voice of One Delight*, and the presence of female onlookers in the background suggested that the story might be told from a woman's point of view.

The poems Shelley wrote just before his death were addressed to Jane Williams rather than to his own wife Mary; while we do not know how Jane felt about

Shelley, beyond her admiration for his poetry, we do know that she and Edward were still very much in love. However, the intensity of Shelley's feelings towards the latest object of his affections is well-documented. Verses from his final poems offer a suggestive emotional thread through the piece, especially when sung by a female voice, while the spoken narrative of events draws on Trelawny's eyewitness account.

Stephen McNeff and I had already established our mutual interest in Italy, through our work together on the d'Annunzio compositions, and we were delighted at the opportunity to develop *A Voice of One Delight* offered by George Vass at Presteigne Festival, to whom many thanks.

*Clare McCaldin, mezzo-soprano*

## ESSAY ON THE LANGUAGE OF D'ANNUNZIO

As celebrated 20th-century Italian poet and Nobel Prize winner Eugenio Montale, famously noted: 'D'Annunzio is present in everybody because he experimented with and touched all linguistic and narrative possibilities in our time.' Montale, who was no apologist of d'Annunzio, captured here the extraordinary linguistic and stylistic legacy of d'Annunzio, whose lasting fame as one of Italy's foremost poets still rests in the poetry written during his stay in Florence, between 1898 and 1910. The *Laudi*, and especially its last volume *Alcyone* (1904), from which all the Italian texts appearing on this recording are taken, are some of the best examples of the use of phonosymbolic imagery in the Italian language.

D'Annunzio's poetry in the 1880s was written under the strong influence of Renaissance models, especially Poliziano and Lorenzo de' Medici, whose versification and linguistic choices were artfully but faithfully recreated by d'Annunzio. The 1880s also saw his establishment as a leading prose writer. His first novel *Il piacere* [*The Child of Pleasure*], 1889, was characterised by a simple syntax coupled with innovative linguistic choices: rare words and Renaissance or Latinate spelling variations, which are also strongly in evidence throughout his poetry at this time.

As d'Annunzio noted, with characteristic self-assurance, commenting on the richness of his own language: 'io sono un grande artista (non comparabile) perché conosco, come nessuno al mondo conobbe, la natura delle parole. Le mie parole sono mie, e non quelle del vocabolario.' ['I am a great artist (incomparable) because I understand, as no-one else in the world does, the nature of words. My words are my own, and not merely vocabulary.'] His linguistic experimentation and his extensive knowledge of the Italian language achieved also through an obsession for dictionaries (especially Renaissance ones) are almost unrivalled. They also attest to d'Annunzio's passionate cult of the Italian language as one of the most important historical legacies of his country.

*Dr Giuliana Pieri, Reader in Italian and the Visual Arts,  
Royal Holloway, University of London*

**Stephen McNeff** (*composer*)



Although born in Belfast, Stephen McNeff grew up in South Wales, where an inspirational teacher awoke his interest in music. After studying composition at the Royal Academy of Music, his career started by working in theatres throughout Britain, followed by a period in Canada where his posts included composer-in-residence at the Banff Centre. Recognition has come steadily; a decade ago McNeff's name would be known mainly in theatre circles through his film noir operatic version of *The Wasteland* (1994), his many scores for the Unicorn Theatre (including a highly successful *Beatrix Potter Suite* in 2002), or among windband fraternities for *Ghosts* (2001). However, from the premiere of his opera for young people *Clockwork* in 2004, based on Philip Pullman's book, at the Linbury Theatre, Royal Opera House, and his appointment the following year to the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra as the first Royal Philharmonic Society/Performing Right Society Foundation Composer in the House, his reputation has gone from strength to strength.

McNeff's theatrical work has continued to flourish with the operas *Gentle Giant* (2007), commissioned by the Royal Opera, and *Tarka* (2005-6) which won a coveted British Composer Award for Best Stage Work in 2007. His new orchestration for smaller forces of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* (2009) received plaudits galore and his opera-oratorio *The Chalk Legend*, composed for Kokoro, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's contemporary music ensemble and community music forces, to mark the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad in Dorset, was premiered in Portland and performed in London. Also in 2012 his music-theatre work *The Secret Garden* (1985, revised 2012) was revived in a critically praised new production in London by Trinity Laban and in Canada by the Banff Festival. Other recent works include *Concerto Duo*, premiered at the 80th birthday concert of the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 2010, and a work for dance, *Seven for a Secret* (based on the music of Ravel) was premiered by Rambert Dance in 2011.

This CD is the result of a longstanding collaboration with Clare McCaldin which started at the Royal Opera House and led via the Presteigne Festival in Wales to incorporate work with a widening circle of colleagues and ever more adventurous developments in presentation and range.

[www.stephenmcneff.co.uk](http://www.stephenmcneff.co.uk)

**Clare McCaldin** (*mezzo-soprano*)

Clare read Modern Languages at Clare College, Cambridge and initially had a career in advertising before turning to singing. Since then she has appeared as a soloist all over the UK and in Europe, on-stage and in concert.

In addition to her reputation presenting established repertoire, Clare is recognised for her advocacy of new work. She has premiered music by Hugh Wood, Cheryl Frances-Hoad, Cecilia McDowell, Brian Irvine, Alexander l'Estrange and Rachel Stott, and created roles and scenes for Errollyn Wallen (Opera North and Royal Opera), Stephen McNeff (WNO) and Luke Styles and Sasha Siem at Aldeburgh. She has an extensive discography and recently recorded Miss Tina in Michael Hurd's *The Aspern Papers* (Ulster Orchestra/Vass).

Her interest in exploring non-traditional ways to present vocal works led to Clare's collaboration with director Joe Austin to create a staged version of *A Voice Of One Delight* in a piano version, for Tête à Tête: the Opera Festival.

[www.claremcaldin.com](http://www.claremcaldin.com) | [www.mccaldinarts.wordpress.com](http://www.mccaldinarts.wordpress.com)

**Orchestra Nova**

Formed by British conductor George Vass and selected from many of today's talented young professional instrumentalists, Orchestra Nova made its debut at the Purcell Room on London's South Bank in October 2001.



photo: Neil Gillespie

Orchestra Nova and its associated chamber group Orchestra Nova Ensemble has recorded chamber and orchestral works by William Alwyn, Gustav Holst, John Joubert, Kenneth Leighton, Elizabeth Maconchy, David Matthews, John McCabe, Cecilia McDowall, Paul Patterson and Michael Hurd's chamber opera *The Widow of Ephesus* for the Dutton Epoch and Guild labels, as well as for Champs Hill Records.

#### **George Vass** (*conductor*)



George Vass studied at the Birmingham Conservatoire and the Royal Academy of Music; he made his professional conducting debut in London, aged twenty-two. As Artistic Director of Orchestra Nova, he has appeared at many of the UK's major concert halls and festivals. As a guest conductor he has worked with a wide variety of ensembles including the Bournemouth Symphony, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National and Ulster orchestras. He has broadcast for BBC Radio 3 and Channel 4 Television.

He has been Artistic Director of the acclaimed Presteigne Festival since 1992, having held a similar position with the Hampstead and Highgate Festival from 2004 until 2009. His continually growing discography mirrors his strong interest in British composers with a wide variety of recordings for Dutton Epoch, Guild, Naxos, Somm and Toccata Classics.

#### **Suzanne Willison-Kawalec** (*harp*)

Suzanne graduated from the Royal Academy of Music in 1999 and has since been made an Associate. She is currently principal harpist with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. As guest principal she plays with all the major London orchestras. Recordings include William Alwyn's harp concerto, *Lyra Angelica*, which prompted rave reviews. *Gramophone* describes the performance as 'immaculate'. She was principal harpist with the European Union Youth Orchestra and a finalist in The Royal Over-Seas League Music Competition, winning the Outstanding Chamber Music Harpist Award.



photo: Andrzej Kawalec

#### **Sarah-Jane Bradley** (*viola*)



photo: Claire Huish

Sarah-Jane Bradley has established a distinguished international reputation as soloist and chamber musician. She has recorded five CDs of British viola concertos for Dutton, plus chamber music on Hyperion, Chandos and Naxos. A former member of the Leopold String Trio and Sorrel Quartet, she currently works with the London Soloists Ensemble.

#### **Kathryn Thomas** (*flute*)

Kathryn Thomas is a graduate and Associate of the Royal Academy of Music. She is a recitalist and chamber musician, performing and broadcasting internationally, including solo and chamber performances at the BBC Proms. Kathryn is a founder member of The Galliard Ensemble, former BBC New Generation Artists.



photo: Eric Richmond

#### **Philippa Mo** (*violin*)



Philippa studied in London and Beijing. She has performed extensively as a chamber musician from her acclaimed debut at the Wigmore Hall, to subsequent recitals in London, Munich, New York and a successful tour of China with her violin duo Retorica in 2011, who released their debut disc in 2012 with NMC.

A champion of contemporary music, Philippa has lectured on British music abroad and works closely with many leading British composers giving premieres of solo and violin duo works.

### Jonathan Byers (*cello*)

Belfast-born Jonathan Byers studied at London's Royal Academy of Music. As cellist in the Badke Quartet, he was winner of the 1st prize and audience prize in the 5th Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition and performs at the Aldeburgh and Verbier festivals and at London's Wigmore Hall and Kings Place, Musikverein in Vienna, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and frequently broadcasts on BBC Radio 3.

Jonathan also performs as guest principal with many orchestras and period instrument groups, including the Academy of Ancient Music, English Concert, Gabrieli Consort, and Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique.

### Andrew West (*piano*)



Andrew West has developed partnerships with many of the country's leading singers and instrumentalists. He performs and records regularly on CD and radio with Emma Bell (Lieder by Strauss, Marx and Bruno Walter for Linn Records), flautist Emily Beynon (music by Les Six for Hyperion), Florian Boesch, Lesley Garrett, James Gilchrist, Emma Johnson, Robert Murray, Christopher Purves, Hakan Vramsmo and Roderick Williams.

His collaboration with Mark Padmore has led to recitals throughout Europe, as well as a staged version of Schubert's *Winterreise* at Lincoln Center, New York. He received the inaugural Gerald Moore Award for Accompanists, and for several years he acted as official accompanist to the Steans Institute for Singers at the Ravinia Festival in Chicago.

Andrew West is one of the artistic directors of the Nuremberg International Chamber Music Festival, and is a professor of Piano Accompaniment at the Royal Academy of Music.



photo: Tas Kyrianiou

## MADRIGALI DELL'ESTATE

### 1 Implorazione

Estate, Estate mia non declinare!  
Fa che prima nel petto il cor mi scoppi  
Come pomo granato a troppo ardore.  
Estate, Estate, indugia a maturare  
I grappoli dei tralci su per gli oppi.  
Fa che il colchico dia più tardo il fiore.  
Forte comprimi sul tuo sen rubesto  
Il fin Settembre, che non sia sì lesto.  
Soffoca, Estate, fra le tue mammelle  
Il fabro di canestre e di tinelle.

### 2 La sabbia del Tempo

Come scorrea la calda sabbia lieve  
Per entro il cavo della mano in ozio,  
Il cor senti che il giorno era più breve.  
E un'ansia repentina il cor m'assalse  
Per l'apressar dell'umido equinozio  
Che offusca l'oro delle piagge salse.  
Alla sabbia del Tempo urna la mano  
Era, clessidra il cor mio palpitante,  
L'ombra crescente d'ogni stelo vano  
Quasi ombra d'ago in tacito quadrante.

### 3 L'orma

Sol calando, lung'h'essa la marina  
Giunsi alla pigra foce del Motrone  
E mi scalzai per trapassare a guado.  
Da stuol migrante un suono di chiarina  
Venìa per l'aria, e il mar tenea bordone.  
Nitrì di fra lo sparto un caval brado.  
Ristetti. Strana era nel limo un'orma.  
Però, dall'alpe già scendeva l'ombra.

## SUMMER MADRIGALS

### Supplication

*Summer, my Summer, please do not decline!  
But sooner let this heart of mine explode,  
A pomegranate burst by too much heat.  
Summer, Summer, be slow to ripen vine-  
Clusters upon the poplars where they're trained.  
And let the saffron bloom a little late.  
Hold closely up against your sturdy chest  
Subtle September, lest he go too fast.  
Suffocate, Summer, in between your breasts  
This maker of baskets and vats where grapes are pressed.*

### The sands of Time

*With fine warm sand continually on the run  
Out of the hollow of the idle hand,  
The heart could see the days were drawing in.  
The heart was struck with sudden anxious fear,  
The humid equinox being close at hand  
Which dims the gold upon the salty shore.  
This hand a vessel for the sands of Time,  
This palpitating heart an hourglass, while  
The shadow lengthened from each empty stem –  
Shades of the needle on the silent dial!*

### The footprint

*The sun was getting low. Along the coast  
I reached the lazy mouth of the Motrone  
And bared my feet that I might wade across.  
From a migrating troop a clarion blast  
Came through the air to join the deep sea moaning.  
A wild horse neighed from the esparto grass.  
I stopped. A footprint in the mud was strange.  
But shades were falling from the mountain range.*

#### 4 All'alba

All'alba ritrovai l'orma sul posto,  
Selvatica, qual pesta di cerbiatto;  
Ma v'era il segno delle cinque dita.  
Era il pollice alquanto più discosto  
Dall'altre dita e il mignolo rattratto  
Come ugnello di gazzera marina.  
La foce ingombra di tritume negro  
Odorava di sale e di ginepro.  
Seguitai l'orma esigua, come bracco  
Che tracci e fiuti il baio capriuolo.  
Giunsi al canneto e mi scontrai col riccio.  
Livido si fuggì pel folto il biacco.  
Si levarono due tre quattro a volo  
Migliarini già tinti di giallicio.  
Vidi un che bianco; e un velo era dell'alba.  
Per quatar l'alba disarmarri la traccia.

#### 5 A mezzodi

A mezzodi scopersi tra le canne  
Del Motrone argiglioso l'aspra ninfa  
Nericiglia, sorella di Siringa.  
L'ebbi su' miei ginocchi di silvano;  
E nella sua saliva amarulenta  
Assaporai l'origano e la menta.  
Per entro al rombo della nostra ardenza  
Udimmo crepitar sopra le canne  
Pioggia d'agosto calda come sangue.  
Fremere udimmo nelle arsicce crete  
Le mille bocche della nostra sete.

#### At dawn

*At dawn I saw once more at that same spot  
That print most like the footprint of a fawn;  
Except I noticed that there were five toes.  
I saw the big toe somewhat set apart  
From the others and the little toe withdrawn –  
Exactly like the oystercatcher's claws.  
The blocked-up river-mouth (such black bits there!)  
Gave off a scent of salt and juniper.  
Like hound or setter sniffing out a bay  
Roebuck, I followed after the faint print.  
I reached the reeds and found the hedgehog there.  
A livid grass-snake slid through weeds away.  
Already of a rather yellowish tint,  
Two or three chaffinches took to the air.  
I noticed something white – a veil of dawn.  
The trail was lost through gazing at the dawn.*

#### At midday

*At midday I discovered in the reeds  
Of the Motrone's clay the savage nymph,  
The black-lashed one, the sister of Syrinx.  
And then I had her on my sylvan knees;  
I savoured her saliva's taste and scent –  
The pungency of marjoram and mint.  
Across the thunder of our loving ardour  
We heard the crackle on the reedy bed  
Of August rain which was as warm as blood.  
Upon the parched and brown backed clay we heard  
The trembling of a thousand mouths – our thirst.*

#### 6 In sul vespero

In sul vespero, scendo alla radura.  
Prendo col laccio la puledra brada  
Che ancor tra i denti ha schiuma di pastura.  
Tanaglio il dorso nudo, alle difese;  
E per le ascelle afferro la naiàda,  
La sollevo, la pianto sul garrese.  
Schizzan di sotto all'ugne nel galoppo  
Gli aghi i rami le pigne le cortecce.  
Di là dai fossi, ecco il triforme groppo  
Su per le vampe delle fulve secce!

#### 7 L'incanto circeo

Tra I due porti, tra l'uno e l'altro faro,  
Bonaccia senza vele e senza nubi  
Dolce venata come le tue tempie.  
Assai lungi di là, dall'Argentaro,  
Assai lungi le rupi e le paludi  
di Circe, dell'iddia dalle molt'erbe.  
E c'incantò con una stilla d'erbe  
Tutto il Tirreno, come un suo lebete!

#### 8 Il vento scrive

Su la docile sabbia il vento scrive  
Con le penne dell'ala; e in sua favella  
Parlano I segni per le bianche rive.  
Ma, quando il sol declina, d'ogni nota  
Ombra lene si crea, d'ogni ondicella,  
Quasi di ciglia su soave gota.  
E par che nell'immenso arido viso  
Della spiaggia s'immilli il tuo sorriso.

#### Towards evening

*I go towards evening to the glade. I capture  
The filly in a noose. She is still wild.  
Between her teeth she still has foam of pasture.  
I grip the bare back like a pair of pincers;  
And underneath her arms I grasp my naiad,  
And lift her up, and set her on the withers.  
With bark and branch beneath the plunging hooves  
The mass of cones and needles spurts and splashes.  
Beyond the dykes, a triform tangle moves  
Over the stubble where it flashes!*

#### Circean enchantment

*Between the two ports, and between their beacons,  
dead calm without a mist without a cloud,  
calm water lightly veined like your pale temples.  
Not near at all, beyond the Argentaro,  
Not near at all the rocks and swampy land  
Of Circe, goddess of the many herbs.  
And she has charmed for us with juice of herbs  
The Tyrrhenian Sea like one enormous cauldron!*

#### The wind writes

*The wind is writing on the soft sand here  
With wing-feathers for quills; and in his language  
The signs speak out along the white seashore.  
But, when the sun declines, from every mark  
A shadow is created, from each ripple,  
As from eyelashes on the smoothest cheek.  
It seems that on the shore's wide empty face  
Your smile is multiplied a thousand ways.*

## 9 Le lampade marine

Lucono le meduse come stanche  
Lampade sul cammin della Sirena  
Sparso d'ulve e di pallide radici.  
Bonaccia spira su le rive bianche  
Ove il nascente plenilunio appena  
Segna l'ombra alle amare tamerici.  
Sugger di labbra fievole fa l'acqua  
Ch'empie l'orma del piè tuo delicata.

## 10 Nella belletta

Nella belletta I giunchi hanno l'odore  
Delle persiche mézze e delle rose  
Passe, del miele guasto e della morte.  
Or tutta la palude è come un fiore  
Lutulento che il sol d'agosto cuoce,  
Con non so che dolcigna afa di morte.  
Ammutisce la rana, se m'appresso.  
Le bolle d'aria salgono in silenzio.

## 11 L'uva greca

Or laggiù, nelle vigne dell'Acaia,  
L'uva simile ai ricci di Giacinto  
Si cuoce; e già comincia a esser vaia.  
Si cuoce al sole, e detta è passolina,  
Anche laggiù su l'istmo, anche a Corinto,  
E nella bianca di colombe Egina.  
In Onchesto il mio grappolo era azzurro  
Come forca di rondine che vola.  
All'ombra della tomba di Nettuno  
L'assaporai, guardando l'Elicona.

## Sea-lanterns

*The jellyfish are luminous like dim  
Lanterns along the Siren's fabled course  
Where pale roots and sea-lettuces are spread.  
Over the whitened shores there breathes a calm,  
And the full moon, arising now, can scarce  
Show where salt tamarisks are throwing shade.  
The suck of feeble lips is made by water  
Filling the print left by your gentle foot.*

## In the slime

*Now in their slime the rushes have the odour  
Of peaches almost rotten and of roses  
That shrivel, of spoilt honey, and of death.  
Now all the marsh seems to be a flower  
Made out of mud the sun of August scorches,  
With who knows what sweet stuffiness of death.  
The frog is dumb, when I am near at hand.  
The gaseous bubbles rise without a sound.*

## The Grecian grape

*Down in Achaea now a certain Greek  
Grape clustered like the curls of Hyacinth  
Is baking, and already turning black.  
That is the grape they call the passolina,  
Down on the isthmus too, and in Corinth,  
And on that island white with doves – Aegina.  
Onchestus, where my bunch of grapes was blue  
As tail of swallow like a fork in flight!  
It was within the shade of Neptune's tomb  
I savoured it, with Helicon in sight.*

*J G Nichols in 'Halcyon, Gabriele d'Annunzio'  
published by Carcanet Press.*

## 12 Farfalle di Neve

*Texts by Gabriele d'Annunzio*

Vengono farfalle di neve  
tremolando a coppie ed a sciami:  
nella luce assemprano lieve  
spuma fatta alata che ami.

Azzurre son l'ombre sul mare  
come sparti fiori d'acònito.  
Il lor tremolio fa tremare  
l'Infinito al mio sguardo attonito.

*(from Undulna)*

Nel silenzio la musica diffonde  
pel gran palagio un lento incantamento.  
Dai fastigi a le sedi più profonde  
Tutto vive ed ascolta. Solo il vento  
A quando a quando languido sospira  
Inebriato da gli odor che aspira  
Tra le rose di Cipri ove s'asconde.

*(from Psiche Giacente)*

## Butterflies like snowflakes

Butterflies like snowflakes come,  
trembling in couples and swarms:  
In the light they look like foam  
drifting, amorous, in the air.

Their shadows are azure on the sea  
like scattered aconite flowers.  
Their trembling expanse  
seems limitless, as I gaze in astonishment.

In the silence music spreads  
A slow enchantment through the great palace.  
From the heights to the deepest places  
Everything is alive and listening. Only the wind  
Sighs languidly now and again  
Intoxicated by fragrance, from its hiding-place  
among the Cypress roses.

*English translations Clare McCaldin*

### A Voice of One Delight

*Lyric texts by Percy Bysshe Shelley*

#### 13 Part 1 - Livorno (1)

When the lamp is shattered  
The light in the dust lies dead—  
When the cloud is scattered  
The rainbow's glory is shed.  
When the lute is broken,  
Sweet tones are remembered not;  
When the lips have spoken,  
Loved accents are soon forgot.

As music and splendour  
Survive not the lamp and the lute,  
The heart's echoes render  
No song when the spirit is mute:—  
No song but sad dirges,  
Like the wind through a ruined cell,  
Or the mournful surges  
That ring the dead seaman's knell.

O Love! who bewailest  
The frailty of all things here,  
Why choose you the frailest  
For your cradle, your home, and your bier?  
*(from 'When the Lamp is Shattered')*

I see the Deep's untrampled floor  
With green and purple seaweed strown;  
I see the waves upon the shore  
Like light dissolved in star-showers thrown;  
I sit upon the sands alone;  
The lightning of the noontide ocean

Is flashing round me, and a tone  
Arises from its measured motion—  
How sweet! Did any heart now share my emotion!  
*(from 'Stanzas Written in Dejection Near Naples')*

#### 14 Part 2 - Livorno (2)

'Sleep, sleep on! forget thy pain;  
My hand is on thy brow, my spirit on thy brain;  
My pity on thy heart, poor friend;

'Sleep, sleep on! I love thee not;  
But when I think that he  
Who made and makes my lot  
As full of flowers as thine of weeds,  
Might have been lost like thee;  
And that a hand which was not mine  
Might then have charmed his agony  
As I another's—my heart bleeds  
For thine.

'Sleep, sleep, and with the slumber of  
The dead and the unborn  
Forget thy life and love;  
Forget that thou must wake forever;  
Forget the world's dull scorn;  
Forget lost health, and the divine  
Feelings which died in youth's brief morn;  
And forget me, for I can never  
Be thine.

*(from 'The Magnetic Lady to Her Patient')*

#### 15 Part 3 - Lerici

Ariel to Miranda:—Take  
This slave of Music, for the sake  
Of him who is the slave of thee,  
And teach it all the harmony  
In which thou canst, and only thou,  
Make the delighted spirit glow,  
Till joy denies itself again,  
And, too intense, is turned to pain;  
For by permission and command  
Of thine own Prince Ferdinand,  
Poor Ariel sends this silent token  
Of more than ever can be spoken;

Now, in humbler, happier lot,  
This is all remembered not;  
And now, alas! the poor sprite is  
Imprisoned, for some fault of his,  
In a body like a grave;—  
From you he only dares to crave,  
For his service and his sorrow,  
A smile today, a song tomorrow.  
*(from 'With a Guitar, to Jane')*

#### 16 Part 4 - Via Reggio

The keen stars were twinkling,  
And the fair moon was rising among them,  
Dear Jane!  
The guitar was tinkling,  
But the notes were not sweet till you sung them  
Again.

As the moon's soft splendour  
O'er the faint cold starlight of Heaven  
Is thrown,  
So your voice so tender  
To the strings without voice had then given  
Its own.

The stars will awaken,  
Though the moon sleep a full hour later,  
To-night;  
No leaf will be shaken  
Whilst the dews of your melody scatter  
Delight.

Sing again, with your dear voice revealing  
A tone  
Of some world far from ours,  
Where music and moonlight and feeling  
Are one.  
*(from 'To Jane: The Keen Stars Were Twinkling')*

### THREE ABRUZZO FOLK SONGS

#### 17 Lu Sant'Antonie

Bona sera bona gente  
che durmete allegramente.  
Ve defenne Sant'Antonie  
prutettore contra lu demonie.

Sant'Antonie 'nghe le busse  
jeve a cacce de ciammatiche,  
lu demonie j' dà na vusse  
e lu manne 'mmiezzie alle urtiche.

Sant'Antonie 'nnallu piate  
ce magneve li tajuline,  
lu demonie uatte uatte  
je s'arrobbe la furcine.

Bona notte gente amiche,  
lu Signore ve benediche  
e v'accresce lu patrimonio  
'nghe le grazie de Sant'Antonie.

#### 18 Tutte li fundanelle

Tutte li fundanelle se so' seccate  
pover'amore mè more de sete.  
Trummalaririlà, l'amor'è bbelle,  
trummalaririlà, 'vviva 'll'amor!

Amore, mi te' sete, mi te' sete.  
Dovelle l'acque che mi si purtate?  
Trummalaririlà, l'amor'è bbelle,  
trummalaririlà, 'vviva 'll'amor!

#### Saint Anthony

Good evening good people,  
all you who are sleeping easily.  
May Saint Antony defend you,  
your protector against the Devil.

Saint Antony carrying his basket  
went out to hunt for snails;  
the Devil gave him a shove  
and sent him head-over-heels into the nettles.

While Saint Anthony sat at table  
eating his noodles,  
the devil sneaked up  
and stole his fork.

Goodnight good people;  
may the Lord bless you  
and increase your riches,  
by the grace of Saint Anthony.

#### All the springs

All the springs are dried up,  
My poor darling! and you're dying of thirst.  
Trummalaririlà, love is beautiful,  
trummalaririlà, hurrah for love!

My love, I'm thirsty, so very thirsty.  
Where is the water you brought me?  
Trummalaririlà, love is beautiful,  
trummalaririlà, hurrah for love!

T'aje purtate 'na giara de crete  
'nghe ddu' catene d'ore 'ngatenate.  
Trummalaririlà, l'amor'è bbelle,  
trummalaririlà, 'vviva 'll'amor!

#### 19 La fija me

E quann' la fija mè facève li ssagne  
li sclucche se sendea alla muntagne.  
E core della mamma, e della mamma sè,  
massera vè la bbanda e se la porta la fija mè.

E quann' la fija mè facève lu sughe,  
l'addore se sendea a Sante Luche.  
E core della mamma, e della mamma sè,  
massera vè la bbanda e se la porta la fija mè.

E quann' la fija mè jev' alla Messe  
li giuvene jève tutt'appresse a esse.  
E core della mamma, e della mamma sè,  
massera vè la bbanda e se la porta la fija mè.

E quann' la fija mè faceva l'amore  
li vasce se li deve a core a core.  
E core della mamma, e della mamma sè,  
massera vè la bbanda e se la porta la fija mè.

I brought it to you in an earthenware jar,  
around which two gold chains are intertwined.  
Trummalaririlà, love is beautiful,  
trummalaririlà, hurrah for love!

*English translations Clare McCaldin*

#### My daughter

When my daughter made pasta  
the blows could be heard right up the mountain.  
but ah! a mother's heart, her own mother's heart;  
tonight the wedding band comes to carry her away.

When my daughter made pasta sauce  
the rich odour could be smelled as far away as San Luca.  
but ah! a mother's heart, her own mother's heart;  
tonight the wedding band comes to carry her away.

When my daughter went to Mass  
all the young men followed behind her.  
but ah! a mother's heart, her own mother's heart;  
tonight the wedding band comes to carry her away.

When my daughter made love  
her kisses were offered from one heart to another.  
but ah! a mother's heart, her own mother's heart;  
tonight the wedding band comes to carry her away.