



Jonathan Dove

All the Future Days

Settings of poems by Ursula Vaughan Williams

This song-cycle was a private commission, and a birthday present. Gerard Hastings asked me to set some of Ursula Vaughan Williams' poems to celebrate David Evans' 40th birthday. Gerard and David have been friends of Ursula for many years, and they are also great admirers of Anne Mason, one of my very favourite singers. (Anne created the roles of Minskwoman in *Flight*, and Jane in *When She Died...*) So I wrote the cycle for Anne to sing at a private concert in Hoxton Hall, in June 2004.

Gerard made this selection from Ursula Vaughan Williams' poems. In a sense, they are all portraits and self-portraits of women: women waiting, women remembering. *Time Being* is a prelude, its "short lifetime" leading to a lifetime recollected in *Autobiography*. *Penelope* describes the origin of painting: before he leaves, Penelope draws the outline of her husband on the wall, anticipating a long wait for his return. *Spider* is an admiring and intimate portrait of the female of the species. *Martha* is the longest song in the cycle: she is only briefly mentioned in the gospels, but the poem lovingly fleshes out her strong character. Finally, *The Siren* is prefaced by a quotation from the Book of Enoch: "And Uriel said to me: 'Here shall stand the angels that have lain with women...and the women they seduced shall become Sirens'." The siren remembers the fallen angel whose love made her what she is, and whose death she will sing and mourn forever.

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