



# Jonathan Dove

## Out of Winter (2003)

Songs for high voice and piano

Text: Robert Tear

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First performance: Robert Tear (tenor) and Jonathan Dove (piano), Spitalfields Festival, December 2003

I first met Robert Tear in March 2000. I was working on a community opera to be performed in Hackney for the Millennium and looking for someone to sing one of the principal characters, a retired gangster called Jericho. Somebody suggested Robert Tear, which I thought was rather a long shot: I'd seen him perform at the Royal Opera House and Glyndebourne, and couldn't imagine he'd been interested in singing with two hundred amateurs at the Hackney Empire. To my surprise, he leapt at the opportunity, and relished every moment of it.

Writing a role for Bob was different from writing for other singers, much more a collaboration: we improvised together, and his dramatic instinct suggested ways of singing a phrase which wouldn't have occurred to me. After the opera was over, we wanted to continue our collaboration. I had invited Bob to sing *Winter Words* at the Spitalfields Winter Festival, and so he wrote a set of poems in response to Hardy words that Britten chose.

The most directly connected is the fourth song in *Out of Winter*, which features the vicar from Hardy's 'The Choirmaster's Burial'. There is also a train journey, but whereas Hardy's narrator meditates on the innocence of a fellow-passenger, Tear's narrator wonders about himself. Our remaining songs are probably more optimistic, and mystical, than Britten's and Hardy's.

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