Cheryl Frances-Hoad

everything grows extravagantly

for baritone and piano
(2021)

Vocal Score

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everything grows extravagantly was co-commissioned by Oxford Lieder and the Oxford Botanic Garden & Arboretum, in celebration of the 20th Oxford Lieder Festival and the 400th anniversary of the Oxford Botanic Garden, with support from the Bishopsdown Trust, the Finzi Trust, the Nicholas John Trust and the RVW Trust.

First performed at the 20th Oxford Lieder Festival on 20th October 2021 at Saint John the Evangelist by baritone Marcus Farnsworth and pianist Libby Burgess.

In celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Oxford Botanic Garden.

Duration: *c.* 24 minutes

This work was written by the composer with support from the 2021 Visiting Research Fellowship in the Creative Arts at Merton College, Oxford.

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For a Garden

For a garden breathes quick and slow.
For a garden is a library of greens.
For a garden holds a thousand ideas about time.
For a garden cherishes its dead.
For a garden has much to say on the subject of beauty.
For a garden does as it is told.
(For a garden, of course, does not.)
For a garden is a cloister and a carnival.
For a garden is an engine of scent and sound.
For a garden is fixed yet never still.
For a garden is glad to be known by the fingertip.
For a garden is a lesson in trust.

Work Song for a New Garden

'4000 loade of mucke and dunge [were] laide in the phisicke garden by H. Windiat the universities scavenger
1621-1636.' (Brian Twyne)

let dizzy ground
be made good
by glory of mud

let water's tilt
be bested
by heft

let every shoulder
heave

let every elbow
tug

let every thumbnail
be sunk deep
in sweetest filth

oh let the stink
of righteous muck
make this garden sing

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The Ferns are So Serious

(polystichum aculeatum)

The ferns are so serious,
I couldn't tell you why.

They have been talking
for the longest time,

and here they are again
in deep conference,

each coiled head
unspooling its own

terrific calculation.
The ferns leave nothing

to chance, I surmise,
in their workings.

They slacken only
as the solution dawns:

open open open to the light.be sunk deep
in sweetest filth

oh let the stink
of righteous muck
make this garden sing

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This combines two contemporary texts from the early years of the garden: an account of Oxford's fortifications during the civil war and then various plants names from the Catalogus plantarum horti medici Oxoniensis (1648) – an early example of a plant catalogue created by the OBG first head gardener, Jacob Bobart.

[N.B. the song text begins from 'May 3d…' with the snippet from the preface of the catalogue just included as an epigraph]

Cataloguing/Fortifying

'Thus as the species of all creatures were gathered together into the Arke, comprehended as in an Epitome, so you have the plants of most parts of the world, contained in this garden where they are preserved for thy inspection.' English preface to the second edition of the Catalogus plantarum horti medici Oxoniensis, Oxford, 1648.

May 3d [1646]. The General, with the Officers of the army [*wilde olive, small purple flower gentle*] took a survey of Oxford by perspectives [*blessed thistle, golden thistle, thistle upon thistle*] which they found to have received many material alterations [*hawthorne tree*] and additions of advantage [*nettle tree*] since their last being before it. And though it was always accounted justly a place of considerable strength [*small creeping borage*], yet now it was made incomparably more strong than ever [*divers kinds of peaches*] it being the King's head quarter and garrison, and his chief place of residence and retreat [*smooth water mint*]… Within the city there were five thousand foot [*small wilde oates*] most of them of the King's old infantry, which had served him from the beginning of the wars [*vipers grasse*] and withal they were well stored [*french lavender*] with a plentiful magazine of victuals [*hard cabbadge, common wilde bean, long rooted red beete*] ammunition [*bitter almonds, sweet almonds*] and provisions of war [*great jagged celandine*]. In a word, whatever art or industry [*maudlin with white flowers blackish in the middle*] could do to make a place impregnable [*garden gold of pleasure*], was very liberally [*ever living borage*] bestowed here [*white may lily, hart's tongue, maiden haire black*].

Performance

The Waterlily Pond
(Nymphaea)

Still as a painting,
mirror cool,
the water
receives the sky.

The lilies
are in perfect
contemplation.

They gaze
unblinking
into the blue.

This one is
blushed
dawn-pink.

This one is
white and yellow,
faultless as an egg.

Star-eyed,
the lilies
are blank
to their beauty,

attentive
only
to the disarray
of cloud.

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This is a found poem based on the letters of Mary Somerset, Duchess of Beaufort (1630-1715) who was one of the first prominent female gardeners and who corresponded regularly with Jacob Bobart the Younger (who was head gardener of the OBG for a spell). Mary was also one of the first people to explore and write about the links between gardening and well-being.

In the Words of Mary Somerset

my journie
is busy with plants

my natural learning
grows very well

& hath produced
ripe seed

my paradise
my infirmary

everything grows
extravagantly

I have been
amongst the trees

I have let in raine & aire
& hope

& when I get into the storys
of plants I know not
how to get out

& tho I cannot brag
I shew you colour indeed

I will be put into the booke
wth those names

Perusal Only

Foxglove
(Digitalis purpurea)

Tick tock
tick tock
foxglove knocks
on the clock of the heart.

No soft touch.

(Pay no heed to
fleeced leaves,
dainty hairs,
wind sway,
bee bliss,
hotch-potch of pretty spots.)

Sip from this speckled cup
and be stocked with toxic cure.

Attend how blood is nudged
to strictest beat.

Tick tock
tick tock
foxglove knocks
on the clock of the heart.

Perusal Only

Mandrake
(Mandragora officinarum)

odd limbed
root spook

white shot
moon shriek

brain creep
sleep seeper

dog howl
bugle call

safe kept
curse tucked

midnight twin
sunk self

On Waiting to Inhale the Rare and Intoxicating Scent of the Queen of the Night Cactus (*Hylocereus undatus*) Which Blooms for Just a Single Evening Once a Year

[ahhh]

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Xylarium

A xylarium is a collection of small wood samples. The Oxford Xylarium was established in 1924 with the Foundation of Imperial Forestry Institute. 'Given the collection's origins as an imperial research tool, most of the samples came from former British territories. The xylarium is also biased towards economically important timbers.' (Stephen A. Harris, 2021)

here sits wood
chunked

cut and stripped
neat as

houses
on the block

beech baobab
bakal banyan

no music here
but oddly an air of

music
the wood practically

vibrates
with the

promise of it
in this

rainbow
of browns

teak tamarind
trachycarpus tsuga

there is an
energy

here
to take up

the stick
and strike these

chunks one after
the other

see what
yields

see how
they ring

yellowwood yew
yuzuri-ha yucca

to think
what it is

the wood
might need

still to
say

Perusal Only

Field Madder
(Sherardia)

quiet
peeper of
purply-
pink

sun-winker

little leaf burst

little flower face

field-found
garden-

hopper

breeze-twitcher
bristle-rippler

chink-dwelling
accidental

bright
scrap

of exalted

ordinary

Perusal Only

[The last original yew tree planted by Jacob Bobart, the first head gardener of OBG, was damaged by Storm Ciara in 2020 – and it still looks a bit bedraggled but is gladly recovering.]

The Storm and the Yew

There came a storm
that shook the ground.

It whipped the tree
and dashed its boughs
and snatched its crown.

And now it is a ragged thing,
this tree.

It stoops.

It has the look of
frail hands or an
abandoned thought.

But oh the tree is sound.

It grows.

For a tree rehearses its soul
in every cell.

It keeps its slow tree self
stashed deep,

cooks time to sweetest starch,

knows only
patience and repair.

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everything grows extravagantly

KATE WAKELING

CHERYL FRANCES-HOAD

1. For a Garden



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2. Work Song for a New Garden



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3. The Ferns are So Serious

(polystichum aculeatum)



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4. Cataloguing/Fortifying



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5. The Waterlily Pond

(Nymphaea)



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6. In the Words of Mary Somerset



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7. Foxglove

(Digitalis purpurea)



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8. Mandrake

(Mandragora officinarum)



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9. On Waiting to Inhale the Rare and Intoxicating Scent of the Queen of the Night Cactus *(Hylocereus undatus)* Which Blooms for Just a Single Evening Once a Year



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10. Xylarium



Perusal Only



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11. Field Madder

(Sherardia)

Scherzando ♩ = 100

Baritone

Piano

mp leggiero

8va

8va

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7

V

mp energico

qui-et peep-er of pur-p' - ly - pink

(8)

(8)

poco

mp

12

sun - wink - er

lit - tle leaf_burst lit - tle flow - er face

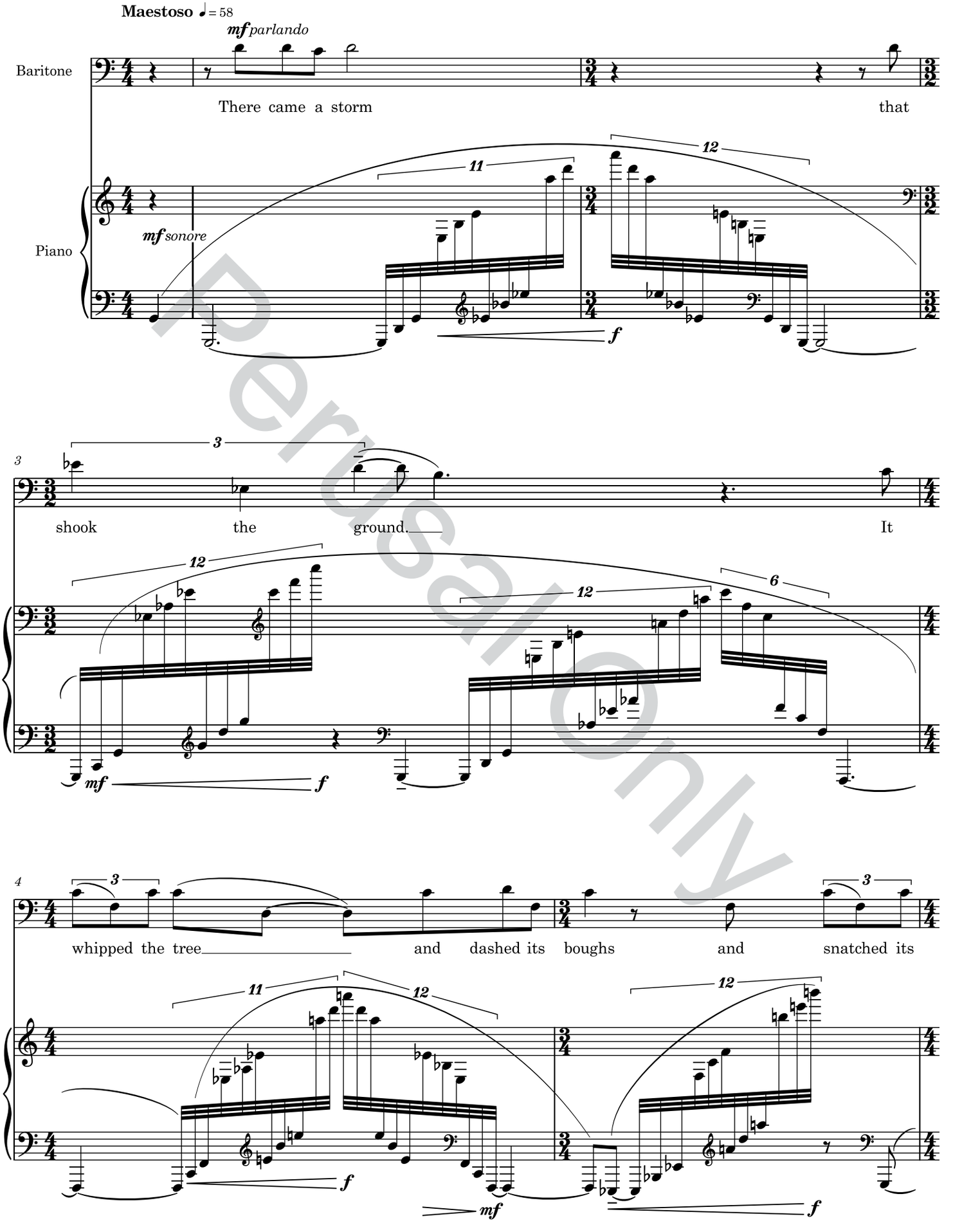
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12. The Storm and the Yew



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13. For a Garden (Epilogue)



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June - August 2021

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