

WIND AMONG THE PINES

Five Images of Norfolk for soprano solo and symphony orchestra

Nicola LeFanu

This piece was composed specially for the Norfolk Youth Orchestra who commissioned it with funds provided by Eastern Arts.

There are five movements, setting poems by Shinkichi Takahashi translated by Lucien Stryk. WIND AMONG THE PINES lasts around 20 minutes.

The first performance carried this longer programme note:

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It was a particular pleasure to write for an orchestra whose fortunes I have been able to follow for many years thanks to two long-standing members, my nephew and niece, Christopher and Sarah Dunlop. It was also a pleasure to write for one of my favourite sopranos, Tracey Chadwell.

The landscape of East Anglia has many associations for me. I was born and brought up in Essex (where my parents still live), with cousins farming nearby on the Essex-Suffolk border. As a teenager, I spent a lot of time at Aldeburgh, visiting friends or working for the festival, and since 1967, my sister and her family have lived in Norwich. However, one area is more precious to me than any other: the North Norfolk coast. Since I was about sixteen, I've spent a part of every year at my sister's cottage near Wells-next-the-Sea. Much of my music has been composed there (this piece included), wild north winds competing with the sounds in my head.

The great expanse of sand and sky at low tide, the smell of the pines on the the dunes on a balmy day, hares on a grey field, the thunderous screaming of a North Sea storm- these are some of the images of Wells

which are often in my mind and which are captured magically in the poems. Takahashi's poetry is the vehicle which allows us to focus and understand the images of our own experience, wherever we happen to be.

There is no room for sentimentality when I think of East Anglia's landscape, beautiful though it may seem to those of us who know it well. It is as far from 'Constable Country' as from the moon. Our farming has torn out its hedges and polluted its waterways beyond recall. Sizewell B looms; great tracts of land are given over to 'defence'- bases where we harbour the instruments of death, where we deny our humanity.

At low tide at Stiffkey , you can walk out among avidly feeding waders. In the no-man's land of the marshes, there is still a precarious harmony between people and creatures, people and land. On the North Norfolk coast it is still possible to find a wildness which has been stamped out almost all over England.

My piece is dedicated to the young musicians of the Norfolk Orchestra in the hope that they come to cherish that wildness , and make a better job of safeguarding it than we have, their elders.