

LIFE CYCLE

Gian Slater | voice
Sonya Lifschitz | piano
Zoe Knighton | cello



move

Life Cycle traces the emotional journey of impending motherhood through the music of highly regarded composer Emily Hall and the words of acclaimed poet Toby Litt. Moving, occasionally shocking and ultimately uplifting, its story develops through the themes of anxiety and impatience which often comes with pregnancy, through sleepless nights nursing a newborn and the changing perspective of watching a child grow.

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- 1 Stillborn – ‘She isn’t, but she was’ 2’02”
- 2 Instrumental I 1’02”
- 3 And so I test myself 0’50”
- 4 I am the pregnant woman 1’16”
- 5 We are counting 1’09”
- 6 The very thought of children being hurt 2’37”
- 7 Instrumental II 0’47”
- 8 A ghostly home 2’52”
- 9 Instrumental III –
(Amnio – ‘Skeleton I see and sense’) 3’20”
- 10 I am alone 1’53”
- 11 Hello 0’51”
- 12 Look at my child 2’51”
- 13 Upon your chest 1’13”
- 14 The gap so small 1’23”
- 15 Not just milk –
‘There used to be a woman in this body’ 3’06”
- 16 Hushabye 2’58”
- 17 The first turn 2’09”
- 18 Instrumental IV 1’01”
- 19 A field of snow –
‘I see you here, all clear and all aglow’ 3’29”



EMILY HALL

Much of Emily Hall's music is formed from close collaborative relationships with singers, writers and instrumentalists and finding her own ways of using technology in live performance. Emily Hall is a member of Bedroom Community, the Icelandic record label.

She has written for the London Sinfonietta, LSO, BBCNOW, the Brodsky Quartet, Opera North, LCO, LSO, Hungarian Radio Choir, Aldeburgh Music, Streetwise Opera, Mahogany Opera, Lady Maisery. Her music is frequently broadcast on BBC Radio 2,3,4 and 6Music.

In 2013, Emily Hall received the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Award for Artists, in 2006 the Genesis Opera Prize and in 2005 the Royal Philharmonic Society Composition Award and in 2015 the Corinthia AIR.

LIFE CYCLE

Life Cycle is about the rarely explored theme of the wonder and lurking fear of motherhood. It is composed by the highly regarded young British composer Emily Hall, with lyrics by acclaimed author Toby Litt. Toby Litt's lyrics have an almost uncanny ability to capture female experiences of motherhood, and has returned to the theme of losing and having children both in fiction and in his autobiographical writing. Life cycle was commissioned by Opera North (UK) and was premiered in 2011. Emily Hall and Toby Litt have collaborated on three songs cycles to date. Others include *Befalling* on unrequited love and *Rest* on death.



TOBY LITT

Toby Litt was born in 1968 and grew up in Ampthill, Bedfordshire. He is the author of ten novels, including *deadkidsongs*, *Ghost Story* and *Notes for a Young Gentleman*, and four short story collections. His most recent book is *Wrestliana*, a memoir about his great-great-grandfather, William Litt, who was a champion wrestler, poet, smuggler and exile. Toby has written three song cycles with Emily Hall, and also the libretto for Samy Moussa's opera *Vastation/Wüstung*, premiered at the Munich Biennale, 2014. He lectures in creative writing at Birkbeck, University of London.

1 **Stillborn**

She *isn't* but she *was*.
She wasn't but yet is.

Eternal *won't*, not *can't*.
All *didn't* and not *couldn't*.

Undone; never done.
Total knowledge, unknown.

Leaving early, arriving late.
Wholly incomplete.

One remaining plural
yet indivisible.

Entirely possible
yet infallible.

One within another;
two inside each other;
three but always either.

2 **Instrumental I**

3 **And so I test myself**

And so I test myself
This time I test myself

We have another chance
Another little chance

A little time to wait
Another waiting time

A line that may be crossed
A cross that may be borne

I cross the line
I cross the line

4 **I am the pregnant woman**

I am the pregnant woman
in the park

I am the pregnant woman
in the hospital

I am the pregnant woman
waiting in the waiting room
with all the other women
waiting, counting down

I am the pregnant woman
at the funeral
waiting in the waiting room
with all the other women

I am the pregnant woman
counting down and adding up

I am the pregnant woman
everywhere

5 **We are counting**

We are counting
We are counting

Thirty will mean more than twenty
Twenty will mean more than ten
Thirty-eight will mean the most
And *forty* is zero and infinity

One and two and three and two.
Two and two and two and two.
One and two and three and two.
Two and two and two and two.

We are trying not to count
All day we're trying not to count

Thirty will mean more than twenty
Twenty will mean more than ten
Thirty-eight will mean the most
And *forty* is zero and infinity

I want to think of something else
To fill my days with something else

Thirty will mean more than twenty
Twenty will mean more than ten
Thirty-eight will mean the most
And *forty* is zero and infinity

6 **The very thought of children being hurt**

The very thought
of children being hurt –
somewhere
in a story.

I cannot bear the thought of force
The world is full of forcefulness
I have to force myself to watch

The very thought
of a child being hurt –
near here
at this moment.

So much depends upon the weak
The weak uphold the edifice
My strength, I feel, is weakening

The very thought
of my child being hurt –
somewhere
in the future.

Although this is impossible
All violence must cease
And something occupy its place
Perhaps not peace

But something we cannot call
anything but peace
Although this is impossible:
All violence must cease
All violence must cease

7 **Instrumental II**

8 **A ghostly home**

Our home is now a ghostly home
We haunt ourselves in every room

I catch a ball
I sing a tender little lullaby

This room is haunted by distress
This room, so full of emptiness,
that might just be the baby's room,
can only be
a grief or joy

The baby's room –
go to the baby's room –
which isn't yet the baby's room
Inside the baby's room I sing a lullaby
a lullaby my mother sang to me

I throw a ball
I stitch a hem

I sing the ghost a tender little lullaby

9 **Instrumental III (Amnio)**

Skeleton I see and sense
Baby you become and be
Innocence lost innocence
Nothing belongs to me

These things are true about you
Now they are known

Absolute in gesture
Say if you want a soul
Posture then imposture
I split and make you whole

These things are measured
and weighed
These are your facts

And I am now what I will always
ever after be.

10 **I am alone**

I am alone
no longer only one
I do not want to be alone
I want you, but not too soon

I am alone
but they say I can eat for two –
this cake's for you
and this cake's for you, too

We are alone
I know I should not speak for you
'We' is not me
I am no longer simply 'I'

I have begun to sing to you
a lullaby
I sing to you
in case you do become our other one

Come, baby, soon but not too soon
Come when you want,
be what you are
Be *who*
Only do... Please do be.

I heard about a woman who...
...at thirty-seven weeks...
...the cord was wrapped around...
and all these stories come my way.

11 Hello

Hello, my beautiful beyond –
Hello, arriving from away –
Hello, my everlasting friend –
Hello, the purest joy!

12 Look at my child

Look at my child –
I think she just smiled –
lying all curled
on the edge of the world
tiny, cosy, shiny, rosy.

Look at my sweet –
so neatly complete –
her little feet on the blood-warm sheet
respect her, protect her.

Look at my darling
so gently uncurling.
Stretching and smiling,
completely beguiling.
Slowly awaking,
your heart must be breaking.

Is your heart breaking?

My heart's breaking.

13 Upon your chest

I put my hand upon your chest
to test it's rising,
falling, rising –

the best I feel is when I know
your slowing breathing
isn't stopping.

Clutch,
you're suddenly still
stopped and stilled,
and so is the world and so is the world
and so is the world

Then slowly you unclutch,
so gently you're
back as you were
then slowly you untense,
so gently you're
back as you were before.

But I am not.
Not yet.

I can't forget

the word
they sometimes put with cot.

14 The gap so small

The gap so small
between world and child –
no gap at all

And every fact,
however small,
has an impact;

your nails can cut,
the wind can wound,
bright light can hurt.

A tiny scrape
upon your face –
both of us bled.

And now w here,
a tiny scar:
there will be more,
there will be more.

15 **Not just milk**

There used to be a woman
in this body
not just milk

There used to be a substance
to her living
not just milk
and carrying

There used to be a life that was
outflowing
not just milk
and carrying
and saying hush

There used to be a
flowering of action
not just milk
and carrying
and saying hush
and putting down

There used to be a world still to
discover
not just milk
and carrying
and saying hush
and putting down
and worrying

There used to be a world
not just milk
and carrying
and saying hush
and putting down
and worrying
and milk

16 **Hushabye twinkle**

Hushabye – twinkle – all – hushabye
If baby will sleep then mummy won't cry
Mummy will tidy and mummy will clean
Mummy will say something she didn't mean.

Hushabye – little – fall – hushabye
If baby won't sleep then mummy will cry
Mummy will dry her tired eyes and will smile
hoping her sweet babe will sleep in a while.

Hushabye – wonder – breaks – on my lap
If baby won't sleep then mummy will snap
Mummy will wish that her baby were dead
Lie down alone in the dark on the bed.

Hushabye – what you – cradle – a nap
If baby will sleep then mummy won't snap
Mummy will weep all alone in the dark
Take baby out for a walk in the park.

17 **The first turn**

Now you can turn
Now you can turn yourself away from
me
Now you can turn yourself

Forceful you are
Forceful you are beyond our reckoning
Forceful you are beyond

Even a god
Even a god is weak compared to you
Even a god is weak

You're everything
You're everything we fear we might
destroy
You're everything we fear

I know you change
I know you change each time
Each time I look
Each time I look away

The best of all
The best of all the world has ever seen
The best of all the world

I want to keep
I want to keep this time, this love,
this us
I want to keep this time

I know you change
I know you change each time
Each time I look
Each time I look away

18 **Instrumental IV**

19 **A field of snow**

I see you here, all clear and all aglow,
in light beyond the light of every day –
as if we lay upon a field of snow.

And I will watch each moment as you
grow
to catch the merest hint of might and
may –
I see you here, all clear and all aglow
as if we lay upon a field of snow.

I love you more than you will ever
know,
because my words are breath that
floats away –
as if we lay upon a field of snow.

And when the dark engulfs me from
below
you dazzle like a firework display –
I see you here, all clear and all aglow
as if we lay upon a field of snow.

I know the thaw will come, and time
will flow,
but now I fear no death and no decay –
I see you here, all clear and all aglow,
as if we lay upon a field of snow.



ZOE KNIGHTON

Zoe is a founding member of Flinders Quartet, one of Australia's finest chamber ensembles. Flinders Quartet tours regionally, nationally and internationally as well as performing in their own celebrated subscription series. The group has commissioned many works and continues to be a champion of Australian Chamber music through their composer development program.

"Flinders Quartet... whose players give such care and unanimity of musical thought to Australian Chamber Music" *Peter McCallum, Sydney Morning Herald*

Her solo work has resulted in seven releases on the Move label. "Knighton has produced a reading of great artistic integrity." *Gordon Kerry*

"She radiates confidence in her work and participates with personality and no little finesse. "Well worth hearing for the pleasure given through this player's familiar warmth and honesty of musical character." *Clive O'Connell*

In addition to her performance activities, Zoe is in high demand as an educator through FQ's work with the John Noble Quartet Program and her own private teaching.

SONYA LIFSCHITZ

Praised by the New York Times and The Age for her "dynamic" and "powerful" performances, and by the Woodstock Times for her "miraculous keyboard technique and musicianship", Ukrainian-born pianist Sonya Lifschitz is internationally recognised as one of Australia's most innovative, fearless and fiercely creative musical voices. In 2016-2018 seasons,

Sonya made a critically-acclaimed solo debut in one of New York's most prestigious concert series, the BargeMusic, with other highlights including a piano duo tour of the USA with renowned pianist Lisa Moore; solo and chamber music performances at the Banff Centre (Canada), the Melbourne Recital Centre's Salon: Solo, Local Heroes and Spotlight series, City Recital Hall Angel Place, and the Melbourne (MIAF), Adelaide (AF), Canberra (CIMF), Darwin, Port Fairy, Metropolis, MONAFOMA, St. John's Feast of Music and Australian Piano Duo Festivals.



Her recent performance of the world premiere "Stalin's Piano" by Robert Davidson at the Canberra International Music Festival received a 4.5 stars review in the Limelight Magazine, and a recent performance of Larry Sitsky's piano trio, Sandakan, commissioned by her ensemble Press, Play, received the Melbourne Recital Centre's Contemporary Masters Award for the best performance of new work. Sonya's performances are regularly broadcast by ABC Classic FM, ABC Radio National, and 3MBS and she has appeared on radio in interviews with Andrew Ford and Margaret Throsby.

A fierce advocate for new music, Sonya has commissioned and premiered works by such leading Australian composers as Larry Sitsky,

Kate Neil, Damian Barbler and Robert Davidson and is the artistic co-director of award-winning contemporary ensemble Press, Play. A passionate collaborator, Sonya has worked with Australia's top performers, including Lisa Moore, Stephen Emmerson, Joe Chindamo, Miwako Abe, Caroline Henbest, Vanessa Tomlinson, Topology, the Kransky Sisters, Christine Johnston, and members of the Flinders Quartet, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony and Queensland Symphony Orchestras. A Fulbright Scholar, Sonya holds a PhD from the University of Melbourne and is currently Lecturer and in Performance at the University of NSW and a regular presenter on ABC Classic FM. www.sonyalifschitz.com

GIAN SLATER

Gian is a prolific vocalist and composer with an approach that incorporates wordless singing and improvisation, songwriting; electronics and extended vocal techniques; new music and contemporary composition and collaborations with theatre and dance practitioners. She has released eight albums of her original music, and has featured on many projects and recordings for acclaimed artists.

She has been a multiple finalist in the prestigious Freedman Fellowship, Melbourne Music Prize and Bell Awards. She was the recipient of the MJFF Apra Composers Commission, Creative Australia Fellowship and the PBS Young Elder of Jazz.

Gian formed her vocal ensemble, Invenio in 2010 who have performed seven of her large scale works, released two albums and have collaborated with Barney McAll, Lior, Chamber Made Opera, Robert Jarvis and Rawcus Theatre Company.

Gian is also a long-time passionate educator and lecturer in Voice, Jazz and Improvisation at Melbourne and Monash Universities.





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