

Richard Peter Maddox

# Australian Songs



Samantha Smith • *soprano*  
Richard Peter Maddox • *piano*  
Graham Maddox • *oboe*



Samantha Smith

### Four Songs for Soprano

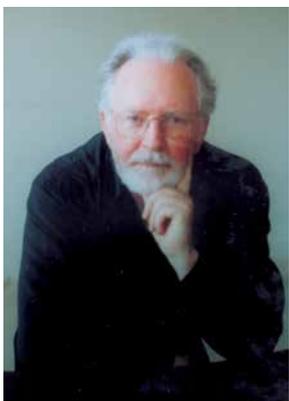
- 1 *The Pear Tree* 4'48"
- 2 *Bargain Basement* 3'32"
- 3 *Sleight-of-hand* 2'29"
- 4 *Sonnet XVIII* 2'47"

### Four Archaic Songs

- 5 *In Praise Of Art* 2'13"
- 6 *To Saint Mary Magdalen* 2'43"
- 7 *A Prayer to the Holy Trinity* 1'52"
- 8 *Blow, blow thou winter winde* 1'55"

### Five Australian Songs

- 9 *Botany Bay* 2'54"  
[the innocent youth is condemned to transportation]
- 10 *Moreton Bay* 3'11"  
[he describes the horrors of the penal system]
- 11 *Click Go the Shears* 2'33"  
[he survives to become an itinerant worker]
- 12 *The Streets of Forbes* 2'46"  
[he loses all and becomes a bushranger]
- 13 *Waltzing Matilda* 3'36"  
[under persecution he takes his own life]



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### Letters from Armidale

- 14 *Lovely Day* 0'57"
- 15 *Figs* 0'53"
- 16 *Letters* 1'53"
- 17 *News Flashes* 0'47"
- 18 *Rain* 1'12"

### The Stranger in My Skin \*

- 19 *Stranger* 4'13"
- 20 *Looking Down From Bridges* 4'51"
- 21 *The Swimming-Pool* 1'51"
- 22 *Bedroom Conversations* 2'25"
- 23 *A Peasant Idyll* 2'46"



Graham Maddox

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# Australian Songs

Samantha Smith  
*soprano*

Richard Peter Maddox  
*piano*

Graham Maddox  
*oboe \**

Recorded on 8 and 10 September 1998  
in the Newcastle Conservatorium  
Auditorium, Australia.  
Piano by Stuart and Sons.

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## Four Songs for Soprano

### 1 *The Pear Tree* (Dame Mary Gilmore)

“What be you a-lookin’ at, Emily Ann,  
Starin’ with your eyes all set?”

“I bin seein’ a ghost, Amanda,  
And I be a-seein’ it yet.”

“Where was it you seen it, Emily Ann?”

“It was hung on the big pear tree;  
I seen a ghost, Amanda,  
And the ghost it said it was me.

“Put your hand on my heart, Amanda,  
Feel of the life of it there;  
For the ghost was hung on the big pear  
tree,  
It had my eyes, and my hair.”

“O moon that blanches the grass,  
Why is the tree so white?”

There is a bird in the tree,  
Was never a bird so white!  
Was never a bird so white,  
But its head bends over,  
There, where it hangs in the tree,  
Dead for a lover.

“O moonlight sheeting the grass,  
What will cover her there?”

There will be frost on the tree,  
And frost on her hair.

“O white moon turn from that tree,  
Shine not so clear and high,  
She was too young for frost on her hair,  
She was too young to die!”

Fourteen Men, *Angus & Robertson*  
1954, © ETT Imprint

### 2 *Bargain Basement* (Frederick T. Macartney)

Not there, my dear, not there;  
this way—down the stair.  
Have you a line of hillocks and some  
white  
absurd young lambs, all wool, and light  
as leaping air?

No, sir—sorry!...

Alright, don’t worry.

You keep, perhaps  
some inexpensive scraps  
of early green  
springtime sateen,  
with colour partly lost  
in folds of frost,  
prinked with those flowers that smell  
so sweetly?—I know them well  
but can’t recall the name:

I saw them somewhere a month ago.

Unfortunately, madam, no...

Ah, what a shame!

I say, I’d like a length of thin  
pale sea-water to wear next to the skin.  
None? A creek, then?—with embroideries  
of eucalypt trees,  
the soldierly sort that gets  
dignity from its golden epaulets.

No, sir, impossible....

Oh, well—

Then, do you stock  
that delicate sort of frock  
now worn by blossoming orchards, thin,  
wide and airy, like a crinoline?

No, madam, no; but I might find...

O, never mind.

Come on, my dear:  
there’s nothing for us here.  
Thank goodness, we still have, in the Lay  
By  
(for what it’s worth  
when we two die)  
that remnant double-width of damaged  
earth.

Modern Australian Poetry ed. *H.M.*  
*Green*, Melbourne University Press  
1946, © *J.M. Auld*

### 3 *Sleight-of-hand* (Bruce Dawe)

Especially I like the bit where  
they take the sun away  
by sliding a cloud hinged to a hill  
over it late in the day  
—it is so nicely done, this part,  
barely noticeable until  
it is, well, *over*...

I like particularly  
the humility in the skill  
that would much rather dodge  
the embarrassing applause,  
and under the finger-tented  
cloth gradually withdraws  
until there is only the shadowy  
stage, the hat, cloak, cane,  
the tumbler of still water,  
and last but not least, the plain  
gesture of reversal even now  
returning to scarves  
of the most fluid silk the world’s  
pocketful of doves.

Sometimes Gladness, *Longman*  
*Cheshire* 1978, © *Addison Wesley*  
*Longman*

#### 4 *Sonnet XVIII* (William Shakespeare)

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate;  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of  
May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a  
date;  
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven  
shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;  
And every fair from fair sometime  
declines,  
By chance or natures changing course  
untrimm'd;  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou  
owest,  
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his  
shade,  
While in eternal lines thou growest;  
So long as men can breathe,  
or eyes can see,  
So long lives this,  
and this gives life to thee.  
Complete Works, *Rex Library*, 1973

These were almost my first attempt at song-writing. They were not conceived as a cycle, but were grouped together for convenience. I subsequently learned that it was not necessary to make the music as florid as possible. They represent four experimental attempts to grapple with the problem of combining words and music. Each proposes a different solution, but common to them all is the notion that a

composer who adds music to an existing poem must pay a great deal of respect to the words which the poet has chosen and organised with such care. In some places I have tried for the Renaissance ideal of "word-painting"; in others I have been more concerned with overall mood-painting.

'The Pear Tree' is the simplest of the four, I suppose because the simplicity of the story did not call for over-elaboration. In 'Bargain Basement' the rich imagery of Macartney's poem seemed to demand a fairly rich setting. Bruce Dawe's 'Sleight-of-hand' was originally published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and I was again struck by the poet's imagery. To try and create a sense of mystery and disorientation I set this in a 7/4 time-signature. Unfortunately, the one who ended up being most disoriented was the pianist! Shakespeare's poetry has always fascinated me, and the sonnet 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day' virtually wrote itself as a song.

The following note to 'The Pear Tree' was written by Dame Mary Gilmore:

"When I was a child there was a young girl employed as kitchen help at Tenandra Park, then a station belonging to Edward Beveridge. Everyone liked this girl. She was about sixteen and was courted by a young man on the place. Suddenly the man disappeared, and though the girl

said nothing she was seen to droop. One night, to the surprise of the two elder women in the kitchen, it being the middle of the week and not Saturday, she took a bath "all over", and put on everything clean, even to a white frock and flounced petticoat she had saved for special occasions. In the morning, out in the frost, they found her hanged on the big pear-tree in the orchard. Then they knew why she had taken a bath, and why she had dressed in white. 'She wanted to go clean and all in white to her Maker', said the elder women.

"When the moon was full, the story was that her ghost could sometimes be seen between the trees, or where she had hanged herself. As a child, when staying at Tenandra, I used to peer out the window at night, looking for the ghost. I never saw the ghost, but the moonlight was so white it was terrifying."

#### Four Archaic Songs

##### 5 *In Praise Of Art* (Michelangelo Buonarotti, translated by Paul Stenhouse)

How is it, my love, that as we humans  
know  
By long experience, an image carved in  
stone  
Of mountain, hard as iron, survives alone  
When craftsmen by age to ashes are  
brought low?  
Sculptor to sculpted rock must bow, and  
go

Like Nature to Art, and as Victor it  
enthroned.  
The corruption of Time and Death when  
sown  
Bear little fruit where Art is King; for so  
Can I give us both long life, not flesh and  
bone  
But faces carved in marble, or colour  
bright.  
Each of us will I save from everlasting  
night,  
So that a thousand years beyond it will be  
known  
How lovely was your face, how harrowed  
mine,  
How right my eyes from love of you to  
shine.

translation © Paul Stenhouse

**6** *To Saint Mary Magdalen*  
(Henry Constable)

Blessed Offendour: who thyself hast try'd  
How far a synner differs from a Saynt,  
Joyne thy wet eyes with teares of my  
complaint,  
While I sighe for that grave for which thou  
cry'd.  
No longer let my synfull sowle abyde  
In feaver of thy first desyres faynte:  
But lett that love which last thy hart did  
taynt  
With pangs of thy repentance pierce my  
syde.  
So shall my sowle no foolish vyrgyn bee  
With empty lampe, but lyke a Magdalen  
Beare for oyntment box a breast with oyle  
of grace:

And so the zeale, which then shall burne  
in mee  
May make my hart lyke to a lampe  
appere,  
And in my spouses pallace give me place.

**7** *A Prayer to the Holy Trinity*  
(Richard Stanyhurst)

Trinity blessed, deitee coequal,  
Unitee sacred, God one eeke in essence,  
Yeeld to thy servaunt, pitifully calling  
Merciful heering.  
Vertuous living did I long relinquish,  
Thy wyl and precepts miserablye  
scorning,  
Graunt to mee, sinful pacient, repenting,  
Helthful amendment.  
Blessed I judge hym, that in hurt is healed:  
Cursed I know hym, that in helth is  
harmed:  
Thy physick therefore toe me, wretch  
unhappy,  
Send, mye Redeemer.  
Glorye too God the father, and his onlye  
Son,  
The protectoure of us earthlye sinners,  
Thee sacred spirit, laborers refreshing,  
Still be renowned. Amen.

**8** *Blow, blow thou winter winde*  
(William Shakespeare)

Blow, blow thou winter winde,  
Thou art not so unkinde  
As man's ingratitude;  
Thy tooth is not so keene,

Because thou art not seene,  
Although thy breath be rude.  
Heigh ho, sing heigh ho unto the greene  
holly,  
Most friendship is fayning; most Loving  
mere folly:  
Then heigh ho the holly  
This Life is most jolly.

Freize, freize thou bitter skie  
That dost not bight so nigh,  
As benefitts forgot:  
Though thou the waters warpe,  
Thy sting is not so sharpe,  
As friend remembered not.  
Heigh ho...

These songs were the result of a  
commission from Naomi Senff, who  
deluged me with a sheaf of poems from  
various sources. I selected from the pile  
the ones that appealed to me most, and  
this set is the result.

*In Praise of Art*

This setting of Buonarotti's Rima no. 239  
reflects my memory of the Michelangelo  
sculptures in the Louvre, Paris,  
collectively titled *The Prisoners*. I saw  
the figures struggling to escape from the  
stone in which they were held captive,  
and this image suggested the capture of  
the music by the pedal note D and the  
struggling accompaniment figure which  
runs through most of the song. In my  
mind, this struggling reflected humanity's

(ultimately futile!) struggle against the ravages of time. In the last two lines of the song the escape is achieved.

### *To Saint Mary Magdalen*

Once again, the poem recalled a visual image, this time a wooden sculpture of an emaciated Mary Magdalene returning after years in the wilderness, which I had seen in Florence. The opening gesture in the piano accompaniment suggests the idea of flagellation, which is gradually softened by the “pangs of repentance”.

### *A Prayer to the Holy Trinity*

The energy of this poem seemed to require the sort of bouncy setting which can be heard here, and the short lines at the end of each stanza suggested a musical rhyme. The exuberance of the song is capped by the ecstatic repetition of the final “Amen”.

### *Blow, blow thou winter winde*

I have tried to match the cynicism of Shakespeare’s well-known text (from *As You Like It*) with a setting which uses a sort of *moto perpetuo* in the accompaniment to suggest both the fierceness of the winter wind and the inevitability of human frailty. The *moto perpetuo* seems to be about to start a third round when the song suddenly ends with the shout of “jolly!”

## Five Australian Songs

### 9 *Botany Bay*

Come all young men of learning good,  
a warning take by me;  
I’ll have you quit night-walking and shun  
bad company;  
I’ll have you quit night-walking, or else  
you’ll rue the day,  
And you will be transported and sent to  
Botany Bay.

I was brought up in London town, a place  
I know full well,  
Brought up by honest parents, the truth to  
you I’ll tell,  
Brought up by honest parents who loved  
me tenderly,  
Till I became a roving blade to prove my  
destiny.

My character was taken and I was sent to  
jail,  
My parents tried to clear me but nothing  
would prevail,  
‘Twas at our Rutland sessions the judge to  
me did say:  
“The jurys found you guilty, you must go  
to Botany Bay.”

To see my poor old father, as he stood at  
the bar,  
Likewise my dear old mother, her old gray  
locks she tore,  
And in tearing of her old gray locks these  
words to me she did say:

“O son! O son! What hast thou done?  
Thou art bound for Botany Bay.”

### 10 *Moreton Bay*

One summer morning as I went walking  
by Brisbane Waters I chanced to stray;  
I heard a prisoner his fate bewailing, as on  
the sunny river bank he lay:  
I am a native of Erin’s island, and  
banished now from my native shore;  
They tore me from my aged parents, and  
from the maiden that I do adore.

Ive been a prisoner at Port Macquarie, at  
Norfolk Island and Emu Plains,  
At Castle Hill and at curst Toongabbie—  
at all those settlements I’ve worked in  
chains.  
But of all the places of condemnation and  
penal settlements of New South Wales,  
To Moreton Bay I have found no equal,  
excessive tyranny each day prevails.

For three long years I was beastly treated,  
and heavy irons on my legs I wore;  
My back from flogging was lacerated, and  
oft-times painted with my crimson  
gore!  
And many a man, from downright  
starvation lies mould’ring now  
underneath the clay;  
And Captain Logan, he had us mangled at  
the triangles\* of Moreton Bay.

Like the Egyptians and ancient Hebrews  
we were oppressed under Logan’s  
yoke,

Till a native black, lying there in ambush,  
did deal this tyrant his mortal stroke!  
My fellow prisoners, be exhilarated that  
all such monsters such a death may find!  
And when from bondage we're liberated,  
our former sufferings shall fade from  
mind.

\* *Triangular wooden frames to which  
offenders were tied to receive the lash*

### **11** *Click Go the Shears*

Down by the shed the old shearer stands,  
Clutching his shears in his thin bony  
hands,  
Eagerly he watches the bare-bellied yo\*,  
Lordy if he gets her won't he make the  
ringer\*\* go!

Click go the shears, boys,  
click, click, click,  
Wide is his blow and his hands  
move quick.  
The ringer looks around and is  
beaten by a blow  
And curses the old snagger\*\*\*  
with the bare-bellied yo.  
In the middle of the floor in his cane-  
bottom chair  
Sits the boss of the board with his eyes  
everywhere,  
Notes well each fleece as it comes to the  
screen,  
Paying strict attention that it's taken off  
clean.  
Click go the shears...

The tar-boy is there and a-waiting in  
demand,  
With his blackened tar-pot in his tarry  
hand.  
Sees one old sheep with a cut upon its  
back—  
Here is what he's waiting for, it's "Tar  
here, Jack!"  
Click go the shears...

Shearing is all over and we've all got our  
cheques;  
Roll up your swags, boys, we're off on the  
tracks.  
The first pub we come to, it's there we'll  
have a spree,  
And everyone that comes along, it's  
"Come and drink with me!"  
Click go the shears...

\* *Ewe*  
\*\* *The champion shearer*  
\*\*\* *The loafer of the shed*

### **12** *The Streets of Forbes*

Come all you Lachlan lads, and a  
sorrowful tale I'll tell,  
Concerning of a hero bold who through  
misfortune fell.  
His name it was Ben Hall, a man of good  
renown,  
Who was hunted from his station and like  
a dog shot down.  
Three years he roamed the roads, and he  
showed the traps\* some fun;

A thousand pound was on his head, with  
Gilbert and John Dunn.  
Ben parted from his comrades, the  
outlaws did agree  
To give away bush-ranging and to cross  
the briny sea.

Ben went to Goobang Creek, found a  
friend to help his need;  
But this friend had read of the big reward,  
and his sould was filled with greed.  
'Twas early in the morning, upon the fifth  
of May,  
When the seven police surrounded him as  
fast asleep he lay!

Bill Dargin\*\* he was chosen to shoot the  
outlaw dead;  
The troopers then fired madly and filled  
him full of lead!  
They rolled him in a blanket and strapped  
him to his prad\*\*\*,  
Then they led him through the streets of  
Forbes, just to show the prize they had!

\* *Police*  
\*\* *An Aboriginal tracker working for the police*  
\*\*\* *Horse*

### **13** *Waltzing Matilda*

Once a jolly swagman\* camped by a  
billabong\*\*  
Under the shade of a coolibah tree,  
And he sang as he watched and waited till  
his billy\*\*\* boiled,  
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with  
me."

Waltzing Matilda, waltzing Matilda,  
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with  
me.

Down came a jumbuck\*\*\*\* to drink at the  
billabong,  
Up jumped the swagman and grabbed  
him with glee,  
And he sang as he stowed that jumbuck in  
his tucker-bag,  
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with  
me."  
Waltzing Matilda...

Down came the squatter\*\*\*\*\* mounted on  
his thoroughbred,  
Up rode the troopers, one, two, three:  
"Where's that jolly jumbuck you've got in  
your tucker-bag?"  
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with  
me."  
Waltzing Matilda...

Up jumped the swagman and sprang into  
the billabong:  
"You'll never take me alive", said he,  
And his ghost may be heard as you pass  
by that billabong,  
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with  
me."  
Waltzing Matilda...

\* *An itinerant rural worker*

\*\* *A small water-course*

\*\*\* *Water can*

\*\*\*\* *Sheep*

\*\*\*\*\* *Land-owner*

This set arose from a commission from the  
singer Dorothy Williams, then resident in  
Belgium, for a setting of Waltzing Matilda  
in (as she put it) "the style of Benjamin  
Britten"(!) to be sung at a reception at  
the Australian Ambassador's residence  
in Brussels. After I had completed this  
arrangement, it was suggested to me  
by friends that I should make a set of  
arrangements of Australian songs. 'Click  
Go the Shears' was an obvious choice,  
and so too was 'Moreton Bay', which  
I have always thought had one of the  
loveliest melodies of all folk-songs. I  
found an unusual version of 'Botany Bay'  
in Ron Edwards' collection of Australian  
songs, *The Overlander Song Book*, where  
it is included as 'Botany Bay 2', and my  
brother Graham suggested 'The Streets of  
Forbes'.

I have tried in these settings to reflect  
the overall mood of the songs with  
accompaniments that underline their  
emotional content.

## Letters from Armidale

### 14 *Lovely Day*

It's a beautiful day.  
The cabbage moth is floating in the grass.  
Eenie's\* fertilizing the flowers.  
The sun is reflected pale on the roof.  
The gum-boots have heated up to twenty-  
eight degrees in the shade on the foot!  
Because they're black and soak up the sun.

And I can just see the shadow of a bee  
Checking my head to see if there's pollen.  
Lovely day!

\* *One of the dogs*

### 15 *Figs*

The wattle-birds and silvereyes and  
sparrows are having a ball,  
an autumn final fling, in the ripening fig-  
tree.  
They are all quite polite and take the top-  
most figs,  
leaving the lower ones for us.  
It's a particularly good crop this year.  
Well, a bad year for cows, a good one for  
figs.  
C'est la vie.  
The sun never sets on an artist's work.  
Unlike other professions.

### 16 *Letters*

A letter has its charms.  
It's one of the first things we learn to do  
with our early writing skills—  
send a letter to Granma,  
write a letter to the neighbours—  
so message sending goes back a long way.  
Maybe a blanket and a good, smoky fire,  
or one of those very long Swiss horns,  
a conch, a cow-bell,  
or a flaming arrow?  
How would I send this letter?  
Tightly folded up in a pearl of an oyster.

## 17 News Flashes

We're all fine.

Ellie's off to Trial Bay for the last week of school.

Star\* got shaved yesterday, and obviously needs to go on a diet.

(Eenie\*\* didn't recognize her!)

The horses are fat and friendly.

The cattle are fat, but not as friendly as the horses.

I'm still drawing!

\* *One of the dogs*

\*\* *The other dog*

## 18 Rain

Raving in light, quick whispers;

And drenching the already damp ground.

I pull in rain's kite to my empty heart,

Never forgetting it was you who brought the string!

These songs use for texts extracts from letters that my friend Mary Buck wrote to me while I was living in Sydney. The first and last were deliberately written as poems, while the other three are simply part of the exchange of information and comment that goes on between friends who correspond over a period. In each case I have tried to match the ideas of the text with music that will reflect or comment on them. 'Lovely Day' is set in a jaunty kind of rhythm and with a degree of dissonance that seems to suit

the extroverted nature of the words. 'Figs' called for a more fluid, flight-like setting. 'Letters' is set in a fairly remote way, to match the distance the letters had to cover. 'News Flashes' represents my homage to the Shostakovich of the *Satires* song-cycle: the piano accompaniment repeats the same ideas almost endlessly, just as family news (and for that matter, television news) endlessly repeats the same trivia. The last song is in a different, more serious vein, reflecting the changes in our relationship that were taking place in the middle of 1992.

The first song, 'Lovely Day' was written on 29 January 1993, during a visit to Armidale. The last, 'Rain' was written as a Christmas present, and completed on 24 December 1994. It was then that I decided to complete a group of songs, and numbers 2 ('Figs') and 4 ('News Flashes') were written between Christmas and 31 December 1994, with the third, 'Letters' being added on 31 January 1995.

## The Stranger in My Skin

### 19 Stranger

"I had a dream that all those images that tell me what I am or what I should be (madonna, goddess, Barbie Doll,

Miss Pretty, *femme fatale*, and Eve, and little Eva, Barbarella, whore, and kitchen-maid) all fell away like so much morbid flesh,

and there I stood, for the first time:  
taller, shorter,  
broader, thinner, fairer, darker, intensely  
other than  
the me that posed forever in my life  
(Decoré-blonded,  
Berlei-moulded, Factor-ized, for sale).  
I felt no guilt for being what I was,  
no shame that I no longer fitted neatly  
the Iron Maiden men had made for me.  
It was as if I'd taken possession of  
myself at last, the stranger in my skin,  
and stood there in the dream-wind,  
shivering, free."

### 20 Looking Down From Bridges

Looking down from bridges over main  
roads  
sometimes we still see troops of tiny  
children  
tentatively skipping blue-metal across  
black water,  
racing paddle-pop sticks through the  
algae  
or wrestling among aniseed bushes  
—another kind to those neat T-shirted and  
stubbied kids  
we turn loose at appropriate restaurants  
and parks  
to ponder the silent semis and the pet  
wallaby tethered  
to a FREE BALLOONS sign. Looking  
down we see  
an earlier world living on in the interstices  
of the present,  
like green wheat in the gutters

of the bulk feed store or the odd shy  
weatherboard  
holding out between factories.

If we were to spit  
from the rails of our world into theirs  
the water would ripple, if we took off our  
shoes and walked  
in the uncut grass there would be cobbler-  
pegs in our cuffs,  
and if we sang to each other through the  
silted-up culverts  
there would be an echo of sorts, but what  
broken-picketed fences  
would we scramble through as these do,  
dodging the raised  
voice in the lowered evening, and what  
other large distances  
would we need to cross, we, us, and ours,  
to be truly there, torn jumpers and tousled  
hair,  
on the old paths embedded with bits of  
broken china?

### **21** *The Swimming-Pool*

Every summer we construct the sea  
from rusting bits and pieces specially kept  
under the house through three indifferent  
seasons.

The floor of the back-yard ocean slopes  
despite  
excavations that gave us a nominal hill  
converted to a rockery...

Each morning  
we patrol its limits, scooping out  
the overnight freight of soggy insects  
(moths, midges, mosquitoes, beetles,

flying ants), puzzling over  
the latest delinquency of the filter pump,  
the first rumour of algae on the PVC...

Our dream:  
the simple one of holding in one place  
by nuts and bolts and galvabond and tape  
10,000 litres of town water hydrophaned  
as carefully as supreme incompetence  
can hope to effectuate, and so sustain  
within the compass of too brief a season  
a Mediterranean of splashing laughter,  
a mare nostrum of sleek happiness, a con  
to cheat the years, to sucker the smug sun,  
and give the forks to all necessity.

### **22** *Bedroom Conversations*

Young girls entering their  
parents' bedroom eager for  
conversation of the most cosmic  
kind "Mum, I was wondering...", or  
"Mum, remember how you said...?"  
pause suddenly  
as they pass before the mirror, their eyes  
flicking like tiddlers into that  
bland pool "just one flick and they're  
gone"  
finning busily in the depthless element  
of their vanity, their restless  
search for reassurance,  
while parents,  
in that other world beyond, scoop  
patiently  
at the surface, smilingly murmur: "Well,  
go on...  
you were wondering..." and: "As you  
were saying..."

But to no end—all conversations  
sink under the weight of  
abstraction, of wiggling dreams from  
which,  
only occasionally, they rise  
with experimental eyebrows, lips still  
framing  
cutenesses in between answering:  
"Mmmnn?...  
What's that, Mum?... I didn't hear you?..."

### **23** *A Peasant Idyll*

Love, like trouble, steps out of the thick  
forest  
and stands in our presence, gentle and  
trembling.  
We were strolling along, our axe on our  
shoulder,  
grumbling the rough lyrics of peasantry,  
the blade of the sun slicing the boughs,  
the song of the birds like the song of small  
thieves  
who have absconded from the counting-  
house  
to tally henceforth only leaves.  
In our nostrils the broth of air  
was delightful, murmuring of home,  
when there, in a sudden clearing, on the  
soft grass,  
you stood, your eyes as sweet as spring  
water,  
the birds fallen silent, the air still, only the  
sunlight  
bothering us with its wry syllables.  
*Bruce Dawe, Towards Sunrise,  
Longman Cheshire  
1986, © Addison Wesley Longman*

This cycle was the result of a commission from Mary Buck. I had for some time been captivated by the poetry of Bruce Dawe, so it was natural that I went to his collection *Towards Sunrise*, which I had come across not long before. Mabs responded positively to my selection of five poems, and was especially pleased with 'Stranger', the poem which gave the song-cycle its title. In retrospect, I realised that there was a thread running through the five poems, in the form of the examination of various kinds of relationships. The first, 'Stranger', deals with the singer's relationship with herself; the second, 'Looking Down From Bridges', with a nostalgic relationship with the past (especially one's own childhood); the third, 'Bedroom Conversations', with the relationship with a growing daughter; the fourth, 'The Swimming Pool', with a family in the seasonal activity of reconstructing the backyard pool; and the last, 'A Peasant Idyll', with the coming of love.

## The Performers

**Samantha Smith** was born in Sydney, and grew up in the Rocky River region near Armidale. She completed her Bachelor of Music Honours degree at the University of Newcastle in 1997, becoming the first music graduate in the University's history to be awarded a University Medal. She was also a part-time lecturer in Musicianship while completing her degree

with first class Honours.

Samantha has been a soloist under many conductors at the University of Newcastle Conservatorium, including the late Professor Michael Dudman, John O'Donnell, Christopher Allan, Philip Mathias, Robert Constable and Nigel Butterley. In 1996 Samantha performed the leading role of Nero in Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea*, directed by Yaron Lifschitz with musical direction by Robert Constable.

She has been the recipient of a number of scholarships during her years at the Conservatorium, including a *Vice-Chancellor's Honours Scholarship* in 1997, and is the current holder of the *Doris Smith Scholarship* for advanced vocal tuition. She is continuing her post-graduate studies in opera at the University of Newcastle, with vocal tuition from Christopher Allan and Ghillian Sullivan, and thesis supervision from Rosalind Halton.

**Richard Peter Maddox** was born in Apia, Western Samoa, and grew up in Sydney, NSW. He completed a Bachelor of Commerce degree at the University of New South Wales in 1962. Following a number of years working as a company accountant and controller, he decided to leave the world of commerce, taking a Bachelor of Music from the University of London by external study in 1973.

In 1977 he completed his MA in Music at the University of Sydney, and embarked for Los Angeles to study for the PhD in Music at the University of California, Los Angeles. In 1982 he returned to Australia to take up a lectureship at the University of New England in Armidale, NSW, and subsequently completed his PhD in 1987. In 1991 he retired from the University of New England to pursue his musical interests as performer and composer.

**Graham Maddox** was also born in Apia, Western Samoa, and grew up in Sydney. Besides pursuing a distinguished academic career (currently he is a Professor of Politics in the University of New England), he studied oboe on an orchestral scholarship with Ian Wilson at the Sydney Conservatorium, and with Neil Black, John Anderson and Evelyn Rothwell in London. He has performed widely, and has given many first performances of works by his brother.

Graham is also a talented conductor, and has directed many oratorio and other performances with the Armidale Choral Society, the New England Sinfonia, and the Armidale Symphony Orchestra.

## Acknowledgments

Grateful thanks are due to the copyright owners listed below for permission to use and reproduce the following texts:

To ETT Imprint, P.O. Box 157, Kings Cross, NSW, 2011 for permission to use 'The Pear Tree' by Dame Mary Gilmore.

To Mr. J.M. Auld for permission to use 'Bargain Basement' by Frederick T. Macartney.

To Addison Wesley Longman, P.O. Box 1024, South Melbourne, Vic, 3205, for permission to use Bruce Dawe's poems 'Sleight-of-hand' from *Sometimes Gladness* and *Stranger*, 'Looking Down from Bridges', 'The Swimming-Pool', 'Bedroom Conversations', and 'A Peasant Idyll' from *Towards Sunrise*.

To Dr. Paul Stenhouse, MSC, translator, for permission to use the translation of Michelangelo Buonarotti's Rima 239, 'How Is It, My Love'.

## Recording details and credits

Recorded 8 and 10 September 1998 in the Newcastle Conservatorium Auditorium.

Piano by Stuart and Sons.

Recorded by Nigel Kentish and Nathan Scott.

Mastered by Barry Henninger, Soundview Studios.

Cover illustration by James White, *Botany Bay*.

Artist photos by K. Sakora (Samantha Smith),

Rachel McSweeney (Richard Peter Maddox) and S. Smith (Graham Maddox).

Annotations by Richard Peter Maddox

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