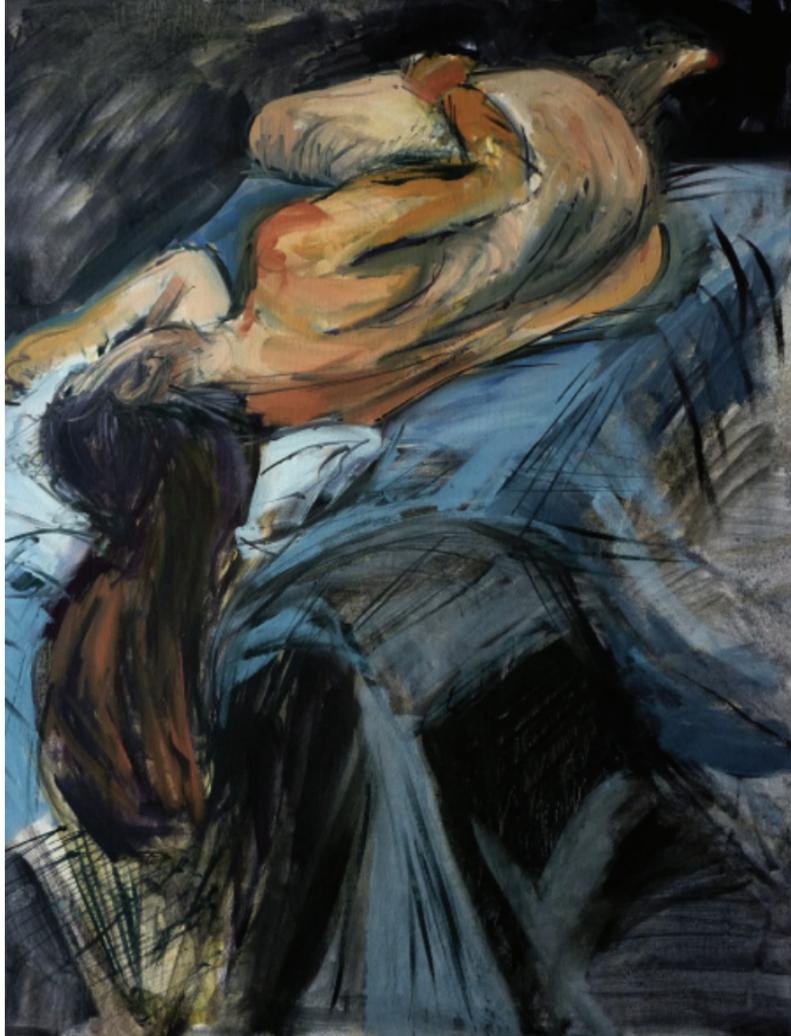


love
is...

**words and
music**

by

sounds like



NOTES ON THE PIECES

Introduction: *Adelita (Francisco Tarrega)*

Kevin Drake plays a piece for the Classical guitar by the Spanish Romantic composer, Tarrega

How High the Moon:

Love without hope (words: Robert Graves, music: Edward Lee)

A gem of economic writing, it was first noticed by Edward when it was one of the *Poems on the Underground* series on the London Underground. It must have given pleasure to countless commuters.

How High the Moon (words: Nancy Hamilton, music: Lewis Morgan)

We decided to do this piece when Frances suggested that it could also be presented as a poem in its own right. Originally written for the 1940 musical *Two for the Show*, this is one of the great jazz standards, sung here by Jan.

The Kiss: Part 1

A short anthology of views of this popular activity from, in order, Thomas Carlyle, Heinrich Heine, Helen Rowland, and finally two from the irrepressible Anon.

'Tis True, 'Tis Day

To His Coy Mistress (words: Andrew Marvell, music: John Dowland)

We included this because it is one of Jan's favourite poems. In performance she introduces it as "One of the best and possibly the longest chat-up lines you'll ever hear"

The Birthday (words: Christina Rossetti, music: Edward Lee)

Edward found that this soaring and evocative poem powerfully suggested music to underpin Frances' reading. The music was created from John Dowland's *My Lord Willoughby's Welcome Home*, extracts of which, played by Kevin, form part of the texture.

The Sunne Rising (John Donne)

This is the opening of Donne's poem , setting the mood for the next item.

Breake of Day (John Donne)

The poem is a little unusual in that it brings out the woman's perspective, which is wittily expressed by Donne

To Wed or Not to Wed

Market Price (words: Mary Horton, music: Edward Lee)

Mary was a little known but very able poet, who was a neighbour of Frances and Edward. Sadly, we only became aware of her gifts fairly shortly before her death. This poem distills much insight and an intense understanding of relationships into a small space. The item opens with *Valentine's Day*, a solo piano composition by Edward, which was written as a gift to Mary.

Lover, Come Back to me (words : Oscar Hammerstein II, music: Sigmund Romberg)

This is another jazz standard, also expressing the unhappiness of love, originally created for the musical *The New Moon* (1928).

The Quarrel (words: Mary Horton, music: Edward Lee)

Another short but bleak insight into destructive relationships. It is framed by part of Edward's theme of the same name, which was created for the first public performance of the poem.

To wed or not to wed (Una Marson)

Una Marson was a noted Jamaican poet, who is considered to be an important pioneer of feminist perspectives. The poem expresses a modern woman's scepticism towards marriage through a witty parody of Hamlet's famous soliloquy. In the printed version she ends "with apologies to Shakespeare".

Easy Living

The Anniversarie, (words: John Donne, music: J S Bach)

The first stanza of Donne's majestic poem is framed by a slightly adapted version of the ending of the *Little Prelude no. 2*, from the *Wilhelm Friedmann Bach Notebook*, by J. S. Bach (BWV 924)

Easy Living (words: Lee Robin, music: Ralph Rainger)

Jan interprets one of the most beautiful ballads of the 30s, which originally appeared in the film of the same name (1937).

All Men Make Faults

Roses have thorns (William Shakespeare)

In these lines, which come from Sonnet 35, Shakespeare's traditional imagery still remains powerful.

The Harp Song of the Dane Women (words: Rudyard Kipling, music: Edward Lee)

Frances remembered this poem from her childhood and introduced it to Jan. Both of them felt that, despite its traditional and heroic setting, it remains very relevant to modern women. Kipling's verse is strongly metrical, but we all felt that we should resist the temptation to intone the words.

One Perfect Rose (Dorothy Parker)

The author's reputation for wit is certainly sustained here. The poem illustrates very well the capacity, found in American popular song of the first half of the last century, of not allowing the rhythms and language of everyday speech to be set aside because of the demands of a strict form.

The Mistresses (Lizzie Wylie)

Lizzie was very highly regarded as a creator of costumes for our leading drama and opera companies but only offered herself as a writer towards the end of her life. Those who knew her were well aware of her quick wit and ability to coin an apt phrase, but were unaware that she also wrote poetry for her own pleasure. This poem gives a witty but sympathetic insight into the status of "the other woman".

Take Those Lips Away

Dante and Francesca (words: Henry Longfellow, music: Edward Lee)

This item presents an incident from Canto 5 of Dante's *Inferno*. It uses a short extract from the Norton translation, but the main text uses the translation by Longfellow. Dante's narrative is based on true events which happened in Italy in about 1275. In this scene, while visiting Hell, Dante meets two lovers – Francesca, wife of the Duke of Rimini, and her brother-in-law, Paolo. Francesca explains to Dante how they came to be joined together in torment for eternity.

Take, O Take Those Lips Away (words: William Shakespeare, music: Edward Lee)

This is the only song in *Measure for Measure* (Act 4, scene 1). Shakespeare's song lyrics are deceptively simple and natural, and continue to inspire composers. The arrangement also steals a technique (the use of echo) which was fashionable at the time when the original play was written.

The Kiss: Part 2

This section was inspired by the wonderful Rodin sculpture. We start with a section from Susan K Rowse's poem *The Kiss*, followed by a different take on the marble lovers by Pelé Cox. The remaining items are a Chinese proverb , a poem by Robert Herrick, and a beautiful definition by Ingrid Bergman

Poem (words: Mary Horton, music: Edward Lee)

This short but effective poem by Mary Horton links the rare moments which can be created when writing a poem and when being with a lover. The poem is read by Frances and the words then become the lyric of a song for Jan. The backing includes live recordings by Kevin Drake, in this case on acoustic guitar, and Sergio Biseo (double bass). The hand drum part was created by Laurence Lee with samples taken from a tape of ethnic music created by the Jamaica School of Music.

When You Are Old and Grey

The Seventh Age of Love (words: Joan Bakewell)

At an earlier stage of preparing the show and CD we considered structuring the event on the theme of the "Seven Ages of Love". Though we later abandoned the idea, we did find this extract from an article by Joan Bakewell which is at the same time sobering and quietly inspiring.

Valentine's Day (words: Sylvia Wiseman)

The preceding text was chosen in part because it led to an item which we had already decided was a central part of the whole performance and of this CD. It was a moving article which Frances had found in *The Guardian*. It could be taken to embody our interest, stated below, in "words, thoughtfully, beautifully and powerfully arranged", whether or not they are "poetry".

My Funny Valentine (words: Lorenz Hart, music; Richard Rogers)

This song was chosen as an ending to Sylvia Wiseman's words, not only for its title, but for its underlying mood.

When You are Old and Grey (words: W B Yeats, music: Edward Lee)

This poem is rightly widely known and well loved. But this presents all future performers with the challenge of how to create a different but valid interpretation. We have tried to resolve this issue by using music to evoke an atmosphere, and using recording possibilities to suggest that the words are being remembered in old age.

How Do I Love Thee ?

Sonnet 29 (words: William Shakespeare, music: Edward Lee)

There have been many settings of Shakespeare's sonnets as songs, but though this arrangement ends with a sung section, our aim was to present the spoken word over music. We did not want to use music as a backcloth of sound, but instead to create a much more tightly synchronised treatment, so that in terms of rhythm the voices may be seen as instruments.

How do I love thee? (Elizabeth Barrett Browning)

This is another poem which is so popular that it is daunting to performers. Frances has opted for an interpretation which is intimate rather than grand, and leads the listener to the quiet but positive mood which we wished the final item to create.

The first time ever I saw your face (words and song line: Ewan MacColl)

This song has long been a favourite of Jan's, who performs it, as she does often at the local folk club in the Constitution Cellar, as an unaccompanied ballad. (There are short guitar interludes)

TEXTS OF POEMS NOT USUALLY AVAILABLE

Market price

Down the stalls of Cabbage Street
I bought my love a heart to eat
And dressed it on a pretty plate.

And when my love had come to dine
I told him that the heart was mine
Not picked up cheap in Bargain Lane.

But I was caught in my deceit;
Because the market heart was sweet
My lover loved my counterfeit.

Mary Horton

The Mistresses

Suffice it to say, it's Valentine's Day
And lovers are with their wives
The mistresses sit and bitch a bit
And polish their nails - and knives

"He promised the moon"
"He comes too soon"
"He hardly comes at all"
"At first it was bliss, I longed for his kiss
But now it's beginning to pall"

We had a love pact but I know for a fact
That he'll never leave his wife,
He says she's the pits, but he loves the kids,
And, in fact, he's a very good life"

"No gifts today?" "The lingerie!
Wrong shape, wrong shade, wrong size,
I wouldn't wear it any way"
"The wrong sort of surprise!"

"Did he send you flowers?"
"I waited hours for Interflora to call,
No chocs, no scent, I must be content
With a card, or nothing at all.

They sip champagne to dull the pain
And ponder their empty lives.
They comfort each other for missing their lovers
And try not to envy the wives.

Lizzie Wyllie

The Kiss (extract)

The figures of lovers steeped in passions locked embrace
The fever of these two who wear loves smile upon their face
This kiss, the whispered wet and wild...beginning of a chance
The arms that seal each moment there in fate's enveloped dance

Susan K Rowse

The Kiss – after Rodin

Kiss kiss

Kiss kiss.

Eternity isn't bliss!

Will we always be stuck like this?

Your face, my lips, your happy wrist
frozen like a butterfly

where it hurts to twist and
where the white stone pins.

Will it only ever be this?

Isn't a kiss supposed to end

And then begin?

Pelé Cox

Poem

Quietly in the night between two sleepings

As if by accident and hardly waking

We made love gently, without any talking,

A sudden poem that came without contriving.

I make few poems of such easy wording.

I think we do too little of such loving.

Mary Horton

THE PERFORMERS

Jan North (singer, reader) works for Camden Council as an Early Years Librarian. She enjoys singing all sorts of music from choral to folk, jazz and more recently a cappella. A few years ago she worked with Edward Lee and Sergio Biseo taking a music hall show, *Memories in Music*, to various community venues.

Frances Lee (reader, singer) taught for many years at the University of Westminster (originally French and later English for Foreign Students). This awakened an interest in reading poems aloud to present them to her students. She decided a few years ago to realise a long-standing ambition to sing, and is currently a member of the Cecil Sharp House Community Choir.

Ed(ward) Lee (guitars, piano, reader) who started in jazz, and first read English but later obtained a Music degree at Oxford. He spent many years in teaching and contributed significantly to the literature on music education. He has always been interested in composition and in linking words and music, both of which are demonstrated in this programme.

There is a fourth member of the team:

Kevin Drake (guitars) was first an engineer and now teaches that subject at University College London. He has a wide-ranging interest in guitar music. He regularly provides what he calls “courtly background music” for our events. Some people like it as background to socialising, and some like to listen more attentively. For both groups we find that this music creates an appropriate ambience for the show.

ABOUT SOUNDS LIKE

Sounds Like is a group which uses a pool of people from various arts to present performances of words and music.

AIMS

Our aim is to put on performances of words and music which are more accessible than many poetry events. Our basic position is that many people are put off by “poetry” which they see as something remote, impenetrable and irrelevant. Instead we feel that most poetry should be viewed first as words, thoughtfully, beautifully and powerfully arranged, which thus have an exceptional capacity for communicating insights which all can approach.

HISTORY

Edward Lee, the Director of the group, qualified in both English Literature and Music, and so it is perhaps not surprising that he has been interested in mixing the two since student days. Mostly, these were one-off occasions, originally following the poetry and jazz models of the American West Coast, but he later created events in which he used a much broader range of music.

He made one album (*Gargoyle*) with his first version of Sounds Like in the 80s. This consisted of Edwin Webb (poet), Terry Mortimer (jazz pianist, actor-musician and later National Theatre MD) and Felix Cross (guitarist, composer, and now Director of the Black Theatre group, Nitro).

The idea of a new Sounds Like group arose in the summer of 2004 to in order perform a concert of poems by local poet Mary Horton. The group have put on various events of their own since, including appearances at the increasingly noted Constitution Cellar Bar, Camden Town.

Sounds Like also welcome the opportunity of collaborating with others to present original work. This has resulted recently in two successful concerts presenting the work of the St Pancras Poets, at St Pancras Old Church. There is also an ongoing collaboration with artist Moira Jarvis, of South London Women Artists, who provides paintings as a part of the setting for performances as well as for use on the CD covers, and as a live exploration of paintings on the Elm Village Arts website.

In 2009 the group created a special performance, *Mary's Birthday* or "Vindicating the Rights of Woman" to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the first great feminist writer, Mary Wollstonecraft, leading to the cutting of a specially made birthday cake in front of Mary's tombstone. A recording is available as a free download from the Elm Village Arts website.

CONTACT US

If you wish to arrange a performance, or know someone who does, we can be reached at

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Website: www.elmvillagearts.co.uk

Other recordings of Sounds Like can be heard and downloaded free at www.elmvillagearts.co.uk

Acknowledgements

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How High the Moon:

Chappell

Lover Come Back to Me:

WB Corporation

Easy Living:

Sony/ATV Harmony

Valentine's Day (Sylvia Wiseman)

Guardian Newspapers

My Funny Valentine:

Chappell

The seven ages of love: 70s:

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