



CHANDOS

**WELCOME
JOY** A CELEBRATION
OF WOMEN'S
VOICES

CORVUS CONSORT
LOUISE THOMSON HARP



© Bill Smith

Elizabeth Poston, at her home, Rooks Nest House
(childhood home of E.M. Forster), 1979

Welcome Joy **A Celebration of Women's Voices**

Imogen Holst (1907 – 1984)

Welcome Joy and Welcome Sorrow (1950) 11:47

Six Part-Songs for Three-part Female Voices and Harp
For the Aldeburgh Festival

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1 | 1 | Welcome Joy and Welcome Sorrow. Allegretto | 1:36 |
| 2 | 2 | Teignmouth. Allegro molto | 1:43 |
| 3 | 3 | Over the Hill and over the Dale. Vivace, ma non troppo
Presto | 0:58 |
| 4 | 4 | O Sorrow. Un poco lento | 3:05 |
| 5 | 5 | Lullaby. Andante molto moderato | 2:36 |
| 6 | 6 | Shed no Tear. Allegretto | 1:30 |

Gustav Holst (1874 – 1934)

Two Eastern Pictures, H 112 (1911)

5:30

for Three- and Four-part Female Chorus and Harp

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 7 | 1 Spring. Allegretto con spirito – Meno mosso – Tempo I | 1:58 |
| 8 | 2 Summer. Allegretto – Andante – Allegretto – Andante – Allegretto – Cadenza [harp] | 3:27 |

Judith Weir (b. 1954)

9 **We sekyn here rest** (2019)

4:05

for Two- and Three-part Female Chorus and Harp

Con moto, leggiero – With a light step – With new energy

Hilary Campbell (b. 1983)

première recording

- | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 10 | Our Endless Day (2017)
for Three-part Female Chorus and Harp
Spaciously, reverentially ♩ = 50 - ♩ = 60 - ♩ = 50 | 3:45 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|

Elizabeth Poston (1905 – 1987)

première recording in this edition

- | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| An English Day-Book (1966 – 67) | | 22:49 |
| for Two-, Three-, and Four-part Female Chorus and Harp | | |
| 11 | 1 A Bellman's Song. Poco maestoso – Meno mosso | 1:24 |
| 12 | 2 Te lucis ante terminum. Plainsong, smooth and flowing – | 1:49 |
| 13 | 3 A Night Curse. Con brio – Largamente maestoso – Lento | 1:18 |
| 14 | 4 Lemady: Maying Song. Moderato – A shade quicker –
Con spirito – A tempo con grazia – Poco più mosso – Meno mosso –
Tempo I | 3:58 |
| 15 | 5 A Charm against the Bumble Bee. Moderato – Tempo giusto –
Tempo I | 3:02 |

16	6	Interlude for Harp. Molto moderato –	2:10
17	7	The Noonday Heat (Air by William Boyce, 1710–1779). Andante piacevole	2:13
18	8	Running Set: Spring. Con brio	1:40
19	9	Evening Song (The Priest's Chant). Tranquillo	1:35
20	10	Sweet Suffolk Owl. Andante semplice	2:09
21	11	A Bellman's Song (Mvt 1 abridged). Poco maestoso	0:56

Olivia M. Sparkhall (b. 1976)

première recording

22		Lux Aeterna (2018) for Two Female Choruses, Solo Soprano, and Harp Adagio	4:29
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Gemma McGregor (b. 1965)

23		Love was his meaning (2018) for Three-part Female Chorus, Solo Soprano, and Harp Andante – En pressant – Più mosso	3:46
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Gustav Holst

Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda, Op. 26, Third Group, H 99 (1910) 13:35

Four Hymns for Four-part Female Voices
with Accompaniment for Harp or Piano

This group is written for and dedicated to Frank Duckworth
and his Ladies' Choir, Blackburn

- | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 24 | I Hymn to the Dawn. Andante | 3:14 |
| 25 | II Hymn to the Waters. Allegro | 2:13 |
| 26 | III Hymn to Vena (The Sun Rising through the Mist). Adagio –
Andante con moto – Allegro – Adagio | 5:17 |
| 27 | IV Hymn of the Travellers. Moderato | 2:36 |

Shruthi Rajasekar (b. 1996)

première recording

28 **Ushās – Goddess of Dawn** (2024) **3:31**
for Four-part Female Chorus and Harp
[] – Grand

première recording

29 **Priestess** (2024) **3:37**
for Six-part Female Chorus and Harp
Incantation – Pleased – Excited – Ecstatic – Frenzied

Gustav Holst

30 **Dirge and Hymeneal, H 124** (1915) **4:29**
for Three- and Four-part Female Chorus and Harp
Andante – Pesante

TT 82:21

Corvus Consort
Freddie Crowley
with
Louise Thomson harp

Corvus Consort

Freddie Crowley director

soprano / alto

Sumei Bao-Smith

Izzi Blain

Ailsa Campbell

Natalie Houlston

Sarah Keating

Hannah Littleton

Ella Rainbird-Earley

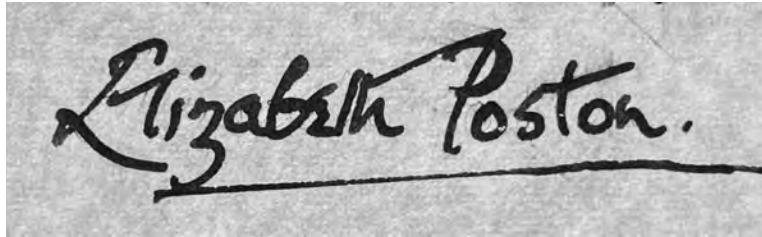
Anna Semple

Ellie Stamp

Joy Sutcliffe

Chloe Wedlake

Clover Willis

A close-up photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored, textured surface. The signature reads "Elizabeth Poston." and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke. The ink is dark and the handwriting is cursive.

© Multitude of Voices

Elizabeth Poston's signature

Welcome Joy: A Celebration of Women's Voices

Imogen Holst: Welcome Joy and Welcome Sorrow

This recording brings together more than a century's worth of music for upper voices and harp, written by composers committed to the musical education of women and girls. Imogen Holst (1907–1984) composed throughout her life, alongside a busy career as an arts administrator, amateur, and pedagogue; she also tirelessly promoted the music and legacy of her father, Gustav Holst. *Welcome Joy and Welcome Sorrow* was written at a pivotal time, in October 1950. For most of the 1940s, Holst had directed musical activities at Dartington Hall, near Totnes, Devon, where she fostered the type of rigorous, holistic pedagogical environment for amateur musicians and for aspiring music teachers that her father had so successfully cultivated at Morley College; by the autumn of 1950, she was preparing to relocate from the rolling Devon hills to another coastal hub of music-making, this time on the east coast. Holst would stay in Aldeburgh for the rest of her life, as a long-serving amanuensis to Benjamin Britten and co-director of the Aldeburgh Festival.

Welcome Joy and Welcome Sorrow, which comprises six choral settings of poems by John Keats, was commissioned by Britten for the Aldeburgh Festival, where it was premiered, at the Jubilee Hall, in June 1951. Keats wrote the poems during his two-month stay in Teignmouth, in 1818, and the cycle is permeated with meditations upon the Devon countryside. We may imagine that Holst, on the cusp of her departure from Devon, was prompted by the commission to reflect creatively on the community, stability, and rural rootedness that had been so important to her life at Dartington. When Britten first received the score, he described the songs as 'six little treasures', and it is easy to see why: throughout, the textures sparkle and the text-setting shines. Most of the part-songs begin with a distinctive, repeated rhythmic foundation in the harp. This underpins the oppositional play of the first movement, itself a setting of Keats's 'Welcome Joy and Welcome Sorrow', also known as 'A song of opposites'. The animated 'Teignmouth' sees the harp impersonating a buzzing bee – using a very different, but equally evocative effect to that of Elizabeth Poston whose bees are

heard elsewhere on this recording. 'Over the Hill and over the Dale' ('Dawlish Fair') is dance-like, replete with quirky musical play on Keats's rhymes, while the carefully spun textures and characteristic Holstian harmonies of 'O Sorrow' bring profundity to the heart of the cycle. After the gentle, moonlit 'Lullaby', the closing 'Shed no Tear' heralds a return of the harp as a rhythmic motor, this time articulating a jaunty, disquieting 5/8 metre.

Gustav Holst: Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda, Third Group

At the time his daughter was born, Gustav Holst (1874 – 1934) was immersed in the study of ancient Indian history and culture, which occupied him creatively between the late 1890s and the mid-1910s. He studied with Mabel Bode – a prominent Pali and Sanskrit specialist and a pioneering female scholar in her field – and read translations of Sanskrit literature voraciously while undergoing enough language study to be able to amend and repurpose translations for his own musical ends. English audiences in the early twentieth century were accustomed to musical depictions of India that deployed stereotypical 'exotic-sounding' devices – including liberal use of the augmented second interval alongside modes, drones, and *ostinati* – to connote a facile, undifferentiated sonic 'Other'.

The musicologist Nalini Ghuman has shown how such music, by the likes of Cyril Scott and Granville Bantock, conditioned audiences' ears to a very particular sonic imagination of 'India'. This explains early reviews of the 'Indian' music of Holst that demonstrate critics' confusion concerning its relative lack of Orientalist clichés: Ghuman uses as an example the comment in the *Daily Telegraph* that his *Vedic Hymns* 'do not suggest a point further East than Leicester Square'. Instead, as scholars including Raymond Head and Ghuman later recognised, his music on Indian themes provided Holst with a creative space free from the pressures of Western musical convention, in which he was able to hone an individual compositional voice far removed from his Wagnerian beginnings.

Holst turned several times to the *Rigveda*, the ancient collection of Sanskrit hymns. He selected hymns for fourteen songs for solo voice and piano (nine of which he published as his Op. 24), and also composed four groups of choral hymns between 1908 and 1912, each group scored for different forces and together forming his Op. 26. The third group of *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda*, for upper voices and harp, was composed in 1910 and contains four hymns: 'Hymn to the Dawn', 'Hymn to the Waters', 'Hymn to Vena', and 'Hymn of the Travellers'. Across the set, the music is

enchanting, Holst using the choir and harp in dynamic and varied ways. His metres are often guided by the hymns' spoken rhythms, which leads to time signatures unusual within Western classical music of the time: in 'Hymn to the Waters', the voices begin in 21/8 while the harp is in 7/4. There are also nods to Carnatic music, which Holst may have heard himself at colonial exhibitions; while his engagement with Indian text and music was much more thorough and holistic than that of his contemporaries, there is no separating his understanding of 'India' from the colonial context of early twentieth-century Britain. Figuration associated with the tanpura animates the harp parts of the first and fourth hymns, while Ghuman suggests that raga formulas lay the ground for some of Holst's melodic contours.

Gustav Holst: Two Eastern Pictures

Holst was a champion of women's voices and taught in several girls' schools, most famously at St Paul's Girls' School where he taught for almost thirty years. He also promoted and uplifted amateur music-making around the country, and at the time when the music on this recording was written was Director of Music at Morley College. The third group of *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda* and the *Two Eastern Pictures* (1911) were written for, and

premiered by, the Blackburn Ladies' Choir and conductor Frank Duckworth. The *Eastern Pictures* sets cantos from the Sanskrit poem *Rtusamhāra*, which describes the seasons of the Indian year. The two 'pictures' here are of 'Spring' and 'Summer': the first is a breezy, fragrant vision of the world in bloom, while the wordless humming that begins 'Summer' celebrates the sheer timbral potential of the upper-voice choir.

Gustav Holst: Dirge and Hymeneal

The little-known *Dirge and Hymeneal*, of 1915, originally for SSA voices and piano, is a setting of a three-part poem by Thomas Lovell Beddoes 'to be sung as the funeral and wedding processions cross each other at the church-door'. There are both separate and layered iterations of the funeral dirge and the wedding song, contrasting 'woe' with 'joy' almost like a distant mirror to Imogen Holst's 'joy' and 'sorrow'. The music forms part of the genealogy of the composer's best-known orchestral work, *The Planets*: Holst repurposed ideas, including the oscillating chords, for 'Saturn', and, after that, set aside the *Dirge and Hymeneal*. It was first performed in 1986 at the Cheltenham Festival.

Shruthi Rajasekar: Ushās – Goddess of Dawn

Shruthi Rajasekar (b. 1996) was commissioned

by Corvus Consort to compose music for this programme in response to Holst's Third Group of *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda*. Across music history, response and companion pieces have come into being for many reasons: some have been written to increase opportunities for the programming of pieces with unusual instrumentation; others encourage audiences to think afresh about aspects of the music to which a new work is responding. Rajasekar's two pieces do both: they add to a flourishing repertoire for upper voices and harp, and *Ushās – Goddess of Dawn* addresses directly a particular dimension of Holst's *Choral Hymns*, namely its engagement with ancient Hindu texts. Rajasekar is an Indian-American composer with a background in both Carnatic and Western classical music traditions; her music often explores themes of community and identity, and she has been a powerful voice in ongoing discussions about how classical music programming can be meaningfully diversified. Juxtaposing the pieces by Holst and Rajasekar allows us to hear how composers from different backgrounds, writing over a hundred years apart, have approached a common source and drawn it into their respective musical worlds.

In *Ushās – Goddess of Dawn*, Rajasekar shares one of Holst's textual sources, but sets the Sanskrit verse rather than an English

translation. Her composition is grounded in the musicality with which the verse would be chanted: she explains that it is 'coded with pitch accents' that denote three chant notes. Rajasekar demystifies the source texts by providing the performers with contextual and practical details, including an audio guide for pronunciation. Whereas Holst presents his hymns with English titles, English words, and no information about provenance, in her score Rajasekar gives precise details about the source of her chosen hymn (Mandala 1, Sukta 113, Rik 19 – that is, Book 1, Hymn 113, Line 19), and her preface sets out the text in Sanskrit supplied with Vedic accents, in English transliteration, and in modern English translation. She further explains her incorporation of the Carnatic raga Namanarayani, and notes that the harp variously takes on the roles of tanpura and swarmandal as well as Western classical harp; Holst's harp writing functions similarly but not explicitly so, and Rajasekar's explanations may therefore lead those performing the two works together to make such connections themselves. Paratexts such as these are often overlooked, but they transform the engagement of performers with the score to such an extent that they make a considerable difference to how pieces are understood, received, and disseminated.

Rajasekar's music begins with a unison statement of the verse, the harp outlining the same chant pitches in octaves. This opening emphasises the contemplative, the ritualistic, and the communal, reminding us of the text's religiosity. As the music gradually expands outwards, the sense of community remains, variously through shared but staggered melodic structures and through monorhythmic passages.

Shruthi Rajasekar: Priestess

Community is central to Rajasekar's second new piece, *Priestess*, which imagines women-centric spaces mentioned in Livy's descriptions of Roman Bacchanalia as 'places where women could be together in joy'. Here, Rajasekar deliberately explores an historical culture and text far removed from her own cultural and religious background – as the Hindu Sanskrit sources were from Holst's. The voices, singing in Latin, are divided into six busily independent parts which cajole and conspire in frenzy, ecstasy, and joy. At the end, lower voices are encouraged to hiss, while the harp uses the characteristic Carlos Salzedo whistling effect.

Elizabeth Poston: An English Day-Book

Like both Gustav and Imogen Holst, Elizabeth Poston (1905 – 1987) played an important

role in the ongoing revivals of folk music and early music that so widely inspired British composers during the early and mid-twentieth century. Her major contributions to these movements included sourcing, transcribing, and arranging songs and carols dating from the thirteenth to the twentieth century, many of which were published in a series of widely disseminated vocal collections between the mid-1950s and mid-1970s; elsewhere, Poston composed incidental music for many BBC Radio adaptations of mediaeval and early modern plays. Centuries of musical and cultural heritage were thus embedded within her compositional practice, and she had an especially strong affinity with mediaeval and Renaissance poetry, prose, and music both secular and sacred. The textual sources drawn upon in *An English Day-Book* (1966 – 67) are mostly early modern, while the musical sources span plainchant, William Boyce, and traditional song of unknown origin. Poston would often return multiple times to texts or melodies that particularly inspired her: within the *Day-Book*, two texts were first set to music by Poston in the 1920s ('Sweet Suffolk Owl' and 'A Bellman's Song'), while several other movements can be linked to separate arrangements or versions which Poston produced over the course of her long

career. If, in some ways, the *Day-Book* may be considered a compendium of favourites, it is certainly more than the sum of its parts: Poston unites her diverse sources into a thoroughly convincing cycle, its narrative tightly spun and its music replete with carefully planned metrical modulations and recurring modal inflections.

Many pieces in this programme vibrantly evoke space, place, and time. The *Day-Book* thematises the passing of time quite literally as it charts the course of a full English day: the work is conceived cyclically to begin and end at nightfall, presenting progressive evocations of dawn, midday, and dusk correlating on a larger scale with the passing of the seasons. A bell motif appears often in the harp, variously suggesting the curfew bell or a chiming clock; in more light-hearted movements, it serves as a moralistic reminder of piety and mortality. The text of 'A Bellman's Song' is extracted from Thomas Ravenscroft's 1611 volume *Melismata*, a collection incorporating many of the cries, songs, and calls that then articulated daily life. The rhythmic and harmonic profile that Poston gives to the curfew call – the harp making its sonic presence felt immediately – splits our ears between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, setting up the cycle's ongoing temporal play. In the second movement, the plainsong *Te lucis ante terminum* sets

off a sequence of gentle prayers blessing night and sleep. Half-way through, the jaunty appearance of a nursery rhyme heralds an increasing rhythmic and textural complexity that leads into the forbidding third movement, 'A Night Curse', which juxtaposes striking harmonies with canonic vocal writing. The harp, imitating a clock, alerts us to the fact that day has arrived in 'Lemady: Maying Song', another virtuosic tapestry of multiple textual sources. Next comes the sixteenth-century 'A Charm against the Bumble Bee', in which Poston (like I. Holst) makes full use of the harp's buzzing potential, though this bee is temporarily incapacitated when it is swatted away (with a knocking sound and subsequent dazed motion); between iterations of a catchy main vocal theme come little snatches of Latin chant.

The halfway point in the cycle is marked by an expansive Interlude for solo harp: nodding to motifs from previous movements, it acts as a meditation on the time passed up to this point. 'The Noonday Heat' arranges 'Tell me, lovely shepherd' from William Boyce's secular serenata *Solomon*; Poston evidently found such inspiration in Boyce's delightful, lilting melody that she arranged the air multiple times for different forces. The song seeks 'sweet retreat [...] from the mid-day heat', and provides the cycle with its lyrical apex: set

up carefully by the harp's interlude, the song offers fuller textures, rhythmic grounding, and more conventional tonality which seem to invite listeners to bask in the warmth of noon. The energetic harp part and evocative vocal bird calls of 'Running Set: Spring' enact an immediate change of pace.

The 'Evening Song' foregrounds close vocal harmony in its delicate setting of John Fletcher's words; the harp only appears in the last three bars to emphasise the final 'farewell', its bell-like harmonics chiming 6pm in an echo of the 6am chimes of 'Lemady'. 'Sweet Suffolk Owl' is one of the poems to which Poston returned periodically throughout her life. She was fond of owls – there is a charming photograph of her playing the piano to an owl perched on her left hand – and we might imagine that their iconic status as aviary emblems of night made the poem irresistible for inclusion in the *Day-Book*. After this gentle, meditative movement, the cycle closes with a shortened reprise of the opening 'Bellman's Song'.

Judith Weir: We sekyn here rest / Hilary

Campbell: Our Endless Day / Gemma

McGregor: Love was his meaning

This is the first recording of a new performing edition of the *Day-Book* published by the charity Multitude of Voyces – now the

musical and literary executor of Poston's creative estate – which they prepared by cross-referencing all known sketches, drafts, and manuscripts in Poston's hand with surviving correspondence and contemporary accounts from performers. Multitude of Voyces also commissioned the settings of words by Julian of Norwich by Judith Weir (b. 1954), Hilary Campbell (b. 1983), and Gemma McGregor (b. 1965), as part of a series of new anthems based on passages from the fourteenth-century mystic's *Revelations of Divine Love*. Weir uses original Middle English words, while Campbell and McGregor set a modern English translation by Alison Daniell. The passage used by Campbell in *Our Endless Day* expresses gratitude for God's light: the music is delicate yet impassioned, unfolding in an expansive triple time with a recurring harp figure that frames and underpins the voices. The clarity of the message of *Love was his meaning* is matched by McGregor's firm rooting of the music in a minor key, the setting's scalic descents and triadic melodies underpinned by pedal tones reciting 'love'; it ends with a disarming, radiant shift into an unexpected major key. Weir's *We sekyn here rest* is a jubilant yet gentle celebration of God, in which Julian of Norwich's words are laced with warning. The harp provides an animated rhythmic basis above

which the voices soar – the unusual vowel sounds of Middle English giving the anthem a distinctive sound-world.

Olivia Sparkhall: Lux Aeterna

Weir's setting was premièred by the Godolphin Vocal Ensemble, conducted by Olivia Sparkhall (b. 1976). Sparkhall belongs to a long tradition of choral composer-conductors – including Gustav Holst – whose practice is deeply informed by vocal pedagogy and intricate knowledge of the practicalities of upper-voice singing. Her *Lux Aeterna* is also associated with Multitude of Voyces and with Julian of Norwich: in it, Sparkhall sought to 'reimagine the sounds associated with Julian's fourteenth century voice in the twenty-first century'. Sparkhall draws upon the importance within the sacred choral tradition of the spatial experience of music: she deploys a separate chorus which, in performance, stands at greater remove from the audience, behind the rest of the choir. The effects of this separation are also temporal, as they draw attention to the anthem's use of chant or chant-derived lines alongside distinctly contemporary harmonic writing; all of this becomes yet more luminous thanks to the shimmering effects of the harp – *glissando*, *bisbigliando*, and much besides.

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Multitude of Voyces and Elizabeth Poston

The Arts and Education charity Multitude of Voyces specialises in publishing and promoting works by communities historically or currently underrepresented or marginalised. It developed out of several projects run by creative individuals in Salisbury (Wiltshire, UK), one of which was an annual service celebrating International Women's Day. A set of anthems by female composers – of which those by Campbell, McGregor, Sparkhall, and Weir on this disc are four – was commissioned for those services, to link the voice and times of the mediaeval mystic Julian of Norwich to the experience of current generations of women through the creation of new repertoire for upper voices and harp.

In response to wide demand for the new works, MoV broadened its remit to include publishing, which led, in November 2019, to the first volume in its groundbreaking anthology series *Sacred Music by Women Composers*.

Also in 2019, MoV began working with the late Simon Champion – a personal friend of Elizabeth Poston, and her musical executor – to support him in preparing and issuing some of the unpublished works which he had carefully protected since her death. In 2023 the charity was honoured to become Mr Champion's successor as the composer's

musical executor: his gift included the available copyright of Poston's music, and a substantial literary archive.

MoV is now engaged in developing a major project around Poston's life and works, supported by the gift and copyright of the research carried out by the late Dr John Alabaster.

Elizabeth Poston and 'An English Day-Book'

Commissioned for the choir of Aldershot County High School, to be premièred at the Farnham Festival in 1967, *An English Day-Book* was conceived to complement existing repertoire (specifically Benjamin Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols*) by providing a work suitable for use *throughout* the year.

Poston was also motivated in her compositional process to

get right away from the clichés meted out to girls, with a subject that clicks and an old / new outlook.

She worked closely with the harpist David Watkins, drawing on his technical expertise to create the dramatic harp part, explaining to him her ideas via typically exuberant letters – and at one point exhorting him to mimic on his harp, down the telephone to her, the sound of a buzzing bee.

The work was widely performed and praised in Poston's lifetime, taken up by

boys', girls', and women's choirs and by esteemed harpists. We can only regret that a notable recording performed by the choir of St Michael's College, Tenbury, directed by Roger Judd, with the harpist Ann Griffith, was never released.

Though many works by Poston *were* published in her lifetime, her situation as a single, self-employed woman reliant on sustaining her own income meant that a substantial quantity of her work remained unpublished at the time of her death, including *An English Day-Book*.

In a letter to the harpist Charlotte Seale of 17 November 1977, Poston explains that

things have got so bad in the music publishing trade, many composers, myself included, are not offering their work for publication... so the material remains with me and I let it out for a reasonable hire fee.

This self-imposed burden of administration – the scores were all in manuscript – consequently limited the dissemination of the work, with the result that this new performing edition appears some thirty-seven years after her death.

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Regd charity no. 1201139

Founded and directed by Freddie Crowley, **Corvus Consort** is a vocal ensemble based

in the UK, comprising some of the country's most talented young professional singers, one critic describing it as 'one of the most innovative and adventurous vocal ensembles presently performing'. Its refreshing combination of musical excellence, passionate performance, and unstuffy presentation makes the group hugely popular with audiences up and down the country. Operating with a flexible combination of voices, the Consort performs in a wide variety of genres and styles, reaching from the Renaissance to the present day, and enjoys a range of instrumental collaborations, notably with Music on the Edge and the Ferio Saxophone Quartet with whom, in 2022, it released *Revoiced*, its debut album on Chandos Records.

The ensemble has quickly developed a strong track record for championing new music. For Christmas 2020, it commissioned twelve young composers to write miniature carols for a choir of twelve voices, based on the well-known song 'The Twelve Days of Christmas', as part of a festive project entitled 'Twelve Composers Composing'. Its latest new music project, 'Byrd Takes Flight', in collaboration with Music on the Edge, commemorated the 400th anniversary of William Byrd in 2023 with four new works for voices and instruments, placing Byrd's

compositional voice into direct dialogue with some of today's brightest artistic voices. It was premiered at the 2023 Whiddon Autumn Festival and featured in a series of concerts in 2024, including the ensemble's debut at the Three Choirs Festival.

Since making its first appearance, in 2018, Corvus Consort has enjoyed performances in venues such as King's Place, London, Chiltern Arts Festival, Church Stretton Arts Festival, Little Missenden Festival, King's Lynn Festival, and Music on the Quantocks, and has served as Ensemble-in-Residence at the Whiddon Autumn Festival, in Devon, since the festival's inception, in 2021. Recent highlights include a Bach programme alongside the violinist Rachel Podger at Dorchester Arts and Exeter Cathedral, a performance with the Ferio Saxophone Quartet at the Stour Music Festival, and a return to Exeter Cathedral to perform Rachmaninoff's *All-night Vigil*.

Praised by Craig Ogden as a 'consummate performer' possessing a 'fluid technique' and 'beautiful artistry', the versatile and experienced harpist **Louise Thomson** has performed at prestigious concert venues around the UK, including the Royal Albert Hall, London, St David's Hall, Cardiff, and Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, with such respected British ensembles as the Hallé,

Manchester Camerata, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, and Manchester Concert Orchestra. Heard live on BBC Radio 3, she has also appeared on BBC 1's 'Heaven and Earth' show with the soprano Katherine Jenkins. She won the Harp Finals at the National Eisteddfod, Wales, in 2003, was a Finalist in the London International Harp Competition in 2005, and performed for Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip at the Royal Variety Performance in April 2007. She studied with Eira Lynn Jones at Chetham's School of Music, in Manchester, and continued her training at the Royal Northern College of Music, where she completed a Master's Degree (MMus), with Distinction in Performance, in 2007.

With Corvus Consort, Louise Thomson has given performances at the Church Stretton Festival and Whiddon Autumn Festival, and at the Sounds Sublime Festival, curated by The Sixteen, at King's Place, London. In 2022 she performed at the World Harp Congress in

collaboration with the presenter Polly Ives, with whom she frequently appears in schools and theatres as part of Concerteenies, an award-winning producer of musical events and activities for young children and their adults in Sheffield and beyond. In January 2024, she launched the inaugural Manchester Harp Festival and Competition, which featured world-class performances, workshops, meet-the-artist events, children's activities, and a competition for harpists of all abilities. She has most recently appeared at the Buxton, Ryedale, Ripon, and Lake District Summer International festivals, and held a residency at the 2023 Whiddon Autumn Festival, which included performances with Corvus Consort. Louise Thomson teaches harp at Chetham's School of Music, Withington Girls' School, and The Manchester Grammar School. She is the harp tutor at the University of Huddersfield and a regular examiner for the Royal Northern College of Music.

1. Welcome joy, and welcome sorrow

1. Welcome joy, and welcome sorrow

Welcome joy, and welcome sorrow,
Lethe's weed and Hermes' feather;
Come to-day, and come to-morrow,
I do love you both together!

Nightshade with the woodbine kissing;
Serpents in red roses hissing;
Cleopatra regal-dress'd,
With the aspic at her breast;
Dancing music, music sad,
Both together, sane and mad.

Muses bright, and muses pale;
Sombre Saturn, Momus hale; -
Laugh and sigh, and laugh again.

'A Song of Opposites'
from *Posthumous and Fugitive Poems*

2. Teignmouth

Here all the summer could I stay,
For there's Bishop's teign
And King's teign
And Coomb at the clear Teign head -
Where close by the stream
You may have your cream
All spread upon barley bread.

There's Arch Brook
And there's Larch Brook
Both turning many a mill;

And cooling the drouth
Of the salmon's mouth
And fattening his silver gill.

There's the Barton rich
With dyke and ditch
And hedge for the thrush to live in,
And the hollow tree
For the buzzing bee,
And a bank for the wasp to hive in.

And O, and O
The daisies blow
And the primroses are waken'd,
And violets white
Sit in silver plight,
And the green bud's as long as the spike end.

from 'Some Doggerel',
sent in a letter to B.R. Haydon

3. Over the Hill and over the Dale

Over the Hill and over the Dale,
And over the Bourn to Dawlish -
Where gingerbread wives have a scanty sale,
And gingerbread nuts are smallish.

from poem of the same title (1818)

4. O Sorrow

O sorrow,
Why dost borrow
The natural hue of health, from vermeil lips? -

To give maiden blushes
 To the white rose bushes?
 Or is't thy dewy hand the daisy tips?
 O Sorrow,
 Why dost borrow
 The lustrous passion from a falcon-eye? –
 To give the glow-worm light?
 Or, on a moonless night,
 To tinge, on syren shores, the salt sea-spray?
 O Sorrow,
 Why dost borrow
 The mellow ditties from a mourning tongue? –
 To give at ev'ning pale
 Unto the nightingale,
 That thou mayst listen the cold dews among?
 O Sorrow,
 Why dost borrow
 Heart's lightness from the merriment of May? –
 A lover would not tread
 A cowslip on the head,
 Though he should dance from eve till peep
 of day.

from poem of the same title,
 from *Endymion* (published 1818)

5. Lullaby

Moon! keep wide thy golden ears!
 Hearken, Stars! and hearken, Spheres!
 Hearken, thou eternal Sky,
 I sing an infant's lullaby,
 A pretty lullaby,

Listen, listen, listen, listen,
 Glisten, glisten,
 And hear my lullaby.
 Though the Rushes that will make
 Its cradle still are in the lake:
 Though the linen that will be
 Its swathe, is on the cotton tree;
 Though the woollen that will keep
 It warm, is on the silly sheep;
 Listen, Starlight, listen, listen,
 And hear my lullaby.
 Glisten, glisten,
 And hear my lullaby.

from 'A Prophecy:
 To George Keats in America',
 lines occurring in a letter to George Keats,
 dated 29 October 1818

6. Shed no Tear

Shed no tear! O shed no tear
 The flower will bloom another year.
 Weep no more! O weep no more!
 Young buds sleep in the root's white core.
 Dry your eyes! O dry your eyes,
 For I was taught in Paradise
 To ease my breast of melodies, –
 Shed no tear.

Shed no tear! O shed no tear!
 The flower will bloom another year.

Adieu, adieu – I fly – adieu!
I vanish into heaven's blue, –
Adieu, adieu.

from 'Fairy Song'
(first published 1838)
John Keats (1795–1821)

Two Eastern Pictures

7 1. Spring

Spring the warrior hither comes
Bowstring formed by rows of bees.
And his darts tipp'd with buds
Wound our hearts with sweet love-longing.

Now the trees put forth their flowers,
On the lakes the lilies fair
Show their heads midst the waves
Melting hearts with sweet love-longing.

What fair maid can vie with Spring?
What sweet voice the cuckoo's song?
Or smiling teeth the jasmine's hue?
Or rosy lips the op'ning flowers?

Bending down with blushing buds,
Flaming mango branches wave
To and fro with the breeze
Filling hearts with sweet love-longing.

And within the lotus flower
Dwells her love, the murr'ring bee

Who with kiss and embrace
Satisfies her sweet love-longing.

8 2. Summer

The fierce glaring day is gone.
Gentle night hath spread her mantle
cool and refreshing,
lit by rays of a thousand stars
and by the golden moon.

The moon shineth on yon roof.
Here lie maidens, crowned with jasmine,
clad in silk rayment,
on their ankles are rings that
tinkle sweetly as they move.

Wafted by jewel covered fans,
sweetest perfume floats o'er each breast.
Song and harp unite with warbling birds
to rouse from sleep the god of love.

Gustav Holst,
after words from a poem by Kālidāsa
(4th–5th century CE)

9 We sekyn here rest

We sekyn here rest
in these things that is so littil,
wherein is no rest,
and know not our God
that is almighty, al wise, al gode;
for he is the very rest.

God will be known,
and him liketh that we rest in him:

for all that is beneth him
sufficeth not us;
and this is the cause
why that no soule is restid
till it is nowted¹
of all things that is made.

from *Revelations of Divine Love*
Julian of Norwich (1342/43 – after 1416)

10 Our Endless Day

And at the end of sorrow,
suddenly shall our eyes be opened,
and in that moment of light
our sight shall be clear;
and that light is God our maker.

Our faith is our light in the darkness;
the light which is God, our endless day.

from *Revelations of Divine Love*
Julian of Norwich
Translation: © Dr Alison Daniell

¹ The word 'nowted' in this context denotes a removal or a stripping away. Essentially, the meaning which is being communicated is that the soul cannot find rest until it divests itself of worldly matters, or is laid bare of them. – Dr Alison Daniell

An English Day-Book

11 1. A Bellman's Song

Maids to bed, and cover coal!
Let the mouse out of her hole!
Crickets in the chimney sing
Whilst the little bell doth ring.
If fast asleep, who can tell
When the clapper hits the bell?

from *Melismata* (published 1611)
Thomas Ravenscroft
(c. 1589 – after 1622)

12 2. Te lucis ante terminum

Te lucis ante terminum,
Rerum Creator poscimus,
Ut pro tua clementia,
Sis praesul et custodia.

Before the ending of the day,
Creator of the world, we pray
That Thou with wonted love wouldst keep
Thy watch around us while we sleep.

The night is come like to the day,
Depart not Thou, great God, away;
Let not my sins, black as the night,
Eclipse the lustre of Thy light.

Oh Thou, whose nature cannot sleep,
Upon my temples sentry keep;
Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,
Bless the bed that I lie on.

Make my sleep a holy trance,
While I rest, my soul advance.
Four corners to my bed,
Four angels round my head:
One to watch and one to pray,
And two to carry my soul away.

Included in *The Wells Office Book* (1896)
Sir Thomas Browne (1605–1682)
(adapted Elizabeth Poston)
and Traditional

13 3. A Night Curse

Within and without all place about, and
through the virtue of His might let no thief
enter in this night. No foot further than this
ground that I upon go, but at my bidding there
be found to do all I bid them do. Dark be their
senses therewith, and their lives mightless,
and their eyes sightless. Dread and doubt
them envelope about as a wall of stone;
be they cramped in the toe, cramped and
crooking and fault in their footing.
The might of the Trinity save these goods
and me.

Anonymous seventeenth century
from British Library Add MS 36674, folio 89
(adapted Elizabeth Poston)

14 4. Lemady: Maying Song

Arise! O hark! The nightingales are singing,
The larks they are taking their flight into the air,

And in ev'ry green border the turtle doves are
building,
Just as the sun is glimmering: arise my dear!

Lemady, lemady, lemady.

Arise! The birds are sweetly singing,
The fields and the meadows are covered with
green,
So pleasant and so charming,
So early in the morning by the break of day.

Arise! The moon shines bright, the stars give
a light
A little before the day:
Our heav'nly Father he called to us
And bid us wake and pray.

Awake my pretty love,
Out of your drowsy dream,
And step into your dairy below
And fetch me a load of cream.

If not a bowl of your sweet cream,
A snug of your brown beer,
For the Lord knows when we shall meet again
To be Maying another year.

Turn to the Lord and our sweet God,
O turn to Him with praise,
For when we are dead and in our graves,
We are nothing but dust and clay.

Arise my love!
I have plucked fair posies,
The choicest of flowers that grow in the grove,
I have gathered them all for thee, my love,
My love, for thee, Lemady!

from 'Lemady' and 'The Moon Shines Bright'
Traditional
(both adapted Elizabeth Poston)

15 5. A Charm against the Bumble Bee

Avaunt from us, false bumble bee, in thy busy
buzzing:
And come not here, thou crafty flea, harm not
in thy huzzing.

Fly far enough, prodigious fowl, in thy bitter
stinging:
Worse than screeching ugly owl, never good
luck bringing.

In thy coming or thy humming, thou false
bumble bee,
In thy swarming and thy harming,
If thou chance within my charming,
Exorciso te!

Beware, I say, thou little bird, of my leather
flea flap:
And come not here nor hitherward, lest it
reach a sound rap:

For it shall beat thy little bum – hear me pretty
fellow –
And clap it thriftly if thou come, harken what
I tell ye.

In nomine O Domine [*sic*], defend us from this
drone;
And charm this hurtful honey bee, to let us
here alone.
Away! Thou foul and fearful sprite and thou
little devil:
I charge thee come not in our sight, for to do
us evil.

Avaunt from us, [*etc.*]

In thy coming [*etc.*]

Exorciso te!

from *Caltha Poetarum* (published 1599)
Tailboys Dymoke,
pseudonym of Thomas Cutwode (1561 – c. 1602 / 03)
(adapted Elizabeth Poston)

16 6. Interlude for Harp

17 7. The Noonday Heat

Tell me, lovely shepherd, where
Thou feed'st at noon thy fleecy care.
Direct me to the sweet retreat
That guards thee from the mid-day heat.

Left by the flocks I lonely stray
Without a guide, and lose my way.
Where rest at noon thy bleating care?
Gentle shepherd, tell me where.

from *Solomon*
Edward Moore (1712–1757)

18 8. Running Set: Spring

Spring!
'Jug-a-jug' [etc.]

Spring, the sweet Spring is the year's pleasant
king;
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance
in a ring,
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing:
'Cuckoo', 'jug-a-jug', 'puwee', 'witta-woo'.

Spring, the sweet Spring!
The palm and may make country houses gay,
Lambs frisk and play, the shepherds pipe
all day,
And we here aye birds tune this merry lay:
'Cuckoo', 'jug-jug', 'witta-woo'.

The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss
our feet,
Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit,

In ev'ry street these tunes our ears do greet:
'Cuckoo', 'jug-a-jug', 'puwee', 'witta-woo'.

Spring, the sweet Spring!

Thomas Nashe (1567–c. 1601)

19 9. Evening Song

[Farewell,] shepherds all, and maidens fair,
Fold your flocks up, for the air
'Gins to thicken, and the sun
Already his great course hath run.
Sweetest slumbers,
And soft silence fall in numbers
On your eyelids!
Farewell, thus I end my evening's knell.
So, farewell.

from *The Faithful Shepherdess* (c. 1609–10)
John Fletcher (1579–1625)
(adapted Elizabeth Poston)

20 10. Sweet Suffolk Owl

Sweet Suffolk Owl, so trimly dight
With feathers like a lady bright,
Thou sing'st alone, sitting by night,
'Te whit!' 'Te whoo!' [etc.]
Thy note that forth so freely rolls,
With shrill command the mouse controls,
And sings a dirge for dying souls.
'Te whit!' 'Te whoo!' [etc.]

Thomas Vautour (1590–1625)

²¹ **11. A Bellman's Song**
(Mvt 1 abridged)
Maids to bed, and cover coal!
Let the mouse out of her hole.

from Melismata (published 1611)
Thomas Ravenscroft

And I saw truly in this and in that,
before God made us, he loved us,
which life has never lessened nor ever shall.

from Revelations of Divine Love
Julian of Norwich
Translation: © Dr Alison Daniell

²² **Lux Aeterna**
Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine:
Cum sanctis tuis in aeternum,
quia pius es.
Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine:
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Antiphon from the Requiem Mass

[May light eternal shine upon them, O Lord,
with Thy Saints for evermore:
for Thou art gracious.
Eternal rest give to them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.]

²³ **Love was his meaning**
Love was his meaning. Who showed it thee?
What showed he thee? Why did he show it
thee?
For love, for love, for love.
Why did he show it thee?

Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda, Third Group

²⁴ **I. Hymn to the Dawn**
Hear our hymn, O Goddess,
Rich in wealth and wisdom,
Ever young yet ancient,
True to Law Eternal.

Wak'ner of the songbirds,
Ensign of th'Eternal,
Draw thou near, O Fair One,
In thy radiant Chariot.

Bring to her your off'ring;
Humbly bow before her:
Raise your songs of welcome,
As she comes in splendour.

25

II. Hymn to the Waters

Flowing from the firmament forth to the ocean,
Healing all in earth and air, never halting.
Indra, Lord of Heav'n formed their courses,
Indra's mighty laws can never be broken.
Cleansing waters flow ye on, hasten and
help us.

Lo, in the waters, dwelleth One,
Knower of all on earth and sea,
Whose dread command no man may shun,
Varuna, sovran Lord is He.

Onward, ye waters, onward hie,
Dance in the bright beams of the sun,
Obey the ruler of the sky
Who dug the path for you to run.

26

III. Hymn to Vena

(The Sun Rising through the Mist)

Vena comes, born of light;
He drives the many-colour'd clouds onward.
Here, where the sunlight and the waters
mingle,
Our songs float up and caress the new-born
infant.

The child of cloud and mist appeareth on the
ridge of the sky.
He shines on the summit of creation.
The hosts proclaim the glory of our Common
Father.

He hath come to the bosom of his beloved.
Smiling on him,
She beareth him to highest heav'n.
With yearning heart
On thee we gaze, O gold-wing'd messenger of
mighty gods.

Wise men see him in their libations
As the sacrifice mounts to the eternal heights,
mingling with our solemn chant;

He stands erect in highest heav'n.
Clad in noble raiment, arm'd with shining
weapons,
Hurling light to the farthest region,
Rejoicing in his radiant splendour.

27

IV. Hymn of the Travellers

(The God invoked in this hymn is the Guide of
travellers along the roads of this world and
along that leading to the next.)

Go thou on before us,
Guide us on our way,
Mighty One.
Make our journey pleasant,
Never let us stray.

Wonder-worker, hearken.
Come in thy splendour; come in thy mighty
pow'r.

Trample on the wicked,
Ah
All who would oppose,
Ah
Mighty One.
Drive away the robber;
Drive away our foes.

Wonder-worker, hearken...

As we journey onward,
Songs to thee we raise,
Mighty One.
Thou didst aid our fathers,
Guard us all our days.

Wonder-worker, hearken...

Feed us and inspire us;
Keep us in thy care,
Mighty One.
Lead us past pursuers
Unto meadows fair.

Wonder-worker, hearken...
Ah

Translation: Gustav Holst

28 Ushās – Goddess of Dawn

mātā devānām aditeranikaṃ yajñasya ketur
bṛhatī vi bhāhi praśastikṛd brahmaṇe no
vyucchā no jane janaya viśvavāre

Mandala 1, Sukta 113, Rik 19
from *Rigveda*

[Mother of gods, power of Aditi, intuition of
sacrificing, vast, do shine widely, giving
expression to wisdom-word, do shine widely
for us, do give to us a birth born in manifested
world of the sun, O thou in whom are all
desirable things.

Translation: Sri Aurobindo
Compiler: Michael Dmitriev]

29 Priestess

tum Hispala originem sacrorum expromit.
primo sacrarium id feminarum fuisse...
sacerdotes invicem matronas creari solitas.

[Then Hispala set forth the origin of the
mysteries. At first, she said, it was a ritual
for women... it was the rule to choose the
matrons in turn as priestesses.]

from *Ab Urbe Condita* (27 – 9 BC), 39.13
Titus Livius (Livy) (59 BC – 17 AD)
Livy, Books XXXVIII – XXXIX with an English Translation.
Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press;
London, William Heinemann, Ltd 1936



Ben Tomlin

Corvus Consort,
with Louise Thomson

30 **Dirge and Hymeneal**

[Dirge]

Woe! woe! this is death's hour
Of spring; behold his flower!
Fair babe of life, to whom
Death, and the dreamy tomb,
Was nothing yesterday,
And now is all!
The maiden, from her play
Beside her lover gay,
The church-yard voices call,
Tolling so slow,
Woe! woe!

[Hymeneal]

Joy! joy! this is love's day;
Strew the young conqueror's way
With summer's glories young,
O'er which the birds have sung,
Bright weeds from fairy rings;
Here, there, away!
Joy, joy, the tree-bird sings,
Joy, joy, a hundred springs'
Melodies ever say, –
Maiden and boy,
Joy! joy!

Poems collected in 1851

Thomas Lovell Beddoes (1803 – 1849)

**Corvus Consort,
with Louise Thomson**

Ben Tomlin



SOP. Solo: cher o NON RIL. foco rit. a tempo

3 dying away, fo a whisper

for 4 Cresc. Segno

© Multitude of Voices

Pencil sketch by Elizabeth Poston for 'An English Day-Book', page 5

34

pretty birds do sing
pretty birds do

E \flat p

© Multitude of Voices

Pencil sketch by Elizabeth Poston for 'An English Day-Book', page 34



Felix Alexander Bush

Corvus Consort, and Louise Thomson, at Whiddon Autumn Festival

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CM 402 microphones are hand built by the designer, Jörgen Thuresson, in Sweden.

Acknowledgements

This recording was made possible with the support of the Holst Society (www.holstsociety.org).



This recording is dedicated to the memory of Maureen and Denis Walker, with gratitude for their generous support.

Language coach, Middle English Dr Alison Daniell ('We sekyn here rest')

Recording producer Adrian Peacock

Sound engineer Alexander James

Editor Adrian Peacock

Chandos mastering Alexander James

A & R administrator Karen Marchlik

Recording venue Church of St Augustine, Kilburn, London; 7 – 9 April 2024

Front cover Photograph by Alexander James of the harp played by Louise Thomson on this recording

Back cover Photograph of Freddie Crowley by Izzy Romilly

Design and typesetting Cass Cassidy

Booklet editor Finn S. Gundersen

Publishers Oxford University Press, London (*Welcome Joy and Welcome Sorrow*), Chester Music Ltd, London (*We sekyn here rest*), Multitude of Voices, Salisbury (*Our Endless Day, An English Day-Book, Lux Aeterna, Love was his meaning*), Stainer & Bell Ltd, London (*Two Eastern Pictures, Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda*, Third Group), Shruthi Rajasekar (*Ushās – Goddess of Dawn, Priestess*), Novello & Co. Ltd, London (*Dirge and Hymeneal*)

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Chandos Records Ltd, Colchester, Essex CO2 8HX, England

Country of origin UK



Sarah Porter Photography

Louise Thomson

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WELCOME JOY: A CELEBRATION OF WOMEN'S VOICES

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CORVUS CONSORT
FREDDIE CROWLEY
WITH
LOUISE THOMSON HARP

Corvus Consort / Thomson / Crowley

WELCOME JOY

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