



The Man with the Golden Key

For Soprano Voice and Piano

Words by Margaret Morgan

Music by Nigel Morgan

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About the music

This song cycle for Soprano voice and piano is part of a multi-media project that seeks to celebrate memory, childhood and the legacy of the composer Robert Schumann.

The starting point for this project came from the second chapter of G.K. Chesterton's *Autobiography*. This chapter titled *The Man with the Golden Key* is a kind of secular sermon on memory taking as its 'text' the author's first childhood memory recounting a scene from his father's toy theatre. In making a precis of this chapter a sequence of 12 paragraphs evolved each with a title from within the text itself. This formed the background structure of *The White Light of Wonder: Scenes from Childhood* for solo piano completed in November 2005.

At an early stage of composing *The White Light of Wonder* a decision was taken to commission illustrations and poems to provide visual and textual commentary for each of the piano pieces. Artist and poet were asked to reflect on Chesterton's text and provide responses to it from their own childhood memories.

In discussions with the poet Margaret Morgan it was agreed that her poems might also be brought together as a song cycle somewhat in the spirit of Robert Schumann's settings of Eichendorff and Heine, particularly *Liederkreis, Op.24* and *Dichterliebe, Op 48* respectively.

The Man with the Golden Key sets the 12 poems commissioned for *The White Light of Wonder*. Whereas the latter work seeks to speak to young and old in the simplicity of its piano writing, *The Man with the Golden Key* is definitely for grown-up listeners and performers.

For those who wish to explore the world of G.K.Chesterton further Martin Ward's extraordinary website contains a cornucopia of Chesterton material, not least electronic versions of almost everything he published, and he published a lot.

<http://www.dur.ac.uk/martin.ward/gkc/>

A Flash presentation of the *White Light of Wonder* featuring illustrations, poems and music is available on the composer's website.

<http://www.nigel-morgan.co.uk>

The Man with the Golden Key is the second section of a *Childhood and Memory*, a four-part multi-media project celebrating the legacy of Robert Schumman in his anniversary year 2006. *Kinderszenen* and *Dicterliebe* have provided both a scaffolding and a starting point, embodying as they do reflections about innocence and the loss of what has once been loved.

The White Light of Wonder 12 Scenes from Childhood for solo piano

The Man with the Golden Key 12 Almost Too Serious songs for voice and piano,

Every Picture Tells a Story Fantasy Piece for harpsichord and visual media.

A World of Miracles 12 reflections on Childhood & Memory for violin and piano

Notes for performance

Tempo, dynamics, expressive markings and articulation are guides, no more.

Where complex irrational groupings occur these should be treated freely, not slavishly.

In Song No.8 *Maps of Fabulous Countries* passages in the right hand of the piano part that are grouped with an *acciaccatura* slash are to be performed freely and, if possible, quite independently against the music of the left hand.

A version for voice and piano trio is also available on request.

The Poems

1: The Man with the Golden Key

The first thing I remember seeing
With my own eyes, at eye-level,
Is a white hand in a grey engraving

The hand relaxed, the arm rested
Across the back of a chair as the man
Gazed at his wife, knitting, sitting against

Rods and spools and pulleys
Busy behind her calm concentration.
'The Invention of the Knitting Machine.'

Further along the wall a man sat,
Arm along seat, head on pale hand,
Gazing at a woman sewing.

They sit by a lake where dead leaves
Float and apples lie on a table. She
ignores him and his folder of papers

but I found later the picture was called
'In Love', which coloured love sepia.
Later still, by the time I sat with you,

Watched your arm on the back of a chair
And your hand at rest while you told me
Of Aquinas and his proofs for the existence

Of God I realised love was not always
Sepia, that these hands held invisible
Keys, were pale because the mind was aflame.

2: Frames and limits

In her family they
Undressed for bed secretly
As though they were
Out in an east wind
On a crowded Norfolk shore.

At the beach they
Wore jacket, shirt, trousers,
Tie or dress, silk stockings
And carried a handbag
Or a briar walking stick.

She dreamed a monster,
Eye-lashes like a giraffe,
Tall enough to see through
Her bedroom window,
Watching her every move.

3: The things we remember (are the things we forget)

It appears for a moment
Exactly as it was, right to the flaking paint
On railings that echoed to my kicks
And comforted my fingers
After the dog's incisors

Had punctured my calf
And set something warm
Trickling down my leg.
Now the grey terrier sits
pencilled in a silver frame.

4: The Great Adventure

The great adventure of my youth
Was not the leaving of Liverpool
But my attempt from Love's sickness
To fly. Guinness and sausage rolls

Across the Irish Sea. March night.
Took train from Dublin to Galway.
Searched for a bed. Sang in a room
Of previously unknown friends

Who staged a party. I sang,
'My false love he stole the rose...'
Stayed up all night. Took boat
To Inishmore, grey with walls.

Round rocky fields of primroses
In rain and walking, walking west
Across the waist of the island
Where I looked down on a rainbow.

5: The World of Miracles

It was like having a wine glass
Propped against the wall of the wind

Or fielding words flying downhill
Batted by hammer-taps on machinery.

It was hearing my grandparents
Rolling advice down chalky furrows

Where pure white flints wait
Like comfits, black as liquorice inside.

And words bounce like finches flying
Down hill, down wind, across the bourne.

I saw the air catch breath
And turn itself into a crystal wrap.

6: Daydreams

If daydreams are wrecks of something divine
I'm amazed by the tediousness of mine.
I'm always the power behind throne.
I rescue princes to make my own.

Changeless as a baby's world
One by one my dreams unfurl.
'How delicious is the winning
of a kiss at love's beginning.'

One moment the ball lies in the net
And life is as good as it can get.
The next you're back for another kick-off.
What divinity is this the wreck of?

7: A Hobby is not a Holiday

When he's paid the mortgage and bought the house,
Raised the children and pleased the spouse
He'll keep his head down away from strife,
For the hobbyist leads a double life.

He's planning the ultimate feeding station
For all the birds in his location
Or planning a field study, no short cuts,
On where the nuthatch stashes his nuts.

He's a tripod, a 'scope that's quite easy to train
And a jacket that's silent in heavy rain.
It's a serious matter, I think you'll find,
Exercising the rest of your mind.

8: Maps of Fabulous Countries

He takes up a thick, black felt pen
And draws a boundary,
Right round the edge of the page.

Roads go in next, in red; houses
Lie on their backs
Beside the roads and then, rivers

Appear, followed by bridges, train lines
Explosions, Spiderman,
Bleeping wailing emergency vehicles

Not a human being in sight, a country
Drawn from the perimeter,
Closing in, cluttered with obstacles.

9: Impatience

These days the Sunday School book prize
Isn't about a boy who lies,
Steals from old ladies, gives them a fright,
Is gored by a bull, which serves him right.

But Six Dinner Sid, the identity thief,
Is bound from the start to come to grief.
With his sleek black fur the elegant-looking
Specialist in regional cooking

Caught a slight cough and the poor little pet
Was taken six times one day to the vet.
Then no-one fed this feline cheat
And he had to move to another street.

10: The White Light of Wonder

The cat with his pink, velcro tongue
Teases himself clean, oblivious to me.

A child's hand picks, turns, fits
Together a jigsaw fairytale.

My grandfather takes his paring knife,
The one that smoothes sawn wounds,

And makes the skin of an apple
a silk spiral whose falling edges curl.

The cold light of wonder shivers
Along my spine, seeps into my hair.

11: Punch and Judy

The little florid murderer with the big nose
Petrified me. Thoughts of the trappings of imposture
Passed me by. The frozen face of Punch
Worried me in advance of seaside holidays.

On the beach I kept a look-out for the stripey
Cuboid bulging with breeze and mysterious people.
Now that no-one expects me to watch Punch and Judy
I seek ingenious excuses for avoiding 'King Lear'.

12: A Lost Experience in the Land of the Living

When a man loses his key
He cannot see to seek it.

He knows it to be inside
His obscurantist soul

But looks outside because
There it should be light.

But the white, solid road
Is darkened by man's dreams.

Introduction by Margaret Morgan

It has never been my custom to write poems about myself or about my personal feelings but to write of things in the clear knowledge that the inescapable self would come through. But the titles we isolated from G. K. Chesterton's words immediately brought images from my past into focus. It was as if I'd found some old, forgotten snapshots in a drawer and they asked to be put into words. Dreams, adventures, unruly memories and magic keys seem to be part of human make-up. We dress them in our own clothing.

The Man with the Golden Key

♩ = 80 un poco meccanico

Soprano

mf

The first thing I re-mem-ber see-ing with

Piano

mf

6

parlando *5* *normale* *piu mosso e legato*
mp

my own eyes at eye le-vel is a white hand in a grey en-gra-ving. The hand re-laxed, the

mp

11

come prima *mf*

arm re-sted a-cross the back of a chair as the man gazed at his wife, kni-tting

mf

17

kni-ting kni-ting, si-ting a- gainst rods and spools and pu-lleys bu-sy be-hind her

22

calm con-cen-tra-tion. *poco staccato e meccanico* 'The in-

28

-ven-tion of the *f* kni-ting ma-chine' *f* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mf*

f *mf* *mp* *mf* *mf*

f *mf* *mp* *mf* *mf*

34 $(\text{♩} = 100)$ *mp* *mf*

Fur-ther a-long the wall a man sat, arm a-long seat, head on pale hand ga-

39 *f* *piu mosso mf*

- zing at a wo-man sew-ing, sew-ing, sew-ing they sat by a lake where dead leaves

44 *mp* *poco a poco calando* *allargando f* *piu a tempo mf*

float and a-pples lie on a ta-ble. She ig-nores him and his fol-der of pa-pers.

49 *a tempo* ♩ = 100

mp *mf* *mp*

but I found la-ter the pic-ture was called 'In Love', which co-loured love se - pia.

mp *mf* *mp*

54 *poco dolce*

La - ter still, by the time I sat with you,

mf *f* *mp* *mp*

60 *mf*

watched your arm on the back of the chair and your hand at rest while you told me

mf *mf*

65

told me, told me of A - qui - nas and his proofs for the e - xis - tence of God

69

I re - a - lised love was not al - ways se - pia, that these hands held in - vi - si - ble

ff *mf* *f* *mf* *mp*

75

keys, were pale be - cause the mind was a - flame.

ff *mp* *ff*

Frames and Limits

♩ = 70 intimo
Soprano *mp* *mf*
Piano *mp* *mf*

In her fa-mi-ly they un-dressed for bed se-cret-ly as though they were

5 *f* *mp*
out in an east wind on a crow-ded Nor-folk shore. At the beach

out in an east wind on a crow-ded Nor-folk shore. At the beach

10 *mf* *f*
they wore ja-cket, shirt, trou-sers, tie or dress, silk sto-ckings and ca-rried a hand-bag or a

they wore ja-cket, shirt, trou-sers, tie or dress, silk sto-ckings and ca-rried a hand-bag or a

15 *f*

bri - ar wa - lking stick. She dreamed a mon - ster, eye - la - shes like a gi - raffe,

20

tall e - nough to see through her bed - room win - dow,

24 *poco staccato*

wa - tching her e - very move, wa - tching her e - very move.

mf mp p > pp mp

The Things We Remember

♩ = 85 con agilité

Soprano

Piano

mf

mp *mf* *mf* *mf* *f*

It a- ppears for a mo- ment ex - act - ly as it

7

mf *f* *mp* *mf* *f*

was right to the fla - king paint on rai - lings that e - choed to my kicks

mp *mf* *mp* *f*

f *mf* *mf* *f*

12

mf *f*

and com - for - ted my fin - gers af - ter the dog's in - ci - sors had punc - tured my calf

mf *p* *mf* *f* *poco staccato* *f*

mf *mf* *f*

19

and set some -thing warm trick-ling down my leg.

mf *mp* *mf*

25

mf *ritardando al fine*

Now the grey te - rrier sits pen - cilled in a sil - ver frame.

The Great Adventure

♩ = 85 con spirito f

Soprano

The great ad-ven-ture of my youth was not the lea-ving of Li-ver-pool

Piano

6

but my a-ttempt from Love's sick-ness to fly.

12 *mf* *poco meno mosso* *mf*

Gui-ness and sau-sage rolls a-cross the I-rish Sea. March night. Took train from

19

sim.

Du - blin to Gal - way. Searched for a bed. Sang in a room of pre - vious - ly un - known friends

24

f *allargando* *lento amoroso* *mf* *quasi a tempo ma meno mosso*

who staged a par - ty. I sang, 'My false love he stole the rose'

29

mp $\text{♩} = 75$ *semplice cantabile e quasi lontano* *mp*

Stayed up all night. Took boat to In - ish - more, grey with walls.

35

Round ro-cky fields of prim-ro-ses In rain and wal-king, wal-king west

5:3

40

a-cross the waist of the is-land where I looked down on a rain-bow

poco a poco calando *p*

p *pp*

red. *

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The World of Miracles

♩ = 150 distinto

Soprano

Piano

mf *f* *ff* *p* *mf* *mp* *p* *Con Pedale*

6

wine glass propped a - gainst the wall of the wind or fiel - ding words

11

fly - ing down hill ba - tted by ha - mmer taps on ma - chi - ne - ry. It was

mf *mf* *8*

15

hea - ring my grand - pa - - rents

roll - ing ad - vice down chalk - y

f *mf*

19

fu - rrows

where pure white

flints wait

like com - fits, black

mp

23

as li - quor - ice in - side.

And

words bounce like

fin - ches fly - ing

mf

27

down hill, down wind, a - cross the bourne. I saw the air

f

f

31

catch breath and turn it - self in - to a cry - stal wrap.

mf *poco intimo* *p*

mf *mp* *p*

mf *mp* *p*

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Daydreams

♩ = 65 semplice *mp*

Soprano

If day-dreams are wrecks of some-thing di-vine I'm a-mazed by the

Piano

mp

6

te-dious-ness of mine. I'm al-ways the po-wer be-hind the throne. I res-cue prin-ce-sses to make

4:3 *3* *4:3*

12

my own. Change-less as a ba-by's world one by one my

Con Pedale

17 *intimo e poco calando*

dreams un - furl _____ 'How de - li-cious is the wi - nning of a kiss at

rit. *mf* *p* *

21 *a tempo*

love's be - gi - nning.' One mo - ment the ball lies in the net and life is as good as it can get. The

mf *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *

26 *rit ed allargando* *mf* *p* *meno mosso* *a niente*

next you're back for a - no - ther kick off. What di - vi - ni - ty is this the wreck of?

p *pp* *rit.* *

A Hobby is not a Holiday

♩ = 90 con brio *f*

Soprano

When he's paid the mort - gage and bought the house,

Piano

5

raised the chil - dren and pleased the spouse

He'll keep his head down a -

9

- way from strife,

for the ho - bby - ist leads a

12

mf

dou - ble life. He's pla - nning the ul - ti - mate fee - ding sta - tion

f *mf* *sim* *sim* *f*

16

for all the birds in his lo - ca - tion

f *mf* *sim* *sim* *f*

20

f

or pla - nning a field - stu - dy, no short cuts,

mf *f* *mf* *f*

Nigel St Clair Morgan
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