

RONALD CORP

STRING, PAPER, WOOD

String Quartet No.3
The Yellow Wallpaper
Clarinet Quintet ('Crawhall')



Rebecca de Pont Davies
Andrew Marriner
Maggini Quartet



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RONALD CORP *(b.1951)*

STRING QUARTET NO.3

1	i Allegro piacevole	5'34
2	ii Cantilena and scherzo	8'04
3	iii Allegro giocoso	3'41

THE YELLOW WALLPAPER *(Charlotte Perkins Gilman adapted by Francis Booth)*

4	An ancestral hall for the summer	2'44
5	We took the nursery at the top of the house	3'14
6	I don't know why I should write this	3'08
7	It changes as the light changes	3'47
8	The smell	4'26
9	Only two more days to get this paper off	5'04

CLARINET QUINTET ('CRAWHALL')

10	i Semplce – Allegro energico	7'09
11	ii Andante	9'42
12	iii Allegretto grazioso	4'11
13	iv Allegro vivace	5'43

66'28

REBECCA DE PONT DAVIES *mezzo-soprano*

ANDREW MARRINER *clarinet*

Maggini Quartet:

SUSANNE STANZELEIT *violin*

DAVID ANGEL *violin*

MARTIN OUTRAM *viola*

MICHAL KAZNOWSKI *cello*

JOHN TATTERSDILL *double bass*

1-3 **STRING QUARTET NO.3**

In my first two string quartets (No.1 'The Bustard', premiered at the Wigmore Hall by the Maggini Quartet in 2008, and No.2, performed by the same quartet in Canterbury in 2010, both recorded for Naxos) I found myself enthused and inspired by writing purely instrumental music. Most of my previous compositions had been in response to words and poetry and were written for solo voices or for choir, but now the floodgates were open for writing for instruments, and in that most hallowed of forms – the string quartet. Quartets No.1 and No.2 come from the same 'stable' because there seemed to be so much I wanted to say in musical terms, so I was determined that Quartet No.3 would feel different. The textures are perhaps lighter, the mood perhaps more relaxed, and the quartet is not so long (a mere seventeen minutes).

There is no 'programme' to the work; it was written in the hope that it could be accepted on purely musical terms. The first movement is in a carefree idiom and takes a loose sonata form shape, with material from the opening section reappearing in the later stages of the movement in a slightly different guise. The second movement begins as a 'cantilena', a slow melody with a broad and relatively simple accompaniment. This gives way (perhaps rather surprisingly) to a short and lively scherzo section before resuming its tread towards a calm closing cadence. The finale takes its inspiration from the witty finales in the string quartets of Haydn, although the sound world is quite different.

The quartet is dedicated in loving memory of Helen L J Pitts SRN QA, and this dedication was made possible by a generous donation to Cancer Research UK in November 2010. It was given its premiere by the Wihan Quartet at the festival Proms at St Jude's in north London in 2011.



THE YELLOW WALLPAPER

Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) adapted by Francis Booth (b.1949)

The short story *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman was published in 1892. Although often regarded as an early feminist classic and a Freudian analysis of a woman's breakdown, it is also simply a very effective ghost story.

Francis Booth, with whom I collaborated on my setting of verses from *Dhammapada* (Stone Records) as well as *The songs of the elder sisters* and *Lullaby for a lost soul*, provided a scena based on texts from the novella, and I envisaged the work as an extended cantata for mezzo-soprano and string quartet (with double bass) or string orchestra. The piece was composed in a series of late night sessions when I found myself completely 'spooked' by the text I was setting.

The music, with its fragments of repeated melodic material and gestures and with its sense of changing moods and textures, tries to represent the state of mind of the young woman as she reacts to the wallpaper in her room of 'captivity'.

The work is dedicated to Naomi Lobbenberg.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 4 | <i>An ancestral hall for the summer
A colonial mansion, an hereditary estate
A haunted house
But that would be asking too much of fate

John laughs at me of course
John is practical
John is a physician
He does not believe I am sick
And what can one do?

Phosphates and tonics
And journeys and air
And exercise
And forbidden to work
Until I am well again</i> | <i>I will talk about the house
The most beautiful place
A delicious garden
The place has been empty for years
There is something strange
I can feel it

He said I was to have perfect rest
And all the air I could get

5 <i>We took the nursery at the top of the house
It is a big airy room
The windows are barred for little children
The paper is stripped off in great patches
I never saw a worse paper in my life</i></i> |
|---|---|--|

*The colour is repellent, almost revolting
A smouldering, unclean yellow
Strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight
No wonder the children hated it*

*John does not know how much I really suffer
He knows there is no reason to suffer
And that satisfies him
Of course it is only nervousness
I wish I could get well faster*

*The paper looks as if it knew
The pattern lolls like a broken neck
Two bulbous eyes stare at you upside down
Up and down and sideways they crawl
I can see a strange, provoking, formless figure
That seems to skulk about
Behind that silly and conspicuous front design*

*I cry at nothing
And cry most of the time
I am alone a good deal just now*

*I determine for the thousandth time
I will follow that pointless pattern
To some sort of conclusion
This thing was not arranged on any laws
Of radiation, or alternation, or repetition,
or symmetry
Or anything else I ever heard of*

*I don't know why I should write this
I don't want to
I don't feel able
The effort is getting greater than
the relief*

*There are things in that paper that
nobody knows but me
Or ever will
The dim shapes get clearer every day
The moon shines in all around just as
the sun does
The faint figure behind seemed to
shake the pattern
Just as if she wanted to get out*

*Dear John, he loves me very dearly
And hates to have me sick
He said I was his darling and his comfort
And all he had*

*The colour is hideous enough
Unreliable enough, infuriating enough
But the pattern is torturing
It slaps you in the face
Knocks you down and tramples
upon you*

*It changes as the light changes
That is why I watch it always
In twilight, candlelight, lamplight
And worst of all, moonlight
It becomes bars
And the woman behind it is as plain as can be*

*I don't want to leave now until I have found out
There is a week more and I think that will
be enough*

*I'm feeling ever so much better
I don't sleep much at night
But I sleep a good deal in the daytime*

*It is the strangest yellow, that wallpaper
It makes me think of all the yellow things*

I ever saw

Not beautiful ones like buttercups

But foul, bad yellow things

The smell

It creeps all over the house

*Hovering in the dining room, skulking
in the parlour*

*Hiding in the hall, lying in wait for me
on the stairs*

It gets into my hair

It is like the colour of the paper!

A yellow smell

I really have discovered something at last

The front pattern does move

And no wonder

The woman behind it shakes it

She crawls around fast

She is all the time trying to climb through

*I think that woman gets out in the
daytime*

*I can see her out of every one of
my windows*

I see her in that long shaded lane

I see her in those dark grape arbours

Creeping all around the garden

Away off in the open country

*Creeping as fast as a cloud shadow in
a high wind*

Only two more days to get this paper off

I believe John is beginning to notice

I don't like the look in his eyes

He asked me all sorts of questions

Pretended to be very loving and kind

As if I couldn't see through him

This is the last day, but it is enough

As soon as it was moonlight

*That poor thing began to crawl and shake
the pattern*

I ran to help her

I pulled and she shook, I shook and she pulled

*Before morning I had peeled off yards of
that paper*

It sticks horribly and the pattern enjoys it

All those strangled heads and bulbous eyes

*And waddling fungus growths shriek
with derision*

I don't like to look out of the windows even

There are so many of those creeping women

And they creep so fast

*I wonder if they all came out of the wallpaper
As I did?*

I shall have to get back behind the pattern

When it comes night

And that is hard

It is so pleasant to be out in this great room

And creep around as I please

For outside you have to creep on the ground

And everything is green instead of yellow

*Why, there's John at the door
How he does call and pound
Now he's crying for an axe
It would be a shame to break down
that beautiful door*

*I've got out at last, I said
In spite of you
And I've pulled off most of the paper
So you can't put me back*



10-13 CLARINET QUINTET ('CRAWHALL')

Arguably the 19th-century equivalent of a true Renaissance man, Joseph Crawhall (1821-1896) had a remarkable range of talents and interests. The son of a former Lord Mayor of Newcastle, he was among other things a brilliant wood engraver, author, illustrator and book designer, cartoonist, angler, humorist, lover of sword dancing and the Northumbrian pipes, and patron of architecture and the arts – and still found time to run the family rope works.

I was introduced to his work by Peter Lobbenberg, to whom the work is dedicated, and this clarinet quintet was written out of my growing affection for this wonderful man.

I wanted to capture something of his humanity, his wit, his love of life, his love of family, his sense of humour, and also to represent in music something of the characteristic of his woodcuts and drawings. But don't look for anything too specific in the music. The introduction to the first movement tries to represent a man perfectly at one with himself and the world, while the third movement suggests a man of wit, and captures some of the flavour of his woodcuts and drawings. There is also a whiff of folk music in the middle section of the second movement and a frenetic dance motif in the finale. But these are just 'suggestions'.

The quintet also fulfils its musical credentials as a formal four-movement work with the slow movement placed second and a lighter dance-like movement placed third. Needless to say the clarinet is a versatile instrument that can be witty and raucous, as well as being subdued and sad, so it was an ideal candidate to represent this most remarkable man.





We are very grateful to Peter Lobbenberg for his support towards the making of this recording.
Produced and edited by Andrew Walton for K & A Productions.
Engineered by Mike Clements.
Recorded 15-17 May 2012 at St Silas, Kentish Town, London, U.K.

Publisher: www.ronaldcorp.com

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Inside front cover: photograph of Ronald Corp © Julian Hanford.
Graphic design: Colour Blind Design.

Printed in the E.U.

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