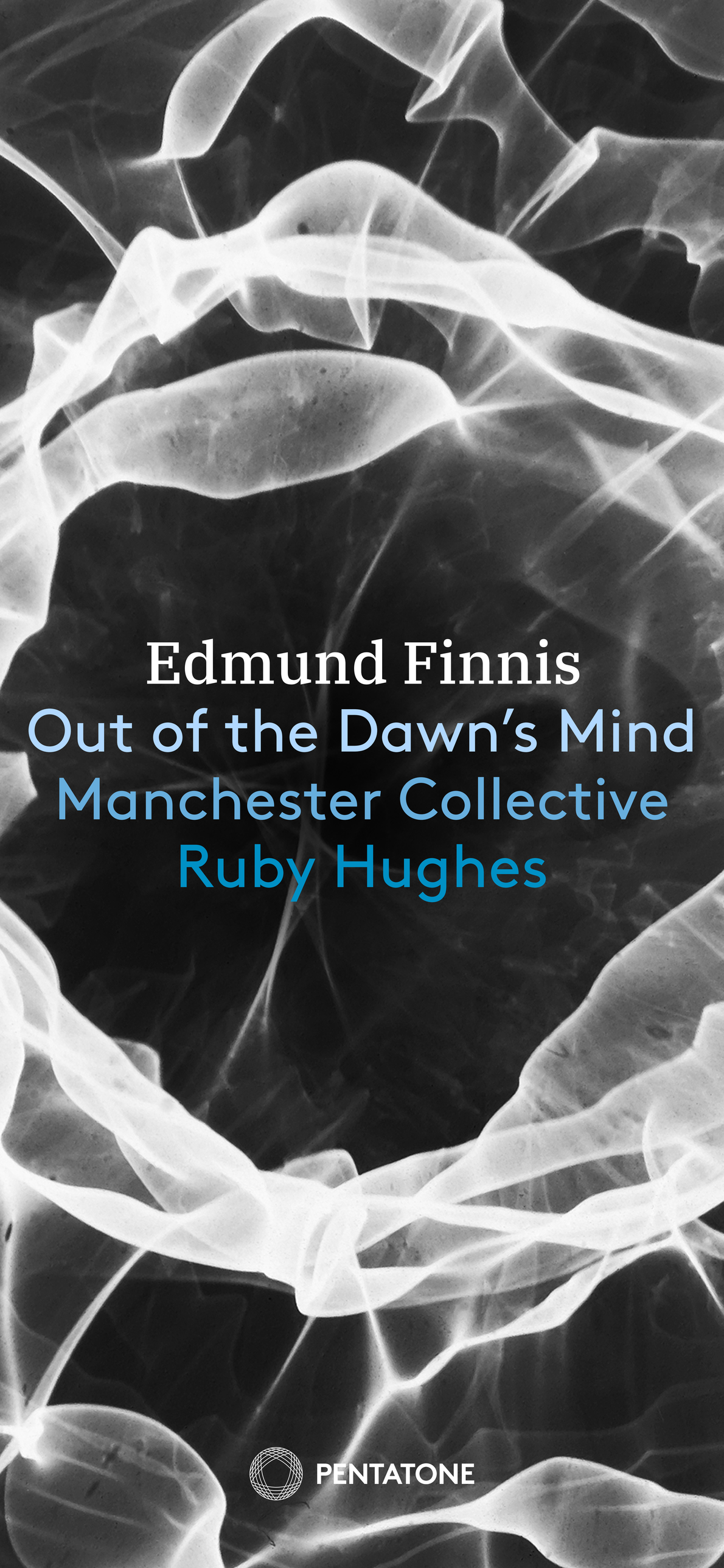

Edmund Finnis
Out of the Dawn's Mind
Manchester Collective
Ruby Hughes
PENTATONE

OUT OF THE DAWN'S MIND

Manchester Collective
Rakhi Singh, director
Ruby Hughes, soprano

PENTATONE · PTC 5187 584

OUT OF THE DAWN'S MIND

Music by **Edmund Finnis**
Poems by **Alice Oswald**

1	A Rushed Account of the Dew	3. 40
2	Sunday Ballad	3. 43
3	A Short Story of Falling	3. 28
4	Shadow	6. 59
5	Slowed-Down Blackbird	4. 29
	Total playing time:	22. 23

Manchester Collective
Rakhi Singh, director
Ruby Hughes, soprano



Ruby Hughes
© Phil Sharp

Manchester Collective

Violin 1

Rakhi Singh
(*Director*)
Jonathan
Martindale
Julian Azkoul
Ian Watson
Peter Liang

Violin 2

Rosemary Attree
Jack Greed
Lily Whitehurst
Anna
Tulchinskaya

Viola

Alex Mitchell
Carol Ella
Lucy Nolan

Cello

Nick Trygstad
Reinoud Ford
Peggy Nolan

Double Bass

Alice Durrant
Billy Cole



Manchester Collective
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Edmund Finnis
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I have felt a strong affinity with Alice Oswald's intensely beautiful poetry since first encountering it over a decade ago. She is acutely aware of the world around us, and is able to articulate something unique about the experience of living within it.

Oswald has said that she thinks of her poems as 'sound carvings', or as melting ice shapes that

vanish and are only there for a moment. Maybe this is why I hear the possibility of music in my mind when I read these poems.

Out of the Dawn's Mind (2022) is a song cycle for soprano and string orchestra that sets five poems from Alice Oswald's book *Falling Awake*. These poems deal with light, water, time and the experience of coming into contact with the world.

The cycle opens with a dawn. Light searches a room 'where two lay twined in bed'. There is falling rain 'that rises to the light and falls again'. At dusk a shadow falls. Rooks fly upwards. The cycle closes in the snow with a kind of erasure.

This is a cycle about cycles, and the flux of the world; about rising and falling; about the sensation of life.

© 2026 by Edmund Finnis

Edmund Finnis is part of the blood and bones of Manchester Collective. Over the decade since our formation we have commissioned, performed and recorded his music, and each time we find new meaning and depths within it.

In listening you can feel folded into a rich inner world full of beauty and sense-making. It was no surprise that, as a composer with rare poetic intelligence, he found inspiration in the words of Alice Oswald. Like a master alchemist he has breathed music into her poems with trademark artistry — strong, fragile, emotional and transcendent, *Out of the Dawn's Mind* gives us space to make contact with the life within and around us.

Linda Begbie
Chief Executive
Manchester Collective

A RUSHED ACCOUNT OF THE DEW

I who can blink
to break the spell of daylight

and what a sliding screen between worlds
is a blink

I who can hear the last three seconds in my head
but the present is beyond me
                listen

in this tiny moment of reflexion
I want to work out what it's like to descend
out of the dawn's mind

and find a leaf and fasten the known
 to the unknown
with a liquid cufflink
                and then unfasten

to be brief

to be almost actual

oh pristine example
of claiming a place on the earth
only to cancel

SUNDAY BALLAD

A questioner called Light appeared,
with probe and beam
began to search the room
where two lay twined in bed.

whose intellect surpassing theirs
with no regard
for things half-dressed
accused them of old age

as weak as eggs they woke.
they thought their bodies
gleaming in the window-square
felt less like age than air

oh no not quite
in blue pedantic Light
two doors away two trees
made less of leaves than sound

as if to prove them wrong
described the wind
and as they dressed the dust
flew white and silent through the house

A SHORT STORY OF FALLING

It is the story of the falling rain
to turn into a leaf and fall again

it is the secret of a summer shower
to steal the light and hide it in a flower

and every flower a tiny tributary
that from the ground flows green and
momentary

is one of water's wishes and this tale
hangs in a seed-head smaller than my
thumbnail

if only I a passerby could pass
as clear as water through a plume of grass

to find the sunlight hidden at the tip
turning to seed a kind of lifting rain drip

then I might know like water how to balance
the weight of hope against the light of
patience

water which is so raw so earthy-strong
and lurks in cast-iron tanks and leaks along

drawn under gravity towards my tongue
to cool and fill the pipe-work of this song

which is the story of the falling rain
that rises to the light and falls again

SHADOW

I'm going to flicker for a moment
and tell you the tale of a shadow
that falls at dusk
out of the blue to the earth
and turns left along the path to here

groggily under its black-out
being dragged along crippled over
things as if broken-winged

not yet continuous
no more than a shiver of something
with the flesh parachute of a human opening
above it

but lengthening a little as it descends through
the rings
of one hour into the next

with the rooks flying upwards
snipping at the clouds

until at last out of that opening here it lies
my own impersonal pronoun
crumpled under me like a dead body

it is faint
it has been falling for a long time

look when I walk
it's like a pair of scissors thrown at me by the sun
so that now as if my skin were not quite
  tucked in
        I am cold cold
trying to slide myself out of my own shade
but hour by hour more shade leaks out

        or if I stand
              if I move one hand
        I hear the hiss of flowers closing their eyelids
        and the trees
as if dust was being beaten from a rug
              shake out their birds and in again

it's as if I've interrupted something
that was falling in a straight line from the eye
  of God

        and if I do nothing
        the ground gives up
        the almost minty clarity of its grass

begins to fade
the white moths under the leaves
are amazed

SLOWED-DOWN BLACKBIRD

Three people in the snow
getting rid of themselves
breath by breath

and every six seconds a blackbird

three people in raincoats losing their tracks
in the snow
walking as far as the edge and back again
with the trees exhausted
tapping at the sky

and every six seconds a blackbird

first three then two
passing one eye between them
and the eye is a white eraser rubbing
them away

and on the edge a blackbird
trying over and over its broken line
trying over and over its broken line

Acknowledgements

PRODUCTION TEAM

Recording producers
Edmund Finnis & **Brendan Williams**

Additional production
Adam Szabo

Recording and Mix engineer
Brendan Williams

Mastering
Joseph Reiser

Text
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Alice Oswald, "A Short Story of Falling", “A Rushed Account of the Dew”, “Sunday Ballad”, “Slowed-Down Blackbird” from *Falling Awake*. Copyright © 2016 by Alice Oswald.
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Product management & design
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commissioned by **Manchester**
Collective

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in Hallé St Peter's, Manchester, UK.

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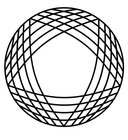
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