

The New Winter Songbook

Rebecca Lea soprano
Caroline Jaya-Ratnam piano



CONVIVIVUM
RECORDS

Tracklist

DISC 1

1	*Dust of Snow	2.05
	<i>Jamie W Hall</i>	
2	North	3.20
	<i>Errollyn Wallen</i>	
3	On White Meadows	3.53
	<i>Judith Weir</i>	
4	*Sundowning	6.34
	<i>Ben Nobuto</i>	
5	*Winter Spell	3.50
	<i>Héloïse Werner</i>	
6	*Frost Fair.	5.59
	<i>Adam Gorb</i>	
7	The Darkest Midnight	2.53
	<i>Eoghan Desmond</i>	
8	*Winter Fragments	4.36
	<i>Jessica Dannheisser</i>	
9	Christmas Eve at Sea	5.45
	<i>Cecilia McDowall</i>	
10	Cradle Song.	3.47
	<i>Helen Neeves</i>	
11	*Natural State	5.18
	<i>James Weeks</i>	
12	Twelfth Night	4.45
	<i>Martin Bussey</i>	

DISC 2

1	The Core of Time.	2.42
	<i>Cheryl Frances-Hoad</i>	
2	*Villanelle: New Year's Eve	2.44
	<i>Peter Foggitt</i>	
3	*Lethe – Oblivion.	5.51
	<i>Electra Perivolaris</i>	
4	*Snow Day	3.37
	<i>Michael Betteridge</i>	
5	*Ariadne	3.27
	<i>David McGregor</i>	
6	Snowdrop.	3.15
	<i>Michael Csanyi-Wills</i>	
7	*The Nineteenth Night	3.42
	of December <i>Sun Keting</i>	
8	*Winters Distant	8.04
	<i>Owain Park</i>	
9	*Seasonal Clothing	6.02
	<i>Anita Datta</i>	
	Total Running Time	92.09
	*Indicates commissions / newly composed for the project	

Programme Note

The New Winter Songbook is a collection of twenty-one songs by a diverse range of composers, featuring contemporary musical settings and lyrical responses to the winter season. The catalyst was twofold: a conversation I had with a teacher at a school in East London, where he told me of the difficulties he had been having finding secular, contemporary songs set in the winter season to play to his pupils and my own desire, one December, to sing some seasonal music that wasn't a carol.

The resulting twenty-one songs in this collection (a coincidentally appropriate number given that the Winter Solstice usually falls on the 21st December) have each been on a different journey. Thirteen are brand new works from composers spanning a range of experiences and backgrounds. Three of these (*Ariadne*, *Winter Fragments*, *Winters Distant*) feature poems selected by composers from an Open Call for poetry submissions in early 2025. The other composers chose or translated pre-existing texts, commissioned poets known to them

(indeed two compositions are the fruits of family partnerships), or in some cases wrote the text themselves. Two songs, *Seasonal Clothing* and *Snow Day*, incorporate musical and lyrical ideas developed by secondary school musicians participating in songwriting workshops held in East London and Kirklees in February and March 2025. Seven of the remaining eight songs are first recordings and it is an honour to include these alongside the commissions. Such was the enthusiasm of the composers for the project, that the parameters expanded from one to the two wonderful discs you have before you today. I am also pleased that Hal Leonard is publishing The New Winter Songbook as an anthology, to be released in November 2025.

It has been a delight to learn the new commissions, noting how they complement the pre-existing songs in the collection. Whilst more traditional winter themes do recur within the songs – darkness, cold, stillness and grief – the approach of each individual composer to these themes is rich and varied. From

Programme Note

James Weeks' minimalist depiction of a modern winterscape in the North East of England (is this the first time a well-known retail warehouse has featured in a song?) to Adam Gorb's declamatory setting of John Gay's *Frost Fair*, all the songs conjure an evocative and compelling sound world. Ben Nobuto's *Sundowning* explores dementia and the confusion that is often exacerbated during the darker winter months; repeated and rotating fragments of text from *It's a Wonderful Life* are combined to create a virtuosic piece that is at once highly disorientating yet extremely playful. In *Seasonal Clothing*, the poet Natasha Gauthier uses the weather as a metaphor for her mother's immigrant experience after a move from Goa to Canada and subsequently her own experience moving from Canada to Wales. Anita Datta weaves Indian Classical Raga Malkauns into both the vocal and piano parts in a fusion of cultural styles.

Echoes of non-Western musical traditions are also to be found in Sun Keting's *Nineteenth Night of December*, which sets

text by Yilin Wang, translated from a poem by Chinese poet Fei Ming, presenting winter images through an alternative cultural lens. Similarly, Judith Weir makes use of a translation, this time of Wilhelm Müller's *Die Winterreise* (probably the most well-known winter song-cycle), from which she extracts and creates five new, crystalline haikus, underpinned by shimmering piano writing. Héloïse Werner, meanwhile, offers a dreamlike, bilingual composition that voices a dialogue written by her sister, Emma, between her anxious younger self and that of her more confident older self. The interplay of French and English reflects the journey of both poet and composer, from growing up in France to living in the UK.

Although the majority of The New Winter Songbook is secular, it seemed disingenuous to completely ignore Christmas. Therefore, the collection includes Helen Neeves' luxurious *Cradle Song* and the closest that we get to a carol in Eoghan Desmond's *The Darkest Midnight*. Martin Bussey's *Twelfth Night* and Cecilia McDowall's *Christmas Eve at Sea* both capture moments of

Programme Note

wild ecstasy. Peter Foggitt's setting of *Villanelle: New Year's Eve* for voice and single piano line, depicts a scene in which a supine couple, from the privacy of their upstairs room, listen to the sounds of the frantic preparations below from the rest of the household.

I find it striking that all these settings reflect so much hope. The commission briefs were quite unprescribed, so it is interesting that the poets and composers have chosen a primarily optimistic approach to the season. Even *Winter Fragments*, perhaps the most desolate of the texts, finishes with a certainty of regeneration, reinforced by the throbbing repeated chords on the piano, whilst *Snowdrop*, *Ariadne* and *Dust of Snow* are poetic and musical landscapes of utmost beauty, longing and hopefulness. These are not depictions of brutalism and existential despair but rather a collection of extremely beautiful and eminently singable pieces that suggest an optimistic vision of things to come: "and the trees hum a song of their inevitable greening."

This release is the culmination of over

two years' work, during which I have researched, fundraised, commissioned, administered and latterly rehearsed and recorded these remarkable songs. It has been a wonderful and insightful experience working with all the composers across the various stages of the project and a complete joy to collaborate with the pianist, Caroline Jaya-Ratnam, as well as the Convivium label and recording team. Particular thanks must go to Arts Council England, The Finzi Friends, The Francis Routh Trust, the Hinrichsen Foundation and the Marchus Trust for significant grants towards the project. Special thanks also to the artists and individuals who so generously offered their time and skills to bring this to fruition. I hope that this release will be the beginning of a new journey for these songs and that singers and audiences everywhere will enjoy them as much as I have.



Texts

11 Dust of Snow

Music by Jamie W Hall

Lyrics by Robert Frost

The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree

Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.

12 North

The Seven Mountains

Music by Errollyn Wallen

Lyrics by Errollyn Wallen

'North' was composed by Errollyn Wallen after visiting Bergen, Norway, for the first time. The song was written as a way of remembering the powerful impression the place had on her and the sense of yearning to travel even further north. EW

When the wind is in the north,
When the mountains sigh.
That is when I'll take my boat
And sail without a cause.

I'll sail by night and think by day,
I'll sail by night and I'll think by day,
I'll sail by night and I'll think all day of
North.

When the stars are beating fast,
When the dark is light,
That is when I'll steal my way
And I'll gird these spirits tight.

I'll sail by night and think by day,
I'll sail by night and I'll think by day,
I'll sail by night and I'll drink all day of
North.

...of North,

When I lighted to this place,
When I smelled the sea,
I knew I'd be here again,
It's where I want to be.

I need to feel cold,
Feel the sea,
I want to be a part of ice and storm.
I want to hold you,
Your cold, cold heart,
My arms outstretched to greet the dawn.

I'm gonna sail by night and think all day,
I'll sail by night and I'll think all day,
I'll sail by night and I'll drink all day of
North.

North.

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Texts

13 On White Meadows

Music by Judith Weir

Lyrics by Wilhelm Müller

Recently I have set to music numerous haiku, tanka and other miniature Japanese poetic forms, which combine observation of the natural world with personal revelation. As a result, I've begun to see haiku everywhere.

Here in this song are five short 'Japanese poems' I spotted in a standard English translation of Die Winterreise. These brief verses come from 'Gute Nacht', 'Der Wegweiser', 'Letzte Hoffnung', 'Der stürmische Morgen' and 'Der Leiermann'.

The resulting song, 'On White Meadows', features a thoughtful traveller viewing fields, trees and skies. Around the singer's wide, extended phrases, the piano creates an 'open air' atmosphere. JW

A shadow thrown by the moon
is my companion.
On white meadows, I seek deer tracks.

Texts

Signs on the road, pointing the way —
I wander, relentless, restless, yet
seeking rest.

Many coloured leaves here
and there on the trees —
I stand lost in thought.

The storm has torn apart
the sky's grey mantle —
tattered clouds fly about.

An organ grinder plays with
numb fingers —
the dogs growl.

14 Sundowning

Music by Ben Nobuto

Lyrics are fragments from
It's a Wonderful Life (1946) directed by
Frank Capra.

'Sundowning' is a state of confusion that occurs in the late afternoon and early evening in people with dementia. Last winter, my dad's dementia progressed suddenly quite quickly in the lead up to Christmas, and I wondered whether it was partly to do with the days getting shorter and darker, with sundowning. I started thinking about this mysterious link between the weather outside and my dad's brain, how the closer to evening it got - the less natural light - the more strange, confused and dreamlike conversations with him became.

In this piece, fragments of George's dialogue from It's a Wonderful Life (1946) are set to music and repeat and rotate in different combinations. I'm interested in how repetition can be a sign of confusion - repeating things to clarify, repeating to help remember - but also a source

Texts

of comfort, reliving a happy memory, rewatching an old film, replaying a song you love over and over. BN

Mother
crazy
I told you
Hallelujah
brother
God
Father
home
Show me the way

Context from the film:

Oh, **Mother**, Mother, please help me.
Something terrible's happened to me.
I don't know what it is. Something's
happened to everybody. Please let me
come in. Keep me here until I get over it.

Now shut up! Cut it out! You're... you're...
you're **crazy!** That's what I think... you're
screwy, and you're driving me crazy, too!
I'm seeing things.

What's the matter with everybody? Janie,
go on. **I told you** to practice. Now, go on,
play!

Hallelujah! Mary! Let me touch you! Oh,
you're real!

Oh, **brother**. I wonder what Martini put in
those drinks?

I want to live again. I want to live again.
Please, **God**, let me live again.

Now wait a minute, here. Wait a minute
here. As, this is some sort of a funny
dream I'm having here. So long, mister,
I'm going **home**.

Dear **Father** in Heaven, I'm not a praying
man, but if you're up there and you can
hear me, show me the way. I'm at the end
of my rope. **Show me the way**.

Texts

Booths sudden hide the Thames,
long streets appear,
And numerous games
proclaim the crowded fair.
Thick-rising tents
a canvas city build,
And the loud dice
resound through all the field.
But now the western
gale the flood unbinds,
And blackening clouds
move on with warmer winds,
The wooden town
its frail foundation leaves,
And Thames' full urn
rolls down his plenteous waves;
From every pent-house
streams the fleeting snow,
And with dissolving frost
the pavements flow.
O roving muse,
recall that wondrous year,
When winter reigned
in bleak Britannia's air.

17 The Darkest Midnight

Music by Eoghan Desmond

Lyrics Irish Traditional, *adapted by*
Rev. William Devereux

The darkest midnight in December,
No snow, no hail, nor winter storm,
Shall hinder us for to remember
The Babe that on this night was born.

With shepherds, we are come to see
This lovely Infant's glorious charms.
Born of a Maid, as prophets said,
The God of love in Mary's arms.

No earthly gifts can we present Him,
No gold nor myrrh nor odours sweet.
But if with hearts we can content Him
We humbly lay them at his feet.

'Twas but pure love that from above
Brought Him to save us from all harms,
So let us sing and welcome Him,
The God of Love in Mary's arms.

Texts

18 Winter Fragments

Music by Jessica Dannheisser

Lyrics by Hannah Cooke

The poem 'Winter Fragments' was written in early 2021, deep into the third Covid lockdown in the UK. It deals with themes of extended isolation, grief and mental health struggles, finding some solace in parallels between these experiences and the wintering landscape punctuated by small, defiant glimpses of spring. HC

I am walking,
body first, mind tugged after.
Balloon on a string.

Someone has inked a rainbow
up from the ground;
run out of colour halfway fading to cloud.

White swans scatter
like rice outside a church on the
engorged river, bloated
like a corpse floated up,
as still as death.

I am singing and I cannot stop.
My voice, mine and not mine,
part of a line of something else, sliding

in and out of harmony and dissonance
the keynote drives
On! On! On!

I look for myself in the
broken mirror puddles;
in the throw of birds across the sky.

And cloak-hooded snowdrops
hang their bell-heads
like lanterns of unseasonal carol singers.

And the trees hum a song of their
inevitable greening.



Texts

19 Christmas Eve at Sea

Music by Cecilia McDowall

Lyrics by John Masefield

'Christmas Eve at Sea' was commissioned by Jane Wickenden, who asked me if I would write a song for her husband's 50th birthday, which falls on Christmas Eve. She suggested this poem by John Masefield and it couldn't be a more appropriate setting for Robin, who is in the Royal Naval Reserve. It was not a poem I knew but I felt there was something really quite beautiful in the ghostliness of it, with its eerily swaying imagery and starry, moonlit sky; an unusual and intense welcoming in of Christmas Day. CMcD

A wind is rustling 'south and soft,'
Cooing a quiet country tune.
The calm sea sighs, and far aloft
The sails are ghostly in the moon.

Unquiet ripples lisp and purr,
A block there pipes and chirps
i' the sheave,

The wheel-ropes jar, the reef-points stir
Faintly – and it is Christmas Eve.

The hushed sea seems
to hold her breath,
And o'er the giddy, swaying spars,
Silent and excellent as Death,
The dim blue skies are bright with stars.

Dear God -- they shone in Palestine
Like this, and yon pale moon serene
Looked down among the lowing kine
On Mary and the Nazarene.

The angels called from deep to deep,
The burning heavens felt the thrill,
Startling the flocks of silly sheep
And lonely shepherds on the hill.

Tonight beneath the dripping bows
Where flashing bubbles burst and throng,
The bow-wash murmurs
and sighs and soughs
A message from the angels' song.

The moon goes nodding down the west,
The drowsy helmsman strikes the bell;

Texts

111 Natural State

Music by James Weeks

Lyrics by James Weeks

In this song, winter is a time when not only the landscape but humanity too is stripped back to its essential substance. A hard time, of enduring and reckoning, when roadside rubbish lies exposed by the dying grass, and we see clearly the world we have built. JW

Overnight snow still lying in patches on
the field, melting under the rain
Wind bending the winter tares, glowing
dull russet
Delivery vans on the road, pushing the
slush around

The verges are scattered with drive-
thru litter: Red Bull cans, McDonald's
wrappers, vape cartons, crisp packets,
water bottles
Black binliner snagged on the barbed
wire on top of the fence
A Stella can caught in a hawthorn bush

Rex Judaeorum natus est,
I charge you, brothers,
sing Nowell, Nowell,
Rex Judaeorum natus est.

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from the Masefield Estate.*

110 Cradle Song

Music by Helen Neeves

Lyrics by William Blake

Sleep, sleep, beauty bright,
Dreaming in the joys of night;
Sleep, sleep; in thy sleep
Little sorrows sit and weep.
Sweet babe, in thy face
Soft desires I can trace,
Secret joys and secret smiles,
Little pretty infant wiles.
As thy softest limbs I feel,
Smiles as of the morning steal
O'er thy cheek, and o'er thy breast
Where thy little heart doth rest.
O the cunning wiles that creep
In thy little heart asleep!
When thy little heart doth wake,
Then the dreadful night shall break.

Texts

Sky a thick grey, shrouding roofs and the
tops of trees
I can only just make out West Cornforth,
the quarry, the Amazon warehouse

A few cows in a field beyond the
trainline, heading for the byre
A pheasant pecking in the scrub
A red car passes, following phone lines
southwards

Industry of body against the cold
Rough land ploughed through the
rubbish of the past
Dirt-bike tracks through abandoned
coalfields
The unkempt scars, planted with saplings

1 12 Twelfth Night

Music by Martin Bussey

Lyrics by Hilaire Belloc

As I was lifting over Down
A winter's night to Petworth Town,
I came upon a company
Of Travellers who would talk with me.

The riding moon was small and bright,
They cast no shadows in her light:
There was no man for miles a-near.
I would not walk with them for fear.

A star in heaven by Gumber glowed,
An ox across the darkness lowed,
Whereat a burning light there stood
Right in the heart of Gumber Wood.

Across the rime their marching rang,
And in a little while they sang;
They sang a song I used to know,
Gloria

In Excelsis Domino.

The frozen way those people trod
It led towards the Mother of God;
Perhaps if I had travelled with them
I might have come to Bethlehem.

Texts

2 1 The Core of Time

Music by Cheryl Frances-Hoad

Lyrics by Di Sherlock

I wrote 'The Core of Time' as part of 'Five Beacons of Light', a dramatic oratorio with music composed by Cheryl Frances-Hoad. It tells the stories of four rock lighthouses intended to safeguard us from the peril of the sea and the current crisis in which it is the sea who is in peril from us. It was to be sung by the Ice Core Driller - ice cores hold a record of the composition of earth's atmosphere in Deep Time, showing spikes in temperature and other indicators of climate change resonant today. DS

In a cave blown out of snow
twenty degrees below
Time fathoms
the Anthropocene.

Down to the bedrock we must go
to tell the story of Earth and Air.
Tell-tale bubbles hold the trace
of smelters lead in Ancient Rome,
the Industrial Revolution.

Ice is the veil we lift
to raise the Ghost
of the Future.

Texts

2 2 Villanelle: New Year's Eve

Music by Peter Foggitt

Lyrics by Peter Foggitt

I don't like going out on New Year's Eve, but house parties with nice people and silly games are a different matter.

This poem is about one of those parties: the villanelle form presents various possibilities – cooking, coffee, decorations, walking – but the two refrains ensure that one stays, mentally and physically, in bed. PF

And you lay next to me all morning long
while all the others got on with the day
a poem our limbs entwined our minds a song

the preparations downstairs starting strong
cooking and coffee, finding games to play
and you lay next to me all morning long

plans made for midnight games and singalongs
candles and tinsel, lights and paper chains
a poem our limbs entwined our minds a song

there through the open curtains ran along
the mist that blurred the hills from green to grey
And you lay next to me all morning long

someone suggests a walk it turns out wrong
the wind awakes the horizontal rain
a poem our limbs entwined our minds a song

the getting up once more again prolonged
while all the others got on with the day
and you lay next to me all morning long
a poem our limbs entwined our minds a song

Texts

2 3 Lethe – Oblivion

Music by Electra Perivolaris

Lyrics by John Perivolaris

In Greek mythology, Lethe (pronounced Li-th-ee) is a river in the underworld of Hades whose water, when drunk, provokes a forgetfulness of the past - or a state of oblivion. 'Lethe' is the title of a poem, written by my father, photographer and writer John Perivolaris, which explores the sense of 'in-betweenness' associated with states of diaspora and mixed cultural identities. The poem reflects on our dual island identity, our origins and family roots on the Greek Aegean island of Chios and our family home on the Scottish Isle of Arran. The music draws upon the words of the poem as it moves from states of 'inbetweenness' and transition, to those of longing, nostalgia, and hope. EP

Chalk in the mouth
Gold in the distance
Every departure
A homecoming
The outline of an island
Floating in the air
Bleached memories
Of dolphins in the bay
Between islands and cities
Rising East and setting West
Every departure
A homecoming
The swans are suspended
Symmetry frosted
Above and below
Thin river ice
The boats are beached
The horizon is empty
Only chalk in the mouth
Cold in the distance.

Texts

2 4 Snow Day

Music by Michael Betteridge

Lyrics by Michael Betteridge

Music and lyrics inspired by workshops with young people in Marsden, West Yorkshire, February 2025.

First glimpse of snow,
Icicles and finger-frosted window panes,
A branch groans nearby
It can be heard for miles.

Breath takes form in the air,
Cold takes hold of the hills
 that hug the village,
Today's a snow day,
A slow day.

The sun limps through the sky,
Skirting the moorlands untouched
 blanket of white,
Cars skid on icy roads
Testing their path to urbanity.

Trees grasp into the blue,
Daylight, January's hazy jewel,
Today's a snow day,
A slow day.

Today's a good day:
The skies are wax and the air is nectar,
Today's a good day:
Still soft underfoot.

Today's a good day:
Nature's slumber holds me home,
I banish thoughts of November's rain,
December's demands,
The weight of January.

First glimpse of snow.

I'll wait for the sun to crown Pule Hill
and herald a new spring.

Texts

2 5 Ariadne

Music by David McGregor

Lyrics by Anna Kenyon

Ariadne was a gift of a poem to set to music, and working closely with the poet, Anna Kenyon, deepened my understanding of the emotional currents running through the text. My musical setting opens with a falling motif in the piano, an evocation of the protagonist's sense of longing for a lover who is no longer present. Ariadne's solitude and stillness is framed against a world in restless flux, while transforming iterations of this falling motif intensify her bittersweet memories. The music reflects her stoic struggle to find solace despite change and loss. DMcG

We met in winter. I fell asleep in his arms
and woke to find him still there, shivering
and excited in the frost.

Now I lie on the sand alone in the heat,
garlanded with this memory. It coils around
me like a silken rope.
Maybe if I stay quite still, the air will move
around me, the little breezes shift the sands
and bring – not someone, but a change,

*Poplars rustling, a skein of geese,
Waves crashing on shingle, mackerel sky.*

But the sun is bright and grey and
 the sea like glass.
I hope we have had the longest day.

Texts

26 Snowdrop

Music by Michael Csanyi-Wills

Lyrics by Susan Holliday

She stirs in the still
hard ground of my grief,
Messenger of hope,
promise of re-leaf.
Naked and newborn
without armour or shield,
Witness to healing,
to wounds already healed?
I fear that she yet
may succumb to a frost,
That the rage of this winter
with all that's been lost,
Which howls through the day
and bites in the night,
Could still come to ravage
her spirit so slight.
And I wonder that something
so gentle and small
Could bring this much comfort,
Could break through at all.

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and Chris Wood.

Texts

27 十二月十九夜 // The Nineteenth Night of December

Music by Sun Keting

Lyrics by Yilin Wang for the English translation of the original poem by Fei Ming

This song sets a dreamlike winter poem by Fei Ming, translated by Yilin Wang, where a single lantern at night becomes a portal into memory, longing, and imagination. Light, flame, and reflection echo throughout, blurring the lines between home and nature, thought and feeling. SK

深夜一枝灯，
若高山流水，
有身外之海。
星之空是鸟林，
是花，是鱼，
是天上的梦，
海是夜的镜子。
思想是一个美人，
是家，
是日，
是月，
是灯，
是炉火，
炉火是墙上的树影，
是冬夜的声音。

in the late night, the lantern
is like the songs of lofty mountains and flowing waters,
a sea beyond the physical self.
the realm of stars is a forest of birds,
is flowers, is fish,
is the dreams of the sky above.
the sea is a mirror for the night.
longing is a beautiful person,
is home,
is the sun,
is the moon,
is the lantern,
is flames.
flames are the shadows of trees on the wall,
the melody of winter nights.

Texts

2 8 Winters Distant

Music by Owain Park

Lyrics by Gareth Matthey

Winter to me has always felt like home – a December baby, I have always loved the clarity of cold weather. Even through many years of living far from home, I knew that the turn of the season to winter will help soothe any homesickness. It is also the season that most soothes my dysphoria, the cold and the ice and the snow somehow reconnecting me with my own body. 'Winters Distant' is therefore a reframing of conventional negative depictions of winter through a very personal lens. GM

I am far from home
But the crunch of snow underfoot
Is home itself to me
Is pleasant company

Snow here
Is just like there
Perfect

The cold seeps in
And caresses me gently, sweetly
I know this feeling
Is that of healing

Cold here
Is just like there
Perfect

I was born in one winter
And here in another's
I am reborn, remade
Free of scorn, of shade

Ice here
Is just like there
Perfect

Many winters distant
Never longing for home
Only craving that time of year
When home draws near

Winter here
Is just like there
Perfect

Texts

2 9 Seasonal Clothing

Music by Anita Datta

Lyrics by Natasha Gauthier

Music inspired by workshops with young people in East London, Feb / March 2025.

When my mother left
She packed light.

Photos of uncles and aunties
Under the bougainvilleas
Stooped by the weight
of their Catholic pride
And extravagant Luso-Victorian names

My mother wrapped the
albums in her silk saris
Like she wrapped up her
three skinny children
Padding her treasures
Against the sharp Canadian cold

They arrived in August
And were soon overheating
In their St Vincent de Paul scarves
And third-hand jumpers
That smelled of nuns

And the garam masala
That had exploded in the
bottom of the suitcase

I was her winter child
Born in a blizzard
Her last chance saloon
Left to suckle the wind
And sleep in the blue-glass light of the plows

She made me weather the frost
Trusting in my hybrid vigour
Instead, I grew sidelong roots
Seeking warmth

When my mother died
It was high summer
I wore marigold orange to the funeral
I wasn't in the mood for grief

When I left my mother
I packed light
Today I went shopping for a raincoat
Better suited
To a reasonable winter
And a punctual spring

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Soprano **Rebecca Lea** enjoys a busy and varied career, performing across the UK and abroad. Recent highlights include singing the roles of Humility and Chastity in the UK premiere of Sir James MacMillan's *Ordo Virtutum*, solo appearances with Aurora Orchestra, a solo appearance at the BBC Proms in a new commission by Cheryl Frances-Hoad with the BBC Concert Orchestra and a broadcast performance of Monteverdi madrigals at the Wigmore Hall. She is a member of the BBC Singers, solo voice ensemble I Fagiolini and contemporary vocal group EXAUDI.

www.rebeccalea.co.uk

Caroline Jaya-Ratnam read music at Cambridge University. The winner of several national accompanist's prizes, she has given duo recitals at the Wigmore and Royal Festival Halls, broadcast live on Radio 3's 'In Tune' including with Brindley Sherratt and Charlie Siem and accompanied Bryn Terfel, Danielle de Niese and Rolando Villazon on the Andrew Marr Show and other television programmes. She has performed in several Proms concerts within the LSO and BBC Symphony Orchestra. As répétiteur she has freelanced for English National Opera and Glyndebourne, following being a Junior Fellow at the RCM. Caroline is a professor at Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

www.carolinejayaratnam.com



The New Winter Songbook

Rebecca Lea soprano
Caroline Jaya-Ratnam piano

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Engineer & Mastering

Adaq Khan

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Matthew Bennett



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Mike Cooter

Executive Producer

Adrian Green

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