

Between Two Lights



Jeff Stockton

The changing of the seasons is a time of marvels every time, no matter how many times it is witnessed. There is wonder above and below, in front and behind. Living far away from a city, the spectacle of these amazing changes is highlighted every day.

It has always seemed somewhat miraculous to me, to tell the truth.

And this is from a well-adjusted (reasonably) adult who also appreciates and marvels at all that science tells us.

Out here, with no streetlights, where the stars burn so fiercely in the time of the Long Nights - I sometimes delight in the spectacle of it all...and think of those who came before.

Those who came before us sang to the world as the seasons shifted. As Winter came on strong, they honoured the sun. They called to it, danced for it.

Perhaps they knew something that we have forgotten.

The music on 'Between Two Lights' celebrates the magic of the time of the Long Nights... and sings to ever changing seasons. May the melody and rhythm here touch your heart - and move your feet! - as you sing and dance the ever-changing seasons.

I will open the door to the music with a blessing from the 13th century, that speaks strongly to my heart here in the 21st century.



The winter will lose its cold,
as the snow will be
without whiteness,

The night
without darkness,

The heavens
without stars,

Before I cease
holding you
in my heart.

May your
days be happy
in number as
flakes of snow,

May your nights
be peaceful without
troubles.

Matthew of Revault - 13th century France

Prelude

Between Two Lights

The moment the horizon
reaches up, and takes the sun into
its embrace...The Setting of the Sun.

Sunset is fleeting in the time of the Long Nights.
A simple piece sung in Irish Gaelic to honour the fleeting moment

Luí na gréine	<i>(The setting of the sun)</i>
Éirí na gealaí	<i>(The rise of the moon)</i>
Idir an dá solas	<i>(Between the two lights)</i>
Amhrán an solas	<i>(Song of light)</i>

Music & Lyrics by Jeff Stockton
Jeff Stockton: Harp & Voice

One Song

*Sunset light fading slow. One star in the heavens aglow
I hear - lifting away all my sorrows -
A sweet melody
So soft, so strong, sweet song awakens my heart*

*Solace - far from the fire. Beauty - uplifts and inspires
Wonder - the Great Song is lifting me higher
The Song carries me
In song we open our hearts*

*Here in this shining night, the magic of song takes flight around me
Woven through branch and air, the music is everywhere - just listen
Song of the dreaming earth, in a heartbeat the Song takes birth around me
Echoing all around, filling me with joyous sound*

*Below, the whole earth is singing
Above, stars dance in place
Within, the tree of my heart is in blossom
And beneath it I hear*

*Circling without end, through the heavens to where I stand in wonder
Woven through branch and air, the music is everywhere - just listen
Song of the dreaming earth, in a heartbeat the Song takes birth around me
Many voices so clear, so strong. Many voices but just one song*

One song - many voices we sing one song

Barb Olorenshaw: Violin
Morag Northey: Cello
Dominic Young: Percussion

Festivale

In the flow of a winter celebration,
at some point early in the evening - we want to dance!

Whirling, laughing, breathless! Candlelight, firelight,
hands clasped, arms linked...

Some years ago, I wrote a bright, fast little piece to
honour a joyful part of my life. I called the piece
'Kyole', a Welsh word meaning 'music'. This song has
stayed with me, but always felt somewhat unfinished.

As the years passed, and I began to prepare for this
recording, I went hunting for a complementary melody
line or two to allow the piece to finish itself off.

A little whirler for the dance floor, combining 'Kyole',
and a portion of the traditional jigs 'Moon And Seven
Stars' & 'Merry The Yule'.

Music by Jeff Stockton
Jeff Stockton: Harp
Barb Olorenshaw: Violin
Dominic Young: Percussion

Midwinter Fires

*The eve of Midwinter with moonlight on snow
The brilliance of starlight reflected below.
The far-reaching silence is an eloquent prayer
A mantel of beauty in the frosty night air*

*It is the deepest of seasons, the darkest of nights
Despite all its wonders, I long for the light
The world dreams of warm winds in the deep icy cold
And the promise of sunlight yet to unfold*

*Come light the Midwinter Fires
Strike up the drums, take my hand love
As the dance leads us in weaving spirals
And we call back the sunshine above*

Music & Lyrics by Jeff Stockton
Jeff Stockton: Harp & Voice

*We call the sun's benediction
To fall on all hearts -inspire us!
With the truth that all life is celebration
We call back the sunshine above*

Barb Olorenshaw: Violin
Morag Northey: Cello
Dominic Young: Percussion

*By the dark heart of winter, I've forgotten the sound
Of the sweet song of robins circling round.
In the cold of December, it's so hard to remember
The promise of springtime 'neath the snow covered ground*

*But in the dance of the seasons the world is renewed
Barren branches will blossom into the fullness of youth
Born aloft on a warm wind will come the song of the winter's end
And all weary hearts will awaken in gratitude*

Priest Of The Sun

In the far distant past,
what would have qualified one to call
out to the sun, to reach out to the heavens, and sing
the sun and its warmth back? Would it have been some
formal program of study and qualification? Or would it have
been something more untamed?

The harp can be tame...elegant, light, airy, ethereal. It is also a fiery
and rhythmic instrument, capable of evoking great passion. It is an
instrument with wildness woven into and through its strings.

A short original composition called 'Priest of the Sun'...interwoven with
two traditional pieces that I have delighted in for many, many years, my
ear never tiring of them. One from Ireland called 'Musical Priest'...the
other from Scotland entitled 'Glenlivet'...both alive with wildness and
intensity.

Perhaps it would have been much less the formal training
that would have made a priest of the sun...
and much more the quality of
fiáin sa chroí - of
being wild at heart.

Music by Jeff Stockton
Jeff Stockton: Harp
Barb Olorenshaw: Violin
Dominic Young: Percussion

Bring Me Joy

*I was lost and alone
Wondering which way was home.
The road was dark, the road was cold
And then you shone...*

*You shone as deep and bright
As the evenstar -
A light in the darkest night.
The first time I saw your face,
The sweetness of that first embrace -
I knew I was home.*

*And now when the road grows dark
I lift my eyes to the stars
I follow my heart home to you.
They say dreams don't come true
But I know they do.*

*For we are together in summertime,
The winter nights of candlelight
To you I pledge my heart.
And in the golden rain of autumn leaves,
The tender blush of each new spring,
To you I pledge my heart.*

You bring me joy!

Grandfather Fire

Is there anything more sensuous
than a fire warming us in the darkness?

In our time of the push of a button, the matter of heat
in the winter is solely a matter of comfort. We click, expect
immediate results... then forget all about it.

Imagine the lives of those before us, deep in the heart of winter -
when the hearth and the physical presence of fire was literally a
matter of life and death.

Not something to be forgotten, fire became an element that we had
a constant ongoing and intimate relationship with...a relationship
spanning generation after generation...Fire always the Eldest
presence at the hearth.

The dance of firelight is exotic, sensuous, rhythmic. As the
coming of fire, this piece begins sparse and spacious,
and then steadily builds to its fiery conclusion.

Go ahead...just try and keep
your hips from moving...

Music by Jeff Stockton
Jeff Stockton: Harp
Barb Olorenshaw: Violin
Morag Northey: Cello
Dominic Young: Percussion

Sunrise

*The northern lights whirl and dance through the sky
One guiding star burning bright, lighting the night
The warmth and strength of your hand, enfolding mine
The beating of your heart and my heart in time.*

*We are waiting with love, waiting with hope
Waiting with faith the return of grace
We are recalling the joys, recalling the tears
Recalling our dreams, releasing our fears
Awaiting sunrise*

*Sky growing light
Stars melt away
Fading from sight
Brand new day*

*Here on the hillside, the long night has passed
The darkness is ending, sunrise at last
Holding you close, you at my side
Eyes shining bright as we welcome sunrise*

*We are waiting with love, waiting with hope
Waiting with faith the return of grace
We are recalling the joys, recalling the tears
Recalling our dreams, releasing our fears
Embracing sunrise*

Grandmother Snow

An Cailleach is often called the 'Old Woman of Winter', and she can be a somewhat fearsome and intimidating figure in Celtic myth.

Winter can be fierce and fearsome...but there is also an incredible softness...the sweetness of falling snow; the stillness that settles through the air; the thrill of watching the wind catch up the drifting snow, and carry it away - so that we can almost see the wind for a moment.

I wanted to create a piece of music that held that sweetness, those movements of the wind, the comfort of the Old Woman of Winter.

This song felt 'mostly finished' for a long time... and then I stumbled upon a piece of music whose title made me laugh...

'Sweet Grandmother's Spatula!'
And the first lines of this old traditional piece were the perfect fit to bring the last element of sweetness the song needed.

Music by Jeff Stockton
Jeff Stockton: Harp
Barb Olorenshaw: Violin
Morag Northey: Cello

Beauty Before Me

*Beauty before me, with it I wander
Beauty behind me, with it I wander
Beauty above, Beauty below
Beauty within me, with it I wander*

*Joy before me, with it I wander
Joy behind me, with it I wander
Joy above, Joy below
Joy within me, with it I wander*

*Wonder before me, with it I wander
Wonder behind me, with it I wander
Wonder above, Wonder below
Wonder within me, with it I wander*

Postlude

Follow The Song

There are some messages we hear
far too often as we make our way through the world.
And there are some messages that we just do not hear often
enough over the course of our lives. I encountered these
phrases on my first travels through Ireland. They cast a spell
on my heart. Here they are, woven into a simple piece as a
postlude to the flow of the music
Between Two Lights.

Áimsigh amhrán do chroí *(Find the song in your heart)*
Lean an t-amhrán i do chroí *(Follow the song in your heart)*

Postlude: Amhrán an Chroí/Follow The Song
Music & Lyrics by Jeff Stockton
Jeff Stockton: Harp & Voice
Percussion: Dominic Young

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