

## **HEDGEHOG**

### **COMPOSER'S NOTES**

#### **THE SONG IN A SENTENCE** (or two...)

Numerous species of animal – mammals, birds, insects, reptiles – cope with harsh climatic conditions (whether cold or hot or dry), by going into a state resembling suspended animation – hibernation or aestivation (the summer equivalent). The song imagines the experience of 'coming back to life' in the spring for the hedgehog of the title after its winter hibernation.

#### **HISTORY & MAIN POINTS OF THE SONG**

The second part of Hedgehog was one of the very first songs I ever wrote for children, back in 1984. It was one of a set called Spring Songs commissioned by Jane Tarr for a concert she organised at the Plymouth Athenaeum Theatre including children from seven local mainstream and special schools. The original versions of Queen Bee and Swallow were also part of the same set.

It was also one of the songs that Hilary Hall heard at a schools' prom concert a year or two later which led to her writing to me to ask if she could use some songs of mine for a village concert in Yealmpton at Easter 1987. I actually managed to lose the letter but a few weeks later she sent me a cheque for £10 as they'd gone ahead and used my songs anyway.

I can't tell you how precious that £10 was! It arrived at a time when I was extremely broke, but also greatly lacking in confidence and direction career-wise. Following that, Hilary and I met up and we ended up running Youthspring Music Theatre together for several years. Each year I'd write a new children's opera or musical for the group and Hilary would musically direct it while Robert Lowe directed the staging. We performed in an ancient wooden barn, a modern potato barn, a disused quarry, a hotel lobby, village and school halls, a garden or two – wherever we could think of. We sometimes put on cabaret performances and it was for one of these that I wrote the piano solo interlude – my 'Richard Clayderman moment' as I call it!

In 2004 I wanted to include the song in the Teign Lifetime Project, but felt it needed a more fact-based introduction, so wrote the new, very different section that opens the song. I wanted to convey the fact that so many widely varied and geographically separated species hibernate or aestivate. I'm writing these notes in the middle of a cold northern hemisphere February, so would quite like to hibernate myself if I could. My cats are well on the way to it – only coming round for about an hour a day to pester me for food.

#### **STYLISTIC POINTS**

The first section of the song has a distinct tango feel to it and should be performed with strong accents and perhaps with some added percussion if you have some. The second half is much more lyrical and gentle. If using the harmony part, make sure it's sung very gently so as not to dominate the main melody.

#### **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

- This song cries out for artwork illustrating the species mentioned and other species that hibernate or aestivate. Try to find as many different types of animal to illustrate as possible. You can even include plants as so many do something rather similar during the winter – just think of deciduous trees. You could print or write out the lyrics of the song and do a border of illustrations around the edge.
- My choir were performing this song recently in an open rehearsal at Teignmouth's Carlton Theatre and I looked up to see two friends of mine tangoing superbly to the first half of the song. Admittedly they do teach tango, but why not ask around and see if someone you know can teach you a tango routine to this part of the song? You could dance to an instrumental version of it and add repeats to extend it. – or write some extra words to fit my tune.