

Ballad

for mezzo & piano

Fergus Hall

(2025)

Ballad

Down by the shore,
At the foot of the cliff,
Leaning on it's starboard side,
By the water's edge,
Lies the shattered broken shell of a boat.
It's green rotted carcass picked clean,
The timber of it's ribs ragged against the cold
of the sky.

No one dare go near it.

A man sits astern they say,
Only revealed by the light of the moon.
They say he is sopping wet,
Dripping slowly on the broken deck.

*My Love came ashore on an Autumn day,
Fair eyes caught mine as he glanced my way,
His hair was black as Winter dark,
I yearned for us to never part.*

*He promised me love on a Winter's day,
With sigh I fell, in his arms I lay,
He said he was mine and that I was his,
I gave him my heart for a tender kiss.*

*My love went away on a warm Spring day,
He sailed with the tide at first light they say,
He left me alone and with no farewell,
And left my heart cold as an empty shell.*

Empty and discarded, I feel broken in two,
Deceived in love like some hapless child.
Wracked with furies and anger,
Acrid yellow turn mine eyes,
I was to believe his empty words were true.

I vow to find him, to bring him back to me,
Searching unbound across open sea,
From clifftop I leap, gliding on the breath of the
wind,
Yearning mid the peaks for the one I crave.

When twenty days and nights had passed
I found him far off shore,
I watched him toil with the crew, as I followed for
two days more.
And when they turned to shore, the time was now,
I knew,
To steal him back, to make him mine, this task I
first must do.

I beat my wings to stir up the waves,
And whistled to muster a gale,
The clack of my beak woke lightning and thunder,
Oh how the vessel did pitch and flail!

Oh see how they scuttle like scared little spiders,
Scurrying this way and that,
One cries for his mother, another to god,
And one flees the ship like a rat!

Alone at the helm stood my love,
Their fate was grim, this he knew.
Hailed by my shriek he saw me perched atop the
mast,
And that's when the hull cracked in two!

*Three times round went the gallant, gallant ship,
And three times round went he,
And three times round went the gallant, gallant ship,
Til she sunk to the bottom of the sea,
Til she sunk to the bottom of the sea.*

His dark hair tangled with green knotted weed,
Pale empty eyes held fast on a lonely horizon,
He'll be my love forever now, sweet songs I'll sing
to him....

*Three times round went the gallant, gallant ship,
And three times round went he,
And three times round went the gallant, gallant ship,
Til she sunk to the bottom of the sea,
Til she sunk to the bottom of the sea.*

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Commissioned by Lea Shaw as part of the "and when the light returned, I, transfigured, awoke" commission series, made possible with funding from Creative Scotland.

♩=55

Music and words by Fergus Hall (b.1996)

Mysterious and desolate

Voice

p

Down by the shore, at the foot of the cliff, lean-ing on it's star-board side,

Piano

pp

5

by the wat-er's edge, — lies the shat - tered — bro - ken shell — of a

8va both voices up an octave

p

8

boat. It's green, rot-ted car-cas picked clean, the

(8) (7) 3

3

11 foreboding

tim-ber of its ribs_ rag - ged_ a-against the cold_ of the sky. No one dare go near

15 $\text{♩} = 110$
twice as fast *mf*

it. A man sits a-stern, they say, on - ly re-

p *mp* R.H. *p*

20

vealed by the light of the moon.

p

24 *mp* they say he is sop-ping wet, drip-ping slow-ly on—

p

6

6

Red.

27 the bro-ken deck.

p

6

6

R.H.

p

pp

30 $\text{♩} = 75$ Light and airy innocent ornament and embellish freely like a folksong

mp

3

3

3

My love came a-shore— on an Au-tumn day,— Fair

mp

8va

3

Red.

34 eyes caught mine,— as he glanced my way, His hair was black,— as win-ter dark,

8va

8va

8va

3

pedal each left hand chord change

43

lay, He said he was mine and that I was his, I

46 *mf* 3 3 3 *mp* 3

gave him my heart_ for a ten-der kiss,___ My love went a - way___

mf *mp*

49

50

_____ on a warm Spring day, _____ He sailed with the tide, _____ at first light they say, He

55

left me a - lone _____ and with no fare-well, _____ and left my heart cold, _____

59

_____ as an emp - ty shell. _____

61 $\text{♩} = 65$
mp

Emp-ty and dis-card-ed, I feel bro-ken in two, de-ceived in love like some hap-less child. _____

65

wracked with grief and an - ger, ac-rid yel-low turn mine eyes, I was to be-lieve his emp-ty

mp

69

68

words were true. I vow to find him, to bring him back to me,

mf

pedel the harmonic changes

71

search ing un-bound a-cross o-pen sea, from cliff-top I leap, glid-ing on the breath of the

mp

mf

8vb

75 *mp* 78 *A tempo* $\text{♩} = 65$ *mp*

waves, yearn-ing mid the peaks for the one I crave. When

79

twen-ty days and nights had passed I found him far off-shore, I

81

watched him toil, with the crew as I fol-lowed for two days more, and

83

when they turned to shore, the time was now, I knew. to

85

steal him back to make him mine, this task I first must do.

87 $\text{♩} = 60$
foreboding

mf

I beat my wings to stir up the

mp

dark and heavy

8^{vb}

89

waves, and whis-tled to mus - ter a

(8)

91

gale, _____ the clack of my beak woke light-ning and

93

thun - der, Oh _____ how the ves - sel did

96

pitch _____ and _____ flail! _____

98 ♩ = ♩

99 *mf*

Oh see how they scut - tle like

101 *f*

scared lit - tle spi - ders scur-ry - ing this way and

103 *mf*

that, One cries for his moth - er, a -

105 *f*

noth - er to God, and one flees the ship like a

107

$\text{♩}^3 = \text{♩}$
 $\text{♩} = 135$

11

mf rat! _____ A -

mf pedal harmony changes

110

lone at the helm _____ stood _____ my love, _____

112

3+3+3+3+3

113

sim _____ their fate _____ was grim this he

mf

115

knew, _____

hailed by my shriek _____

116

hailed by my shriek _____

he saw me perched a - top the mast, _____

118

he saw me perched a - top the mast, _____

and that's when the hull _____

120

and that's when the hull _____

and that's when the hull _____

122 *ff*

cracked in two!

123

f R.H. L.H.

ff pedal down until 124

Slower, free tempo *f*

Three times round went the

f continue to repeat, independent of voice, syncing back up at bar 132

ff

like a seabird

gal - lant, gal - lant ship Ah! Ah! Ah! And three times round went_

128

he, Ah! Ah! And three times round went the gal - lant, gal - lant ship

132

til she sunk to the bot-tom of the sea, Ah! Ah! Ah! til she

pedal held throughout *ff*

sim

8^{va}

sunk to the bot - tom of the sea!

6

7

X4

(8)

124 ♩=55 Tempo primo

p

His dark hair tan-gled with green knot-ted weed, pale_ emp-ty eyes held fast

p

128

pp

on a lone - ly ho - ri - zon, he'll be my love for - ev - er now, sweet songs I'll sing to

8^{va} as before

pp

132 rit. 133 ♩ = 90 *p*

him, three times round went the gal-lant, gal-lant ship, and three time round went,

(8) rit.

p

8^{rb}

pedal down until the end

136

he, and three times round went the gal-lant, gal-lant ship til she sunk to the bot-tom of the

(8)

140

sea, til she sunk to the bot-tom of the sea.

(8)