

MOTHER AND CHILD

For soprano, clarinet and string orchestra

PROGRAMME NOTES

1. *Benediction*
2. *My Song*
3. *The Champa Flower*
4. *The End*

These four songs, composed originally for soprano, clarinet and piano over late 1999 and New Year 2000, set poems from Rabindranath Tagore's collection *The Crescent Moon*. An orchestral version was premiered in London on 6 October 2001 by Rachel Nicholls (soprano) with Sarah Thurlow (clarinet) and the Sinfonia Amici conducted by Roy Howat.

The texts most likely reflect life experiences, specially 'The Champa Flower' where one can imagine Rabindranath himself at play as a child (the poem refers to an Indian fairy tale in which children have been transformed into champa flowers. Having grown up in a cultured family, Tagore greatly enjoyed the frequent evenings of household storytelling when he was a child. 'Benediction' has the poet speaking to the new mother; in 'My Song' the mother sings to the child; and the last two are the child speaking or singing to the mother (with some dialogue between them at the end of 'The Champa Flower'). 'The End' is a beautiful and moving poem which retains its tenderness and dignity in the tragic face of infant mortality, a topic Tagore knew well from experience.

'Benediction' is almost in a fast 4, the quavers providing the scherzetto; 'The End' conversely swings gently in 2, without heaviness.