Too Tender for Such Things
Reaching Back
Across the Abyss
Through Catharsis
Comes Healing

The Flowers of War project is focussed on about the power of recovery, after loss: how the return of something long lost and forgotten, can enrich and uplift us. It is also a mechanism for understanding the present by looking through the window of the past. This program measures cultural loss through the music of three great talents, from France, Germany and the United Kingdom, who served in the Great War and somehow created beauty in the face of violence. They, who once were lost and now are found, straddle the river between us and the Great War’s dead, speaking to us so that we might learn and not make the same mistakes again.

The colossal losses in the Great War have cast a long shadow in France, Germany and Britain, remaining to this day like a deep bruise in each nation’s psyche. Every so often, something - like the reburial of the missing Australian dead of Fromelles - gives the chance for this unacknowledged burden of grief to be alleviated. Similarly the recovery of personal belongings can give families relics, by which they can remember their long lost relatives. These most precious gifts are potent mythic symbols which have a rare power to heal. The Flowers of War has been charged with the task of finding and recovering such musical artefacts.

The Three Treasures program is about the cultural recovery of lost music by WWI composers, but also specifically examining three kinds of trauma that befell artists who served. Clearly their worst fate was to be killed.

The German composer, Botho Sigwart, the Count of Eulenburg, showed a potent early talent as a musician, composing prolifically before the war. He completed his last composition (his War Sonata) on the battlefield in France before being transferred to Silesia on the Eastern Front, where he was wounded through the lung, eventually dying from the wounds. He then almost completely disappeared from his country’s cultural memory.

The French composer Claude Duboscq did not die on the battlefield, but he was severely damaged both physically and psychologically. While he survived the War, he retreated to the obscurity of provincial France, where near Bordeaux, he attempted to create a new sacred theatre with some of the leading artists and writers of his time. For all its freshness and creative élan, following in the slipstream of Satie and Henri Duparc, his music quickly disappeared from view after his death in 1938 as a result of profound depression. Only now, with good fortune, may his music return to light.

The final archetypal trauma for an artist is disfigurement, the maiming of the artistic apparatus - in the British composer Peter Latham’s case, the fusing of his right shoulder, after a machine gun bullet shattered his humerus, ending his hopes of a making a solo career as a pianist. The works he wrote during 1915 are from before his wounding and show a composer creating beauty in the midst of the war. His post-wounding works are from 1919, while he is coming to terms with how he will be able to continue in music. They are cathartic expressions of his emotional journey to ultimately accept his fate, and indeed he went onto to become an important musicologist and lecturer on music. His compositions were only found by accident at the Royal Academy of Music library, while I was researching a New Zealand composer, Willie Braithwaite Manson, who was killed in the Somme. I had not even known my Great Uncle composed.

This concert, then, is our gift to three nations, offering pearls of great price brought back from the depths of the past.
Flowers of the Great War

Too Tender for Such Things - Claude Duboscq (1897-1938)
French soldier and translator for the English Army

Recordings
La cloche fêlée from Trois Poèmes by Charles Baudelaire (1918) * Christina Wilson mezzo-soprano, Alan Hicks piano
Essai musical Marie-Bénédicte Cohu piano
L’inquiétude de Dieu - Piano interlude 4th movement (1916 – 1918) * Edward Neeman piano
À la bien-aimée, 3 Sonnets de Shakespeare (1918) transl. Duboscq *
I Sonnet 2 dedicated to Jules Joets
II Sonnet 8 dedicated to Claude Duboscq
III Sonnet 71 dedicated to Robert Kampmann
No longer mourn for me when I am dead (Lorsque je serai mort sèche tes tendres pleurs), Christina Wilson mezzo-soprano, Alan Hicks piano
Trois Mélodies (1917-1918) Le foyer - poem by Paul Verlaine * Prière pour avoir une femme simple - poem by Francis Jammes Complainte - poem by Claude Duboscq Christina Wilson mezzo-soprano, Alan Hicks piano
Pour être joué après un beau voyage (1918) Poème d’Automne 3rd movement (1918) Marie-Bénédicte Cohu piano

Christopher Latham producer, John Lewis, Christian Huff Johnston recording engineers

* First recordings

Claude Duboscq was born on July 15, 1897, the youngest of six children in a wealthy family in Bordeaux. He grew up in a very pious Catholic environment. His father Antoine, a solicitor, quickly recognised the exceptional talents of his son, and did all he could to foster his cultural and musical development. Claude began learning piano at the age of three, and produced his first compositions at eleven.

His earliest musical enthusiasm was for Wagner, whose work he heard performed in Bayreuth and in Munich in 1912. In 1913, Claude went to Paris to work at the Schola Cantorum with Vincent d’Indy (1851-1931), and studied the organ under the direction of Maître Henri Letocart, organist at Saint-Pierre de Neuilly, former student of César Franck. In Paris he first encountered the great mezzo soprano Jane Bathori, who premiered many songs by Debussy, Ravel and Poulenc, and who was to remain Duboscq’s favourite interpreter in later years. She would later describe Duboscq as one of the few true geniuses she had encountered in her extraordinary musical life.

Duboscq was on vacation from Paris when the Great War broke out. He spent the 1914-15 winter engaged in composition, but then, to his father’s great dismay, he enlisted early in 1915, and served as a translator for the English army (his Shakespeare Songs, written to his own translations of Shakespeare’s sonnets, bear witness to his linguistic skills, as do his poems in general). Duboscq suffered a severe injury when his horse fell into a shell hole in the dark; he was hospitalised and spent almost a year recovering in bed, during which he wrote large amounts of poetry, songs and piano works.

Duboscq’s works are notated without bar lines, an innovation borrowed from his idol, Eric Satie.

He had always had a predilection for the human voice, “the most beautiful of instruments”, and it came naturally to him to marry poetry and song with piano accompaniment, along the model of Fauré, Chausson and Duparc. In addition to his Shakespeare Songs, his earliest publications included settings of such poets as Ronsard, Villon, Verlaine, Mallarmé, and Francis Jammes, who would become a close friend. The period 1916 to 1922 was particularly prolific for Duboscq, but the impact of the war is clear. These works contain seeds of a profound melancholy which would take root and kill him eventually. Many of the war works contained cathartic expressions of despair. No setting being darker than his own poem, Complainte. Conversely this period also saw luminous miniatures that seem to radiate a sense of inner peace, such as the piano works, Essai musical, Pour être joué après un beau voyage and Poème d’Automne (from 1918).

In 1917 after he was medically discharged, he returned to his family to convalesce. In 1916, his father had left Bordeaux, moving to Onesse-Laharie (Les Landes). Keen to keep his son close to him, Antoine Duboscq
built a fine music room, endowed with a magnificent 3-manual organ. The house in Onesse came to be called the “Bourdon”, after the name of the organ stop.

On April 12, 1921, Claude married the pianist Philippe-Marie Keller, with whom he had six children. The couple moved into an annex at Onesse known as the “Chalet”. Retiring into this provincial isolation Duboscq largely withdrew from social contact, though he remained closely linked with Jane Bathori. Putting aside any ambition for commercial success, Duboscq quietly developed a musical language inseparable from his religious thought. He cultivated free rhythm and rejected virtuosity, aiming at a simple, uncluttered music. An innovator by instinct, an admirer of Debussy, Fauré, Ravel and Satie in particular, he dreamed of creating a new form of expression which would meld gesture, word and music in a sort of neo-Wagnerian synthesis of all the arts, with an intensely religious focus.

An opportunity to pursue this aim was provided by the Russian mystic, Marie Vassilief, a cubist painter and theatre designer who was at the centre of the Parisian bohemian Art World. She suggested to Duboscq that he compose a ballet entitled Divertissement Sacré, to be produced in Paris in 1927 by a troupe of Ukrainians known as “la Misère noire” (the “Black Destitution” group), in a charity program for the benefit of the unemployed. In the atmosphere of financial crisis of the late 1920s, however, the program’s title Le Bal de la Misère noire sounded like deliberate provocation, and the show was ultimately cancelled by the government. Duboscq decided to move the performance to the grounds of his home at Onesse-Laharie, where it played with great success in front of 700 spectators.

The success of this production gave Duboscq the idea of building a concert hall – a “Christian Bayreuth” – next to the music room at Onesse, which was launched in 1930 with one of Claude’s masterpieces, the ballet-divertissement Colombe-la-Petite. Duboscq dreamed of transforming the Bourdon property into a School of Dramatic Art, where residential students would study composition, instrumental music, dance, pantomime, singing and drama. When Antoine Duboscq died on December 31, 1930, Claude inherited his father’s wealth, but the rest of his family accused him of squandering the family fortune, eventually putting a stop to the project. Already sensitive by nature, impacted by the war, this reversal plunged Duboscq into a depression from which he would never recover. The death of his last daughter at the age of 18 months was the final blow which led him to end his own life on May 2, 1938. He was 40 years old.

**Reaching Back Across the Abyss - Botho Sigwart zu Eulenburg (1884-1915)**

One of Germany’s finest young composers, killed at 31

**Recordings**

*Erwachen des Waldes from Vier Lieder für Sopran (Four Songs for Soprano), Op. 17*

No. 1 *
Louise Page soprano
Edward Neeman piano
Sculthorpe String Quartet

*Christmas Sonata in A major Op. 14: Anbetung der Hirten (The Adoration of the Shepherds)*

Vincent Delage piano

*Mariä Verkündigung from Marienlieder Op. 08 / 2 *
Christina Wilson mezzo-soprano
Alan Hicks piano

*Dormi Jesu from Marienlieder Op. 08 / 3 *
Christina Wilson mezzo-soprano
Alan Hicks piano

*Hymnus from Marienlieder Op. 08 / 4 *
Christina Wilson mezzo-soprano
Alan Hicks piano
Christopher Latham violin, producer, director
Ross A’hern, Kim Cunio, John Lewis recording engineers

Botho Sigwart Philipp August, Count of Eulenburg, was born on January 10th, 1884, the second son of Philipp, Count of Eulenburg. The family’s home was the castle and estate of Liebenberg in the Brandenburg region, 50 km. northeast of Berlin.

Art, especially music, played a central role in the family. The father, who was ennobled in 1900 by Emperor Wilhelm II, was himself highly artistic – he made music, sang, wrote poetry and composed. He was a friend and confidant of Emperor Wilhelm II, a regular guest at Liebenberg estate.

Sigwart inherited his father’s musical talent, as did his younger sister Viktoria. Tora, as she was called, became a professional pianist. As early as age seven, Sigwart could transcribe songs he heard into musical notation; beginning at age eight he received music lessons in Munich and Vienna, composed music himself, and improvised on the piano, often in the castle and estate of Liebenberg.

In 1898 Sigwart was enrolled in the grammar school in Bunzlau (Silesia). He rapidly learned to play the organ under the municipal choirmaster and organist. In 1900 he switched to the Friedrich Wilhelm Humanistic Grammar School in Berlin, where in 1902 at the age of 18 he completed his college entry exam. In 1901 he was invited by Cosima Wagner, the widow of Richard Wagner, to take part in the first of his communications, describes her experience in the following words:

In the remoteness and stillness of these days I realized what it was that Sigwart expected of me – not to let him guide my hand and influence me from the outside; rather, I must open a door inside of me, and then I would hear his words, which in turn I should write down.

Lycki, then Tora, and later Marie began writing down the communications, which became more and more frequent. The increasing frequency, however, could not entirely dispel their doubts. Was this really possible? Despite all of Sigwart’s reassurance and assertions, doubt still remained. The family sent Marie with the communications accumulated to that point to Dr. Rudolf Steiner, for him to inspect them.

Marie writes:

Dr. Steiner received me most cordially and asked if he might keep the manuscripts for a few days, and then talk to me about them.

The day came, and I must admit it was one of the most apprehensive ones of this whole phase. For fully an hour and three-quarters Dr Steiner went through the communications with me page by page …. Often he nodded his head while reading and said approvingly: ‘Very well depicted’, ‘Well put!’, ‘A striking turn of phrase!’ ‘Yes, the musical performances, they are a reality!’ … At the end, as I was preparing to leave, he said ‘Yes, these are extraordinarily clear, absolutely authentic transmissions from the spiritual worlds. I see no reason to advise you against going on listening to them…’ Even as we bade each other farewell he stressed how communications of this kind are extremely rare. I sensed that it was genuine joy that he felt and that he shared our joy with us.

The following passages from the book relate to the music recorded here:

**Adagio** from the Kriegssonate (*War Sonata*) Op. 19
Daniel de Borah piano

**Bridge Across the River**
While researching the life of Sigwart in the British Library, I came across a curious artefact – a book entitled *Brücke über den Strom* (*Bridge Across the River*). This purported to be the collected communications of the dead Sigwart transcribed by his two sisters, Lycki and Tora, and his sister-in-law Marie.

Lycki, the sister who received the first of his communications, describes her experience in the following words:

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The following passages from the book relate to the music recorded here:
On Dying - August 5th and 6th, 1915

I always had the feeling that I would not live to become old, but I was not less cheerful on this account; rather, I enjoyed life to the full, because I knew: everything is predetermined and I myself can do nothing to change it. This explains the calm with which I went off to war. Still, I was surprised when my death actually set in, because at that moment I didn’t believe it would.

During the long period in which I was bedridden I had, after all, always made plans for the future, but then suddenly I saw my life before me and I knew: now it is ending! The last minute was frightful, but only for a moment. And then it was over; that is, then the sleep of death came, which redeemed me from all the torments the body had to bear….

On the Christmas Sonata - December 21st, 1930 (as Sigwart’s sister Tora was playing his Christmas Sonata)

The Christmas sounds that once were intoned on your earth now sound on in our spheres and flow through the space surrounding you and us. These are the sounds that unite us, a luminous link spinning threads between you to us. These resonances form a net that delicately surround us, and this is how we celebrate Christmas with you. The bells ring for the hearts of men, to draw them upward into the regions of the spirit and sanctify them, uplift them, purify them at the time of Holy Christmas. Hearken to the bells; they ring for you too!

On the Adagio of the War Sonata - February 17th, 1931

While Tora was playing my War Sonata just now, all the moments I went through as I was composing it resurfaced. … At the time I wrote it, I knew full well that this music was my Swan Song, and that is why it was granted to me to sense, to savour, to live through the very highest a human being is allowed to in the course of a lifetime... Believe me, my own tears flowed too, when I had to create the Adagio. The unmediated experience of my impending departure from this world, still so sunny for me, was a pain that made my heart quake. I wanted to flee, out of the spell of this compulsion to create, out of this slowly arising threnody. But it held me fast, and a higher directive compelled me to persevere and finish this last work crafted with my heart’s own blood.

You need to know this, so that you understand just what it meant to me to feel the kind of compulsion I suffered in order to create this last work. With magic threads it attracts me ever and again and connects me with you and with everything that was dear to me.

In fervent love,

Sigwart

Through Catharsis Comes Healing - Peter Latham (1894 – 1970)

Recordings
I have trod the upward and the downward slope from Songs of Travel by RL Stevenson (1915)

Three Songs by Thomas Hardy
Song of Hope (Feb 1915)
The Comet at Yell’ham (Secunderabad, March 1915)
After Schiller (Secunderabad 12 July, 1915)

Cradle Song from The Golden Threshold, words by Sarojini Naidu (Secunderabad 6 Aug 1915)

In the Nilgiris, Two Sketches for piano solo
Con Allegressa (Wellington, India, May of 1915)
The Droog (Wellington, June 1915)

Violin Sonata in F minor (11th of March, 1919)
Allegro un poco maestoso
Adagio
Andante funesto
Allegro con fuoco

Adagio for violin and piano (August 30th, 1919)
Christina Wilson mezzo-soprano,
Alan Hicks piano
Christopher Latham violin, producer, director
Edward Neeman piano
Christian Huff Johnson, John Lewis recording engineer

My great uncle Peter Latham (1894 – 1970) was a prominent musicologist and lecturer in England. He met me once as a three year old child. I had been named after him and his brother, my grandfather, Christopher Latham. He was important to me while I was growing up in Australia, because he was the only musician in the family before me. He studied Classics at Balliol College, Oxford, but at the outbreak of war, he and his brother signed up as Lieutenants in B Company of the 2nd 5th Hampshire Regiment Territorial Force (2nd 5th Hants).

The Territorial Forces were originally intended to be a home defence force; eventually however, on December 13, 1914, his Regiment was sent to India, freeing the British and Indian regular army battalions stationed there to fight on the Western Front. While their service mainly involved Garrison and policing duties, it also occurred against the backdrop of the Hindu–German Conspiracy. This was a plot by Germany to support Indian nationalist groups in their attempt to foster a Pan-Indian rebellion against the British Raj, thus destabilising England’s colonial Jewel in the Crown, and had only recently been broken up by British intelligence. India’s manpower and resources were enormously important to the outcome of the war, especially in 1915 when Indian troops bolstered Britain’s depleted regular army, before the other Commonwealth nations’ armies arrived.

Coping with boredom and the summer heat seems to have been the Territorial troops’ greatest challenge in India. In the case of the 2nd 5th Hants,
they were not even able to undertake musketry training until mid-1915 and only then because they took possession of obsolete long rifles that the 1st 5th Hampshire Regiment had already discarded.

The two brothers were initially based in Secunderabad where Peter wrote a number of songs, and in Wellington, where he wrote a pair of solo piano works. As Prof. Peter Stanley observes in his book, *Terriers in India - British Territorials in India 1914-19*, military service in India allowed for a very rich cultural life, including the formation of string bands, orchestras and choirs maintaining active performance schedules. Peter’s own Battalion “felt that forming a band justified every man subscribing a rupee to purchase instruments.”

**Songs (Secunderabad, India, 1915)**

Peter Latham’s first composition in India, and indeed his earliest surviving composition, was a setting of Robert Louis Stevenson’s *I have trod the upward and the downward slope* from *Songs of Travel* which he wrote in Secunderabad in February of 1915. Ralph Vaughan Williams had written his famous setting of this poem between 1901 and 1904, but it would not be published until after Vaughan Williams’s death, when his wife, Ursula Vaughan Williams, found it among his papers.

The song speaks of the archetypal traveller who having voyaged far has left behind everything he has “lived and loved”. Peter clearly relished this state of being able to start afresh in such an exotic land, and his next song, also written in Secunderabad in February of 1915, was a setting of Thomas Hardy’s *Song of Hope* and could hardly be more innocently optimistic and wide-eyed. Part of a set of three Hardy settings, the first verse ends with “Hope, for a gleaming soon will be streaming, dimmed by no gray – no gray”, and the final verse promises “tomorrow shines soon - shines soon!”. In March, while still stationed in Secunderabad, he wrote his second Hardy setting, *The Comet at Yell’ham*, which describes the viewing of a cosmic event, which turns bittersweet when the author realises that on its return, it will not shine on his beloved. His final Hardy setting, *After Schiller*, completed in Secunderabad on July 12, 1915, speaks to that terrible conundrum that faces any man when the woman he loves reveals that her feelings lean towards friendship and not to passion. A true miniature lasting less than a minute, it still manages to surprise with a particularly daring chromatic shift at its conclusion, something that will become an increasingly characteristic feature of his compositions.

In August, he set *The Cradle Song* by the Indian poet Sarojini Naidu, who is often referred to as “The Nightingale of India”. The poem was likely written in Hyderabad ten years prior to him writing the song in Secunderabad, a twin city joined with Hyderabad. It is from Naidu’s first collection of poems, entitled *The Golden Threshold* (1905), which was enormously popular in both India and England. His setting of her words is utterly delightful, and it seems inexplicable that such a charming song has not been recorded previously, or performed in the modern era. There is no record of whether he wrote these songs for one of the many public performances organised for his fellow officers. Indeed it is unclear if any of his war time compositions were ever performed. At least some of the song texts give the impression they are intended for a female singer to perform - an unlikely event in such a predominantly male environment.
In the Nilgiris, Two Sketches for piano

The Two Sketches for piano solo entitled *In the Nilgiris*, were written during his posting to the military camp at Wellington in the Southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. *The Nilgiris* in English means the Blue Mountains, likely named either for the widespread blue Strobilanthes flower or as a result of the smoky haze which makes the mountains appear blue in the distance.

The first movement, marked *Con Allegressa*, was written in Wellington, India, in May of 1915. It is a curiously varied composition which continuously surprises, whereas the second movement, *The Droog*, is more like a watercolour that captures the mystical mood of its subject.

*The Droog*, also written in Wellington, a month later in June of 1915, refers to the prominent monoliths which are a prominent feature in the state of Tamil Nadu and other Southern Indian states. Droogs are massive granite outcrops with smooth sides, rounded like an elephant’s back and can be up to 1,500 ft (460 m.) high. They are often sacred sites with temples to Ganesh or Shiva at their summit.

*The Droog* shows his clear affinity with India’s sacred life. His daughter Valentine went so far as to describe him as being like a Hindu in his nature, believing that there was a god for all things. Peter would return to India in the 1930s when his artist wife Angela Latham was invited to consult on the preservation of ancient sacred paintings made on the roofs of temple caves.

Peter’s battalion was transferred to the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (E.E.F.) where he served in the Sinai and Palestine Campaign from April 1917, fighting in in the Third Battle of Gaza, the Capture of Junction Station, the Battle of Nabi Samweil and Tell’Asur, until he was wounded in action at Berukin (aka Baruchim) on April 10, 1918.

In early 1918, having taken Beersheba, Gaza, Jaffa and Jerusalem, General Edmund Allenby wished to extend the E.E.F.’s right flank to include Jericho, then to cross the Jordan River and advance to Amman (in modern Jordan) in order to destroy the Hedjaz railway in order to isolate the Ottoman forces near Medina and to further encourage the Arab uprising which T.E. Lawrence (aka Lawrence of Arabia) was helping to inspire.

In the action at Berukin, just as at Gallipoli, the Commonwealth forces were facing an Ottoman Army reinforced by German troops and artillery under the capable leadership of the German General Otto von Sanders. They had well entrenched positions with well-placed machine guns and had prior knowledge of the attack. On April 9th 1918, three EEF divisions carried out an initial assault against the villages of Berukin, El Kufr, Ra-fat and Three Bushes Hill, all of which were successfully captured, with Berukin the last to be captured at 16:00. However the delay in capturing Berukin gave the German and Ottoman defenders time to further strengthen their defences.

The 2nd 5th Hants battalion diaries record that on April 9, 1918, A and C companies were pinned down by sniping from a low ridge on their left and could not advance, delaying the assault on Berukin, when they lost touch with their flanks. To relieve the pressure B Company was ordered to attack a ridge named Too Good Hill (grid sector A8a/A8b in map), which they did at 17:25.

At 8am on April 10, B company advanced with the 2/3 Gurkhas to attack Mogg Ridge (A2aob/A3a) and by 11:30am were taking considerable casualties from machine gun, rifle and trench mortar fire. It was probably at this point that Peter Latham was wounded. The crest of the ridge was taken at 17:10, but then the enemy counterattacked in force, and the Commonwealth troops withdrew to a safer position on Too Good Hill.

The 2nd 5th’s casualties alone were 48 killed or missing, 94 wounded out of a force of around 625, a casualty rate close to 25%. Overall the offensive only gained 2,500 yards with the E.E.F. suffering 1,498 casualties overall, with losses to the Turkish and German forces estimated at between 200 and 700 with 27 prisoners taken. It was a significant setback in the Palestine campaign, and was followed by a period of inaction for six months to allow for the German Spring Offensive on the Western Front to be contained.

Finally in September 1918, the E.E.F.
broke through rapidly bringing about the Ottoman Empire’s collapse.

Peter Latham’s medical records reveal that the machine gun bullet traversed his right shoulder joint from front to back, shattering the head of his humerus. The excision of the head of the bone was done at the Casualty Clearing Station where the shoulder joint was ankylosed or fused. A later report states that the result of the surgery was good, leaving him with a useful arm, although they note, he will be unable to follow his previously planned profession as a piano soloist (due to his shoulder having been immobilised).

His story has similarities with the left handed pianist Paul Wittgenstein who having lost his right arm in the war, commissioned composers such as Benjamin Britten, Paul Hindemith, Erich Korngold, Sergei Prokofiev, Richard Strauss and of course Maurice Ravel to write Piano Concertos for the Left Hand alone.

Violin Sonata in F minor (London, 1919)

On his return to London Latham began work on a Violin Sonata in F minor (completed on the 11th of March 1919), which seems to be the cathartic expression of his emotional turmoil about losing his career as a performer. The Violin Sonata is tumultuous and in the key of F minor, a key reserved for the darkest of musical statements, including Beethoven’s op 95 String Quartet F minor, ‘Sérioso’, Mendelssohn’s final string quartet in F minor, and the Brahms and Franck Piano Quintets. There is a sense of deep outburst and release over the course of the 4 movements (which includes a very dark funeral march in movement 3) but the work ends with a strikingly triumphant and glowing F Major coda, with the marking “con luminosità”.

It bears an inscription, the third verse of Invictus by William Ernest Henley. The full poem is:

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

The Violin Sonata is dedicated to “R.L. Gamlen”, who is probably Captain Robert Long Gamlen (born 1881, educated at Cambridge and St. Thomas’s Hospital, M.R.C.S. and L.R.C.P. in London in 1906, M.B., B.O. and B.A. from Cambridge in 1908). Entering the Indian Medical Service (IMS) as Lieutenant in 1908, he was promoted to Captain in 1911, and was then placed on sick leave for nearly two years likely from a tropical disease contracted on one of the expeditions he went on. This ill-health led to him resigning from the IMS on the 28th August, 1914, and returning to London.

Gamien served initially in the Royal Army Medical Corps at the 3rd Southern General Hospital in Oxford before he again had to resign his commission again due to ill-health in early 1915. He became the Senior Medical Officer at
the Brinnington Neurological hospital in Stockport, England and specialised in shell shock and post-traumatic stress cases, treating his patients through both hypnosis and psychotherapy. He was the author of a 1920 paper on PTS responses to the Great War which reveals his great sensitivity to his patient’s condition. I can only assume that he treated Peter Latham as a private patient and assisted him come to terms with his wounding, and Peter dedicated the piece he wrote about that process of resolution to Dr Gamlen in return, as thanks. Given Gamlen’s own severe disabling illness which prompted his early retirement from the military, he would have felt particular empathy towards Peter’s situation of losing his dream of being a performer.

Peter Latham’s final work in this process of recovery through cathartic creative expression is his Adagio for violin and orchestra, a stand-alone work completed on August 30th 1919, where he expresses in music his acceptance of his condition. The Adagio is in A flat major, the relative major key to the Violin Sonata’s F minor, and it even returns in the middle section to F minor, but ends again in A flat. It is a particularly beautiful work that speaks of contentment and resolution of his war-time trauma. No parts exist with the score, indicating that the work was probably never performed in his lifetime. It seems to have been a work he wrote for himself to show that while his shoulder would remain crippled, he would not.

Following the war he resumed his studies at Balliol in 1919, leaving Oxford with an MA, then studying at the Royal Academy of Music (RAM) from 1919-20 where he won the Charles Lucas prize for orchestral composition. In 1921 he became working as a university extension lecturer for both Oxford and Cambridge and also for London University. He was appointed professor of harmony and counterpoint at the RAM in 1938 and lecturer in musical history and appreciation at the Guildhall School of Music in 1948. As he aged his composing slowed, I surmise due to the angle of his fused shoulder having making it impossible to notate music on a piano music stand. He, however, could write at a desk without discomfort and eventually became best known as a writer on music, writing a popular book on Brahms for the Master Musicians series and serving from 1941 to 1964 as the Gresham Professor of Music, a public advocacy role for music. During this time he was a well-known figure both on radio and through his public lectures on music.

His granddaughter, Penny Griffiths, shared a very moving story with me about how Peter and his wife, Angela, always had an open heart for soldiers damaged by war. As well as running a comfort shelter during WW2, they also brought wounded soldiers into their house and cared for them, in a way similar to a hospice. Angela had trained as a portrait artist, and painted the men as they would have been had they not been wounded and in pain. Those portraits then were sent home to the soldier’s parents as the men died.

One Scotsman who recovered took his portrait home with him, and sent a Scottish landscape calendar as thanks to them every year for the rest of his days. I only found Peter Latham’s musical manuscripts by accident at the Royal Academy of Music. Although I was always aware and deeply appreciated his writing on music, I had not known he was also a composer. We recorded his war time works, and the music and recordings will be available for free as part of the Flowers of the Great War collection. I have been able to have a life as a performer which was denied to him, and can think of no better way of honouring him than to enable the world to hear the music he created to heal himself.