

The Songs

The lyrics for '**Blessed are the Broken**' were inspired by the saying 'Blessed are the cracked for they shall let in the light'. Pippa interpreted this to mean that the damage we all sustain through our lives makes us a little more beautiful and a little more open to enlightenment. On the day Pippa began to write the lyrics Rob was working on a guitar piece in 5/4 which had a meditative and mesmeric quality - the song was written in a matter of minutes before a gig that lunchtime. Carmina were honoured when this was chosen to be the **Tipperary International Song of Peace 2007**.

'**My Crescent City**', by contrast, was many months in the making. The song is dedicated to the memory of **Pete Jacobsen**, our greatly loved friend and the piano player in Carmina from 1993 until his death in 2002. The lyrics are based on **Philip Larkin's** wonderful evocation of the power of great music to speak directly to you, in the poem '**For Sidney Bechet**', which is set in an imagined, more idealized and personal New Orleans (the 'Crescent City'). In the song Pippa imagines a Crescent City where you can bring together all your favourite musicians to play just for you - and Pete, the 'man with the beautiful vision', is at the centre of the piece. The jazz interlude was written by saxophonist **Julian Nicholas** and developed in the studio by **Geoff Castle** and **David Goodier**, all of whom worked with Pete over the years. The cover of the album is an original photo of New Orleans by **Tom Partridge**.

'**Mostly Myself**' is about the dangers of repressing negative emotions! The groove, riff and chords were written by bassist **Dave Sturt**, the lyrics and melody by Pippa, and the song arranged with the addition of the Middle 8 and sax solo by Rob.

The name '**Hungry Hill**' is taken from the title of a **Daphne du Maurier** novel. Pippa felt the name provided the perfect metaphor for the place you would be born if you went through life feeling a sense of restlessness and spiritual hunger. Pippa's 10-year-old daughter **Katie** drew a picture of the place the song conjured up for her. Some time after we recorded the song we discovered that there is a real Hungry Hill in West Cork - the highest mountain of the **Beara Peninsula** - with a legend attached to it (probably dating back to the great famine of the 1840s) that if you walk upon it you hunger for ever more. The real Hungry Hill looks a lot like Katie's picture ...

The narrative of '**Cold Clear Water of the Mountain**' came to Pippa complete in a dream. The landscapes in the song are influenced by **DH Lawrence's** powerful evocations of areas around Pippa's Nottinghamshire home, and the mountains of North Wales. Rob thinks that the music he put to it might have been influenced by **Steven Stills'** guitar style.

The lyrics of '**TwentyThree**' are influenced by the psalms and their brilliant images for exhaustion, joy and despair. The song is about new beginnings - and the sort of elation you feel when you realize that Spring really has begun. The tune at the end is '**The Monaghan Twig**', chosen by Dónal, Diarmaid and Brian; it has a great major/minor shift within it complementing the song, and gives a sense of joy and also abandonment.

'**Lord Franklin**' has been a favourite traditional ballad of ours (and of the Carmina audience) for many years. This is the second time we have recorded it, as it has evolved in live performance. The tune which ends the song, '**The Mountain Road**', was chosen by Diarmaid, and his lyrical whistle style perfectly complements the elegiac nature of the song. The tune itself echoes the idea of 'The ship on mountains of ice was drove' - a line in the song - and also the fact that Franklin and his crew had to abandon the ship and travel those 'mountains of ice' in search of rescue - which never came, of course.

'**Stretched on your Grave**' first entered the Carmina live set when Pippa suggested to Rob doing a cover version of the song with just bodhrán and voice - we played it for the first time at Lommel Festival in Belgium and it has stayed in the set ever since. Audiences at gigs often ask if we have recorded the song on an album; Dónal was the perfect person to arrange it, so now we have! Brian and Diarmaid chose the tune, which is '**Toss the Feathers**'; again it has a sense of abandonment, but also a real intensity, created by Brian's whistles here (double-tracked with great precision!).

The title of '**Still falls the Rain**' is taken from a poem by **Edith Sitwell**, which accompanies a beautiful triptych painting by **Hamish Moyle** in **Southwell Minster**. We had always wanted to record a song with a muted trumpet solo, and when Richie put us in touch with **Paul Williamson** we knew we had found the ideal player for the job.

'**December Song**' was brought to our attention by Geoff, who worked with composer **Eliana Tomkins** on the original recording of the song. The lyrics are by **Carol Ann Duffy**, based on a poem in her **Rapture** collection. Rob arranged the song for Carmina, adding the riff, solo and outro sections.