

A PENNY FOR A SONG

A Penny for a Song was written in autumn 1981 for Penny Price-Jones and Philip Martin, who commissioned it with funds provided by the Arts Council of Great Britain. It consists of ten songs, prefaced by a piano piece, which acts as a refrain, heard again between nos. 6 and 7 and before the last song.

All the texts are miniatures; some are Haiku, a Japanese Zen poetic form and they all have in common a number of Haiku characteristics, such as vivid imagery, seasonal or natural, and allusive brevity. The poems are small, but they have a resonance extending far beyond themselves. Zen artists love to play with space: through a few brush strokes they can conjure up a world of detail; they suggest infinitely expanding space through the implications of a few lines on a nearly empty background. This has been my approach in the music of A Penny for a Song. The songs are fleeting, momentary; they are echoes of a world that is always there if we stop to listen for it.

Nicola LeFanu