

The Wildman – opera in two acts  
Music: Nicola LeFanu  
Libretto: Kevin Crossley-Holland

Commissioned by the Aldeburgh Foundation and first performed Aldeburgh Festival, June 1995

Set in the fishing village of Orford, on the east coast of England, during the reign of King Henry II, the action arises from events briefly described by the Cistercian Abbot Ralph of Coggeshall in his 'Chronical Anglicanum' (c.1210 AD). The fishermen of Orford catch a Wildman in their nets. He is hairy and lithe and cannot speak – although the audience shares his thoughts when he soliloquizes. He is telepathic and, for the community, the consequences are far-reaching. Throughout, three groups of characters react to the Wildman's presence in a series of short scenes. They speculate: is he human? Ghost? Sea-creature? Will kindness or torture unlock his tongue?