

GREAT CIRCLE

THE CALL TO BE THE FIRST

THE GOLDEN GLOBE 1968

BY

NICK HART

CANORYON LOWEN

KATIE KIRK AND RICK WILLIAMS

**Commissioned by
National Maritime Museum Cornwall
Saturday November 24th 7.30pm**

2018

Great Circle

The Call To Be The First

Based on the stories of three of the sailors in the 1968 Golden Globe Single Handed World Circumnavigation, 'Great Circle' explores the extraordinary strength, passions and resolution of those who heard the siren call to pit themselves against the power of the world's most feared oceans – and of those who stayed behind, watching and waiting. The work reflects the triumph and the tragedy of sailors and families, storms and doldrums and the aching void of separation from human contact.

Thanks

Everyone involved in the production of Great Circle would like to thank the Museum for its unfailing help in realising this project.

We are especially grateful to Sir Robin Knox-Johnston and Simon Crowhurst for their positive and sympathetic response to Great Circle.

In addition, my thanks to Janet Wright for her careful scrutiny and always constructive feedback of my writing, her rehearsal notes, and for sharing in the teaching of the piece. To Dom Weeks whose enthusiasm and energy need bottling and selling, and for sourcing so much archive footage. To Kim Gray and Rhona Gardiner of Excess Energy for going way beyond the call of duty on our behalf.

To my daughter-in-law Maud Hart for reworking my French into something colloquial and poetic. And as ever, to my wife Jenny Hart for living with the beast for the last twelve months, and for such wonderful support when I got stuck or was unsure.

Collaboration with Museums

We are thrilled Nick Hart agreed to undertake this commission and are very proud Canoryon Lowen will be premiering 'Great Circle' in the National Maritime Museum Cornwall. This major new choral work, celebrating Sir Robin's extraordinary achievement, is a perfect fit for our museum and it is particularly poignant that the performance will take place right at the heart of our hanging boat collection in our main gallery. A production of this type may not be something usually associated with a museum but how fitting that it is happening in a place where people come to enrich their understanding of the sea and Cornwall. We aim to inspire our visitors with culturally and artistically rich programming and 'Great Circle' does this perfectly.'

Richard Doughty

Museum Director
National Maritime Museum Cornwall

Dedication

We were deeply saddened by the unexpected death of our dear friend, founder member and priceless bass, Peter Bawden during the preparation of Great Circle. We dedicate this performance to his memory.

Great Circle

Words and Music by Nick Hart

Canoryon Lowen

Directed by Nick Hart and Janet Wright

Songs of separation arranged and performed by

Katie Kirk and Rick Williams

Children

Harvey Brown, Fred Brown, Daisy Brown
Florence Maiklem

Instrumentalists

Flute

Dominic Fairman

Violin

Tia Tamblyn

Cello

Janet Wright

Cornet

Mervyn Chipman

Flugelhorn

Hannan Curran

Valve Trombone

Nick Hart

Trombone

Colin Mutton

Sound Engineer

Brendan McGreal

Projection Design

Dominic Weeks

Acknowledgements

Cornwall Film Festival for hire of digital projector

Dance Republic for loan of picos projectors

Barry Pickthall PPL Media Ltd for use of Golden Globe images

All texts by Nick Hart, except 'The Menace of the Call' which has been drawn from a poem by Ada Cambridge and another anon.

The *Sunday Times* Golden Globe Race was a non-stop, single-handed round-the-world yacht race, held in 1968 -1969. No one had so far succeeded in accomplishing this epic voyage non-stop and solo.

Nine sailors set out, but only one finished, and it claimed the life, probably through suicide, of one of the entrants.

Safe Harbour

Safe harbour out to open seas,
Why leave?
Why chase the fickle breeze,
Deceive
Yourself that currents carry fate?
The wheel,
Hand held in moon-gripped state,
Is real,
Free willed but frozen in its course.
The beck
And call of sirens with the honeyed force
To wreck
The sailor less his deafening wax.
He sings
To harmonise the strength he lacks.
Just sings.

The Menace of The Call

I hear the menace of the call,
To rope and rivet, wheel and mast.
Slack water stands quite still.
Unroped, I silent in my dream,
In hopeless apathy.
A tug, the gentlest pull;
The first declining moment of the tide
Draws nibbling ripples of this urgent call
Across the vacant page.

Cast Off Your Ropes,

Cast off your ropes
Leave dreams and hopes
In the almighty hand of fate.
Let go your fears,
Your anguish, your tears,
And let the call dictate.

Cast off your ropes
And all is in the slipstream
Of a turbulent delight.
For the wind is always behind you,
The journey holds nothing of dread.
Look back if you dare or you must do
For sunlit adventure's ahead.

At anchor the ropes rap their rattle
And sing in furled sails to be free;
The chain chaffs the block and the
tackle
Yearning to reach for the sea.

Go Safely!

I am your wife, your daughter, your mother
Who gave you life as you gave me meaning;
I am your friend, your sister, your lover,
The one, like a fool, who believes in your dreaming.

Go safely, Go swiftly,
And take our love with you.
Go safely, Go! Go! Go!
Go safely, Go swiftly,
And know we sail with you.
Go safely, Go! Go! Go!

I am your father, your son and your brother,
I held your bike as you wobbled along.
I am your mate as we sank 'just another',
I am the club to which you belong.

Be brave, we say, from the bliss of warm comfort,
Vanquish our dread as you live out our fears.
You carry all our hopes and ambitions,
We hear dark storming and stifle our tears.

Clip The Cringle

Full and by,
Jib, genoa, yankee, mizzen, stay,
Block, baggywrinkle, making way.
Clip the cringles,
Haul the halyard,
Winch the sheet and sail her full and by.

Feel the helm begin to quiver
As the boat bends to her task,
Ease the main and free her headsails,
As she gives all we ask.

Alone Now

Alone now, in this darkest star-bright night,
The white flecked wave is hissing 'gainst the bow;
It scores across the ocean's steel black skin.
I am alone, I am alone now.

Phosphorescence, showers of light, beneath the creaking, creaking hull,
Its colour, keener than the day could ever make,
Paints whorls and spirals in the shimmered tissue of the sea.
Galaxies of ocean stars are seething in our wake.
I am alone now.

From Psalm 107, The Storm

Who am I who goes to sea in a ship?
And who dares do business in this
great water?
Who am I?
I see the works of the Lord
And his wonders of the deep.
Does he command and raise the
mighty wind?
That lifts on high those mighty waves?
They mount up to Heaven and go
down again to the depth.

My soul is melted because of
trouble,
I reel to and fro and stagger like a
drunken man.
Who am I?
Am I? At my wit's end?
I cry to the Lord in my trouble.
And he brings me out of my
distress,
He makes the storm a calm.
The waves once more are still.
And I am glad that I'm becalmed.

Carry My Love

A wind has kissed me, brushed me in my sleep,
It stroked my cheek, ran fingers through my hair.
I felt your love borne on its dove-soft wings -
A tender breeze that whispers my despair.
I hear our child cry in his pillowed dark,
The distant mewling call, the kittiwake
Whose endless, easeful glide on curling wave
Brings you to me in dreams and as I wake.

The stars that light the lonely night,
The bitter-sweet of the stinging sea,
Your joy, your touch, your eyes' delight
Are all of you, Oh please remember me.
And carry my love, carry my love,
Oh please remember me.

The sun that warms me, playing on my skin
Like love's hot breath, like fire within my soul,
Burns arid on my shell of solitude.
I move with you in every ocean roll.
The day begins to dim, the dying rays
Cast shadows on my images of you.
Can I still feel the truth of your caress?
The night sky's black, I'm indigo and blue.

The Sun Is Over The Yardarm

All the sailors referred to occasional 'sundowners' and at Christmas a bit more as well. And their thoughts would turn to the pleasures denied the solitary sailors, followed by maudlin introspection.

It's six o'clock somewhere for certain
And time to break out the rum,
The Doldrums are driving me crazy,
I've started to cry for my mum!
A cruise ship passed by to starboard
And all aboard waved with delight;
But all I sensed was the perfume
And what I was missing at night.

Oh, the sun is over the yardarm,
My boat's in a sulk on the sea,
My head is quite numb from the chart
work,
I'm locked up - and want to be free.

Shall I serve drinks in the galley
Or lie in my cockpit and dream?
Or shall I stand watch on the foredeck
With a bottle of Bristol Dry Cream?
Do dolphins turn into mermaids?
How would the small talk begin?
How sweet and welcome their kisses -
It's time for another stiff gin!

What did she mean when I left her:
'Follow your own guiding star.'
How do I know if she's waiting
Or finding her own Shangri-La.
What kind of life is the future
When everything now is on pause?
And if I come last, or worse, second,
Will I just be her lost cause?

INTERVAL

The second half follows the narrative of three of the nine sailors: Bernard Moitessier, already a living legend as a long distance yachtsman; Donald Crowhurst, whose harrowing story has been immortalised in film, book and documentary; and Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, the plucky Brit who felt it was his destiny to win.

Why Finish For Finishing's Sake?

*The celebrated French sailor, **Bernard Moitessier**, found himself in a very strong position in the race and looked very likely to win. He made the extraordinary decision to continue sailing round the world in his beloved yacht Joshua and ended up in Tahiti - the longest solo non-stop journey ever made at that time. He left behind his wife Françoise and her three children.*

Brimful of joy's intensity,

Intoxicant delight,

Transported through enormity,

The stars and I fly silver through
the night.

I no longer know how far I have
gone,

Nor what I have left in my wake.

The truth lies in azimuth, sextant
and sight,

Why finish for finishing's sake?

Safe harbour? No, the restless sea!

Return home? What becomes of me?

Here where my boat and my soul are as one,

The quest is for freedom! The race is dead.
Done.

Safe harbour is my beautiful,

My faithful, certain craft.

Safe harbour is the white bow wave,

Uncertainty lies aft.

I am at one now.

Hypothesis

Believing that falsifying his true position would be the salvation of his beloved family, gain him the prize money and save them all from destitution, Donald Crowhurst eventually realised the hopelessness of his situation.

Found in the margin of his logbook were these words of Einstein:

That light requires the same time to traverse the path A to M as for path B to M is in reality neither a supposition nor a hypothesis about the physical nature of light, but a stipulation which I can make of my own free will in order to arrive at a definition of simultaneity.

Crowhurst went on to write 12000 words of mystical and mathematical philosophy as he descended into madness, believing that he could leave his body and that he alone understood a great cosmic truth which he could be at one with. His last words written, presumably before he took his own life, include:

Now is revealed the true nature and purpose and power of the game offence I am I am what I am and I see the nature of my offenceIt is finished - It is finished IT IS THE MERCY...

Hypothesis is not a supposition,

A definition of simultaneity,

Free will allows for simple stipulation

Of syncrination with transcendent deity.

I am the end of a beginning

And hear the call

The menace of the call

The menace or the mercy

I am, I am, I am at one with all

I am at one, the mercy and the menace,

The beginning of an end to it all.

The Needle Points

While Bernard Moitessier sailed off to Tahiti his wife Françoise remained at home with her three children - her life on hold. She was reportedly very understanding about her husband's desertion, but she was equally driven to travel. So she built her own boat and undertook some very long solo journeys herself.

A key exhibit in the museum is the radio telephone from one of the boats. This hugely unreliable piece of telecommunication kit was both a blessing and a curse. No news was a source of worry. For at least two of the sailors the unreliability was also an excuse not to communicate their significantly changed intentions.

The needle points its shortwave finger on the dial,

Its crackling silence with no echo of regret.

He holds the wheel and knows the course his spirit steers,

He's travelling by a star that he alone can see

While I am held within my own four lonely walls,

Adrift, at sea, and waiting helplessly.

C'est moi, je suis perdu,

C'est moi, qui ignore ce milieu,

Ma vie, dessine une carte vide,

Sans voie, ni joie, ni dieu.

But I will take a boat that's only meant for me,

I'll sail away and find my own true solitude;

The ocean's vast and there is room for me as well,

I'll set my sail whichever way the wind will blow.

Then I'll be held within a compass of my own,

And make a world that only I can know.

C'est moi, je m'suis trouvé,

C'est moi qui connais bien ce lieu.

Ma vie n'est pas une carte vide,

Ma voie, ma vie, mon dieu.

Called To Be The Man

Robin Knox-Johnston writes of his belief that only a British sailor would gain the supreme achievement of being the first to sail non-stop around the globe, following an illustrious maritime tradition. He felt that it was his destiny to be that man.

His craft was the solid traditional Norwegian ketch Suhaili, a tried and tested design, unlike some of the more experimental and downright unseaworthy yachts of his rivals.

It is a very British thing that I am called to do!

There is no other outcome in the plan.

I am the tortoise or the turtle,

Not the trimarans that hurtle.

I believe that I am called to be the man.

It is a test of man's resolve to sail around the world.

Our boat and plans are equal in the measure.

The storms that spared me, left me spinning,

Strengthened my belief in winning,

The pain is there to justify the pleasure.

Safe harbour? It's the steady course.

Return home? With no regrets or remorse?

I never gave a backward glance,

The two of us in one delighting dance.

It is a very British thing that I am called to do!

There is no other outcome in the plan.

I believe that I am called to be the man.

Homecoming

And he brings me out of my distress,

He makes the storm a calm.

The waves once more are still.

Suhaili carried me alone,

So alone,

And I am home.

The race is done and only one has made it home,

Can claim the legend and the champion's burnished robe;

Suhaili's fame as certain as a Victory,

While others lie in pieces round the lonely globe.

I steered my course and kept my faith with log and time,

My friends - the wind, the sun and ancient rime.

The sea has let me go,
The sea, a shadow on my soul;
She keeps her deeper meaning close,
And how she takes her toll.

The sea has let me go,
The sea, a shadow on my soul;
She keeps her deeper meaning close,
Of who must pay the toll.

It was a very special thing that I was
called to do!

The sea, he had to go!

There was no other outcome in the
plan.

The sea, a shadow on my soul.

First home! First home!

She keeps her deeper meaning close

There was no other outcome in the
plan!

And how we pay the toll.

Katie Kirk and Rick Williams from West Cornwall combine a love of early music with an ear for timeless quality behind contemporary songs. “Katie is one of the great ‘undiscovered’ talents of the UK folk and acoustic scene. With exceptionally sympathetic accompaniment from Rick she delivers riveting vocal performances.” Geoff Lakeman. Follow Katie and Rick on <https://www.facebook.com/KatieKirkandRickWilliams>

Canoryon Lowen

www.canoryonlowen.com

Formed by Nick Hart in 2002, the choir is based in St Neot with singers drawn from Devon and Cornwall. The choir is constantly experimenting with new formats and unusual venues making the performance tonight a perfect fit with its outlook.

The choir has performed in Florence, Lorient, Prague, Venice, with cathedral recitals in Cork and Coventry.

Nick Hart

Formerly MD of the County of Cornwall and Loveny Male Voice Choirs, Nick’s arrangements for choir have become well known. He has written four major works for Canoryon Lowen - the community opera *A Daughter’s Tale*, *A Midwinter Cantata*, *A Story Of Cornwall* and *Great Circle*. He was made a Bard of the Cornish Gorsedh for creativity in music and in 2016 was awarded the Gorsedh prize for composition and performance.