

Paul STEENHUISEN - PROGRAM NOTES

PIECE: A Book from the Harbour

A Book from the Harbour is an ongoing collection of songs written at intervals of a minimum of 2 years. I imagine one day compiling them together, as a diary of an ever-changing perspective - on songs, the voice, words and music. Chapter I dates from 1987, and is concerned with (and for) animals, including humans. Each of the songs is based on the same 12-note pitch-set. Chapter II is about reflection, and makes brief reference to Chapter I and selected other song cycles. Chapter III (11 micro-songs), has two alternating and conflicting strands; intimate love songs vie with obstacle songs, songs of external pressure. The disparate forces gradually interleave, competing and overlapping from the outset until the central song (#6), after which they retreat and divide again. Though conceived as a cycle, in every instance at least 1 of the 11 songs is omitted, so the cycle remains incomplete. Chapters II and III are written for and dedicated to Elizabeth Skillings.