

# Edward Cowie

## Bird Portraits Book 4: Sea Birds

miniatures for violin & piano (2020)



*& ump*  
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# BIRD PORTRAITS

## 24 miniatures for violin and piano

**Book 1: Water Birds; Book 2: Field Birds; Book 3: Wood and Garden Birds; Book 4: Sea Birds**

The connections between humans and birds are archetypal and probably biological. Birds evolved from earlier reptiles and it seems likely that the earliest bird songs were reptilian in nature. The cormorant, one of the most ancient genera of birds, is certainly no *bel canto*, and for the most part its songs consist of the hisses and wheezes normally associated with reptile calls. My own life has been inextricably linked with the lives and behaviours of birds from all over the world. Though in the main I have never tried to imitate or translate birdsong into music directly, I have used my studies in ornithology to fertilise and enhance my 'nature music'. When, in 2002, I composed my 5<sup>th</sup> string quartet, now known as *Birdsong Bagatelles*, I was continuing more than 30 years of musical composition directly inspired by natural sound(s). But in spite of the title of this quartet, there is very little in the way of directed and assimilated birdsong.

It so happens that both the violin and piano were my main instruments - although a serious left hand injury put paid to my violin playing in my early 20s - so when a chance arose for me to collaborate with two great musicians and friends, the violinist Peter Skaerved Sheppard and pianist Roderick Chadwick, in the realisation of a major cycle of works for violin and piano, I jumped at the chance.

The result is this 'suite' of 24 short movements (or 4 suites of 6 pieces each), that connect with the habitat, habits and songs of 24 British birds. Unlike my 5<sup>th</sup> quartet, the actual songs of each bird are more closely fused with my musical language than usual. But these are no mere transcriptions - they are evocations of the place of song in special places and often under special circumstances. The final movement for example, *Great Northern Diver*, recalls an amazing late winter experience along the side of a sea loch in Western Scotland. It was strangely warm for the time of the year and the sea mist was so dense and mercurial that objects and distances became blurred and magically transformed. From out of this haze of possibility came the strange and haunting cry of one of these shy and elusive creatures. It was one of those spine-tingling and mind-chilling moments that imprinted itself deep into my psyche.

All the 'moments' of birdsong represented in this cycle are memories of special places and circumstances when I heard and almost always saw a particular bird calling. Sometimes there are duets between two birds and in the case of the *Starling* movement, large flocks of singers, but these are all 'sonic portraits' of creatures that are as much composers as I am. In general the violin 'bird-sings' though the piano is sometimes given passages of birdsong too. But the piano creates the soundscape for the singer. The violin, (bird) inhabits, flies, dances, and sings in the habitat(s), (piano).

Edward Cowie, South Cumbria, 25 October 2020.

Cover drawing: Puffin, by the composer.

# BIRD PORTRAITS

24 miniatures for violin and piano

## Book 4: Sea Birds

Edward Cowie (b.1943)

### 19: Curlew

384  $\text{♩} = 120$

Vln. *con sord.* *pp*

Pno. *ppp* *sempre legato e espressivo* *ppp*

This system contains measures 384, 385, and 386. The violin part begins with a rest in measure 384, followed by a series of notes with slurs and accents in measures 385 and 386. The piano part features a melodic line in the right hand and a more rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand, both marked *ppp* and *sempre legato e espressivo*. The tempo is marked  $\text{♩} = 120$ .

387

Vln.

Pno.

This system contains measures 387 and 388. The violin part continues with slurred notes. The piano part features long, sustained chords in the right hand and a more active line in the left hand. The texture is dense and expressive.

389

Vln.

Pno.

This system contains measures 389 and 390. The violin part has a rest in measure 389 and resumes in measure 390. The piano part continues with sustained chords and a melodic line in the left hand, ending with a final note in measure 390.

391

Vln.

Pno.

393

Vln.

Pno.

395

Vln.

Pno.

397

Vln.

Pno.



399

Vln.

Pno.



401

Vln.

Pno.

*(but freely!)*

*senza sord.* *V*

*pp* *mf* *p*

6 5

*(ppp)*

*(ppp)*

403

Vln. *pp* *mf* *mp* *pp* *mp* *f*

Pno.

405

Vln. *mp* *f* *p* *pp*

Pno.

406

Vln. *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *f* *mp* *f* *mp* *pp*

Pno.

*gliss*

408

Vln.

*p* *mf* *mp* *f* *mp* *f* *mp* *fp*

*gliss.*

Pno.

*pp*

410

Vln.

*fp* *ppp* *fp* *ppp* *p*

Pno.

*ppp*

412

Vln.

*p* *mp*

*(micro gliss. each pair)*

Pno.

*ppp*

414

Vln.

*ff* *p* *mf* *mp* *f* *mp* *f*

Pno.

*ppp*

416

Vln.

*mp* *fp* *fp* *ppp* *fp* *ppp* *p*

*gliss.*

*3* *3*

Pno.

419

Vln.

*mp* *p*

*3* *3*

Pno.



*sul tasto then  
sul pont.*

*lunga pausa 2nd time only*

420

Vln. *fp* *ppp* *fp*

Pno. *pp* *ppp*

*una corda*

**20: Cormorant**

*2nd time only  
\*\**

422  $\text{♩} = 144$

Vln. *ff*

Pno. *fff* *ppp*

*ff* *ppp* *Ped.*

*\* palm clusters (B and W)*

427

Vln. *mp*

Pno. *f* *mp* *pp*

*f* *mp* *pp*

431

Vln. *p* *pp* *mp* *pp*

Pno. *pp* *ppp*

Red. *pp* *ppp*

434 (b)

Vln. *ff* *f* *mf* *ff* *mf* *p*

Pno. *ff* *mp* *mf* *p*

438

Vln. *f* *mp* *f* *mp*

*ultra sul tasto!*

Pno. *mp* *pp* *mf* *mp* *pp*

(pizz. on 'A)

441

Vln. *f mp f mp mf f p*

Pno. *p ppp*

444

Vln. *p arco norm. ultra sul tasto! mp f*

Pno. *ppp mp pp mf*

447

Vln. *mp p mp p*

Pno. *p pp ppp*

Ped. *p pp ppp*

450

Vln.

*f* *mp*

Pno.

*pp* *mp* *pp*

453

Vln.

*ffp* *p*

Pno.

*mf* *ppp* *ff* *mp*

456

Vln.

*fff* *pp* *mp*

Pno.

*mp* *pp* *ppp* Ped.

458

Vln.

*mf* 6 *f* 6

Pno.

5 6

460

Vln.

*f* *mp* *ff* *f* *mp* *ff* *pp* *non vib.*

5 3 6 3

Pno.

5 6

463

Vln.

*f* *p* *ff* *pp*

Pno.

*mp* 7 7 5 5

466

Vln. *sempre p* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *Rit . . . . .*

Pno. *p* *Rit . . . . .* *tenderamente* *pp*

468  $\text{♩} = 72$

Vln. *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.*

Pno.  $\text{♩} = 72$  3 3

470

Vln. *gliss.* *gliss.*  $\frac{3}{4}$

Pno. 3  $\frac{3}{4}$  *(ppp)*  $\frac{3}{4}$

472  $\text{♩} = 72$

Vln. *mf* 10 *mp* 5 5 *p*

Pno. *pp* *pp*

474

Vln. *fp*

Pno. 10 5 *ppp*

Ped.

475

Vln. *f* *ff*

Pno. 5 5

Ped.

476

Vln.

*mf* *p*

10

Pno.

5

5

Ped.

477

Vln.

*mp* *pp* *p* *pp*

10

5

Pno.

5

3

3

3

479

Vln.

*p*

5

3

Pno.

5

3

3

3



481

Vln.

Pno.

*mp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

*mfp*

Red.

483

Vln.

Pno.

*p* *mf*

*ppp*

Red.

486

Vln.

Pno.

*p* *mp* *ff*

*fff* *fff* *ppp*

\* palm clusters (B and W)

Red.

489

Vln.

Pno.

*f* *mf* *ff* *mp* *f*

*ultra sul tasto!*

493

Vln.

Pno.

*mp* *sim.* *mp* *f* *mp*

\* palm clusters (B and W)

*p* *pp*

497

Vln.

Pno.

*f* *mp* *f* *mp* *ppp*

\* palm clusters (B and W)

*pp* *ppp*



*molto espressivo*

507

Vln.

*pp* *ppp*

Pno.

510

Vln.

Pno.

513

Vln.

Pno.

516

Vln.

*p* 6 6 6 6

Pno.

*ppp*

*ppp* Ped.

3

519

Vln.

6 *mf* 5 6 7 *p*

Pno.

3 *pp* 3 3

521

Vln.

9 *mf* 3 *mp*

Pno.

*pp*

20

523

Vln.

poco Rit. . .  $\text{♩} = 48$

5

3

Pno.

poco Rit. . .  $\text{♩} = 48$

*legato*

*mp*

7

3

*legato*

*p*



524

Vln.

Pno.

7

7



525

Vln.

Pno.

7

7

3

526

Vln. *pp* *mf* 21

Pno.

527

Vln. *rubato* (*mini upward gliss. on each note!*) *f* *ff*

Pno. *rubato*

529

Vln. *mp* *f* *ff*

Pno. *ppp* (*bell-like*) *ppp*

532

Vln.

*ff* 6 7 *p*

*tr*

Pno.

535

Vln.

*f* *ff* 7 *pizz.* 3 *mf*

Pno.

537

Vln.

*arco* *fff*

Pno.



## 22: Arctic Terns

539  $\text{♩} = 152$

Vln.  $ff$   $pp$   $ff$   $f$

Pno.

544

Vln.  $>mp$   $ff$   $>mp$   $ff$   $mp$   $p$   $ff$   $mp$   $p$

Pno.  $ppp$   $ppp$   $Red.$

548

Vln.  $mf$

Pno.  $p$   $pp$

551

Vln. *p* *mp*

Pno.

553 ♩=76

Vln. *mf* *p*

Pno. *p* *pp* *p* *pp*

Red. *p* *pp* *p* *pp*

555

Vln. *mf*

Pno. *p* *pp* *p* *pp*

557

Vln. *mp* 3 *p*

Pno. *mf* *pp* 3 *Red.*

561

Vln. 3

Pno. *Red.*

565

Vln. *pp*

Pno. *ppp*

567

Vln.

Pno.

*pp*

569

Vln.

Pno.

*p*

*Ped.*

571

Vln.

Pno.

*mp*

*sul pont.*

573

Vln.

Pno.

*p*

3

5

6

575

Vln.

Pno.

*pp*

3

gradual back to arco normal . . .

6

7

*Red.*

578

Vln.

Pno.

*sempre secco!*

*f* *mp* *f* *mp* *f*

3

3

6

*gliss.* *gliss.*

*ppp*

*mf* *pp* *p* *pp*

3

*Red.*

581

Vln. *gliss.* *mp* 3 *f* *p*

Pno. *mp* 6 7 *pp* 3 *ppp*

583

Vln. *f* *mp* *f* *mp* *p* *mf* *f* *p* *gliss.*

Pno. *ppp* *Ped.* 5

586

Vln. *mp* 3 *f* *p* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.*

Pno. *mp* 5 6 *p* *pp* *p*

588

Vln.

Pno.

*mp* *pp* *ppp*

23: Puffin(s)

590

Vln.

Pno.

*mf* *p* *mp* *pp*

$\text{♩} = 66$

592

Vln.

Pno.

*mf* *p* *mp* *pp* *ppp*

594

Vln.

Pno.

*mf* *p* *pp*

596

Vln.

Pno.

*mf* *p* *pp*

*f* *pp*

598

Vln.

Pno.

*giocoso!*

*pp*

*ppp*

*ppp*

*Ed.*



600

Vln.

*p* 7 *mf* 7 *p* 7 *pp* 6

Pno.

*mp* 3 *p* 5 *pp* 3 *ppp* 5

*mp* 3 *p* 5 *pp* 3 *ppp* 5

602

Vln.

*p* 5 *pp* 6 *mp* 3 *p* 7 *pp* 7

Pno.

*pp* 5 *ppp* 7 *pp* 7 *p* 7

*pp* 3 *p* 3 *pp* 3 *ppp* 3

604

Vln.

*p* 7 *pp* 7 *p* 7 *pp* 7

Pno.

*ppp* 13 *pp* 3 *pp* 7 *ppp* 3

*ppp* 13 *pp* 3 *pp* 7 *ppp* 3

606

Vln.

Pno.

*p* *pp*

7 7

7 3

608

Vln.

Pno.

*p* *pp* *p* *f*

5 6 3

13 3

*ppp* *pp* *mf* *mp* *p*

13 3

*mp*

*pp* *mf* *f* *mp*

$\text{♩} = 66$

610

Vln.

Pno.

*p* *mp* *p* *pp* *mp*

*pp* *mf* *f* *mp*

613

Vln.

Pno.

*f* *mp* *p* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp*

616

Vln.

Pno.

*f* *mp* *mf* *mp* *p* *pp* *mp*

619

Vln.

Pno.

*with a raucous wavering tone!*

*mf* *gliss.* *ff* *gliss.*

*pp* *mp*

*pp* *mf*

621

Vln. *mf* *gliss.* *mp* *f* *mf*

Pno. *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf*

624

Vln. *mp* *p* *mf* *f* *mf*

Pno. *pp* *ppp* *p* *p* *mp* *p*

627

Vln. *mp* *p*

Pno. *pp* *ppp*

$\text{♩} = 52$   
24: Great Northern Diver

Vln. 630 *pppp*

Pno.  $\text{♩} = 52$  *ppp*

Red. *ppp*

Vln. 633 *f* *pppp* *non vib.*

Pno.

Red.

*slow-down trem . . . .*

Vln. 636

Pno.

*slowly go to warm then very wide vibrato!*

640

Vln. *ff* *ppp*

Pno. 9

Red.

642

Vln. *ff*

Pno. 10

Red.

645

Vln. *pppp*

Pno.

648

Vln.

*fff* *pppp*

Pno.

Red.

651

Vln.

*ff*

Pno.

3

653

Vln.

*pp* *mp* *pp*

11

Pno.

654

Vln.

*p* 14 14 14

Pno.

*ppp*

||

656

Vln.

14 14

Pno.

||

657

Vln.

14 14

Pno.



658

Vln.

662

Vln.

Pno.

663

Vln.

Pno.

665

Vln.

Pno.

668

Vln. *ff* *pp*

Pno. *pp* 7

Ped.

671

Vln. *fff* (ghostly) *port.* *gliss.* *mp* 3

Pno. *ppp* 7

Ped. *ppp*

674

Vln. *mp* *port.* *gliss.* *p* 3 *port.* *gliss.*

Pno. 7

Ped.





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