

# Songs for Peter

*for high voice and piano*

Davide Ghiglione, D. H. Lawrence

Ian Shaw



## Songs for Peter

### 1. Catholic Church

Rosario Lonegro was only twenty years old when he entered a Catholic seminary in Sicily. But while he was there he fell in love with another man and his superiors demanded that he undergo conversion therapy.

For more than a year, he was compelled to take part in spiritual gatherings outside the seminary, some over several days, where he was subjected to a series of distressing activities intended to strip him of his sexual proclivities.

These included being locked in a dark closet, being coerced to strip naked in front of fellow participants, and even being required to enact his own funeral.

During these rituals, he was tasked with committing to paper his perceived flaws, such as "homosexuality", "abomination", "falsehood" - and even more explicit terms, which he was then obliged to bury beneath a symbolic gravestone.

Pope Francis has said that the Catholic Church is open to everyone, including the gay community, and that it has a duty to accompany them on a personal path of spirituality, but within the framework of its rules.

Rosario Lonegro has left Sicily behind and now lives in Milan. He shares an apartment with his boyfriend and studies philosophy at university.

Following a nervous breakdown in 2018, he left both the seminary and the conversion therapy group. While he still believes in God, he no longer wants to become a priest. The psychological wounds inflicted by such activities still run deep.

- *'Darkest period of my life': Gay conversion therapy in Italy*, Davide Ghiglione for BBC News, 2 June 2024 (abridged)

### 2. Words cannot express

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;  
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see  
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings  
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song  
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong  
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside  
And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour  
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour  
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast  
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past.

- *Piano*, D. H. Lawrence

### 3. Lullaby

It was my privilege to be taught by the late Peter Tranchell. Recently, I listened to him on youtube singing and playing *David and John*, which tells the story of two young men in love. He wrote both the words and the music of this tender, tragic song and recorded it in about 1960, seven years before homosexuality ceased to be illegal in UK. Hearing his light baritone and effortless piano-playing after such a long time brings him vividly to mind – his scholarship, his generosity, his wry, anarchic humour. I only later began to understand the courage that being openly gay demanded from men of his generation.

On the same day as hearing *David and John*, I read Davide Ghiglione's report for the BBC News website, '*Darkest period of my life': Gay conversion therapy in Italy*', which recounts the recent experience of Rosario Lonegro, an ordinand. The song and the report describe the same deep pain and confusion in virtually identical terms. What do you do if you're not allowed to be who you are? David rejected the love of his life; Rosario had a nervous breakdown and abandoned his vocation. At least he has a brighter future now.

It occurred to me to set lines from '*Darkest period of my life*' as the first number in this short sequence, under the title *Catholic Church*. In doing so, I was following the example of Peter's *In a Sunday paper* (1953), a cycle of eight songs to news articles. One of these, the tellingly nonchalant *Women walk out of court*, concerns the trial of seven men for 'impropriety' at a racecourse. My accompaniment is intended to suggest the soft clatter of a reporter's typewriter.

Moving from impartial journalism to poetic autobiography, *Words cannot express* is a setting of D. H. Lawrence's *Piano*. I chose this poem not only because the piano was Peter's instrument but also because it describes an equally precious and susceptible, though otherwise quite different, bond between two people and because a return to inarticulate childhood is surely a metaphor for emotional maturity. Although orientation is not at issue in this poem, nor was it a simple matter for Lawrence. In an often-quoted letter he wrote, 'I should like to know why nearly every man that approaches greatness tends to homosexuality, whether he admits it or not.'

As Lawrence was ultimately lost for words, so the last song, *Lullaby*, has no words at all. In the footsteps of Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, it forms a brief epilogue for 'tinkling' piano, though mother hums along to the tune.

The titles and themes of all three songs are borrowed from Peter's *Thematic Catalogue*, the originals now sadly lost. From their very different angles, they acknowledge the primal importance of a connection with another, whoever it may be, especially through physical tenderness. 'The heart of me weeps to belong.' (IS)

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*Songs for Peter* is suitable for soprano or tenor (B flat - A or A sharp) and lasts a little under ten minutes.

'*Darkest period of my life': Gay conversion therapy in Italy* is abridged and used by kind permission of BBC News.

# Songs for Peter

## 1. Catholic Church



Davide Ghiglione

Ian Shaw (\*1960)

straightforward ♩ = 100

like a typewriter

*p*

*sempre simile*

senza ped.

6

*p*

Ro - sa - rio Lo - neg - - - ro

11

was on - ly twen - ty years old

16

when he en - tered a Cath - 'lic se - min - 'ry in

21

Si - ci - ly. But while he was there

26

he fell in love with a -

*poco cresc.* *subito p*

31

no - ther man and his su - pe -

36

- riors de - mand - - ed that he un - der -

41

go con - ver - sion the - ra - py.

46

For

*sempre p*

*con ped. ad lib.*

50

more than a year, he was com - pelled to take part in

(8)

54

spi - ri-tual ga - ther - ings out - - side the se-mi-na-ry,

(8) *gva*

59

some o - ver sev-'ral days, where he was sub-ject-ed to a se - ries of dis -

*gva* *gva*

63

tress - ing ac - ti - vi-ties in - tend - ed to strip him

*gva*

67

of his sex - ual pro - cli - vi - ties.

(8) *dim.* *gva*



74 *semplice, sempre con moto*

These in-clud-ed be-ing locked in a dark clo-set, being co-erced to strip na-ked in front of

*p*

*ped.*

77

fel-low par-ti-ci-pants, and e-ven being re-quired to en-act his own fu-ne-ral.\_\_\_\_

*ped.* *sempre con ped.*

80 *cresc.*

— Du-ring these ri-tuals, he was tasked with com-mit-ting to pa-per all his per-

*quasi violoncello*

*cresc.*

*(m.d.)*

83

ceived flaws, such as "ho-mo-sex-u-al-i-ty", "a-bo-mi-na-tion",

*ped.*

86 *cresc.*

"false-hood" and e-ven more ex - pli - cit terms, which he was then ob - liged to bu - ry — be-neath

*cresc.*

89 *mf* *p*

a sym-bo - lic grave - stone. — Pope Fran - cis. —

*mf* *dim.* *p*

92

— has said that the Ca-tho-lic Church is o-pen to ev - 'ry-one, in-clud-ing

95

the gay — com - mu - ni - ty, — and that it has — a du-ty

*15ma* *delicatissimo*

*sost. (3ped.) ad lib.*

to ac-com - pa-ny them on a per - so - nal path\_\_\_\_\_

(15)-----7

15ma-----7

of spi - - - ri - tu - a - li - ty,

15ma-----7

sost. (3ped.) ad lib.

but with-in the frame-work\_\_\_\_\_ of its rules.\_\_\_\_\_

come primo

*p*

senza ped.

sempre simile

Ro - sa - rio Lo - neg - - - ro

*p*

112

has left Si - ci-ly be - hind

117

and now lives in Mi - lan. He shares

122

an a - part - - ment with his boy - -

*poco cresc.*

127

friend and stu - dies phi - lo - so - phy at u - ni - ver - si - ty.

*subito p*

133

Fol - lowing a ner - vous break - down in

*8va*

*sempre p*

*con ped. ad lib.*

137

twen - ty - eight - een, he left both the se - mi - na - ry—

*(8)*

141

and the con -

*(8)*

*dim.*

145

ver - sion the - - - ra - py group.— While he

*(8)*

*cresc.*

150

still be - lieves in God, he no lon - ger wants to be -

*cresc.*

*con ped.*

*(m.d.)*

152

come a priest. The psy - cho - lo - gi - cal wounds

*dim.*

*poco cresc.*

154

— in - flict - ed by such ac - ti - vi - ties

156

still run deep, — still — run deep.

*molto rall.*

*p*

*pp*

*mf sost. (3ped.) ad lib.*

## 2. Words cannot express



D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930)

**sombre** ♩ = 70 **p** *sempre sostenuto*

Soft - ly, in the dusk, a wo - man is sing - ing

**p** *quasi contrabasso*

The second system consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the vocal line with lyrics. The lower staff is a piano accompaniment in G major, 4/4 time, featuring a melodic line with a half note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a half note. The piano part is marked with a piano (p) dynamic and a quasi contrabasso instruction.

5 *cresc.*

to me; tak-ing me back down the vis - ta of years, \_ till I

*cresc.*

The third system consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the vocal line with lyrics. The lower staff is a piano accompaniment in G major, 4/4 time, featuring a melodic line with a half note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a half note. The piano part is marked with a piano (p) dynamic and a quasi contrabasso instruction.

9 **f** **>**

see A child \_ sit-ting un-der the pi-

**f**

The fourth system consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the vocal line with lyrics. The lower staff is a piano accompaniment in G major, 4/4 time, featuring a melodic line with a half note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a half note. The piano part is marked with a piano (p) dynamic and a quasi contrabasso instruction.

13 *dim.*

a - no, in the boom of the ting - ling strings, And

*mf*

16

press-ing the small, poised feet of a mo-ther who smiles as she sings.

*pp*

20 *p* *cresc.*

In spite of my-self the in-si-dious mas-te - ry of song.

*cresc.*

24 *f*

Be - trays me back,

*f*



27

till the heart of me weeps to be - long\_ To the old Sun - day eve - nings

*meno f*

30

*ff* at home, *subito mp* with win - ter out - side\_

*ff* *pp* *silent retake*

33

and hymns in the co - - - sy par-lour, *leggero* the tink - ling pi - a - no

*poco sf*

36

our guide.\_ So now it is vain\_

*p senza espressione*

(C)

40 *poco cresc.*

for the sing - er to burst in - to cla - mour With the great black pia - no ap - pas - sio -

43 *mf*

na - to. The gla - - - - - mour Of child-ish days is up -

*mf dim.*

47 *dolce*

on me, my man-hood is cast Down in the flood of re-mem-brance,

*sempre dim.*

*8va*

51

I weep like a child for the past.

*8va*

*ppp*

## 3. Lullaby



slow and tender ♩ = 110

First system of musical notation for the piano accompaniment, including treble and bass staves with chords and a melodic line in the treble. The tempo is marked "slow and tender" with a quarter note equal to 110 beats per minute. The key signature is two flats. The time signature is 6/8. The piano part begins with a *p* (piano) dynamic and the word "semplice" (simple).

Second system of musical notation for the piano accompaniment, continuing the melodic and harmonic development. The piano part continues with a *p* (piano) dynamic. The word "ng" (likely a typo for "sing") is written below the treble staff.

Third system of musical notation for the piano accompaniment, concluding the piece with a final chord. The piano part continues with a *p* (piano) dynamic. The word "ng" (likely a typo for "sing") is written below the treble staff.

13

ah

*mp*

17

ng

ah

*dim.*

21

*p*

*dim.*

26

calando al fine

ng

*gliss.*

*pp*