

**PROGRAMME NOTES:** This is the first of “Three Songs” which I wrote to the poetry of John Fernald, having imagined each of them during walks in the surrounding countryside. The poem “Spring Dawn” is subtitled “charm of earliest birds”, a phrase of John Milton which sets the tone for this poem of nature.

**Text:**

**Spring Dawn**

*Charm of earliest birds – Milton*

They wake me, woken  
insomniac, renew my sense of life  
after such troubled, sleepless nights.

Cool spring, the trees are inky  
a star or two it is still night.

“Birds build but not I build ...”

“The charm of earliest birds,”  
singing, charming the world,  
song, *carmen*, their morning work.

What can we do with words?  
“the language of inspiration”  
“unbidden and against my will.”

Birdsong in cool Canadian spring,  
awaking to that,  
birdsong that fills the trees  
as sun comes slowly over the hill.