

Is there anybody out there, please?

# FIFTEEN FEET OF PURE WHITE SNOW

## PROGRAMME NOTES

Words & music  
in the presentation of the first section "Time to be Real" from

### **Mental Fight**

a poem for the new Millennium  
*dedicated to humanity in the Aquarian Age and to William Blake*

by Ben Okri

Read for you today by

Strace Wheeler  
Heloise Osborne  
Angela Richardson  
Andrew Connolly  
Stephen Burrows  
Sarah Wheeler

Saturday 1 February 2003

**whiterabbit**

21 Douglas Buildings, Marshalsea Road, London SE1 1EJ



A PRESENTATION OF SECTION I OF BEN OKRI'S

# Mental Fight

## Time to be Real

Fifteen Feet of Pure White Snow  
God is in the House  
Nick Cave

### **Verse 1 - Strace Wheeler**

Partita No.1 by J S Bach  
Angela Hewitt

### **Verse 2 - Heloise Osborne**

Cry (if you want to)  
Holly Cole Trio

### **Verse 3 - Angela Richardson**

Shadows & Light  
Joni Mitchell

### **Verse 4 - Andrew Connolly**

Lark Ascending  
Ralph Vaughan Williams

### **Verse 5 - Stephen Burrows**

Prayer & Psalm 103  
Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh  
Choir of the Russian Cathedral in London

### **Verse 6 - Sarah Wheeler**

Vain Care of Times to Come  
George Friedrich Handel

END

# DEPRESSION = COLD + WHITE + SILENT

## FIFTEEN FEET OF PURE WHITE SNOW

Nick Cave

Where is Mona? She's long gone  
Where is Mary? She's taken her along  
But they haven't put their mittens on  
And there's fifteen feet of pure white snow.

Where is Michael? Where is Mark?  
Where is Mathew? Now it's getting dark?  
Where is John? They are all out back  
Under fifteen feet of pure white snow  
Would you please put down that telephone  
We're under fifteen feet of pure white snow

I waved to my neighbour  
My neighbour waved to me  
But my neighbour is my enemy  
I kept waving my arms till I could not see  
Under fifteen feet of pure white snow

Is there anybody out there please?  
It's too quiet in here and I'm beginning to freeze  
I've got icicles hanging from my knees  
Under fifteen feet of pure white snow

Is there anybody here who feels this low?  
Under fifteen feet of pure white snow

Raise your hands up to the sky! Is it any wonder?  
Oh my Lord Oh my Lord

Doctor! Doctor! I'm going mad!  
This is the worst day I've ever had  
I can't remember ever feeling this bad  
Under fifteen feet of pure white snow  
Where's my nurse? I need some healing  
I've been paralysed by this lack of feeling  
I can't even find anything worth stealing  
Under fifteen feet of pure white snow

Is there anyone else here who doesn't know?  
We're under fifteen feet of pure white snow

Raise your hands up to the sky! Is it any wonder?  
Oh my Lord Oh my Lord

# DESPAIR = 'THE STRAIGHT' & 'THE NARROW'

## GOD IS IN THE HOUSE

Nick Cave

We've laid the cables and the wires  
We've split the wood and stoked the fires  
We've lit our town so there is no place for crime to hide  
Our little church is painted white  
And in the safety of the night  
We all go quiet as a mouse  
For the word is out, God is in the house  
No cause for worry now, God is in the house

Moral sneaks in the White House  
Computer geeks in the school house  
Drug freaks in the crack house  
We don't have that stuff here  
We have a tiny little Force  
But we need them of course  
For the kittens in the trees  
And at night we are on our knees  
As quiet as a mouse, for God is in the house  
God is in the house, and no one's left in doubt  
God is in the house

Homos roaming the streets in packs  
Queer bashers with tyre-jacks  
Lesbian counter-attacks  
That stuff is for the big cities  
Our town is very pretty, we have a pretty little square  
We have a woman for a mayor, our policy is firm but fair  
Now that God is in the house  
God is in the house. Any day now He'll come out  
God is in the house

Well-meaning little therapists  
Goose-stepping twelve-stepping tea-totalitarianists  
The tipsy, the reeling and the drop down pissed  
We got no time for that stuff here  
Zero crime and no fear  
We've bred all our kittens white so you can see them in the night  
And at night we're on our knees as quiet as a mouse  
Since the word got out from the North down to the South  
For no-one's left in doubt, there's no fear about  
If we all hold hands and very quietly shout  
Hallelujah  
God is in the house

**JOY = PLAYFULNESS**

**PARTITA NO. 1**

**Johann Sebastian Bach**

**Introduction to 'Songs of innocence'**

**Piping down the valleys wild  
Piping songs of pleasant glee,  
On a cloud I saw a child  
And he laughing said to me:**

**"Pipe a song about a Lamb!"  
So, I piped with merry cheer.  
"Piper, pipe that song again,"  
So, I piped: he wept to hear.**

**"Piper, sit thee down and write  
"In a book that all may read."  
So, he vanish'd from my sight,  
And I plucked a hollow reed,**

**And I made a rural pen,  
And I stain'd the water clear,  
And I wrote my happy songs  
Every child may joy to hear.**

**William Blake**

# LOVE = THE BRIDGE OF RECOVERY

## CRY (IF YOU WANT TO)

Holly Cole

Cry if you want to  
I won't tell you not to  
I won't try to cheer you up  
I'll just be here if you want me

It's no use in keeping a stiff upper lip  
You can weep, you can sleep, you can loosen your grip  
You can frown, you can drown and go down with the ship  
You can cry if you want to  
Don't ever apologize venting your pain  
It's something to me you don't need to explain  
I don't need to know why  
I don't think it's insane  
You can cry if you want to

The windows are closed  
The neighbours aren't home  
If it's better with me than to do it alone  
I'll draw all the curtains and unplug the phone  
You can cry if you want to

You can stare at the ceiling and tear at your hair  
Swallow your feelings and stagger and swear  
You could show things and throw things and I wouldn't care  
You can cry if you want to

I won't make fun of you  
I won't tell any one  
I won't analyse what you do or you should have done  
I won't advise you to go and have fun  
You can cry if you want to

Well it's empty and ugly and terribly sad  
I can't feel what you feel but I know it feels bad  
I know that it's real and it makes you so mad  
You could cry

Cry if you want to I won't tell you not to  
I won't try and cheer you up  
I'll just be here if you want me; to be  
Near you

# BI-POLAR ILLNESS/BI-POLAR UNIVERSE

## SHADOWS & LIGHT

Joni Mitchell

Every picture has its shadows  
And it has some source of light  
Blindness, blindness and sight  
The perils of benefactors  
The blessings of parasites  
Blindness, blindness and sight  
Threatened by all things  
Devil of cruelty  
Drawn to all things  
Devil of delight  
Mythical devil of the ever-present laws  
Governing blindness, blindness and sight

Suntans in reservation dining rooms  
Pale miners in their lantern rays  
Night, night and day  
Hostage smiles on presidents  
Freedom scribbled in the subway  
It's like night, night and day  
Threatened by all things  
God of cruelty  
Drawn to all things  
God of delight  
Mythical god of the everlasting laws  
Governing day, day and night

Critics of all expression  
Judges in black and white  
Saying it's wrong, saying it's right  
Compelled by prescribed standards  
Or some ideals we fight  
For wrong, wrong and right  
Threatened by all things  
Man of cruelty - mark of Cain  
Drawn to all things  
Man of delight-born again, born again  
Man of the laws, the ever-broken laws  
Governing wrong, wrong and right  
Governing wrong, wrong and right  
Wrong and right

## **AGE OF AQUARIUS = A(IR )SIGN OF THE TIMES?**

**Lark Ascending**

**Ralph Vaughan Williams**

In "Birds with Human Souls" the general patterns of bird symbolism is discussed: "The idea that the bird represented the soul as opposed to the body, the spiritual in contrast to the earthly, seems to have been universal." In addition the bird was associated with new life and procreation. In medieval art the bird is also a frequent inhabitant of paradise or the garden of earthly delights while a few birds may point to negative qualities in man or represent the Seven Deadly Sins. In art there are numerous depictions of the Christ Child clutching a bird in his hand or holding a bird on a string--both suggesting the idea of the soul incarnated in the body.

The phoenix who possesses both sexes in itself, at the end of its life builds a funeral pyre. It then ignites the fire, burns itself up, and on the ninth day rises again from the ashes to live another life. Given these fabulous details, it is small wonder that the Christian allegorists saw the phoenix as a symbol of Christ and his resurrection from the dead. References to particular birds in literature often bring a deeper meaning to the text. For example, Chaucer characterizes his Squire through the nightingale, a traditional symbol for lust and sexual love. Ironically enough, the nightingale's song could also be associated with Christ's death and resurrection and thereby with divine love.

HOPE = SPIRIT

**“BLESSED IS THE KINGDOM OF THE FATHER AND THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, NOW AND FOREVER TO THE AGES OF AGES.....”**

**Celebrant: Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh**

**“The Holy Liturgy of Saint John Chrysotom is the one, which is most commonly served in the Orthodox Churches, and it begins with this clear statement, loosed like a golden arrow, aimed at the very heart of the target. It is clear that we have come to enter into the present of and share in the life of our God, the Holy and Undivided Trinity, Who has created all things. This initial blessing is simultaneously an indication of our current point of departure and of our goal. It is announced from the ‘holy of holies’, also called the ‘altar’, which is marked off from the rest of the church by the ikon screen, which connects this holy place to the rest of the church, just as the neck joins, rather than divides the human head to the human body. This momentous blessing echoes gently through the sacred space in which the believers stand before God. Its peace is a pre-condition for prayer. This continuous form of prayer punctuates almost all Orthodox worship in one form or another and underlines the constant prayer of Christians in time and in eternity. This sequence of litanies and psalms characterises the first section of the Liturgy and it prepares us for the bringing out of the Gospel book into the centre of the Church which signifies Christ Himself, the Light of the world, entering into his own creation to illuminate all things. The first antiphon which follows the great litany is that which is normally sung in the Russian Church on Sundays and on feasts of the Mother of God, it is chanted to a traditional melody. This antiphon is usually taken from Psalm 103, though the whole psalm can be sung, if desired.”** Father Phillip Steer

**Sung by the Choir of the Russian Orthodox Cathedral in London as part of “The Liturgy of St John Chrisotodom” directed by Reverend Archpriest Michael Fortunatto**

**PEACE = HOMECOMING**

**VAIN CARE OF TIMES TO COME**

**George Friedrich Handel**

**Vain care of times to come  
Does not disturb our gentle sleep**

**No need to worry about the future  
We are all in God's hands  
And everything that happens to us  
Comes from him.**

**This is one of Handel's "Nine German Arias" which, interestingly, he wrote at the end of his life, returning from many years working as a composer in England to write these nine songs in his native German. Intensifying the feeling, present in the songs, of the peace to be found in the quiet realisation that coming to the end (of anything) is also, somehow a return to a deeper beginning.**

**(With grateful thanks to Dr David Jenkinson for help with this translation from German)**

## JOURNEY OF THE MAJI

'A cold coming we had of it,  
Just the worst time of the year for a journey, and such a long journey  
The ways deep and the weather sharp,  
The very dead of winter.'

And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,  
Lying down in the melting snow.

There were times we regretted  
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,  
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.  
Then the camel men cursing and gambling  
And running away and wanting their liquor and women,  
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,  
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly  
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:

A hard time we had of it.  
At the end we preferred to travel all night,  
Sleeping in snatches,  
With the voices singing in our ears, saying  
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,  
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation,  
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness  
And three trees on a low sky.

And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.  
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,  
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,  
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.

But there was no information, and so we continued  
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon,  
Finding the pace; it was (you may say) satisfactory

All this was a long time ago, I remember  
And I would do it again, but set down  
This set down

This; were we led all that way for  
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,  
We had evidence and no doubt, I had seen birth and death  
But had thought they were different, this Birth was  
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death,  
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,  
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,  
With an alien people clutching their gods,  
I should be glad of another death.

T S Eliot

THE END?

With particular, heartfelt thanks and love to:

My very own and beloved team of husky dogs: **my father, Strace, my very dear friends, Steve & Heloise (and also all staff and patients at IPTS) - for finding the strength and stamina to drag me across the snowy plains of July to December 2002 into this January haven and hopefully, beyond.**

For all previous husky packs: **who have provided ongoing and back-up support through the various ice ages and for all the frolics during the thaws in between. Too many names to mention, not enough words to say thank you.**

The intrepid poetry pioneers: **Strace, Heloise, Angela, Andrew & Steve.**

Ice engineer: **Gabby, for all the inspiration, help and expertise in putting together and recording the music for the presentation, amongst other things.**

Generous igloo host: **Linda for keeping open house for the Merz family.**

The Pole Star: **Reverend Tony Lucas for allowing the event to take place at St George The Martyr Church.**

Snow Angels: **Alexei, Anna, Andrei and Gyorge for waiting there for me at the right place at the right time.**

My beloved Eskimo tribe: **Father, Strace, mother, Maureen, brother, Adam, sister, Rachel, their partners, Katy and John and much cherished nieces and nephews - Helen, Hannah, Matthew and Sam. Also, Nora, Pat, Bill and all uncles, aunts and cousins.**

Fellow Travellers & Explorers: **All of you and everybody, past, present and future. With particular appreciation of those here today who have rivalled the Three Kings in their efforts to attend: Ingrid, Christian, Daniel and Maria from the foothills of the Alps; Adam, Katy, Hannah and Sam from Southampton; Rachel, John, Helen & Matt from Market Haborough, Rosie, Amy & Sam from Bristol, Heloise from Hayling Island; Karen from Bristol; Adele & Hugo from Winchester,; Genevieve from Brighton; Sarah from Bath; Helen, Christopher and Anthony from Oakham; Judie & Paul from Sussex; Simon, Jo, Olivia and Marcie from Northamptonshire; Pat from Oxford; Strace & Nora from Warwickshire; Alexei, Anna, Andrei & Gyorge from the Russia-not-in-exile-but-not-in-Russia either that is Sutton in Surrey and, finally, in anticipation, the beloved Johane Leblanc from Quebec who is coming to London in March.**

Snowbabes & bunnies: **Children and animals, here and the world-over.**

Any takers for the

## Mental Fight Club?

The aim is simply to meet again to read the further seven sections of the poem and discuss ideas that arise.

Possible venue is "The Boot & Flogger" round the corner on Redcross Way, possible date of next meeting Friday 21 March 2003, 6.30 pm.

Further details will be mailed to you in due course, probably.

### **The Clod & the Pebble**

“Love seeketh not Itself to please,  
“Nor for itself hath any care  
“but for another gives its ease  
“And builds a Heaven in Hell’s despair

So sang a little Clod of Clay  
‘Trodden with the cattle’s feet,  
But a Pebble of the brook  
Warbled out these metres meet:

“Love seeketh only Self to please,  
“To bind another to Its delight  
“Joys in another’s loss of ease  
“And build’s a Hell in Heaven’s despite

**William Blake**

**W h i t e r a b b i t**

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