

PETERLOO

Cantata

Music: Gary Daverne

Script: Ruth Hamilton

Synopsis

The setting is in England between 1815 and 1819. This was a period of immense political tension and mass protest as a result of the Napoleonic Wars.

Fewer than 2% of the population had the vote and hunger was rife with the disastrous Corn Laws making bread unaffordable, accumulating since the 1815 battles at Waterloo.

On the morning of 16th August 1819 a huge, but peaceful crowd, the majority dressed in their Sunday best, began to gather on the field around what's now called, St Peters Square in Manchester.

Local magistrates watching from a window near the field panicked at the sight of the large crowd and read the riot act.

On horseback the cavalry came, armed with sabers. By 2pm the carnage was over and the field left full with abandoned banners and dead bodies, an event that became known as The Peterloo Massacre.

All in the name of liberty and freedom from poverty.

Narrator

Rich Lady (part of the chorus)

Rich Gentleman (part of the chorus)

Poor woman (part of the chorus)

Poor Man (part of the chorus)

Mixed Chorus of men and women with solo lines

PETERLOO

INTRODUCTION

Chorus: Waterloo. Waterloo.
Waterloo. Eighteen fifteen. Waterloo.

Narrator: *1815 Waterloo*

Chorus: Waterloo. Eighteen fifteen. Waterloo.

Narrator: *The glorious battle that finally defeated the mighty army of Napoleon Bonaparte.
An army that exceeded in greatness that of Tamerlane, Alexander, Darius and Caesar.
1815.
For the wealthy, war was glorious. War was entertaining.*

Chorus: Waterloo. Waterloo.
Waterloo. Waterloo. Waterloo. Waterloo.

Lady: *1815. I have been invited to the Duchess of Richmond's ball in Brussels. Shall I wear my diamonds or my rubies?*

Chorus: Waterloo. Eighteen fifteen. Waterloo.

Gentleman: *Rubies my dear. They'll look well with my uniform.
I hope Mr. Nap, Old Boney, won't interrupt the ball.*

No. 1 THE WALTZ

Lady: *(Gracefully)*

V.1 Dance, dance the waltz with me,
Hold me near.
Say you'll always waltz with me
And that you'll hold me tight
Dance 'till the morning light.
Say you'll waltz with me
Say you'll waltz with me

V.2 Dance, dance the waltz with me,
Hold me near.
Please don't leave me all alone
Or you'll see my heart aches
Dance 'till the morning breaks.
Say you'll waltz with me
Say you'll waltz with me

Gentleman:

V.3 Yes. I will dance the waltz with you,
Hold you close.
If I leave you dear tonight
I will recall the sweet touch
Of your hand in mine
When I waltz with you
I will waltz with you

Both: Say you'll waltz with me
Say you'll waltz with me

(Key Change)

Chorus:

V.4 Yes, we will dance tonight
One last waltz

Gentleman:

I may have to leave you soon
Dance with me hold me tight
We'll waltz 'till the morning light

Lady: I will waltz with you
I will waltz with you

Chorus: We will waltz; we'll waltz all night
Until the dawn.

Narrator: *But there was no glory for the poor*

No. 2 WATERLOO

Chorus: Waterloo. Waterloo.
Looooo..... (*Under woman/man narration*)

Woman: (*Spoken with urgency*) 1815. Food prices are high.
We can not afford bread. We are starving, but there is a war on.

Man: (*Spoken with urgency*) 1815. The Bill of Enclosure has taken away my
land and I have no means of livelihood.

Men: (*Sung with pride*)

Through the cold, through the mud, through the rain we marched.
(*Could be solo lines*) Old campaigners and new
In the cold, in the mud, in the rain we camped
At a place near Waterloo

Chorus: At a place near Waterloo

V.1 (*With anguish*)

Men: How can we sleep when we're soaked to the skin?
Women: How can they sleep when we're soaked to the skin?
Men: How can we rest when we're chilled to the bone?
Women: How can they rest when we're chilled to the bone?
Men: How can we sleep?
Women: How can they sleep?
Men: Lashed by the wind?
Women: Lashed by the wind?
Men: Aching and shaking with cold
Women: Shaking, shaking, shaking, shaking,
Shaking, shaking, shaking, shaking

V.2

Men: Smear all our blankets with mud and with clay
Women: Smear all our blankets with mud and with clay
Men: Fashion a pillow with straw or with hay
Women: Fashion a pillow with straw or with hay
Men: Sleep close together
Women: Sleep close together
Men: Out of the wind
Women: Out of the wind
Men: Aching and shaking with cold
Women: Shaking, shaking, shaking, shaking,
Shaking, shaking, shaking, shaking

V.3

Men: How can we fight when we're covered with mud?
Women: How can they fight when we're covered with mud?
Men: How can we fight when we've nothing to eat?
Women: How can they fight when we've nothing to eat?
Men: How can we fight?
Women: How can they fight?
Men: Leader's not there
Women: Leader's not there
Men: Aching and shaking with cold
Women: Shaking, shaking, shaking, shaking,
Shaking, shaking, shaking, shaking

Chorus: (*With pride*)

Through the cold, through the mud,
Through the rain we marched.
Old campaigners and new
In the cold, in the mud, in the rain they camped
At a place near Waterloo
At a place near Waterloo

Women: (*With anger*)

Eighteen, fifteen
My son, husband, brother, lover
Killed, killed, killed, killed

Chorus: At Waterloo

Narrator: *The law doth punish the man or woman who steals the goose from the common.*

But lets the greater villain loose who steals the common from the goose.

Chorus: Waterloo

No. 3 ENCLOSURE – CORN LAW

Narrator: *Many people lost their land and homes because of the Enclosure. The Corn Bill greatly increased the price of bread.*

Chorus: Enclosure Corn Law, *(10 times under solo voice)*

Woman: I sold my son to a chimney sweep
We were starving

Man: Woman, your son is dead
He fell

(Key change)

Chorus: Eighteen sixteen. Eighteen sixteen. Eighteen sixteen,
Eighteen sixteen. Eighteen sixteen. Eighteen sixteen,
(Under narrator)

Narrator: *1816. It has rained. 1816. The crops have failed.*

Woman: I cannot afford to by bread for my family

Chorus: Eighteen sixteen

Woman: My husband is one of three hundred thousand men.
Dismissed from the force without a pension.

Chorus: There is no work

No. 4 POOR SONG

Chorus:
(Could be solo lines)

V. 1 They left their wives and children
They left their homes and friends
To fight against Napoleon
So Boney would not win

Everyone: They fought to succor England
So freedom could bear fruit
England did not succor them
She's left them destitute
But England did not succor them
She's left them destitute

V. 2 The new bill of enclosure
Has left us with out homes
They've lost their way of living
And hunger threatens them
Their children work in factories

Everyone: Their wives are their slaves too
They toil for sixteen hours a day
But still can't pay for food
They toil for sixteen hours a day
But still can't pay for food

V. 3 The factories can't employ them
They're turned away in scorn
Children die from hunger
Their wives are maimed at work

Everyone: The rich care but for rich reward
Their lives the price that's paid
The rich care but for rich reward
Their lives the price that's paid

(Key change)

V. 4 And if they steal a rabbit
To fill their children's mouths
They're hanged or transported
The price for being poor

Everyone: They're sent if they owe money
Off to the debtor's goal
Then they can neither pay their bills
Or buy their families food

Everyone: And England did not succor them
She left them destitute
She left them destitute

Narrator: *1816 - Men, women, children toil for 16 hours a day in appalling conditions.*

Chorus: Wah..... (*Under narrator. Repeat as required*)

Narrator: *Many are maimed or killed at work.
Most die young from occupational diseases.
Many are forced to apply for poor relief as wages
are below subsistence level.
Among the common people a savage anger breaks out.*

Everyone: (*Shouting and clapping in rhythm*)

Burn the mills, burn them
Burn the mills, burn them

Wreck machines, wreck them
Wreck machines, wreck them

Sack the towns, sack them
Sack the towns, sack them

Burn the mills, burn them
Burn the mills, burn them

Burn. Burn. Burn. Burn.
Burn. Burn. Burn. Burn. Burn.

Narrator: *1817. The situation has intensified.*

Women: (*With anger*)

My son, husband, brother, lover
Arrested, imprisoned, transported
Hanged for his part in the riots

No. 5 WORK SONG

Narrator: *The rioting has been stopped by hanging or transporting those
involved.*

1818: The plight of the common people is unchanged.

Solo Woman: (*With desperation*)

My man is a weaver, weaving cloth for pay, but
Factories have opened up; we'll have no work today

Chorus: Where shall we go the find some work?
We must be bold
Shall we go to Manchester?
Where the streets are paved with gold, gold, gold

Solo 2nd Woman:

My man is a cobbler, payed to mend your shoes
Starving people cannot pay, now we can't pay our dues

Chorus: Where shall we go the find some work?

We must be bold
Shall we go to Manchester?
Where the streets are paved with gold, gold, gold

Solo 3rd Woman:

My man's a small holder, growing food for you
He pays taxes for the poor, now we're poor people too

Chorus: Where shall we go the find some work?

We must be bold
Shall we go to Manchester?
Where the streets are paved with gold, gold, gold
Where the streets are paved with gold
(Key change)

Solo Woman: (*With desperation*)

My man is a poor man, beggars we will be
Change the Government and laws. Set us poor folk free

Chorus: Where can we go the find some work

Before we are too old
We will march to Manchester
Where the streets are paved with gold
Where the streets are paved with
Gold. Gold. Gold. Gold.
Gold. Gold. Gold. Gold

Narrator: *1819 Manchester*

Chorus: Manchester. Eighteen nineteen, Manchester,

Narrator: *On the morning of 16th August 1819 at St. Peters Square, Manchester, the peaceful crowd gathered to protest, with dignity and discipline, the majority dressed in their Sunday best.*

Chorus: Manchester. Eighteen Nineteen, Peterloo

Narrator: *On horseback the cavalry came, armed with sabres. By 2pm, the carnage was over and the field left full with abandoned banners and dead bodies, an event that became known, as The Peterloo Massacre.*

Chorus: Peterloo. Eighteen nineteen, Peterloo.

Peterloo was originally composed in a shorter version, in 1978, while the composer was Composer in Schools for two years, at Auckland's North Shore Teacher's College.

It was written for and performed by the College music department under the direction of Stuart Manins.

The handwritten manuscript remained untouched until 2006 when the composer loaded it on to a computer.

He revisited the score again between 2017 and 2019, revising and lengthening it to its present form. It was recorded in 2024.

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About the authors

Ruth Hamilton (Story and words): Educated at King Edward VIth Camphill Grammar School, Birmingham, England, residing in New Zealand since 1970 where she had a successful career reaching French and English in Auckland.

In 1998, Ruth launched WritersInc Ltd., a specialist documentation and training company where she works as a documentation consultant, technical writer and trainer for a wide variety of organizations. This includes: writing procedure manuals, designing documentation management and control strategies to support knowledge management projects.

Ruth is a certificated Information Mapping trainer and lectured part-time at AUT University. Participants on Ruth's courses appreciate her practical, hands-on approach, which empowers them to put theory into practice.

Ruth collaborated with Gary on an earlier successful children's musical: *Gypsy Girl*.

Gary Daverne ONZM (www.garydaverne.gen.nz) holds the position of Music Director Emeritus of the Auckland Symphony Orchestra, the orchestra he founded in 1975 and remained musical director and conductor for 35 years until he handed over the baton to a younger Maestro in 2010.

Gary, a qualified secondary schoolteacher in Commerce and Music, was born and educated in Takapuna on the North Shore of Auckland, NZ.

He grew up as a Rock 'n' Roller, playing piano and saxophone in top New Zealand rock groups. In the early '60s he started his career as a record producer, producing over 40 albums achieving several hit single records with one platinum and two gold albums. In the 1970s he was a leading musical arranger and director for Television New Zealand.

During the 1980s and 90's he was one of New Zealand's most successful and prolific composers: in the 'pop' world, symphonic and accordion music, children's musicals and creating more than 500 music soundtracks and jingles, for radio, TV and film. Much of his work has over recent years been recorded, digitally re-mastered and released now online and CD.

Today, Gary is known as an international orchestral conductor having conducted many of the world's major orchestras. Please check Gary's web, www.garydaverne.gen.nz.
