

# **CHRISTINA'S WORLD**

**A Chamber Opera for 5 Voices & Instrumental Ensemble**  
**Music by Ross Edwards. Libretto by Dorothy Hewett.**

**Christina's World (1983) - A Chamber Opera in one act.**

**Ross Edwards, Music  
Dorothy Hewett, Libretto**

Dorothy Hewett has described *Christina's World* as "an allegory or fable about illusion and reality and the truth and lies of memory."

Christina, in middle age, is obsessed by a desire to return to the house of her childhood and the life of the imagination she created there - a kind of second Eden of lost childhood and the Pastoral Dream. She succeeds in conjuring her young self, a hesitant and idealistic dream figure who gradually takes on the characteristics of a 'real' Christina - a contradictory, perverse, tragi-comic adolescent with a fierce egocentric life of her own.

The idealised Eden reveals its sinister and terrifying aspects as the young Christina plays out the story of the house by the sea; Dick, her withdrawn father, widowed by the suicide of her mother, drowned by the sea; Harry, her schizophrenic uncle, subject to fits of melancholia and violence, who is nevertheless Christina's confidante and friend - her only friend until she meets Tom, the boy from over the hill, a young farm labourer who becomes her dream lover.

After she has become pregnant, Tom deserts her. She retreats further into her fantasy life and when her baby is born she sets it on a raft and releases it out to sea. Later, Tom's body is found in a ditch. Has he been murdered by her father, her uncle or herself? Did he even exist? She is uncertain and so are we. But the house is peopled by malignant ghosts and terrible memories. In the end we are left with an enigma. Was there ever such a house? Was there a lover, a father, a mad uncle, a drowned child - or were they all nothing more than figments of the young Christina's distorted imagination? Was there ever such a place as Christina's World? The opera ends with the voice of the ageing Christina still telling her tragic story of lost love and perfect world.

#### **COMPOSER'S NOTE**

The collaboration between Dorothy Hewett and myself was conceived and fostered by Stuart Challender who, while conducting a program of my music, felt it had certain affinities with Dorothy's musical play, *The Man from Mukinupin*. *Christina's World* was commissioned by the Music and Literature Boards of the Australia Council. The first performance was given in the Everest Theatre, Sydney, on 24th November 1983. For later productions I revised the score, enlarging the instrumental forces.

R.E.

**CHRISTINA'S WORLD**  
**A Chamber Opera for 5 Voices & Instrumental Ensemble**  
**Music by Ross Edwards. Libretto by Dorothy Hewett.**

**CAST:**

**Mezzo Soprano 1:** Young Christina, the girl in the farmhouse.  
The Daughter

**Mezzo Soprano 2:** Middle-aged Christina.

**Tenor 1:** Harry, the Shell-shocked Uncle

**Tenor 2:** Tom, the Young Lover  
The Son

**Baritone:** Dick, the Father  
The Husband.

**The Dummies:** The Realistic Dummy - Faceless: Christina, middle-aged, crippled.  
The Straw Man: Tom's dead body.

**The Setting:** Open stage against a cyclorama with the blow-up of a skeletal, burnt-out farmhouse.

Two chairs, a small table, a lamp, an old trunk.  
Lighting is particularly important.

## CHRISTINA'S WORLD

When the opera opens we see, downstage centre, a wheelchair containing the life-size dummy of a crippled middle-aged woman in modern dress. She has her back to the audience. Behind the wheelchair, also with back to audience, stands her son. The husband and daughter face the audience. We see them all only in silhouette. Projected onto the cyclorama is the blowup of the skeletal, burnt-out farmhouse, brooding and shadowy. The air is full of noise, the call of seabirds, wind, surf, a ship's buoy sounding over water.

CHRISTINA: *(voice over as young girl, singing)*

This is the wide country  
I lived in when I was young  
the great clouds over it  
the hawk in the high sky hung

Hung upside down like a metal bird  
fixes time in his fatal eye  
the mice run circles, the plovers cry  
till I hardly know in that hurtling sky  
which of the three wild things am I  
murderer, victim, recorded cry.

THE HUSBAND: The hawk spins round like a weathervane.

CHRISTINA: The seed spills bitter, the hawk turns slow.  
Under the rainbow arch will lie  
the girl with the haystack hair awry,  
her legs outflung and her brief blood dry  
while the bumpkin boy goes whistling by  
with gravel-rashed knee and weeping eye.

THE SON: And the hawk in the high sky hung.

VOICES OVER: Christina, Christina, Christina.

*Wind, surf, seabirds etc. take over the soundtrack, and out of these sounds we begin to distinguish music and human voices - such a medley of sounds it is hard to distinguish the human from the elemental world. Gradually CHRISTINA'S MIDDLE-AGED VOICE emerges clearly on the soundtrack singing.*

CHRISTINA: *(voice over as middle-aged woman, singing)*

2.

Let us go to Mad Fish Bay

by the Black Mountain  
where the gannets cry all day  
and the kelp washes in.  
Where the restless, unending wave  
searches along the shore  
for the conch shell with the message inside  
that ends - I am here,  
I have not forgotten.

THE SON: Christina making daisy chains  
under Black Mountain.

THE DAUGHTER: Rich man, poor man, beggarman, thief,  
grief is love and love is grief.

ALL: (*chanting*) Albatross, sea-eagle, sandpiper, tern,  
gannet and seagull, tide on the turn,  
Mullet and blackfish, salmon and whale,  
Cocles and mussels, put salt on his tail.

SON: Alive, alive-o, alive, alive-o.

FATHER: Cockles and mussels, alive, alive-o.

DAUGHTER: I sell seashells by the sea shore.

ALL: We sell seashells by the sea shore.

HUSBAND: I am the husband, the father,  
the silent one.

SON: I am the son  
who never answered her cries.

DAUGHTER: I am the daughter,  
of that Christina, so young,  
lovely and lost in the foam.

ALL: And we'll never go home to Black Mountain.

THE SON *pushes the wheelchair towards the cyclorama.* HUSBAND and DAUGHTER *move slowly backstage and exit. Farmhouse blow-up fades out. The cyclorama, back lit, takes on the*

*appearance of a glitter mirror-surface or the surface of the sea. THE VOICES grow more insistent.*

VOICES OVER: Chistina, Christina, Christina.

*All sound cuts out. CHRISTINA DUMMY is now facing the cyclorama. Clock begins to tick louder and louder, until the sound fills the stage.*

CHRISTINA: *(voice over as middle-aged woman)*

The clock starts to tick,  
and the tide starts to flow.  
There's a shimmer and glow  
and the girl in the mirror is floating,  
home to Black Mountain, home to the house  
under the hill.

CHRISTINA DUMMY *is pushed off by the SON. VOICES OVER whisper like the tide:*  
Christina...

*A GIRL appears in front of the cyclorama, as if coming from its mirror-surface. She is the YOUNG CHRISTINA, dressed in the fashion of forty years ago, but a romantic, rather timeless costume. She is hesitant, a dream-figure who moves onto the stage as if born from a chrysalis. She is hung with daisy chains, and as she moves she picks off the petals. They drift around her as she sings.*

YOUNG CHRISTINA: *(sings)*

Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor,  
rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief.

There are three men in my life  
Tom, Dick and Mad Harry.  
Tom has hair like new-mown hay  
Harry's wits have gone astray  
and Dick has nothing at all to say  
There are three men in my life.

Dick is a beggar man, Harry is barmy  
Tom is the thief who stole my heart  
Gulls on the ocean, mice in the granary  
The heart bleeds white when the winters start.

The wind starts up and blows like a bellows  
Storms in the chimney, rain on the sea

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Dick reads books and Harry's wool gathering  
Tom will never come home to me.

There are three men in my life  
Barney Harry and silent Dick  
Tom the thief who ran far away  
Fishing for truth and coming home empty  
I live alone overlooking the bay  
with Tom, Dick and Mad Harry.

ENTER TOM *in fisherman's jersey, trousers tucked into sea-boots.*  
*He carries a rifle. There should not be any attempt, except in his costume, to make him any different to the Son.*

CHRISTINA: *(speaking)* Who are you?

TOM: *(speaking)* I'm the boy who works on the farms.

CHRISTINA: I'm the girl who lives in the house on the hill.  
*(sings)* Who are you?

TOM: *(sings)* Tom the bad boy, Tom the sad boy,  
Tom from over the mountain.  
Who are you?

CHRISTINA: *(like an echo)* Who are you?  
Christina lives with Dick and Mad Harry.

TOM: Christina making daisy chains  
Under Black Mountain.

*They move towards each other and take hands for a DUET.*

DUET: TOM AND CHRISTINA

CHRISTINA: I invented you  
one pearly morning  
when the dew was on the grass.

TOM: I invented you  
one starfish morning  
high-tide and gannets calling.

BOTH: I invented you.

CHRISTINA: Tom the hay-carter,  
Tom the fish-trapper,  
I invented you for me.

TOM: Tom the bad boy,  
Tom the sad boy,  
Tom from over the mountain.

CHRISTINA: Christina in the old house  
with the windy chimney.

TOM: Christina making daisy chains  
by Mad Fish Bay.

BOTH: Stay for me there,  
Stay for me always,  
...stay...

CHRISTINA and TOM *settle down with his head on her lap.*

SPOKEN DIALOGUE WITH ACCOMPANIMENT UNDER...

CHRISTINA: What's it like on the other side of Black Mountain?  
I've never been over it. I've never seen the world.

TOM: Well, there's cities and rivers and trains and ships.

CHRISTINA: I've seen the ships sailing by.

TOM: I'll get on one of them ships one of these days and go.  
I'll go round the world blowin' the breath  
out of me nostrils. *(He laughs)*

CHRISTINA: Then take me.

TOM: You wouldn't fit in.

CHRISTINA: Anywhere you'd belong, I'd belong.

TOM: You've got to stay here.



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CHRISTINA: Why? It'd go on just the same - Mad Fish Bay and the Black Mountain.

TOM: And Dick and Harry?

CHRISTINA: A gale could bump the house flat and they'd go on just the same, reading and gabbling, gabbling and reading till Doomsday. That's why my mother walked into the sea. She couldn't bear it any longer. They'd never notice I'd gone.

TOM: I bet they'd notice alright. They'd be after me with the shotgun.

CHRISTINA: That's only for foxes.

TOM: And I'd be the fox - after their soft spring chicken.

*He chases after her mockingly, growlingly.*

CHRISTINA: *(half afraid)* Don't - don't. I don't like it - I don't.

*He catches her, kisses her lingeringly.*

TOM: *(a challenge)* Don't you?

*(He breaks away)*

I want to drif out with the tide.

CHRISTINA: Dick wouldn't do anything to you and Harry's shell-shocked from the last war in France.

TOM: You've got to be here for me when I get back.

CHRISTINA: *(hesitant)*

I don't know. Would you always come back? Would you?

TOM: Like the peregrine falcon, back to your wrist in the spring.

*They kiss and TOM EXITS slowly, throwing her kisses. Stage darkens, a sea-bird calls piercingly.*

CHRISTINA *rises and moves towards her chair, taking up her sewing.*

CHRISTINA: *(singing softly)*

Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor,

rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief.

*A soft light on stage. DICK ENTERS carrying several books. He silently takes the other chair. A middle-aged man, withdrawn, dressed shabbily and conservatively. They sit reading and sewing quietly. This is a moment of stasis as evening comes down. There is harmony in the domestic picture. Light slants down from the sea and sky and turns the stage into a cathedral-like space. The scene should resemble one of the domestic paintings of the old Dutch masters.*

*When HARRY ENTERS he breaks it. HARRY and TOM should be similar enough to be startling to the audience, but not enough to confuse. Harry should look much older than his prototype. His clothing should be wild and ragged, an old army coat and grey, askew wig. He is carrying a child's pail full of sea shells. Coming to himself, he sits down onstage, laying out his treasures childishly...*

HARRY: *(chanting softly)*

I sell sea shells on the sea shore  
I sell sea shells on the sea shore

DICK and Christina take no notice of him. HARRY begins to sing...

### HARRY'S SONG

Three corpses lie in a trench at Loos  
hi-ho, hi-ho...  
Blood on their breasts and shit in their trows  
hi-ho, hi-ho

I sell sea shells on the sea shore

Shells and shrapnel are howling high  
A trench to rot in, a trench to die  
Ten feet across and five feet high  
Hi-ho, hi-ho

I sell sea shells by the sea shore

DICK: *(reading aloud in a flat voice)*

When General Haig commenced his attack on the Somme

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60,000 men fell within ten minutes.

HARRY: (*muttering rapidly*)

Get on then, get on, get on. Come on you, get on.  
Get on there, get on you bastard, can't you get on.

HARRY: (*SINGS*) Get on, get on, to the shrapnel fire  
Get on you dirty swine

Over the top and strung on the wire  
From arsehole to breakfast time

The poison gas made us start to cough  
Rolls of barbed wire as high as walls  
Our legs blew off and our heads blew off  
So they strung us up by the balls

DICK: (*reading*) There were nearly nine million and a half British soldiers in France and Belgium in 1916.

HARRY: A shit and a woodbine for breakfast we had  
we was all done in  
and the end of it all me bonny lad  
nobody loses, nobody wins  
...we was all done in...

DICK: General Petain said: 'You can't fight the Hun and the mud at the same time.'  
(*He shakes with silent laughter*)

HARRY: I sell sea shells on the sea shore

CHRISTINA: (*speaking*) He never speaks. He just reads aloud.

HARRY: (*speaking*) He's full of words.

CHRISTINA: I want some words for myself. I want him to speak to *me*.

HARRY: Words choke him, he doesn't dare.

CHRISTINA: *You speak to me*

HARRY: Words running over, tumbling, whirling. Chaos is life,  
Chaos is richness. Dicks's pushing the chaos back. He lives without hope.

CHRISTINA: *(to herself)* I met a boy by the seashore, one pearly morning. Tom the hay-carter,  
Tom *the fish-trapper*.  
Did I invent him because I needed him?

HARRY: To be without hope is an act of murder.

*A FOX YELPS. The yelping grows louder...*

CHRISTINA: *(sings)*  
Red cloud in the moonlight  
my fox, my darling  
he comes over Black Mountain  
and yelps at the moon.

HARRY: *(speaks)* There's something outside.

DICK: *(speaks without looking up)* The wind in the chimney.

CHRISTINA: *(sings)* My wolf in sheep's clothing  
when nobody's looking  
He crosses the mountain.

HARRY: *(speaks)* I can hear footsteps padding...

CHRISTINA: My fox, my darling  
he creeps into the fowlyard  
and steals all the chickens...

DICK: *(speaks impatiently)* It's only the wind.

CHRISTINA: He moves like the wind moves  
and flattens the grasses...

HARRY: *(shouts, starting up)* It's a fox after the chickens!

*HE rushes over, picks up the rifle in the corner and stands guard.*

DICK: *(sighing)* When you go there'll be nothing...

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CHRISTINA: *(sighing & sewing)*

He's biting off chicken heads  
there's a squawking and beating

blood drips from his chops  
and he grins as he runs...

HARRY: *(speaks)*

There isn't a sound. *(He puts up the rifle)*  
There's nobody there.

CHRISTINA: *(singing, exultant)*

He's over Black Mountain  
like a cloud, like a comet  
ruff touched with silver  
paws pressing the dew.

DICK: *(speaking)*

It's always the same.

CHRISTINA: *(sings, smiles softly)*

My fox...my darling...

HARRY: *(sings)*

There's another war coming over the mountain  
I've seen the soldiers in the town...  
conch and cowrie, nautilus and coral...

*(He begins to sort his shells back into the bucket)*

There's another war coming over the mountain  
More good boys gone into the sea

Cockles and mussels, alive, alive-o!  
Alive, alive-o, alive, alive-o,  
singing cockles and mussels, alive, alive-o!

I sell sea shells on the sea shore.

HE EXITS, *chuckling and muttering. The night has come down. The music picks up the sounds of the wind roaring outside, the crash of the waves. DICK lights the lamp on the little table. Quietly CHRISTINA folds up her sewing...*

CHRISTINA: *(speaks)* Goodnight Father.

*There is no reply. She moves downstage and stands as if waiting.*

TOM'S VOICE *sings softly off...*

TOM: *(offstage)* Who goes round my house by night,  
only poor young Tom.

*(He enters behind her, puts his hands over her eyes, then speaks.)*

I've come to say goodbye.

CHRISTINA: *(cries out)* Goodbye?

*She swings around. He holds her. SPOKEN DIALOGUE follows...*

TOM: I'm off. The town's full of soldiers. I don't want to get caught up  
in the draft.

CHRISTINA: I'm coming with you.

TOM: You can't come.

CHRISTINA: Why not? Why not?

TOM: I'm goin' tuna fishin', Esperance and the Ninety Mile Beach,  
Israelite Bay to Eden. Them great fish leap out of the sea like  
unicorn. *(He nuzzles her neck)* Like you an' me'll leap in the hay  
tonight

CHRISTINA: I don't know. I don't know if it's right. Will you come back to me?

TOM: I said - like the peregrine falcon.

*They kiss and move off, arms round each other.*

TOM: *(sings softly)* Tom, Tom, the devil's son  
Stole a heart and away he run.

CHRISTINA: *(sings softly)* Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief,  
grief is love and love is grief.

*THEY EXIT. DICK is left alone on stage. Wind and sea music.*

### DICK'S SONG

I was the father who never caught his great fish,  
 who hugged to himself the ultimate mystery,  
 I was the husband who wished and wished for love  
 while my wife walked into the sea.

Rocks and stones and trees cried out of the silence,  
 everything spoke, everything shouted a lie,  
 the shrine I made for her was the ultimate swindle  
 when her death began to die.

My daughter runs in the night to meet a lover  
 my mad brother sings by the shore, counting his shells  
 I live in an iron mask in the circle of lamplight,  
 each one of us shut up in a separate hell.

Even the clock has a tick to break the silence  
 the sea eagle screams on the wind and eerily,  
 The white owl tears at the feathered flesh of her lover,  
 but I am buried fathoms deep under the sea,  
 I am buried fathoms deep under the sea.

*He blows out the lamp and sits until darkness slowly covers the stage. EXITS under cover of music and darkness. Music fades and all we can hear is the amplified tick of the clock...tick, tick, tick. The SHIP'S BUOY SOUNDS, then the CLOCK STRIKES SEVERAL TIMES.*

*CHRISTINA and HARRY enter, move centre dragging a SEA CHEST which is spotlighted. She kneels, opens the chest, and begins to take out various articles of clothing. Harry helps her, tossing the clothes about madly...*

CHRISTINA: *(sings)* The tide rolls out and the tide rolls in,  
 the mountain's lost in cloud.  
 My mother once had a wedding ring  
 and a gown for a funeral shroud.

He'll come today or he'll come tomorrow,  
 He'll end my waiting, he'll end my sorrow

HARRY: I sell sea shells on the sea shore.

CHRISTINA: I had a lover whose name was Tom  
 a golden boy to look upon  
 I loved him well but he wouldn't stay  
 so my reward is this wedding day

He'll come today or he'll come tomorrow  
 He'll end my waiting, he'll end my sorrow

HARRY: I sell sea shells on the sea shore.

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CHRISTINA: The tide runs out and the tide runs in  
 the mountain's lost in cloud  
 my mother once had a wedding ring  
 and a gown for a funeral shroud.

HARRY: *(sings)* Long ago when I was a boy  
 I used to shout out ship ahoy  
 Get me a boat and let me float  
 away from the Black Mountain

It's sweet to go but it's sweeter to stay  
 for weddings and funerals at Mad Fish Bay  
 I'll pick up your train and catch your bouquet  
 under the Black Mountain

I sell sea shells, I sell sea shells

I sell sea shells on the sea shore

*During the song HARRY gambols around her like a crazy wedding guest throwing confetti. But now the spell is broken. CHRISTINA moves away to the lamp and lights it. She stares out into the darkness. HARRY, like a disappointed child, sits cross-legged, picking the withered bouquet to pieces. CHRISTINA moves across and curls up in the chair. Moonlight floods the stage. There is the sound of CHURCH BELLS tolling far off.*

HARRY: *(chanting)* He loves me, he loves me not, he loves me, he loves me not.

CHRISTINA: *(sings)* I'll light a lamp in the window tonight  
 to see you home  
 I'll start from my sleep and think I hear you coming  
 but it's only the wind.

VOICES OVER: *(high, unearthly)* Christina, Christina...

CHRISTINA: Outside the sea thuds  
 the great heart rocking me



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and my grief as it rocked us  
in each other's arms  
and I said listen to the sea  
feeling that nothing could part us  
that we had in some way come through  
but the house is dark and I sit  
counting the hours  
you forget my face, I forget yours  
truly there is nothing in the world  
so strange as love

HARRY: (*chanting*) Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief,  
Grief is love and love is grief.

CHRISTINA *goes back to the chest, takes the lamp with her and places it beside her. She drops the wedding veil and the circlet of flowers inside.*

### **CHRISTINA'S MAD SONG**

Spring has come & gone but he hasn't come  
to my wrist like the peregrine falcon  
Summer is over, the neap tide swells  
as I swell, but nobody noticed it  
Only Mad Harry laughed, you're getting fat Christina

HARRY: (*giggling*) You're getting fat Christina.

CHRISTINA *kneels down by the trunk, holding her body as if in pain. She resumes her song...*

When the time came  
I crouched in the sand dunes  
bearing down, biting my lips  
like an animal

(*A seabird screams*)

I saw the little face  
between my legs  
puckered to cry

*Slowly she turns back to the trunk. She takes out a SHAWL and bundles it up into the semblance of a baby. She rocks it against her breast. HARRY mimes the rocking with her. There is a wild, concerted screaming of GULLS.*

**CHRISTINA'S LULLABY**

The baby's head was covered in down  
like a nightjar

HARRY: Lulla, lulla, lullaby

CHRISTINA: I wrapped him up and I laid him down  
like a white star  
with a night-light for company  
I sent him out to sea

HARRY: Lulla, lulla, lullaby  
she sent him out to sea

*She lays the bundle on top of the trunk, carefully places the light beside it, rises and slowly, mournfully, moves back towards Harry.*

*He rises and stands beside her.*

CHRISTINA: The waves lapped soft on the beach that night  
Up, up and down

HARRY: Lulla, lulla, lullaby

CHRISTINA: The little lamp burned with a steady light  
up, up and down  
As I waved it away from me  
It disappeared in the the sea

HARRY & CHRISTINA *stand alone solemnly waving, then join hands and circle the stage, dancing and chanting together.*

HARRY & CHRISTINA:

We sell sea shells by the sea shore  
conch and cowrie, nautilus, coral  
cockles and mussels alive, alive-o.  
Alive, alive-o, alive, alive-o,  
Cocles and mussels, alive, alive-o.

*They exit dancing. DICK ENTERS. He sits in his chair and sings...*

**LAMENT FOR A DROWNED CHILD**

Seven days rolled in the autumn tide  
the child swung home and rose  
in Mad Fish Bay

Crabs at his lips  
the blue flesh barnacled  
he metamorphosed on the empty beach

come back from there with trailing arm  
a fin, a down of hair cast in a pool

Seven days a wonder sailors wept  
and knelt to see him pass  
the currents turned his face towards home  
what home, what shore can take him now  
not fish or child but beast  
magicked from ruin in the pearly deep

Anenomes open  
from his gaping sides  
the sea-grapes cluster  
none dare to touch  
he floats and he divides

*A wild crescendo of music. ENTER HARRY carrying a GUN and dragging a STRAW MAN dressed in a SOLDIER's UNIFORM.*

HARRY: (*speaks*) I heard a fox after the chickens.

*Music continues as CHRISTINA ENTERS and, trance-like, moves across stage. She kneels beside the straw man, takes his head on her lap. DICK crosses and stands with Harry. There is a PEAL OF THUNDER, the sky is dark with storm clouds.*

**CHRISTINA'S LAMENT OVER POOR TOM**

He is lying in a ditch by the side of the road on Black Mountain  
that road he took so many nights  
                    whistling, carrying his gun  
he has gone hunting for foxes over Black Mountain  
his time has run out and he will not come again

HARRY and DICK *dance around Christina and the straw man singing...*

Tom, Tom, the devil's son  
 stole a heart and away he run  
 the heart was eat and Tom was beat  
 & Tom went howlig down the street

CHRISTINA: The rain drips down his face with an eerie whisper  
 a few black clouds are scudding over the crag  
 and he lies there in the ditch with his arm bent queerly  
 Like a hank of dirty rag

HARRY and DICK: All the neighbours start to shout  
 Tom, Tom of Bedlam's out  
 Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief  
 Grief is love and love is grief

CHRISTINA: I had a lover who died in a ditch in the rain  
 like an exiled wolf, like an imprisoned fox in the brain  
 his bite drew blood, I'll carry the scar for ever  
 but he won't come home again

*SHE RISES, turns and moves away, her back to the audience, head bowed in grief.*

HARRY and DICK: Who goes round my house by night  
 only poor young Tom  
 Who does wrong, who does right  
 Who's the guilty one

*HARRY kneels with the straw man's head cradled in his arms. DICK moves slowly back to his chair, takes up his book again. A thin, high VOICE OVER fills the stage...*

VOICE OVER: Christina, Christina...

*The cyclorama glows as CHRISTINA moves slowly towards it, singing, and seems to vanish into its surface.*

CHRISTINA: The clock starts to tick  
 and the tide starts to flow  
 there's a shimmer and glow  
 and the girl in the mirror is floating  
 home to Black Mountain  
 home to the house under the hill

*She vanishes, the light drains from the stage, the music continues, mysterious and haunting. Only HARRY is left spotlighted, holding the straw man in his arms.*

HARRY:

**POOR TOM'S SONG**

Poor Tom's a-cold, poor Tom's a-cold  
 he's wet with rain, beset with storm  
 I'll carry him inside the house  
 And light a fire to keep him warm

The house will blaze, the stars will set  
 his bones will burn, his song be sung  
 and there'll be nothing left at all  
 of this poor thing of straw and dung

He'll never whistle on the hill  
 when the white moon begins to rise  
 I'll set him up to scare the crows  
 to peck his ribs and steal his eyes

And empty on the empty sky  
 his coat will flap till fold on fold  
 it rots away like sodden crap  
 poor Tom's a-cold, poor Tom's a-cold

*HE EXITS, dragging the straw man after him. THE CLOCK TICKS more and more loudly, amplified like a heart beat. The stage is filled with a fiery glow, then the skeletal farmhouse emerges on the cyclorama with the theme of 'Let us go to Mad Fish Bay'... Blackout. Wind, surf, seabirds, the ship's buoy and the medley of whispering voices that crescendo and take over the soundtrack. Lights up. The CHRISTINA DUMMY is centre stage in the wheelchair with the SON standing beside her. THE HUSBAND stands stage left, THE DAUGHTER stage right. For the first time we see that the Christina Dummy's face is absolutely featureless.*

THE SON: *(speaks)* She wants to go back.

THE HUSBAND: *(speaks)* There's nothing left to go back to. Her father's dead, her mother walked into the sea, her mad uncle burned the house down. He was never right in the head.

**RECITATIVE**

DAUGHTER: She wants to go back.

HUSBAND: She sits there all day...

SON: with a bee in her bonnet...

DAUGHTER: and a gnat in her brain...

HUSBAND: and truly I cannot bear the sight of her sitting...

CHRISTINA VOICE OVER (*middle-aged*) Who are you?

HUSBAND: I am the husband who never caught his great fish.

SON: I am the son who kissed her and wished her dead.

CHRISTINA VOICE OVER: (*young*)

I am the maiden all forlorn

who milked the cow with the crumpled horn...

ALL: in this the house that we all built.

CHRISTINA VOICE OVER: (*middle-aged*) Who are you?

HUSBAND: I am the husband who tried and tried and tried.

I was dumb with words and my wife walked into the sea.

DAUGHTER: I am the daughter who turned from the look in her eyes.

SON: I am the son who never answered her cries.

CHRISTINA VOICE OVER: (*young*)

I am the maiden all forlorn

who fell in love with a unicorn

and never came home again

ALL: and the sky came down and the earth began to tilt

In the house that we all built

*During this section the light dies off the stage, the blow-up of the skeletal house fades out. The family, silhouetted against a pearly cyclorama, EXIT slowly, leaving the CHRISTINA DUMMY centre stage alone.*

CHRISTINA VOICE OVER: (*middle-aged*)

Let us go to Mad Fish Bay  
by the Black Mountain  
where the gannets cry all day  
and the kelp washes in.

Where the restless, unending wave  
searches along the shore  
for the conch shell with the message inside  
that ends: I am here,  
I have not forgotten

*Music introduction, and YOUNG CHRISTINA appears before the cyclorama and sings...*

I am the wild girl in the heart  
I am the self gone free

tied to no man no child  
     Who haunts the sea

I swim deep water  
     under circling gulls  
     stone arms round drowned sailors  
     cold kiss on their skulls

My blind eyes stare at the rim  
     where the sky meets the sea  
     I rock, cradle and hum  
     my stone arms squeeze

Who would change places with me  
     out there where the tide turns  
     sufficient and sunless as self  
     who cannot suffer or burn

VOICES OVER:   **Christina, Christina...**

*A seabird cries.*

CHRISTINA VOICE OVER: *(middle-aged)*  
     I am here, I have not forgotten.

THE END