

Photo 51

I

Image of a song on enduring winds,
Double Helix—a spiral of two strands
printing identity on Time, twining together.
Crystal gazing ... And she said:
Science and life cannot and should not be separated.
Science gives a partial explanation of life
in so far as it goes ... Science and life,
a spiral of two strands twining together.

II

Image of a song on enduring winds,
crystal gazing, a key turned, a door to be opened.
And she said: *Fact, experience, and experiment*
in so far as it goes ... Science and life ...
two strands twining together.
Science gives a partial explanation of life
in so far as it goes. Science and life
as far as they go, as far as they both shall go.

Seán Street (b. 1946)

Composer's note

Photo 51 (Seven Ages of Woman) is based on the iconic image taken by Rosalind Franklin, the crystallographer, whose work was central to the understanding of DNA. *Photo 51* marks the centenary of Rosalind Franklin's birth.

I commissioned the poet and author Seán Street to create a text based on the iconic image (known as Photo 51) taken by Rosalind Franklin, the chemist and crystallographer whose work was central to the understanding of the molecular structures of DNA. 'Photo 51' was the critical evidence in identifying the structure of DNA, revealing its double helix structure in the very early fifties. Her work was overlooked when, four years after her death, three men—Wilkins, Crick and Watson—were awarded the Nobel Prize for the discovery of DNA. I knew a little of Rosalind Franklin and her remarkable work in this field but have taken this opportunity to discover more about her. This is also the year of her centenary and it seemed fitting to focus on her part in the discovery of DNA at this time. The number 51 has a resonance for me, too, chiming with the year in which I was born. I find it fascinating to think of Rosalind Franklin's remarkable discoveries unfolding in my early years. The idea of the Double Helix plays a part in both the structure of Seán Street's poem and the texture of my a cappella work, *Photo 51*.

Cecilia McDowall, 2020

Photo 51

Seán Street (b. 1946)
Rosalind Franklin (1920–58)

CECILIA McDOWALL

Always flowing, spiralling ♩ = c.54

stagger breathing where necessary

SOPRANO 1

SOPRANO 2

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

p stagger breathing where necessary

mf sempre dolce

mf sempre dolce

I - mage of a song, of a song on en - dur - ing

I - mage of a song, of a song on en -

Always flowing, spiralling ♩ = c.54

mf sempre dolce

for rehearsal only

6

winds, en - dur-ing winds, Dou - ble He - lix,

- dur - ing winds, en - dur - ing winds, Dou-ble

p dolce

p dolce

p dolce

Duration: 4 mins

First performed on 27 February 2020 for International Women's Day by the BBC Singers, with conductor Grace Rossiter, at St Peter's Eaton Square, London.

Music © Oxford University Press 2020. Text © Seán Street 2020. Reproduced by kind permission of the author.

Printed in Great Britain

11 *mf*
 a spi-ral of two strands print - ing i -
mf
 a spi-ral of two strands print - ing i -
mf
 a spi-ral of two strands print - ing i -
 Dou - ble He - lix, Dou - ble He - lix, Dou - ble He - lix, Dou - ble He - lix, Dou - ble
 He - lix, Dou - ble He - lix, Dou - ble He - lix, Dou - ble He - lix, Dou - ble He - lix,

16 *f* *mf* *mf*
 -den - ti - ty on Time, twin - ing to - geth - er, twin - ing to - geth - er.
f *mf* *mf*
 -den - ti - ty on Time, twin - ing to - geth - er, twin - ing to -
f *mf* *mf*
 -den - ti - ty on Time, twin - ing to, twin - ing to - geth - er, twin - ing to - geth - er,
 He - lix, Dou - ble He - lix, Dou - ble He - lix, Dou - ble He - lix, Dou - ble He - lix, Dou - ble
 Dou - ble He - lix, Dou - ble He - lix, Dou - ble He - lix, Dou - ble He - lix, Dou - ble He -