

**PROLOGUE**

*'The city' – images of inner Leeds.*

**The choir sing** (very quietly): Just a crow. Corvus corone. Azzuro-negro.

*The other two soloists echo the words of the song under Erin's melody.*

Erin:                   A crow flew into my window, my city window.  
                          Just a crow and you shouldn't blame a crow  
                          but next day I came home and found my mum out cold.

I have a gorgeous daughter who's two years old.  
While I studied hard, my mum cared for her,  
played with her, gave all her precious time to her.

Then a crow flew into my window, my city window.  
Just a crow and you shouldn't blame a crow  
but my dancing mum has grown suddenly old.

Now my precious time has gone, my life's been sold  
to someone I don't know, who just can't cope –  
this stuck-at-home girl who's lost all hope.

A crow flew into my window, my city window.  
Now that crow's leading me out of my life.

Just a crow and you shouldn't blame a crow  
for helping me to fly beautifully out of my life.

*Erin runs off.*

## **Overture**

### **Wind band and string quartet**

*The seabirds dance, and – towards the end of the overture – the suggestion of  
a crow dances.*

## **ACT 1**

### **Scene 1**

*Midsummer's Day 2011, Bempton Cliffs.*

*The seabirds continue to dance. Ilona stands on the cliffs, dressed in her RSPB uniform, with a bird  
watching scope on a stand.*

Ilona: Two hundred thousand birds.

Bempton Cliffs. Seabird city.

This is our Serengeti.

This is our life on earth.

### **Gannet chorus**

Soloists: (*Loudly*)Sea sounding sea and gannets' shanty.

Ilona: Gannet crag gannet pile gannet plunge

Choir: (A) Arrah Arr Urrah (*A barking sound*)

(B) Gannet creech gannet pother gannet cry

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*Erin reappears, running towards the cliff. She is breathless. Her words are fragmented and cut through the chorus; sometimes the chorus suddenly stops, leaving her words surrounded by silence. Her first line is shouted out.*

Erin: Gonna reach those cliffs an' fly out of my life

fly so beautifully out of my life out of my life

*She runs into Ilona who instinctively grabs her.*

Erin: Take your hands off me!

Leave me alone.

Sorry I'm so sorry I didn't mean -

Ilona: Calm down. Look... down.

*Ilona turns Erin around. The seabirds fill the space. They rise and fall, with a great deal of noise*

Erin: Oh my God! Thousands!

Thousands and thousands!

Ilona Kitts kittiwakes calling their own name

*(Two parts, A & B, sung simultaneously)*

Soloists: (A) Kitt-ee-wake, kitt-ee-wake, kitt-ee-wake

Crackled/bicker/of shriek

(B) Missing despondent female missing despondent female

kitt-ee-wake, kitt-ee-wake, kitt-ee-wake

*They continue, under Erin's words.*

Erin: (*Panics*) It's like... Saturday!

Like Elland Road...the North Stand...the noisiest stand

the North Stand...the noisiest stand

My Dad used to take me...when I was little

my Dad used to take me...on Saturday

the North Stand... the noisiest stand

Choir: Kitt-ee-wake, kitt-ee-wake, kitt-ee-wake

*(Quietly)* Missing despondent female missing despondent female

Kitt-ee-wake, kitt-ee-wake, kitt-ee-wake

Erin: I need to go now.

Ilona: I'll walk with you.

Erin: No –

Ilona: *(Firmly)* I'll walk with you.

## Scene 2

*They walk along the cliffs (Walk music). Erin is pulling away from Ilona who carries the scope on its stand. Ilona puts the scope down, focuses it and beckons Erin to look. At first Erin refuses but curiosity gets the better of her.*

*Ilona sings a descant to the song above the melody.*

Farm birds            Legs of twig and eyes of seeds,  
& Ilona:                beaks of flint and wings of reeds.

Legs of twig and eyes of seeds,  
beaks of flint and wings of reeds.

Ilona: What can you see?

Erin: Nothing. Just...grass!

Ilona: Look. Listen.

Farm birds Hid among the grasses there  
& Ilona: our hidden voices haunt the air.

You may see us if you hush:  
skylark, warbler, thrush.

We're woodcocks in the tree tops  
who scatter if you sneeze.  
We're buntings on the fence posts  
who sound like jangling keys.

We're agile crested lapwings  
rising up with ease.

We're yellow feathered siskins  
wheezing in the breeze.

Hid among the grasses there  
our hidden voices haunt the air.  
You can see us if you hush:  
skylark, warbler, thrush.

Farm bird: Tseek-tseek-tseek-tississisk

Tseek-tseek-tseek-tississisk

*This call continues until the reed bunting flies up.*

Ilona: A reed bunting! On top of that teasel.

*Pause.*

It's got a black and white head.

It looks like it's been dipped in rust.

Erin: Amazing! Beautiful!

*Pause, as she watches it.*

Oh, it's gone. It's flown away.

It was hidden... alone.

Just like a tuft of grass.

Ilona: There's so much we don't see.

*Pause.*

What's your name?

Erin: (*Spoken*) I told you to leave me alone.



*Pause.*

*(Erin: very quietly)*

hidden... alone

Ilona: My name's Ilona. I work here.

*(Erin: very quietly)*

I help people show them the birds. just like a tuft of grass

*(Sung)* Two hundred thousand birds.

*Pause. Then she picks up the scope.*

Erin: *(Spoken)* My name is Erin.

Ilona: Erin. And you're from Leeds?

Erin: Leave me alone.

*Pause.*

Ilona: Look, let me give you my phone number.

*Erin searches her pockets.*

Erin: I must have dropped my phone...on the road.

I'll be alright... I'm not your problem.

*Erin walks away quickly along the cliff path and then freezes in mid-motion.*

Ilona: *(Sung)*      Look up there! Our peregrines.

Our deadly falcons.

The rippling slash of wings!

You'll see feathers on the path.

All that's left of pigeons.

Feathers on the path.

Our lithe and thrilling peregrines!

So large, and shining.

So large, and shining.

### **Peregrine dance**

*(Spoken)*      Follow them, Erin. Please follow them