

Landlocked and Off Shore

The Music and Travels of Celia Loughton Thaxter, poet of the Isles of Shoals

*"Rock, little boat, beneath the quiet sky;
Only the stars behold us where we lie
Only the stars and yonder brightening moon.*

*The waves are full of whispers wild and sweet
They call to me -- incessantly they beat
Along the boat from stern to carved prow.*

*Sweet sounds on rocky shores the distant rote;
Oh could we float forever, little boat,
Under the blissful sky drifting alone.*

--"Off Shore," *Celia Loughton Thaxter (1835-1894)*

"(Rote)means the sound of the sea on the rocks, it is a very sweet, suggestive word. I cannot possibly spare that. It is all right, you will find it in Worcester's Dictionary. I find many people are unfamiliar with it, but it is much used at sea. ...I hope to make you hear it sometime." (Celia Thaxter letter to James T. Field, editor, Atlantic Monthly, in Sandpiper, p. 62)

Abstract

Developed for the Portsmouth Maritime Folk Festival 2001, this program will present a concert of musical settings of Celia Thaxter's poems as the focus of a living history roleplay of the writer's travels from the Isles of Shoals to Newtonville, Florida, and Europe. A special focus will be the sound of the poems as spoken word, and the images and sounds of river and sea as artistic influences.

Concert Themes

- Victorian settings of Thaxter poems (Julius Eichberg, J.K. Paine, et al.)
- contemporary popular music honoring Celia Thaxter (waltzes, schottisches)
- 20th century arrangements of her works
- a survey of Celia's musical tastes and influences

Related Research

- performance style and technique of Victorian parlor songs for solo voice and piano
- biographical sketches of Thaxter composers
- map and timeline of Celia's travels
- retracing, by rail line and water, of her annual journey from Newtonville to Appledore, photographing and mapping landscapes still visible from her era and linking them to her writings

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