ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK RECORDING

A POET IN NEW YORK

MUSIC COMPOSED AND CONDUCTED BY DEBBIE WISEMAN
PERFORMED BY THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
TOM HOLLANDER READS DYLAN THOMAS

1. A Poet In New York (3:00)

2. Fabulous filthy city (1:49)

3. Willy Nilly, postman (1:08)

4. The boat house (1:29)

5. Now as I was young and easy (4:06) *

6. And you, my father (4:21)

7. Caitlin (3:33)

8. Air and playing (4:12)

9. To begin at the beginning (1:21)

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10. Anything you need (3:02)

11. Used to be so happy (3:02)

12. Can't swim, can't run (1:37)

13. Time let me hail and climb (1:15)

14. Had enough, Little Cough? (1:09)

15. Eighteen whiskies (3:14)

16. Fern Hill (1:51)

17. Do not go gentle (1:56) *

18. Dylan (2:01)

(*) Featuring Tom Hollander as Dylan Thomas

A note from the Director

This is my first and long awaited collaboration with the wonderfully talented Debbie Wiseman. After many attempts to try and work together over the years it seemed that the right project finally came along with A Poet in New York.

A Poet in New York is a challenging piece to find a musical voice for. Its heartbeat is complex. Its landscape is vast. Debbie found a rather special voice. Her score is lyrical. It is perfectly engaging emotionally and it echoes the character of Dylan Thomas and his poetry beautifully.

There are always challenges with films. My biggest challenges on Poet were how Tom Hollander and myself were going to create a Dylan that we believed in and fell in love with. I also had to create a believable 1953 New York in Cardiff in 2013.

Musically the challenge was equally great. How do you find the right theme to accompany Dylan Thomas' poetry, as there is an amount of it in the film. How do you echo the landscape that he wrote about? The Laugharne he loved or the Gower Peninsula that he wrote about so often. How do you comment on his life with Caitlin? or on his emotional state during his last and fatal trip to New York? These were the challenges that Debbie and I talked about when we first met.

Just before I started shooting the film we met again. Debbie wanted to play me some themes she had been thinking about. The one we both preferred had a celtic heartbeat to it. Then as it grew in size with the addition >>

THE HILLS AND FIELDS. THE SEA. THE VASTNESS OF THE WALES HE LOVED. THIS WAS WITHOUT DOUBT DYLAN'S THEME

MUCH OF CAITLIN IS SEEN IN FLASHBACK, DYLAN YEARNING TO RETURN TO A HAPPIER TIME AND PLACE

of strings it had something of the soul of a Welsh Choir. It echoed the landscape that Dylan wrote about in so many of his poems. The hills and fields. The sea. The vastness of the Wales he loved. This was without doubt Dylan's theme.

We needed a theme that gave us our New York. Its heartbeat needed to be very different to Dylan's. I was keen to use 1950's jazz in some scenes. I had been longing to use Chet Baker in a film for a long time. Andrew Davies had referenced Johnnie Ray in his screenplay. Debbie found the right rhythm to fit around and meld with our source music to give us our New York. It has a vibrancy to it at the start of the film that echoes the hope that Dylan had on his arrival. It also has a darker undertone that comes more to the fore as Dylan struggles to survive.

Finally we needed a theme for Caitlin. How do you comment on this fiery free spirited woman, who was the love of Dylan's life. Much of Caitlin is seen in flashback, Dylan yearning to return to a happier time and place. Debbie used one of my favourite instruments, an Irish whistle. It is an instrument that stands out on its own. You can hear its breath. I like it when played slightly off tune. When played with the right emotion it gives one such a sense of longing. It is soulful too. There is one moment towards the end of the film as Caitlin rows away from us that will hopefully give you the feeling we were trying to create.

Thank you Debbie for making this a wonderfully interesting journey.

– Aisling Walsh. *February 2014*

THE THEMES OF LOVE AND LOSS, OF DEGRADATION AND EXCITEMENT WERE CARRIED THROUGH THE FILM BY DEBBIE WISEMAN'S WONDERFUL MUSIC

A note from the Executive Producer

We started work on the Dylan project some three years before the centenary, by looking at the life and tangled relationships of the man and uncovering what were, for me, some extraordinary unknown aspects of his life and, in particular, the leaving of it. I don't know why, propaganda probably, but I had always assumed that his last masterpiece "Under Milk Wood" was composed and presented by and for the BBC in London. In fact it was largely an American project, part of his extraordinary success on the Bohemian scene in New York where he had enjoyed tremendous acclaim and an ardent following and where, ultimately, he died, in the middle of a fourth visit, ravaged by pneumonia exacerbated by escapist drinking and personal despair.

It was Andrew Davies who transformed this story into a witty, heart-breaking and elegiac narrative. The drama that he wrote explored the breakdown of Dylan's tempestuous relationship with Caitlin. It had the inevitability and relentless drive of tragedy. Aisling Walsh directed brilliantly. Ruth Caleb produced with consummate skill. Tom Hollander gave an astonishing portrayal of Dylan, which was bold and true without being an impersonation. And the themes of love and loss, of degradation and excitement were carried through the film by Debbie Wiseman's wonderful music. This is what you can hear on these recordings. A delicate response to the poetry, an evocation of the sheer lyrical force of Dylan's love of green Welsh landscape and a sense of the mounting driven, febrile excitement of urban New York in 1953. It is always a great pleasure to feel that the component parts of any venture come together to reinforce the strengths of a drama. Debbie Wiseman's music was the "green fuse" that drove this film. Listen to it and feel the pulse. It is great to have it and Tom's haunting readings combined and preserved like this. In the end it was the technical craftsmanship and dedication of people like Debbie who made this project so satisfying to work on.

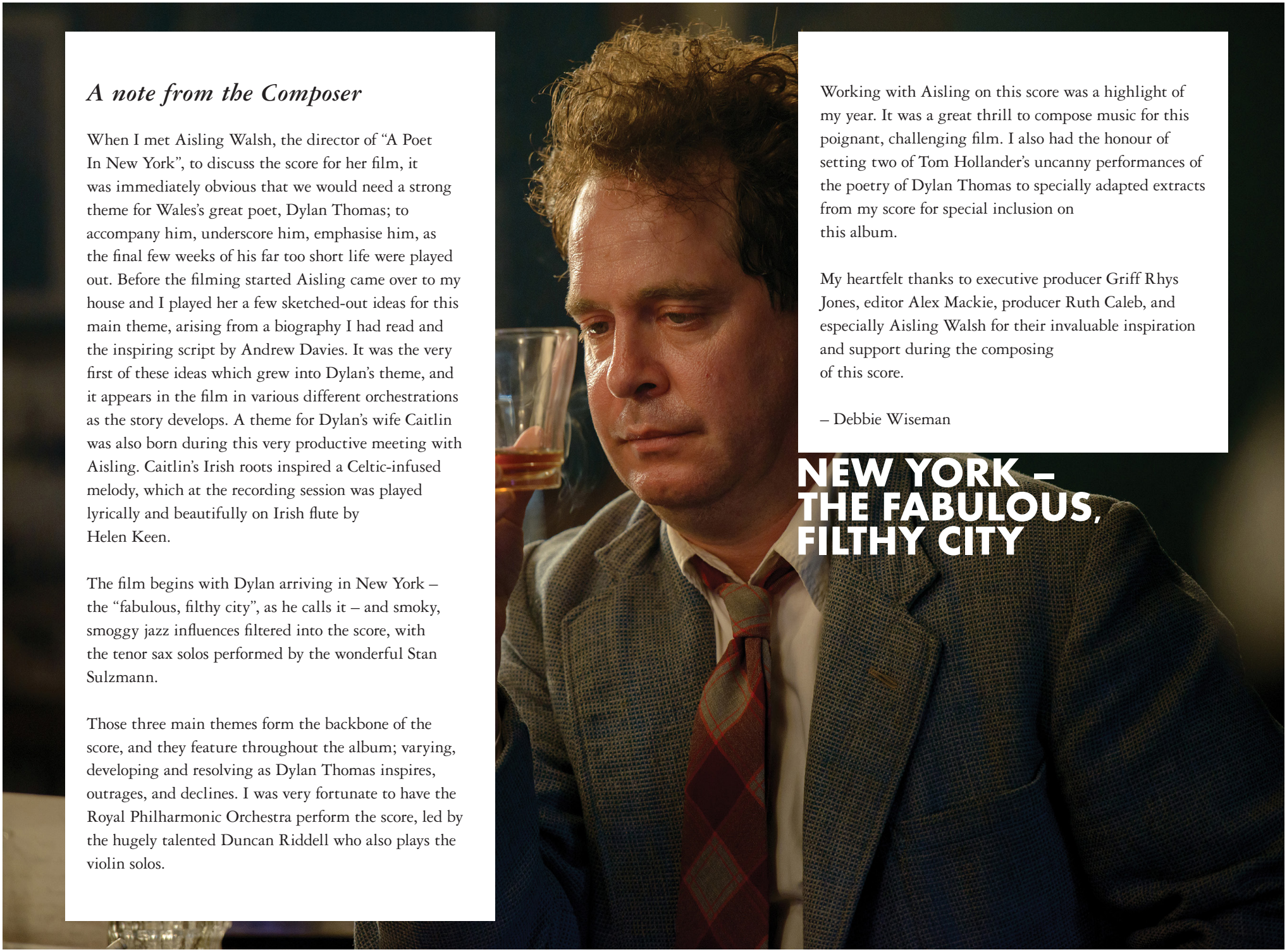
– Griff Rhys Jones

A note from the Composer

When I met Aisling Walsh, the director of "A Poet In New York", to discuss the score for her film, it was immediately obvious that we would need a strong theme for Wales's great poet, Dylan Thomas; to accompany him, underscore him, emphasise him, as the final few weeks of his far too short life were played out. Before the filming started Aisling came over to my house and I played her a few sketched-out ideas for this main theme, arising from a biography I had read and the inspiring script by Andrew Davies. It was the very first of these ideas which grew into Dylan's theme, and it appears in the film in various different orchestrations as the story develops. A theme for Dylan's wife Caitlin was also born during this very productive meeting with Aisling. Caitlin's Irish roots inspired a Celtic-infused melody, which at the recording session was played lyrically and beautifully on Irish flute by Helen Keen.

The film begins with Dylan arriving in New York – the "fabulous, filthy city", as he calls it – and smoky, smoggy jazz influences filtered into the score, with the tenor sax solos performed by the wonderful Stan Sulzmann.

Those three main themes form the backbone of the score, and they feature throughout the album; varying, developing and resolving as Dylan Thomas inspires, outrages, and declines. I was very fortunate to have the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra perform the score, led by the hugely talented Duncan Riddell who also plays the violin solos.



Working with Aisling on this score was a highlight of my year. It was a great thrill to compose music for this poignant, challenging film. I also had the honour of setting two of Tom Hollander's uncanny performances of the poetry of Dylan Thomas to specially adapted extracts from my score for special inclusion on this album.

My heartfelt thanks to executive producer Griff Rhys Jones, editor Alex Mackie, producer Ruth Caleb, and especially Aisling Walsh for their invaluable inspiration and support during the composing of this score.

– Debbie Wiseman

NEW YORK – THE FABULOUS, FILTHY CITY

A Poet In New York

Written by Andrew Davies
Directed by Aisling Walsh
Produced by Ruth Caleb
Executive Producers: Griff Rhys Jones, Faith Penhale & Bethan Jones

Starring:
Tom Hollander as... Dylan Thomas
Essie Davis as... Caitlin Thomas
Ewen Bremner as... John Malcolm Brinnin
Phoebe Fox as... Liz Reitell

Album Credits

Music composed & conducted by Debbie Wiseman
Music performed by The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Score orchestrated by Debbie Wiseman

Orchestra Leader and violin solos: Duncan Riddell
Irish Flute solos: Helen Keen
Guitar solos: Mitch Dalton
Tenor Sax solos: Stan Sulzmann
Piano solos: Debbie Wiseman

Music Recordist: Steve Price
Assistant Engineer: Jez Murphy
Music recorded and mixed at Angel Studios, London

Music Preparation: Tony Wharmby
Album mastered by Mike Brown at Original Sound

All titles published by Universal Music Publishing (BBC Worldwide)

Front cover photograph: Warren Orchard

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