

THE HOLLIES, FOR EXAMPLE

play some music
that you know well
but haven't heard in a while

listen as long as you like
then turn the volume
as soft as still clear

walk to another room
leaving the music to play
as long as it likes

**when the ear lights
on the half-said thing¹**

open the window wide
draw the curtains wide too

softly singing

¹ Don Paterson, "Radka Toneff," *40 Sonnets* (Faber & Faber, 2015).

THE HOLLIES, FOR EXAMPLE

a version for ensemble:

singing to
listening to
singing along

familiar to you,
mostly fragments

softly - not necessarily
quiet, more akin to *gentle*

as much about telling as singing

a space where we share these small things

about ourselves, since we're together for a little while yet

THE HOLLIES, FOR EXAMPLE

a third page:

I rode the bus yesterday, the first time I had been on public transport in a long while. For the last twenty minutes of my half-hour journey (New Cross to Walworth, mostly traffic), a woman sitting toward the back of the very quiet bus sang softly to someone over the phone. I don't know who was on the other end of the line, but I suppose it was someone dear. The song was faintly familiar in the way that lots of songs we've never heard before are. As far as I could tell there was no greeting or opening pleasantries, just a quiet singing. I got off the bus before she did, and she was still singing when I left. I don't know whether she would have said anything before hanging up, or whether she had paid much mind to the idea of finishing at all.

I am hesitant to turn this moment into a score – in fact, I have decided that I won't – but the more I think on it the more wonderful it seems. There is something of sharing through singing to both the pages above (the first is for yourself and the second is a game for others too), but this singing seems to contain both and infinitely more. I can think of few small things more meaningful to do. Maybe the next time I'm singing somewhere I'll call someone. Maybe the next time you're singing somewhere you'll call me. I don't think we need to plan it or write down a way of doing it. Maybe it'll go to voicemail anyway.

It makes me think of two other things: Annelise's ongoing piece where people anywhere in the world call the same number to leave a voicemail about the weather where they are (beautiful), and the way my friends and I used to call each other to share favourite songs when we were without each other at gigs by bands we loved. I like the way music sounds over the phone, too, but I don't think that's particularly important.