

Poems v songs

By Jim Saville

Most good poems are written with care
The writer selects and polishes every word.
So, despite a hundred different readers
Their meaning is clearly heard.

The sense is not just in the metre
Or the rhythm or the rhyme.
The message is in the phrasing
It stands out clearly every time.

The phrasing is not always static.
It can vary from verse to verse.
A poem comes alive with those changes
Standardisation usually makes things worse.

Each individual reader
Will read in their own special way
But allowing the words that are written
To tell what the poet wanted to say.

But sometimes the reader hears music
And can fit a tune round the ode
So that every subsequent hearer
Has to follow the self-same code.

The notes are carefully crafted
So the words fit firmly in place.
But if the tune not the words become master
That's a potential shame and disgrace.

Words and music can live together
Please don't get me wrong.
But sometimes we need to remember
The difference between poem and song.

There were 2 prompts that produced this poem.

One was a review of my performance at the Cutty Wren Folk Club which said I had turned some well known songs into poems. (they were poems to begin with) I had (hopefully) entertained folk with some of my own work and two of Cicely Fox Smiths poems. LEE FORE BRACE and TRAVELLER.

The second was a regular comment heard many times at Lancaster Maritime Festival, Easter 2004 when a singer would say "The words cried out for a tune so I wrote one"

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