

Joseph Holbrooke (1878 – 1958), a late-Romantic British composer born in Croydon, Surrey in 1878, nearly always took pictorial elements rather than abstract form as the inspiration for his music, as shown in this *Nocturne*, (1911), which conjures up a fairytale of imagination. The music is a depiction of the poem '*Fairy-Land*' by Edgar Allan Poe, (see below), and uses a freely developing musical form as developed by Liszt, with also strong influences of Wagner, and perhaps most apparent, an impressionistic 'Debussy-esque' quality shining through.

Holbrooke wrote well over 200 compositions for all combinations from large orchestra to solo instrument and everything in-between. However due perhaps to his life encompassing both world wars and his notoriously constant revisions and changes to his works and even his own name, Holbrooke's music and indeed his prominence as a composer is still emerging today. Just as Beethoven had done 200 years earlier Holbrooke lost his hearing and went deaf fairly early on his career. This led to him increase his tendency towards isolation, and to become increasingly irritable and difficult to deal with. In contrast to this and the effect these characteristics had on his legacy, Holbrooke was a pioneer of musical promotion and through an impressive series of chamber concerts that he directed for many years from 1902, promoted a wide range of both his own music and that of other British composers.

#### Fairy-Land

Dim vales— and shadowy floods—  
And cloudy-looking woods,  
Whose forms we can't discover  
For the tears that drip all over:  
Huge moons there wax and wane—  
Again— again— again—  
Every moment of the night—  
Forever changing places—  
And they put out the star-light  
With the breath from their pale faces.  
About twelve by the moon-dial,  
One more filmy than the rest  
(A kind which, upon trial,  
They have found to be the best)  
Comes down— still down— and down  
With its centre on the crown  
Of a mountain's eminence,  
While its wide circumference  
In easy drapery falls  
Over hamlets, over halls,  
Wherever they may be—  
O'er the strange woods— o'er the sea—  
Over spirits on the wing—

Over every drowsy thing—  
And buries them up quite  
In a labyrinth of light—  
And then, how, deep! —O, deep,  
Is the passion of their sleep.  
In the morning they arise,  
And their moony covering  
Is soaring in the skies,  
With the tempests as they toss,  
Like—almost any thing—  
Or a yellow Albatross.  
They use that moon no more  
For the same end as before,  
Videlicet, a tent—  
Which I think extravagant:  
Its atomies, however,  
Into a shower dissever,  
Of which those butterflies  
Of Earth, who seek the skies,  
And so come down again  
(Never-contented things!)  
Have brought a specimen  
Upon their quivering wings.

EDGAR ALLAN POE