



Richard Skelton has spent the last two years living on the rural northern edge of the Scotland-England border, a boundary demarcated by various watercourses - among them the Kershope Burn, the Liddel Water and the River Esk. This hinterland topography has informed a series of musical recordings which, in their brevity, stand in stark contrast to the longform compositions for which he is more usually known. Nevertheless, there is a sense that these twelve miniatures are fragments of a larger whole, such is their unity in tone and timbre.

In some ways, *Border Ballads* can be seen as a revisiting of certain compositional processes first encountered on *Marking Time*, over a decade ago. The sparse, overlapping bowed notes, for example, or the solitary, bell-like piano. But there is something different at work here. Whereas

*Marking Time*

felt aeolian, shifting, fleeting, this new work, with its persistent cello undertow and its low, tremulous viola, feels telluric, grounded, earthen. Perhaps

*Border Ballads*

can be seen as the embodiment of a desire for certainty after a prolonged period of upheaval, but that ever-close riverine border, at once both fixed and fluid, is a disturbing presence. A darkness that cannot be ignored.

More information can be found [here](#).