

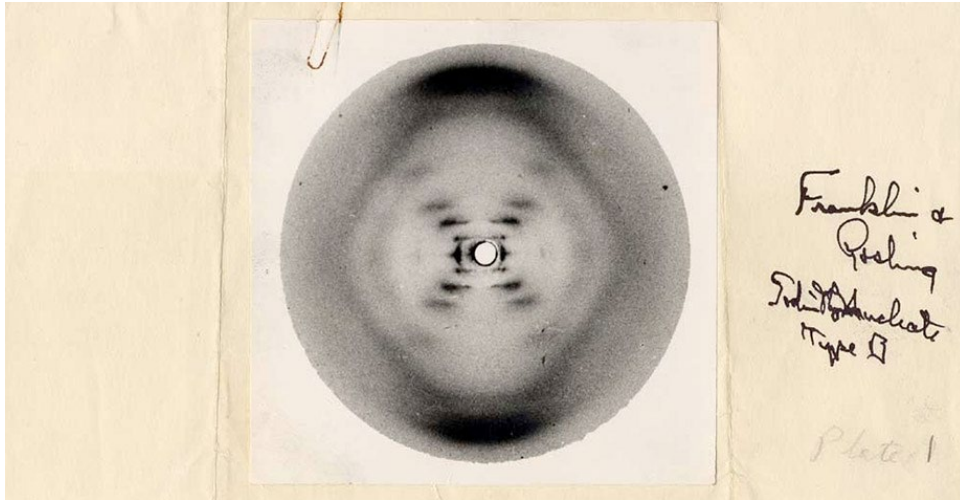


**Photo 51**

I

Image of a song on enduring winds,  
Double Helix—a spiral of two strands  
printing identity on Time, twining together.  
Crystal gazing... And she said:  
*Science and life cannot and should not be separated.*  
*Science gives a partial explanation of life*  
*in so far as it goes... Science and life,*  
a spiral of two strands twining together.

II

Image of a song on enduring winds,  
crystal gazing, a key turned, a door to be opened.  
And she said: *Fact, experience, and experiment*  
*in so far as it goes... Science and life...*  
two strands twining together.  
*Science gives a partial explanation of life*  
*in so far as it goes. Science and life*  
as far as they go, as far as they both shall go.

Seán Street (b. 1946)

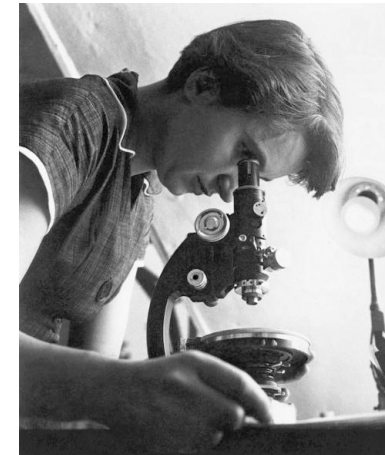
### **Composer's note**

*Photo 51* is based on the iconic image taken by Rosalind Franklin (1920–1958) whose work was central to the understanding of DNA.

I commissioned the poet and author Seán Street to create a text based on the image taken by Rosalind Franklin, the chemist and crystallographer whose work was central to understanding the molecular structures of DNA, revealing its double helix structure in the very early fifties. Her work was overlooked when, four years after her death, three men—Wilkins, Crick and Watson—were awarded the Nobel Prize for the discovery of DNA. I knew a little of Rosalind Franklin and her remarkable work in this field but have taken this opportunity to discover more about her.

2020 was also the year of Franklin's centenary and it seemed fitting to focus on her part in the discovery of DNA at this time. The number 51 has a resonance for me, too, chiming with the year in which I was born. I find it fascinating to think of Rosalind Franklin's remarkable discoveries unfolding in my early years. The idea of the double helix plays a part in both the structure of Seán's poem and the texture of my *a cappella* (unaccompanied) work. *Photo 51* was commissioned by BBC Radio 3 and first performed on 27 February 2020 for International Women's Day by the BBC Singers.

Cecilia McDowall, 2020



*Franklin with a microscope in 1955*

**PRESENTED BY SINGERS FROM THE CHORAL ENSEMBLE VOX CAPE TOWN**

**Lia Hall, Anna Telford (sopranos)**

**Sammy Ash (alto)**

**Dirk Binneman (tenor)**

**John Woodland (bass)**

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