

WIGMORE HALL



Saturday 10 June 2023
7.30pm

Borletti-Buitoni Trust 20th Anniversary Weekend

Mitsuko Uchida piano
Geneva Lewis violin
Christian Poltéra cello
James Newby baritone
Apollon Musagète Quartet
Paweł Zalejski violin
Bartosz Zachłód violin
Piotr Szumieł viola
Piotr Skweres cello

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Notturmo in E flat D897 (?1828)

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

Rückert Lieder (1901-2)

*Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder • Ich atmet' einen linden
Duft • Um Mitternacht • Liebst du um Schönheit • Ich
bin der Welt abhanden gekommen*

Interval

Franz Schubert

String Quartet in D minor D810 'Death and the Maiden' (1824)

*I. Allegro • II. Andante con moto •
III. Scherzo. Allegro molto • IV. Presto*



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From either end of the 19th Century, Schubert and Mahler share a common ground in Vienna: the former, a son of the city who enjoyed getting out into the countryside; the latter, Bohemian-born, but yearning for urban acclamation which, for ten years in directing the Vienna State Opera, he got. As a conductor, Mahler not only returned to Schubert but 'improved' his works, by expanding tonight's quartet for orchestral strings and 're-orchestrating' the 'Great' Ninth Symphony. And if in no way as prolific as Schubert in the genre, Mahler's other interest in composition, away from his gargantuan symphonies, was Lieder.

Compared to **Schubert's** 22 works for string quartet there are only four for piano trio: the early truncated 'sonata' (D28, 1812) and the three great works from 1827: the two piano trios and the *Notturmo*, which might have been the original slow movement of his Piano Trio in B flat D898.

Over rippling piano chords, the violin and cello introduce the languorous main theme in unison, later abruptly swapping to *pizzicato* when the piano takes the theme, swapping again before the run into the more strident second theme in E major (enharmonically standing in for F flat), with dotted string figures underpinned by piano triplet semiquaver arpeggios. The opening returns back in E flat, then the second theme in C major, before a final look back to the start, now with piano trills.

On 24 February 1901 **Mahler**, after conducting Bruckner's Fifth Symphony and Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* in one day, suffered substantial intestinal haemorrhaging which required major surgery. Recuperating that summer, he composed his last *Wunderhorn* song before turning to the poetry of Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866). He wrote to Anton Webern in 1905, 'after *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, Rückert was the only poet to set – this is poetry at first hand, whereas all other poetry is written at one remove.'

That 1901 summer, in his composition hut at Maiernigg on the Wörthersee in Carinthia, Mahler set three of Rückert's *Kindertotenlieder* ('Songs on the Death of Children') as well as four other, unconnected poems by the poet, including 'Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen' ('I am lost to the world') and 'Um Mitternacht' ('At midnight'). Sombre subjects indeed, as were sketches for the anguished, funereal first two movements of his Fifth Symphony. But his earlier brush with death seemed also to concentrate his mind about his own life. That November he met Alma Schindler. Soon engaged, Alma became pregnant, and in March 1902 they married. That summer Mahler set a final Rückert song: 'Liebst du um Schönheit' ('If you love for beauty'), his only love song, as a present for Alma. He hid it in her copy of *Siegfried* and waited for it to fall out when she opened it.

Originally the five Rückert settings were published with 'Revelge' and 'Der Tambours' sell' from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* as *7 Lieder aus letzter Zeit*. Mahler rarely performed the songs in the same order.

'Do not look into my songs!' ('Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder') obviously had a very personal resonance for Mahler. He was always very cagey about being watched

when composing, telling Natalie Bauer-Lechner that 'to me, it is as if a mother would undress herself and expose to the world the child in the womb before it is born'. Here the busy bees seem to be in action even in the first verse. In 'Ich atmet' einen Linden duft' ('I breathed a gentle fragrance') Mahler revels in the untranslatable play on words Rückert evokes in using 'Lind' (gentle/sweet) and 'Linde' (lime). 'Um Mitternacht' describes fearful thoughts at the dead of night. Only in the final verse is a ray of hope, in the major peroration that encloses the acceptance of the Lord's power to keep us safe in the darkest hour. 'If you love for beauty', marked 'heartfelt', rises and falls in ardent and rapt waves. Finally, 'Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen' is the first time Mahler voices a withdrawal from the world, foreshadowing a major feature of his later works. Given the events of 1901, one can easily see the resonance it must have struck in Mahler.

In 1824 Schubert had planned a trio of quartets, but the third quartet in G D887 was delayed by two years, so they were not published together. Indeed, there is no record of the D minor Quartet having had a public performance during Schubert's lifetime. It bears its nickname 'Death and the Maiden' from the *Andante's* adoption of his song setting Matthias Claudius's *Der Tod und das Mädchen* from 1817. The song's first stanza is the girl's impassioned plea for death to stay away from her, while the second stanza is death's reply, chilling in its calm consolation.

Yet the most arresting music is in the first movement, with its forcefully reiterated opening rhythmic motif. That dotted minim and descending triplet for the inner voices (second violin and viola) is one of music's greatest calling cards, and all the more powerful with the slow, quiet chords that follow. The triplet motif develops into rocking semiquavers which accompanies the second theme, with its rising dotted figure. Schubert develops both themes simultaneously, leading to a bustling *coda* which melts in both pace and volume, ending as quietly as the movement had started dramatically.

Intriguingly, although adopting the original song's key of D minor for the whole quartet, the *Andante con moto* that uses the theme is in G minor. The opening's rhythmic unison is as quiet as the end of the first movement. The theme's two parts are repeated, before five variations eventually slow and return to the gentle, unison rhythm of the original song. The *Scherzo* has almost as dramatic an impact in its dotted strutting as the quartet's very opening; it is barely a third of the length of the *Andante*, even with the central *pianissimo* D major trio in which the first violin again soars high.

The final *Presto's* opening *saltarello* (in 6/8 time) has an incessant short-long-short-long rhythm, eventually interrupted by the unison chords of the second theme (aping the opening movement's long-held note and following triplet), but Schubert's marking *con forza* means there is no let-up in the power of the music. Schubert tops all of this with a *prestissimo* *coda*, where the *saltarello*, which you might think could go no faster, speeds frenetically to the final chord.

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Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Notturmo in E flat D897 (?1828)

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

Rückert Lieder (1901-2)

Friedrich Rückert

Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder

Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder!
Meine Augen schlag' ich nieder,
Wie ertappt auf böser Tat;
Selber darf ich nicht getrauen,
Ihrem Wachsen zuzuschauen:
Deine Neugier ist Verrat!

Bienen, wenn sie Zellen
bauen,
Lassen auch nicht zu sich
schauen,
Schauen selbst auch nicht
zu.
Wenn die reichen
Honigwaben
Sie zu Tag befördert
haben,
Dann vor allen nasche du!

Do not look into my songs!

Do not look into my songs!
I lower my gaze,
as if caught in the act;
I cannot even dare
to watch them growing:
your curiosity is treason!

Bees, when they build
cells,
let no one watch
either,
and do not even watch
themselves.
When the rich
honeycombs
have been brought to
daylight,
you shall be the first to taste!

Ich atmet' einen linden Duft

Ich atmet' einen linden
Duft.
Im Zimmer stand
Ein Zweig der Linde,
Ein Angebinde
Von lieber Hand;
Wie lieblich war der
Lindenduft!

Wie lieblich ist der
Lindenduft!
Das Lindenreis
Brachst du gelinde;
Ich atme leis
Im Duft der Linde
Der Liebe linden Duft.

I breathed a gentle fragrance

I breathed a gentle
fragrance.
In the room stood
a spray of lime,
a gift
from a dear hand;
how lovely the fragrance
of lime was!

How lovely the fragrance
of lime is!
The spray of lime
was gently plucked by you;
softly I breathe
in the fragrance of lime
the gentle fragrance of love.

Um Mitternacht

Um Mitternacht hab' ich
gewacht
Und aufgeblickt zum Himmel;
Kein Stern vom Sternegewimmel

At midnight

At midnight I kept
watch
and looked up to heaven;
not a star in the galaxy

Hat mir gelacht um
Mitternacht.

smiled on me at midnight.

Um Mitternacht hab' ich
gedacht
Hinaus in dunkle
Schranken
Es hat kein Lichtgedanken
Mir Trost gebracht um
Mitternacht.

At midnight my thoughts
went out
to the dark reaches of
space;
no shining thought
brought me comfort at
midnight.

Um Mitternacht nahm ich in
acht
Die Schläge meines Herzens
Ein einz'ger Puls des
Schmerzens
War angefacht um
Mitternacht.

At midnight I paid
heed
to the beating of my heart;
a single pulse of
pain
was set alight at
midnight.

Um Mitternacht kämpft' ich
die Schlacht,
O Menschheit, deiner Leiden;
Nicht konnt' ich sie entscheiden
Mit meiner Macht um
Mitternacht.

At midnight I fought the
fight,
O Mankind, of your
afflictions;
I could not gain victory
by my own strength at
midnight.

Um Mitternacht hab' ich die
Macht
In deine Hand gegeben:
Herr über Tod und Leben,
Du hältst die Wacht um
Mitternacht.

At midnight I gave my
strength
into Thy hands:
Lord over life and death,
thou keepest watch at
midnight.

Liebst du um Schönheit

Liebst du um Schönheit,
O nicht mich liebe!
Liebe die Sonne,
Sie trägt ein goldnes Haar.

Liebst du um Jugend,
O nicht mich liebe!
Liebe den Frühling,
Der jung ist jedes Jahr.

Liebst du um Schätze,
O nicht mich liebe!
Liebe die Meerfrau,
Sie hat viel Perlen
klar.

Liebst du um Liebe,
O ja mich liebe!
Liebe mich immer,
Dich lieb' ich immerdar.

If you love for beauty

If you love for beauty,
O love not me!
Love the sun,
she has golden hair.

If you love for youth,
O love not me!
Love the spring
which is young each year.

If you love for riches,
O love not me!
Love the mermaid
who has many shining
pearls.

If you love for love,
ah yes, love me!
Love me always,
I shall love you ever more.

Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have ended.

Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen

I am lost to the world

Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen, Mit der ich sonst viele Zeit verdorben. Sie hat so lange nichts von mir vernommen, Sie mag wohl glauben, ich sei gestorben.	I am lost to the world with which I used to waste much time; it has for so long heard nothing of me, it may well believe that I am dead.
Es ist mir auch gar nichts daran gelegen, Ob sie mich für gestorben hält. Ich kann auch gar nichts sagen dagegen, Denn wirklich bin ich gestorben der Welt.	Nor am I at all concerned if it should think me dead. Nor can I deny it, for truly I am dead to the world.
Ich bin gestorben dem Weltgetümmel, Und ruh' in einem stillen Gebiet. Ich leb' allein in meinem Himmel, In meinem Lieben, in meinem Lied.	I am dead to the world's tumult and rest in a quiet realm. I live alone in my heaven, in my loving, in my song.

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