

WIGMORE HALL 125

Friday 10 October 2025
7.30pm

Jakub Józef Orliński countertenor
Aleksander Dębicz piano

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)	Widerstehe doch der Sünde from <i>Widerstehe doch der Sünde</i> BWV54 (?1714)
Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)	Eja mater, fons amoris from <i>Stabat mater</i> in F minor RV621 (?1712) arranged by Aleksander Dębicz
Henry Purcell (1659-1695)	Strike the viol, touch the lute from <i>Come, ye sons of art, away</i> Z323 (1694) arranged by Aleksander Dębicz
Nicola Fago (1677-1745)	Alla gente a Dio diletta from <i>Il Faraone sommerso</i> (1709) arranged by Aleksander Dębicz
Aleksander Dębicz (b.1988)	Quarantine Song (2020)
Henry Purcell	Fairest Isle from <i>King Arthur</i> Z628 (1691) arranged by Aleksander Dębicz

Interval

Johann Sebastian Bach	Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust from <i>Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust</i> BWV170 (1726)
George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)	Empio, dirò, tu sei from <i>Giulio Cesare in Egitto</i> HWV17 (1724, rev. 1725-30)
Joaquín Rodrigo (1901-1999)	Adela (1951) arranged by Aleksander Dębicz
Aleksander Dębicz	Dream 9 (2025)
	Thoughts (2025)
Stanisław Moniuszko (1819-1872)	Prząśniczka (pub. 1851) arranged by Aleksander Dębicz



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The high male falsettist has been part of both solo and choral music traditions since the Middle Ages, and the voice was particularly prized for its dramatic and expressive qualities during the Baroque era, in cantatas and operas. In the 20th Century, since its revival by Alfred Deller (1912-79) and others, the countertenor has also been heard in Romantic and modern repertoire, sometimes borrowed from other voices, and has also been used extensively in contemporary music, such as the role of Oberon in Britten's opera *A Midsummer Night's Dream* of 1960, created for Deller. Tonight's programme of arias and songs – which has links to the performers' recent crossover album *#LetsBaRock* – explores music from the 17th to the 21st centuries, in a wide variety of moods and styles.

Bach spent his career as a church musician, where his primary compositional duty in several posts was to create numerous cantatas for the cycle of Lutheran feast days and Sundays. From time to time, his full choir would be under-strength due to illness, or else he found himself with an outstanding vocal soloist, so he also composed solo cantatas for voice and instrumental ensemble; some of the finest of these are for alto. His cantata either for Lent or after Trinity, *Widerstehe doch der Sünde* ('Stand steadfast against sin'), BWV54, was composed to a text by Georg Christian Lehms soon after Bach's arrival in Weimar, and likely first performed in March 1715. Two arias are separated by a recitative, and the scoring of solo alto accompanied by five-part strings allows Bach to provide rich, dissonant harmony for the opening *da capo* movement, where the shapely vocal line is surrounded by intense, trudging chords. The cantata *Vergnügte Ruh*, *beliebte Seelenlust* ('Contented rest, beloved inner joy'), BWV170 (after the Interval), is for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity, also sets a Lehms text, and was first performed in Leipzig in July 1726, although it was not heard again there for some 20 years. This time there are five movements, alternating aria and recitative, and the scoring adds an oboe d'amore, as well as an obligato organ part in the later arias. In keeping with the very different and joyful text, the opening movement is of a smoothly-flowing pastoral kind, varied with some minor-key colouring.

Vivaldi's 'Eja mater, fons amoris' (Loving mother, fount of love) is from the last section of his *Stabat mater* RV621, a substantial solo cantata for alto and strings that sets the well-known lament of the Virgin Mary at the foot of the cross; the spare harmony and

'dark' key make this a work of almost operatic expressive power.

Purcell was very fortunate to be able to draw on the excellent countertenor voices of the choir of the Chapel Royal, where he worked – they feature prominently in his operas, odes and anthems. The lyrical aria 'Strike the viol, touch the lute', from his 1694 ode for the birthday of Queen Mary, *Come, ye sons of art, away*, was scored for countertenor, two recorders and continuo (the viol and lute of the title are assumed to be part of the latter, although the composer does not specify them as such), with a ritornello for strings. The lilting aria 'Fairest Isle' is from the 'semi-opera' (a staged work incorporating spoken text) *King Arthur* (1691), with a text by Poet Laureate John Dryden. It is heard during Act 5, where the goddess Venus praises Britain as of 'all isles excelling, seat of pleasure and of love'.

Francesco Nicola Fago's 'Alla gente a Dio diletta' (Break the bonds of servitude) is a pastoral F-major aria for unison strings, voice and continuo from the oratorio *Il Faraone sommerso* (1709). Fago worked in Naples as a director of music and a composer of operas and oratorios, and was a leading teacher of the next generation of Italian composers. 'Empio, dirò, tu sei' comes from *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*, one of **Handel's** finest operas, which tells the story of Caesar and Cleopatra. 'Empio, dirò' (I say that you are a villain) is addressed by the appalled Julius Caesar to the Egyptian general Achilla, who has brought him the head of Caesar's defeated rival Pompey.

Moving from the Baroque, a group of works from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries takes in some new territory. The lamenting song 'Adela' by **Joaquín Rodrigo** is the ninth of the composer's set of *Doce canciones españolas* from 1951. Both **Aleksander Dębicz's** *Quarantine Song* and *Thoughts* were composed for Jakub Józef Orliński (the latter using Jakub's own words), during the COVID-19 quarantine in 2020 and in 2025 respectively. *Dream 9* is part of Dębicz's upcoming solo project, centred around the poetics of dreams. It is a kind of fantasy on the theme of dreaming. The programme concludes with another Polish work, the well-known song *Prząśniczka* ('The distaff') by the opera composer **Stanisław Moniuszko**, which refers to the spinning of yarn – and this is vividly illustrated by the continuous semiquavers in the right hand of the piano.

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Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Widerstehe doch der Sünde from *Widerstehe doch der Sünde*
BWV54 (?1714)
Georg Christian Lehms

Widerstehe doch der Sünde, Sonst ergreifet dich ihr Gift. Lass dich nicht den Satan blenden; Denn die Gottes Ehre schänden, Trifft ein Fluch, der tödlich ist.	Stand firm against all sinning Or its poison will possess you. Be not blinded by Satan; For those who violate God's majesty Shall be felled by a deadly curse.
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Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

Eja mater, fons amoris from *Stabat mater* in F minor RV621 (?1712)
Liturgical text
arranged by Aleksander Dębicz

Eja, Mater, fons amoris Me sentire vim doloris Fac, ut tecum lugeam.	O thou Mother! fount of love! Touch my spirit from above, make my heart with thine accord.
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Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Strike the viol, touch the lute from *Come, ye sons of art, away* Z323 (1694)
Nahum Tate
arranged by Aleksander Dębicz

Strike the viol, touch the lute,
Wake the harp, inspire the flute.
Sing your patroness's praise,
In cheerful and harmonious lays.

Nicola Fago (1677-1745)

Alla gente a Dio diletta from <i>Il Faraone sommerso</i> (1709) <i>Anonymous</i> arranged by Aleksander Dębicz	Set God's chosen people free from <i>The submerged pharaoh</i>
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Aronne Alla gente a Dio diletta Sciogli i lacci di servitù. Che si tarda e che s'aspetta Se prescritto ha il Ciel lassù?	Aaron Set God's chosen people free from the bonds of slavery. Why delay, why hesitate, since such is the will of heaven above?
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Aleksander Dębicz (b.1988)

Quarantine Song (2020)

Henry Purcell

Fairest Isle from *King Arthur* Z628 (1691)
John Dryden
arranged by Aleksander Dębicz

Fairest isle, all isles excelling,
Seat of pleasure and of love.
Venus here will choose her dwelling,
And forsake her Cyprian grove.
Cupid from his fav'rite nation
Care and envy will remove;
Jealousy, that poisons passion,
And despair, that dies for love.

Gentle murmurs, sweet complaining,
Sighs that blow the fire of love,
Soft repulses, kind disdainings,
Shall be all the pains you prove.
Ev'ry swain shall pay his duty,
Grateful ev'ry nymph shall prove;
And as these excel in beauty,
Those shall be renown'd for love.

Interval

Johann Sebastian Bach

Vergnügte Ruh,
beliebte Seelenlust
from *Vergnügte Ruh*,
beliebte Seelenlust
BWV170 (1726)
Georg Christian Lehms

Contented rest,
beloved inner joy

Aria
Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte
Seelenlust,
Dich kann man nicht bei
Höllensünden,
Wohl aber Himmelseintracht
finden;
Du stärkst allein die
schwache Brust.
Drum sollen lauter
Tugendgaben
In meinem Herzen Wohnung
haben.

Aria
Contented rest, beloved
inner joy,
You cannot be found
amid hell's sins,
But rather in the harmony
of heaven;
You alone strengthen the
weak breast.
Thus shall naught but
virtue's gifts
Dwell in my
heart.

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Empio, dirò, tu sei from
Giulio Cesare in Egitto
HWV17 (1724, rev. 1725-30)
Nicola Francesco Haym,
after *Giacomo Francesco*
Bussani

There I'll reproach
from *Julius Caesar in*
Egypt

Empio, dirò, tu sei,
Togliti agli occhi miei,
Sei tutto crudeltà.
Non è di re quell
cor
Che donasi al rigor,
Che in sen non ha
pietà.

There I'll reproach
the barbarous Act,
And bid him fly my Sight:
The Prince, whose Soul is
void
Of Pity and Compassion,
Deserves not to hold the
Reins of Empire.

Joaquín Rodrigo (1901-1999)

Adela (1951)
Traditional
arranged by Aleksander
Dębicz

Adela

Una muchacha guapa,
Llamada Adela, llamada
Adela,
Los amores de Juan
La lleva enferma, y ella sabía,
Que su amiga Dolores lo
entretenía.
El tiempo iba pasando,

A pretty girl
called Adela, called
Adela,
fell ill for love
of Juan, though she knew
her friend Dolores had
caught his eye.
As time went on,

Y la pobre Adela, y la pobre
Adela,
Más blanca se ponía
Y más enferma; y ella sabía
Que de sus amores se
moriría.

poor Adela, poor
Adela
grew ever paler,
ever weaker; and she knew
her love would be the
death of her.

Aleksander Dębicz (b.1988)

Dream 9 (2025)

Thoughts (2025)
Jakub Józef Orliński

...my soul, far away.
So many miles, today
I see that even though I'm close,
I cannot any more strike that pose.
Maintain the grip
Strongly holding – I won't dig
Deeper, for there is nothing within.
Just the emptiness,
A void full of clearness.

Feeling left behind,
So blind.
Full of everything – and nothing.
Confusion that throws you off a cliff,
Asking constant questions: 'What if?'

Thoughts –
A mindful storm,
Tornado, and me like a warm.

Looking for sense in meaningless actions,
Hoping for at least a fraction
Of truth in it all.

What is the ultimate goal?
Eternal routine is killing beings.
Craziness of feelings.
So little time, and so much doubt
To figure it out.

I'm lost.
I am found.
And All over again –
I am lost,
And I'm found...

Stanisław Moniuszko (1819-1872)

Prząśniczka (pub. 1851)

Jan Czeczot

arranged by Aleksander

Dębicz

The loom

U prząśniczki siedzą, jak
anioł dziewczeczki,
Przędą sobie, przędą
jedwabne niteczki.

By the loom, like angels, sit
the sweet young girls,
spinning and spinning their
slender silken threads.

Kręć się, kręć, wrzeciono,
Wić się tobie wić!
Ta pamięta
lepiej,
Czyja dłuższa nić!

Spin, spin the spindle!
Twist, twist your thread!
The one whose thread is
longer
will remember better!

Poszedł do Królewca
młodzieniec z wiciną,
Łzami się zalewał, żegnając
z dziewczyną.

A young man with a withy
went to Königsberg,
he was awash in tears as he
bade his girl farewell.

Kręć się, kręć, wrzeciono...

Spin, spin the spindle! ...

Gładko idzie przędza,
wesoło dziewczynie,
Pamiętała trzy dni
o wiernym
chłopczynie.

Your yarn is going
smoothly, happy girl!
For three whole days she
remembered her
faithful boy.

Kręć się, kręć, wrzeciono...

Spin, spin the spindle! ...

Inny się młodzieniec
podsuwa z ubocza,
I innemu rada dziewczyna
ochocza.

In comes another young
boy from somewhere else
and the blissful girl is
ready for another.

Kręć się, kręć, wrzeciono,
Pryśła wątła
nić;
Wstydem dziewczę
płonie,
Wstydz się, dziewczę, wstydz!

Spin, spin the spindle!
The slender thread has
snapped;
the girl is burning with
shame,
for shame, girl, for shame!