

WIGMORE HALL



Sunday 11 June 2023
7.30pm

Borletti-Buitoni Trust 20th Anniversary Weekend

Mitsuko Uchida piano

Quatuor Ebène

Pierre Colombet violin

Gabriel Le Magadure violin

Marie Chilemme viola

Aleksey Shadrin cello

Sean Shibe guitar

Emma Nikolovska mezzo-soprano

Itamar Zorman violin

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Fantasia a4 No. 6 in F Z737 (1680)

John Dowland (1563-1626)

Fantasia No. 1 P1

Come, heavy sleep (pub. 1597)

Think'st thou then by thy feigning (pub. 1597)

Can she excuse my wrongs (pub. 1597)

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

From *Songs from the Chinese* Op. 58 (1957)

The Old Lute • The Autumn Wind

Thomas Adès (b.1971)

From *The Exterminating Angel* (2015-6)

It's very late now • Over the sea

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Rondo in B minor D895 (1826)

Interval

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

String Quartet in F (1902-3)

I. Allegro moderato, très doux •

II. Assez vif, très rythmé • III. Très lent •

IV. Vif et agité



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In the fifth edition (1696) of Edward Philipps's *New World of Words*, which he helped revise, **Purcell** defined *Fantasia* as 'a Piece of Composition full of Harmony, but which cannot be reduc'd under any of the regular kinds.' Some 230 years later, Peter Warlock, who edited Purcell's *Fantasias for Strings*, wrote: 'It is in these early *Fantasias*, modelled on the Old English tradition... that Purcell shows his greatest originality and finest musicianship.' Of his 15 *Fantasias*, in three to seven parts and largely composed in June 1680, we hear one for four viols in F, completed on 14 June. The opening's slow downward sighs melt into a slower section with a sombre halting step, contrasted with a faster rising contrapuntal figure leading to the slow close.

John Dowland died more than 30 years before Purcell's birth. Known as a virtuoso lutenist and singer in his day – serving not only in England, but also in Paris, Brunswick, Hesse, Venice, Florence, Nuremburg and Denmark, only returning to London in 1612 – Dowland's legacy is as a composer. His first *Fantasia* (of seven directly attributed to him) expands from the opening solo line in an ever-improvisatory way, encompassing rapt, intricate and more playful passages. Of Dowland's 87 songs, 84 are collected in four volumes of *Songs and Ayres*, much imitated. From his 1597 First Book of 21 songs, we hear two about slumber: 'Come, heavy sleep', a melancholy self-directed lullaby, and 'Think'st thou then by thy feigning', where the singer is faced with a lover who apes slumber. The dotted tread of 'Can she excuse my wrongs' adds a playful aspect.

It was Julian Bream's pioneering career as guitarist and lutenist that produced such a wealth of new 20th-century works for his instrument. **Benjamin Britten's** *Songs from the Chinese* comprises six exquisite settings of Chinese lyrics in Arthur Waley's translations, dating from November 1957, which Peter Pears premièred with Bream. 'The Old Lute', from an original poem by Bai Juyi, describes not only the instrument but, to end, why it has fallen from grace, overtaken by other instruments in popularity. Similarly melancholy, 'Autumn Wind', from an original poem by Emperor Wu of Han, equates the turning of the season to aging.

Thomas Adès's most recent opera, *The Exterminating Angel*, was premièred at the Salzburg Festival in 2016 before travelling to Covent Garden and the Metropolitan Opera. Together with librettist and director Tom Cairns, Adès successfully adapted Luis Buñuel's 1962 surreal cinematic tale of rich people trapped and dying in a house which they can't leave, after being abandoned by the servants. From Act III, Silvia's 'berceuse macabre', 'It's very late now', sees her cradling a dead sheep thinking she's singing to her son, Yoli. Act II's 'Over the Sea' for pianist

Blanca is a folk myth-like travelogue (originally ethereally accompanied by ondes Martenot) that sends more than just Blanca into madness.

Schubert's 1826 expansive *Rondo* was premièred by Bohemian violinist Josef Slavik and pianist Carl Maria von Bocklet early in 1827 at a concert given by the publishing house Artaria. Prefacing the main *Allegro*, encompassing a scherzo and a march, is an extended introduction heralded with a piano tattoo of dotted phrases and a swooping upward violin run and ending with the piano's tattoo-like salvos, this time with two descending violin scales. The main *Allegro* leads to a spirited, nay hasty, march theme, with a central episode in G major, before returning to a *più mosso* version of the march to end.

Ravel's 1902-3 String Quartet followed Debussy's after nearly a decade. It came at a time when relations between the two composers had soured (mainly caused by associates and hangers on) and they had stopped visiting each other. Intriguingly, then, it was Debussy who defended Ravel's Quartet after its dedicatee, Ravel's teacher Fauré, had 'found the fourth movement stunted, badly balanced, in fact a failure.' In the end, Debussy was asked for his opinion, and he reassured and congratulated the younger man, writing him a solemn injunction: 'In the name of the gods of music, and in mine, do not touch a single note of what you have written in your Quartet'. Ravel commented 'My String Quartet represents a conception of musical construction, imperfectly realised no doubt, but set out much more precisely than in my earlier compositions.'

Contrasting its first theme's warm, natural lyricism with the wavering wistfulness of the second, the opening *Allegro's* short development then turns the emotional key before recapitulating the long-breathed calm opening and slowing to the end. Emulating Debussy, the scherzo opens with a jaunty pizzicato quasi-Spanish first theme, melting into its bowed section amidst trills before slowing sublimely for the rapt trio section. Pizzicato lines are reintroduced which, with guitar-like strumming, herald the eventual return of the scherzo proper. The 'very slow' third movement echoes the quartet's beginning: a nostalgic reverie, intimate but also at times distracted and unsettled which, despite a central section blossoming to a more positive climax, rapidly falls back to its more unsettled musings notwithstanding the calm ending. The finale, opening in an agitated 5/8, also has a throwback to the opening movement's first theme in a much more relaxed 3/4. These two time signatures leapfrog each other in ever quicker haste, even more so in the spirited, rushing coda.

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Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Fantasia a4 No. 6 in F Z737 (1680)

John Dowland (1563-1626)

Fantasia No. 1 P1

Come, heavy sleep (pub. 1597)

Anonymous

Come, heavy Sleep, the image of true death,
And close up these my weary weeping eyes,
Whose spring of tears doth stop my vital breath,
And tears my heart with Sorrow's sigh-swoll'n cries.
Come and possess my tired through-worn soul,
That living dies till thou on me be stole.

Come, shadow of my end, and shape of rest,
Allied to Death, child to his black-fac'd Night,
Come thou and charm these rebels in my breast,
Whose waking fancies do my mind affright.
O come, sweet Sleep, come or I die for ever;
Come ere my last sleep comes, or come never.

Think'st thou then by thy feigning (pub. 1597)

Anonymous

Think'st thou then by thy feigning
Sleep, with a proud disdain,
Or with thy crafty closing
Thy cruel eyes reposing,
To drive me from thy sight,
When sleep yields more delight,
Such harmless beauty gracing.
And while sleep feigned is,
May not I steal a kiss,
Thy quiet arms embracing.

O that my sleep dissembled,
Were to a trance resembled,
Thy cruel eyes deceiving,
Of lively sense bereaving:
Then should my love requite
Thy love's unkind despite,
While fury triumph'd boldly
In beauty's sweet disgrace:
And liv'd in sweet embrace
Of her that lov'd so coldly.

Should then my love aspiring,
Forbidden joys desiring,
So far exceed the duty
That virtue owes to beauty?
No Love seek not thy bliss,
Beyond a simple kiss:

For such deceits are harmless,
Yet kiss a thousand-fold.
For kisses may be bold
When lovely sleep is armless.

Can she excuse my wrongs (pub. 1597)

Anonymous

Can she excuse my wrongs with Virtue's cloak?
Shall I call her good when she proves unkind?
Are those clear fires which vanish into smoke?
Must I praise the leaves where no fruit I find?
No, no; where shadows do for bodies stand,
That may'st be abus'd if thy sight be dim.
Cold love is like to words written on sand,
Or to bubbles which on the water swim.
Wilt thou be thus abused still,
Seeing that she will right thee never?
If thou canst not o'ercome her will,
Thy love will be thus fruitless ever.

Was I so base, that I might not aspire
Unto those high joys which she holds from me?
As they are high, so high is my desire,
If she this deny, what can granted be?
If she will yield to that which reason is,
It is reason's will that love should be just.
Dear, make me happy still by granting this,
Or cut off delays if that die I must.
Better a thousand times to die
Than for to love thus still tormented:
Dear, but remember it was I
Who for thy sake did die contented.

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

From *Songs from the Chinese* Op. 58 (1957)

The Old Lute (1957)

Arthur Waley after Bai Juyi

Of cord and cassia-wood
Is the lute compounded;
Within it lie ancient melodies.
Ancient melodies weak and savourless,
Not appealing to present men's taste.
Light and colour are faded
From the jade stops;
Dust has covered the rose-red strings.
Decay and ruin came to it long ago,
But the sound that is left
Is still cold and clear.
I do not refuse to play it, if you want me to;
But even if I play people will not listen.
How did it come to be neglected so?
Because of the Ch'iang flute
And the zithern of Ch'in.

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

The Autumn Wind (1957)

Arthur Waley after Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty

Autumn wind rises; white clouds fly.
Grass and trees wither; geese go south.
Orchids all in bloom; chrysanthemums smell sweet.
I think of my lovely lady; I never can forget.
Floating pagoda boat crosses Fen river;
Across the mid-stream white waves rise.
Flute and drum keep time to sound of rower's song;
Amidst revel and feasting sad thoughts come --
Youth's years how few, age how sure.

Thomas Adès (b.1971)

From *The Exterminating Angel* (2015-6)

Tom Cairns

It's very late now

It's very late now.
Yoli, it's bedtime.
Don't you feel sleepy
When you close your eyes?

Do not fear that man with the goat beard.
He's just your guardian angel.

Close all the windows,
Yoli, close your eyes,
Or in their millions
Flies will swarm inside.

I'll tuck you in, child of all my dreams.
I'll never see you again.
Goodnight, my son.

Over the sea

Over the sea,
Over the sea,
Where is the way?
Birds, tell me!

Over the sea
On islands of gold
A mighty tall nation
Of giants stroll.

A mighty tall nation
Upright and pure,
Ruled by a king
Like none before.

Gardens the king has
Over the sea
Where birds of paradise
Nest in the trees.

Over the sea,
Over the sea,
Where is the way?
Birds, tell me!

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Rondo in B minor D895 (1826)

Interval

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

String Quartet in F (1902-3)

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