

WIGMORE HALL

Monday 12 December 2022
1.00pm

William Thomas bass
Malcolm Martineau piano

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

L'incanto degli occhi D902 No. 1 (1827)

Auf der Donau D553 (1817)

Das Fischermädchen from *Schwanengesang* D957 (1828)

Fahrt zum Hades D526 (1817)

Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)

3 Gedichte von Michelangelo (1897)

*Wohl denk ich oft • Alles endet, was entsteht •
Fühlt meine Seele*

From *Mörike Lieder* (1888)

Fussreise • Der Tambour • Bei einer Trauung

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Das Tal Op. 51 No. 1 (1902)

Der Einsame Op. 51 No. 2 (1906)

Franz Schubert

Du bist die Ruh D776 (1823)

Am Tage aller Seelen D343 (1816)



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The three songs of D902 are **Schubert's** last Italian songs, dedicated to a celebrated bass named Luigi Lablache; the text of 'L'incanto degli occhi' is the 'Aria di Licinio' from the celebrated opera librettist Pietro Metastasio's *Attilio Regolo* of 1740. This is an affectionate aping of Italianate style by someone who imbues it with his own tonal sophistication and a certain amused exaggeration.

In 'Auf der Donau', Schubert's friend Johann Baptist Mayrhofer revives the ages-old metaphor in which a small boat gliding on the water is emblematic of individual human life on the river of Time. Obliteration is the common fate of humanity and all it has made; we hear 'Zeiten' ('time') pass by in the Schubertian signature bar of silence before the final section.

In 'Das Fischermädchen', a buoyant singer, confident of his powers of attraction, woos a lower-class girl with his pearls of poetry/song. One can interpret this song as a sincere serenade or as mockery by poet and composer, with Schubert hinting that the persona is not the genius he proclaims himself to be.

Mayrhofer contemplated oblivion yet again in 'Fahrt zum Hades', both an encomium to what he held dearest in life and expectation of Hell's horrors as he crosses the River Styx. Schubert knew his friend's tormented but Stoic nature: when he, unlike the poet, repeats the opening section at the end, he allows his friend to conclude ascendant over his fears.

Hugo Wolf originally planned at least six Michelangelo songs as a musical portrait of the artist - 'Naturally the sculptor must sing bass', he told a friend - but only composed four in March 1897, rejecting the fourth as beneath his best work. 'Wohl denk ich oft' contrasts present fame with past neglect through a scrim of irony. The sequence of ascending and descending semitones we hear at the beginning will also infuse the second song, 'Alles endet, was entstehet'. The tragic irony of Wolf's letter to his friend Oskar Grohe is unbearable: 'If in your emotion over it, you don't lose your reason, you cannot ever have possessed any. It is truly enough to drive one mad ... I really stand in awe of this composition, for over it I fear to lose my senses'. Here, the dead speak to the living in passionless tones, confronting us with that we would rather not see but cannot escape. A few months after composing this masterpiece, Wolf went mad, a consequence of tertiary syphilis.

In the final song, 'Fühlt meine Seele', the poet asks whether it is the longed-for light of God that he feels or a

dream that brings him to tears. Finally, he concludes that it is love, sacral in its intensity. At the moment of recognition, we hear a single unharmonised semitone low in the bass: an unforgettable moment in an unforgettable song.

In 1888, Wolf's musical imagination caught fire from Eduard Mörike's masterful poetry, and the result was an anthology of 53 masterpieces. In 'Fussreise', a contented tramp through the nearby hills culminates in the poet's conclusion that the 'old Adam' - human nature - is not so bad after all because we are inspired by Nature's beauty to praise our Creator. The drummer boy in 'Der Tambour' is a lad on the verge of adulthood who fantasises comic transformations: his instrument is a bowl filled with warm sauerkraut, his hat a beaker of burgundy, his sabre a long sausage. Wolf must have enjoyed evoking military marches and the comically exaggerated sighing figures near the end when the lad thinks of his distant sweetheart. In 'Bei einer Trauung', Mörike mocks the loveless arranged marriages of the aristocracy with a grotesque wedding scene, and Wolf devises musical grotesquerie to match.

Richard Strauss's two lushly-orchestrated songs of Op. 51 are less well-known than they should be. 'Das Tal', to a poem by the early 19th-century patriotic poet Ludwig Uhland, is an early premonition of the *4 Last Songs*, but for bass. An elderly man visits the valley of his youth, praises Nature's restorative powers, and hopes that it will shelter his body in death. Heinrich Heine was, unusually, not being ironic in 'Der Einsame' Having lost the light of his beloved's eyes, the singer longs for primordial night. The linguist-scholar-poet Friedrich Rückert introduced German readers to Persian, Indian, Chinese and Arabic mythology and poetry. 'Du bist die Ruh', its text from the 1822 *Östliche Rosen* ('Eastern Roses'), tells of quietly rapturous adoration for the beloved. Near the end of each stanza, the voice ascends as if drawn irresistibly upwards to a rapt high note; a Schubertian measure of silence follows both invocations of this, one of his loveliest passages.

In June 1816, shortly before composing 'Am Tage aller Seelen', Schubert wrote some tender thoughts about his dead mother Elisabeth Vietz in his diary as he was walking through the Währing Cemetery. Given her death in 1812 and those of numerous infant siblings, Schubert had reasons close to home to create this quietly passionate prayer for the souls of the beloved dead.

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Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

L'incanto degli occhi The magic of eyes

D902 No. 1 (1827)

Pietro Metastasio

Da voi, cari lumi,
Dipende il mio stato;
Voi siete i miei Numi,
Voi siete il mio fato.
A vostro talento
Mi sento cangiar,
Ardir m'inspireate,
Se liete splendete;
Se torbidi siete,
Mi fate tremar.

On you, beloved eyes,
depends my life;
you are my gods,
you are my destiny.
At your bidding
my mood changes,
you inspire me with daring
if you shine joyfully;
if you are overcast,
you make me tremble.

Auf der Donau D553

(1817)

Johann Baptist Mayrhofer

Auf der Wellen Spiegel
Schwimmt der Kahn.
Alte Burgen ragen
Himmelan;
Tannenwälder rauschen
Geistergleich –
Und das Herz im Busen
Wird uns weich.

On the Danube

The boat glides
on the waves' surface.
Old castles soar
heavenward;
pine-forests stir
like ghosts –
and our hearts grow
faint within us.

Denn der Menschen Werke
Sinken all';
Wo ist Turm, wo
Pforte,
Wo der Wall,
Wo sie selbst, die
Starken?
Erzgeschirmt,
Die in Krieg und Jagden
Hingestürmt.

For the works of man
all perish;
where are towers, where
gates,
where ramparts,
where are the mighty
themselves?
Who, clad in bronze armour,
stormed into wars
and hunts.

Trauriges Gestrüppe
Wuchert fort,
Während frommer Sage
Kraft verdorrt.
Und im kleinen Kahne
Wird uns bang –
Wellen droh'n, wie Zeiten,
Untergang.

Melancholy briars
grow rank and rampant,
while the power
of pious myth withers.
And in our small boat
we grow afraid –
waves, like time, threaten
destruction.

Das Fischermädchen from *Schwanengesang*

D957 (1828)

Heinrich Heine

Du schönes Fischermädchen,
Treibe den Kahn ans Land;
Komm zu mir und setze dich
nieder,
Wir kosen Hand in Hand.

You lovely fisher maiden,
row your boat ashore;
come and sit down by my
side,
hand in hand we'll cuddle.

Leg' an mein Herz dein
Köpfchen,
Und fürchte dich nicht zu sehr;
Vertraust du dich doch
sorglos
Täglich dem wilden Meer.

Lay your little head on my
heart
and don't be too afraid;
each day, after all, you
trust yourself
fearlessly to the raging sea.

Mein Herz gleicht ganz dem
Meere,
Hat Sturm und Ebb' und
Flut,
Und manche schöne Perle
In seiner Tiefe ruht.

My heart's just like the
sea,
it storms and ebbs and
floods,
and many lovely pearls
are resting in its depths.

Fahrt zum Hades D526

(1817)

Johann Baptist Mayrhofer

Der Nachen dröhnt,
Cypressen flüstern –
Horch, Geister reden
schaurig drein;
Bald werd' ich am Gestad',
dem düstern,
Weit von der schönen Erde
sein.

Journey to Hades

The boat creaks,
cypresses whisper
hark, spirits utter their
chilling cries;
soon I shall reach the
gloomy shore,
far from the lovely
world.

Da leuchten Sonne nicht,
noch Sterne,
Da tönt kein Lied, da ist kein
Freund.
Empfang die letzte Träne, o
Ferne!
Die dieses müde Auge weint.

Neither sun nor stars
shine there,
no song is heard, no
friend is found.
O distant earth, accept
this last tear
shed by my weary eyes.

Schon schau' ich die blassen
Danaiden,
Den fluchbeladnen Tantalus;
Es murmelt
todesschwangern Frieden,
Vergessenheit, dein alter
Fluss.

Already I see the pale
Danaiides,
and curse-laden Tantalus;
your ancient river, O
Oblivion,
murmurs of death-
swollen peace.

Vergessen nenn' ich
zwiefach Sterben.
Was ich mit höchster Kraft
gewann,
Verlieren – wieder es
erwerben –
Wann enden diese Qualen?
Wann?

Oblivion to me is a double
death.
To lose that which
needed all my strength
to win, and to strive for it
once more –
when will these torments
cease? When?

Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)

3 Gedichte von Michelangelo (1897)

Wohl denk ich oft

Wohl denk' ich oft an mein
vergang'nes Leben,
Wie es, vor meiner Liebe für
Dich, war;
Kein Mensch hat damals
Acht auf mich gegeben,
Ein jeder Tag verloren für
mich war.
Ich dachte wohl, ganz dem
Gesang zu leben,
Auch mich zu flüchten aus
der Menschen Schar ...
Genannt in Lob und Tadel
bin ich heute,
Und, dass ich da bin, wissen
alle Leute!

I often recall

I often recall my past
life,
As it was before I loved
you;
No one then paid heed to
me,
Each day for me was a
loss.
I thought to live for song
alone,
And flee the thronging
crowd
Today my name is
praised and censured,
And the entire world
knows that I exist!

Alles endet, was entstehet

Alles endet, was
entstehet,
Alles, alles rings vergehet,
Denn die Zeit flieht, und die
Sonne sieht,
Sieht, dass alles rings
vergehet,
Denken, Reden, Schmerz
und Wonne;
Und die wir zu Enkeln hatten
Schwanden wie bei Tag die
Schatten,
Wie ein Dunst im Windeshauch.
Menschen waren wir ja
auch,
Froh und traurig, so wie
ihr;
Und nun sind wir leblos
hier,
Sind nur Erde, wie ihr
sehet;
Alles endet, was
entstehet,
Alles, alles rings vergehet!

All must end that has beginning

All must end that has
beginning,
All things round us perish,
For time is fleeting, and
the sun
Sees that all things round
us perish,
Thought, speech, pain
and rapture;
And our children's children
Vanished as shadows by
day,
As mists in a breeze.
We were also human
beings,
With joys and sorrows like
your own;
And now there is no life in
us,
We are but earth, as you
can see;
All must end that has
beginning,
All things round us perish!

Fühlt meine Seele

Fühlt meine Seele das
ersehnte Licht von Gott,
Der sie erschuf? Ist es der
Strahl
Von and'rer Schönheit aus
dem Jammertal,

Does my soul feel

Does my soul feel the
longed-for light
Of God who created it? Is
it the ray
Of some other beauty
from this vale of tears

Der in mein Herz
erinnungweckend bricht?
Ist es ein Klang, ein
Traumgesicht,
Das Aug' und Herz mir füllt
mit einem Mal
In unbegreiflich glüh'n'der
Qual,
Die mich zu Tränen bringt?
Ich weiss es nicht.
Was ich ersehne, fühle, was
mich lenkt,
Ist nicht in mir: Sag' mir, wie
ich's erwerbe?
Mir zeigt es wohl nur eines
And'ren Huld.
Darein bin ich, seit ich Dich
sah, versenkt;
Mich treibt ein Ja und
Nein, ein Süß und
Herbe ...
Daran sind, Herrin, Deine
Augen Schuld!

That storms my heart,
awakening memories?
Is it a sound, a vision in a
dream
That suddenly fills my
eyes and heart
With inconceivable,
searing pain,
Reducing me to tears? I
do not know.
What I long for, what I
feel, what guides me
Is not in me: tell me how
to achieve it!
Only another's favour is
likely to reveal it.
This has absorbed me,
since seeing you;
I am torn between yes
and no, bitterness and
sweetness . . .
Your eyes, my lady, are
the cause!

From *Mörrike Lieder* (1888)

Eduard Mörike

Fussreise

Am frischgeschnittenen
Wanderstab,
Wenn ich in der Frühe
So durch Wälder ziehe,
Hügel auf und ab:
Dann, wie's Vög'lein im
Laube
Singet und sich rührt,
Oder wie die goldne
Traube
Wonnegeister spürt
In der ersten Morgensonne:
So fühlt auch mein alter,
lieber
Adam Herbst- und
Frühlingsfieber,
Gottbeherzte,
Nie verscherzte
Erstlings-Paradieseswonne.

A journey on foot

When, with freshly cut
staff,
I set off early like this
Through the woods
And over the hills:
Then, as the bird in the
branches
Sings and stirs,
Or as the golden cluster
of grapes
Senses the spirits of delight
In the early morning sun –
So too the old Adam in
me
Feels autumn and spring
fever,
The God-inspired,
Never forfeited
Primal bliss of Paradise.

Also bist du nicht so
schlimm, o alter
Adam, wie die strengen
Lehrer sagen;
Liebst und lobst du immer
doch,
Singst und preisest immer
noch,
Wie an ewig neuen
Schöpfungstagen,
Deinen lieben Schöpfer und
Erhalter.

So you are not as bad,
old
Adam, as strict teachers
say;
You still love and
extol,
Always sing and
praise
Your dear Maker and
Preserver,
As if Creation were
forever new.

Möcht es dieser geben,
Und mein ganzes Leben
Wär im leichten
Wanderschweisse
Eine solche
Morgenreise!

May He grant it so,
And my whole life
Would be, gently
perspiring,
Just such a morning
journey!

Der Tambour

The Drummer-boy

Wenn meine Mutter hexen
könn't,
Da müsst' sie mit dem
Regiment
Nach Frankreich, überall mit
hin,
Und wär' die Marketenderin.
Im Lager wohl um Mitternacht,
Wenn Niemand auf ist als die
Wacht,
Und alles schnarchet, Ross
und Mann,
Vor meiner Trommel säss'
ich dann:
Die Trommel müsst' eine
Schüssel sein;
Ein warmes Sauerkraut darein;
Die Schlegel, Messer und
Gabel,
Eine lange Wurst mein Sabel,
Mein Tschako wär' ein
Humpen gut,
Den füll' ich mit
Burgunderblut.
Und weil es mir an Lichte
fehlt,
Da scheint der Mond in mein
Gezelt:
Scheint er auch auf
franzö'sch herein,
Mir fällt doch meine Liebste ein:
Ach weh! Jetzt hat der Spass
ein End!
– Wenn nur meine Mutter
hexen könn't!

If my mother could work
magic
she'd have to go with the
regiment
to France and
everywhere,
and be the vivandière.
In camp, at midnight,
when no one's up save
the guard,
and everyone's snoring,
horses and men,
then I'd sit by my
drum:
my drum would be a
bowl,
of warm sauerkraut,
drumsticks a knife and
fork,
my sabre – a long sausage;
my shako would be a
tankard
which I'd fill with red
Burgundy.
And because I'd lack light,
the moon would shine
into my tent;
and though it would shine
in French,
I'd still think of my love:
oh dear! There's an end to
my fun!
– If only my mother could
work magic!

Bei einer Trauung

At a wedding

Vor lauter hochadligen
Zeugen
Kopuliert man ihrer
Zwei;
Die Orgel hängt voll
Geigen,
Der Himmel nicht, mein'
Treu!
Seht doch! s i e weint ja
greulich,
Er macht ein Gesicht
abscheulich!

Before exclusively
highborn witnesses,
two exclusive people are
being wed;
the organ pours forth
joyful music,
but there'll be no joy in
heaven, I vow!
Just look, *she's* crying her
eyes out,
he's making a dreadful
face!

Denn leider freilich,
freilich,
Keine Lieb' ist nicht dabei.

For I'm very very sorry to
say,
that love is wholly absent.

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Das Tal Op. 51 No. 1 (1902)

The valley

Ludwig Uhland

Wie willst du dich mir
offenbaren,
Wie ungewohnt, geliebtes
Tal?
Nur in den frühesten
Jugendjahren
Erschienst du so mir
manches Mal.
Die Sonne schon
hinabgegangen,
Doch aus den Bächen klarer
Schein;
Kein Lüftchen spielt mir um
die Wangen,
Doch sanftes Rauschen in
dem Hain.

How will you reveal
yourself to me,
unaccustomed, beloved
valley?
Only in my earliest
youth
did you sometimes
appear to me like that:
the sun has already
set,
but a light glows from the
brooks;
no breeze plays about my
cheeks,
but there's a gentle
rustling in the grove.

Es duftet wieder alte
Liebe,
Es grünet wieder alte
Lust;
Ja, selbst die alten
Liedertriebe
Beleben diese kalte Brust.
Natur, wohl braucht es
solcher Stunden,
So innig, so liebevoll,
Wenn dieses arme Herz
gesunden,
Das welkende genesen
soll.

Past love smells sweet
again,
past desire grows green
again;
and even the old urge to
sing
revives this cold breast.
Nature – such hours are
needed,
intimate and loving hours,
if this poor heart is to
recover,
if this withering heart is to
heal.

Bedrängt mich einst die Welt
noch bänger,
So such' ich wieder dich,
mein Tal,
Empfange dann den kranken
Sänger
Mit solcher Milde noch
einmal!
Und sink' ich dann ermattet
nieder,
So öffne leise deinen
Grund
Und nimm mich auf und
schliess' ihn wieder
Und grüne fröhlich und
gesund!

Should the world one day
grow more oppressive,
I shall seek you out again,
my valley.
Receive the sick singer
then
with such gentleness
again.
And if I sink down
exhausted,
gently open up yourself
up to me
and take me in and close
yourself around me
and grow green happily
and healthily!

Der Einsame Op. 51

No. 2 (1906)

Heinrich Heine

Wo ich bin, mich rings
umdunkelt
Finsterniss so dumpf und dicht,
Seit mir nicht mehr
leuchtend funkelt,
Liebste, deiner Augen
Licht.

Wie erloschen ist der
süssen
Liebessterne goldne Pracht,
Abgrund gähnt zu meinen
Füssen –
Nimm mich auf, uralte Nacht!

The solitary

Darkness gathers about
me,
so heavily and close,
now that your sparkling
eyes,
beloved, no longer shine
on me.

The golden splendour of
love's sweet firmament
is now extinguished for me,
the abyss gapes beneath
my feet –
receive me, O primeval
night!

Franz Schubert

Du bist die Ruh D776

(1823)

Friedrich Rückert

Du bist die Ruh,
Der Friede mild,
Die Sehnsucht du,
Und was sie stillt.

Ich weihe dir
Voll Lust und Schmerz
Zur Wohnung hier
Mein Aug' und Herz.

Kehr ein bei mir,
Und schliesse du
Still hinter dir
Die Pforten zu.

Treib andern Schmerz
Aus dieser Brust.
Voll sei dies Herz
Von deiner Lust.

Dies Augenzelt
Von deinem Glanz
Allein erhellt,
O füll es ganz.

You are repose

You are repose
and gentle peace,
you are longing
and what stills it.

I pledge to you
full of joy and pain
as a dwelling here
my eyes and heart.

Come in to me,
and softly close
the gate
behind you.

Drive other pain
from this breast!
Let my heart be filled
with your joy.

This temple of my eyes
is lit
by your radiance alone,
O fill it utterly.

Am Tage aller Seelen

D343 (1816)

Johann Georg Jacobi

Ruhn in Frieden alle Seelen,
Die vollbracht ein banges
Quälen,
Die vollendet süssen
Traum,
Lebenssatt, geboren
kaum,
Aus der Welt hinüber schieden:
Alle Seelen ruhn in Frieden!

Liebevoller Mädchen Seelen,
Deren Tränen nicht zu
zählen,
Die ein falscher Freund
verliess,
Und die blinde Welt verstieß:
Alle, die von hinnen
schieden,
Alle Seelen ruhn in Frieden!

On the day of All Souls

May all souls rest in peace,
those whose fearful
agony is ended,
those whose sweet
dreams are over,
those who, weary of life,
scarcely born,
have departed the world:
may all souls rest in peace!

The souls of girls in love,
whose tears are without
number,
who, abandoned by a
faithless lover,
rejected the blind world.
May all who have
departed hence,
may all souls rest in peace!

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