

WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 14 January 2024
7.30pm

A poet's love; a poetess's love

Elsa Dreisig soprano
Romain Louveau piano

A POET'S LOVE

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Dichterliebe Op. 48 (1840)

*Im wunderschönen Monat Mai • Aus meinen Tränen
spriessen • Die Rose, die Lilie, die Taube, die Sonne •
Wenn ich in deine Augen seh • Ich will meine Seele
tauchen • Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome • Ich grolle
nicht • Und wüssten's die Blumen, die kleinen • Das ist
ein Flöten und Geigen • Hör' ich das Liedchen klingen •
Ein Jüngling Liebt ein Mädchen • Am leuchtenden
Sommermorgen • Ich hab im Traum geweinet •
Allnächtlich im Traume • Aus alten Märchen • Die alten,
bösen Lieder*

Interval

A POETESS'S LOVE

Rita Strohl (1865-1941)

La flûte de Pan from *12 chants de Bilitis* (by 1898)

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

La chevelure from *Chansons de Bilitis* (1897-8)

Rita Strohl

From *12 chants de Bilitis*

La chevelure • Roses dans la nuit • Les remords •
Le sommeil interrompu

Claude Debussy

L'isle joyeuse (1903-4)

Angélique Ionatos (1954-2021)

From *Sappho de Mytilène* (1990)

Astéron Panton • Anthe' Amerghissan

Rita Strohl

Berceuse from *12 chants de Bilitis*

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A poet's love; a poetess's love

It would not be an exaggeration to say that song performance is a game of masks. Who am 'I', singing to the audience? Am 'I' the poet? The composer (whose setting the poet may hate)? A fictional party dreamt up by the two creators? What additional sense of self is brought by the singer, who may seek to embody the words and music before them without reservation, or raise an eyebrow to indicate their full awareness that what they are singing about needs taking with a hefty pinch of salt? This evening's programme is a fascinating dive into the musical masquerade, turning attention to the loves of various poets – male and female, factual and fictional – in their realisations by 19th- and 20th-century composers from Germany, France and Greece.

We begin with **Robert Schumann's** cycle *Dichterliebe*. This belongs to 1840, Schumann's so-called 'year of song' – and is one of several opuses to draw upon the poetry of fellow German Heinrich Heine. Schumann chose his poems from Heine's *Buch der Lieder*, initially building a run of 20 numbers which he eventually whittled down to 16. The opus was dedicated to the great operatic soprano Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient, and the first public performance of any of the songs was given by another young soprano, Livia Frege: an important reminder that the gender of the poet and composer did not necessarily indicate a 'correct' gender of performer.

Much like Franz Schubert's *Winterreise* of 13 years earlier, *Dichterliebe* describes a clear dramatic scenario without unfolding a song-by-song narrative. Our poet has had his heart badly broken and recalls the heady days of falling in love – so sweet as to be painful – even to the point of perceiving the image of the Virgin Mary in Cologne cathedral as resembling his beloved. By 'Ich grolle nicht' it's clear that all is lost, and he tortures himself further when he hears the music of her wedding party ('Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen'): she has left him for another man. Dreams and fairytales bring both solace and grief, and the cycle ends with our poet grandly stating that he intends to bury his love and pain and move on. But Schumann's achingly beautiful final postlude makes it clear that he is not, in fact, able to do so.

The first poetess from whom we hear after the interval is herself a poetic invention. In 1894, the Belgian-born poet Pierre Louÿs spent time in Algeria with fellow writer André Gide, and this inspired him to write a sizeable collection of prose poems he entitled *Les chansons de Bilitis*. The collection was dedicated to an Algerian woman, Meriem ben Atala, to whom Gide reputedly lost his virginity; and Louÿs claimed that the poems were not in fact his own invention, merely 'translated from the Greek for the first time' in his edition.

We hear the sensuously erotic poems of Bilitis in settings by two composers. **Claude Debussy** – friend of

both Louÿs and Gide – set three *Chansons de Bilitis* between 1897 and 1898. In 'La chevelure', Bilitis reports the passionate dream that 'he' told to her, whole-tone scales unfurling into Wagnerian lushness, when all she can do in the face of such intensity is drop her gaze to the floor. And we hear the words of 'La chevelure' again, along with five other numbers from *12 Chants de Bilitis* by Debussy's much longer-lived contemporary **Rita Strohl**. Strohl studied at the Paris Conservatoire and lived in Paris until 1905. In 1900, she scored a major success with her *chants de Bilitis*. Louÿs's poems were all the rage.

Strohl's creations balance on the knife-edge between Wagnerism and Symbolism. The melodies of the syrinx curl seductively through the piano in 'La flûte de Pan', their curious chromaticism weighed against the Romantic passion of the poet speaking. Strohl's 'La chevelure' is a heady dream of impassioned delight; though Bilitis lowers her head in confused uncertainty at its close. There is magic in the twinkling sky and perfumed flowers of 'Roses dans la nuit' – and embarrassment and shame in 'Les remords' as she remembers rejecting her lover's advances. 'Le sommeil interrompu' is a tale of innocence taken without consent, ending in a tearstained invocation to Kypris, another name for the goddess Aphrodite. Finally we hear Bilitis singing to her daughter in the dreamy 'Berceuse'.

The remaining two songs on the programme are settings of the Greek lyric poet Sappho in modern translation. **Angélique Ionatos** was a Greek singer, guitarist and composer who lived in France from the early 1980s but maintained a lifelong fascination with the poetry of her homeland. Her 1991 album *Sappho de Mytilène* sets renderings of Sappho by the Nobel Prize-winning author and translator Odysseas Elytis, originally for voice and guitar; and from this we hear 'Astéron Pantón' and 'Anthe' Amerghissan'. The first is an ode to the evening star, circling and hypnotic, whilst the second is a touching depiction of a beautiful young girl picking flowers.

Debussy's *L'isle joyeuse* is the perfect partner to these poetic conjurings. One of his most extensive works for solo piano, it was completed in 1904. The identity of the island itself remains mysterious, and despite various suggestions that the paintings of Turner and Watteau might have provided inspiration, Debussy never offered a full explanation of the work's origins. 'Here you will find masks from the Comédie italienne,' he wrote, 'young women dancing and singing, and everything coming to an end beneath the rays of the setting sun.' But when pressed, he would say only that the title and scenario were 'pure imagination. Though I must tell you that I don't have enough fingers to play it.'

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Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Dichterliebe Op. 48 (1840)

Heinrich Heine

**Im wunderschönen
Monat Mai**

Im wunderschönen Monat
Mai,
Als alle Knospen
sprangen,
Da ist in meinem Herzen
Die Liebe aufgegangen.

Im wunderschönen Monat
Mai,
Als alle Vögel
sangen,
Da hab' ich ihr
gestanden
Mein Sehnen und Verlangen.

**Aus meinen Tränen
spriessen**

Aus meinen Tränen spriessen
Viel blühende Blumen
hervor,
Und meine Seufzer werden
Ein Nachtigallenchor.

Und wenn du mich lieb hast,
Kindchen,
Schenk' ich dir die Blumen
all',
Und vor deinem Fenster soll
klingen
Das Lied der Nachtigall.

**Die Rose, die Lilie, die
Taube, die Sonne**

Die Rose, die Lilie, die Taube,
die Sonne,
Die liebt' ich einst alle in
Liebeswonne.
Ich lieb' sie nicht mehr, ich
liebe alleine
Die Kleine, die Feine, die
Reine, die Eine;
Sie selber, aller Liebe Wonne,
Ist Rose und Lilie und Taube
und Sonne.

**In the wondrous
month of May**

In the wondrous month of
May,
when all buds were
bursting into bloom,
then it was that in my heart
love began to blossom.

In the wondrous month of
May,
when all the birds were
singing,
then it was I confessed to
her
my longing and desire.

**From my tears will
spring**

From my tears will spring
many blossoming
flowers,
and my sighs will become
a choir of nightingales.

And if you love me,
child,
I'll give you all the flowers,
and at your window shall
sound
the nightingale's song.

Rose, lily, dove

Rose, lily, dove,
sun,
I loved them all once in
the bliss of love.
I love them no more, I
only love
she who is small, fine,
pure, rare;
she, most blissful of all loves,
is rose and lily and dove
and sun.

**Wenn ich in deine
Augen seh**

Wenn ich in deine Augen
seh',
So schwindet all mein Leid
und Weh;
Doch wenn ich küsse deinen
Mund,
So werd ich ganz und gar
gesund.

Wenn ich mich lehn' an deine
Brust,
Komm't's über mich wie
Himmelslust;
Doch wenn du sprichst: Ich
liebe dich!
So muss ich weinen bitterlich.

**Ich will meine Seele
tauchen**

Ich will meine Seele tauchen
In den Kelch der Lilie hinein;
Die Lilie soll klingend hauchen
Ein Lied von der Liebsten mein.

Das Lied soll schauern und
beben,
Wie der Kuss von ihrem Mund,
Den sie mir einst gegeben
In wunderbar süsster
Stund'.

**Im Rhein, im heiligen
Strome**

Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome,
Da spiegelt sich in den
Well'n,
Mit seinem grossen Dome,
Das grosse, heilige Köln.

Im Dom da steht ein
Bildnis,
Auf goldenem Leder gemalt;
In meines Lebens Wildnis
Hat's freundlich
hineingestrahlt.

Es schweben Blumen und
Englein
Um unsre liebe Frau;
Die Augen, die Lippen, die
Wänglein,
Die gleichen der Liebsten
genau.

**When I look into
your eyes**

When I look into your
eyes,
all my pain and sorrow
vanish;
but when I kiss your
lips,
then I am wholly
healed.

When I lay my head
against your breast,
heavenly bliss steals over
me;
but when you say: I love
you!
I must weep bitter tears.

**Let me bathe my
soul**

Let me bathe my soul
in the lily's chalice;
the lily shall resound
with a song of my love.

The songs shall tremble
and quiver
like the kiss her lips
once gave me
in a sweet and wondrous
hour.

**In the Rhine, the
holy river**

In the Rhine, the holy river,
there is reflected in the
waves,
with its great cathedral,
great and holy Cologne.

In the cathedral hangs a
picture,
painted on gilded leather;
into my life's wilderness
it has cast its friendly
rays.

Flowers and cherubs
hover
around Our beloved Lady;
her eyes, her lips, her little
cheeks
are the image of my
love's.

Ich grolle nicht

Ich grolle nicht, und wenn
das Herz auch bricht,
Ewig verlornes Lieb! ich
grolle nicht.
Wie du auch strahlst in
Diamantenpracht,
Es fällt kein Strahl in deines
Herzens Nacht.

Das weiss ich längst. Ich sah
dich ja im Traume,
Und sah die Nacht in deines
Herzens Raume,
Und sah die Schlang', die dir
am Herzen frisst,
Ich sah, mein Lieb, wie sehr
du elend bist.

Und wüssten's die Blumen, die kleinen

Und wüssten's die Blumen,
die kleinen,
Wie tief verwundet mein
Herz,
Sie würden mit mir weinen,
Zu heilen meinen Schmerz.

Und wüssten's die Nachtigallen,
Wie ich so traurig und krank,
Sie liessen fröhlich
erschallen
Erquickenden Gesang.

Und wüssten sie mein Wehe,
Die goldenen Sternelein,
Sie kämen aus ihrer
Höhe,
Und sprächen Trost mir
ein.

Sie alle können's nicht
wissen,
Nur Eine kennt meinen
Schmerz;
Sie hat ja selbst zerrissen,
Zerrissen mir das Herz.

I bear no grudge

I bear no grudge, though
my heart is breaking,
O love forever lost! I bear
no grudge.
However you gleam in
diamond splendour,
no ray falls in the night of
your heart.

I've known that long. For I
saw you in my dreams,
and saw the night within
your heart,
and saw the serpent
gnawing your heart –
I saw, my love, how pitiful
you are.

If the little flowers knew

If the little flowers
knew
how deeply my heart is
hurt,
they would weep with me
to heal my pain.

If the nightingales knew
how sad I am and sick,
they would joyfully make
the air resound
with refreshing song.

And if they knew of my grief,
those little golden stars,
they would come down
from the sky
and console me with their
words.

But none of them can
know,
my pain is known to one
alone;
for she it was who broke,
broke my heart in two.

Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen

Das ist ein Flöten und
Geigen,
Trompeten schmettern
darein;
Da tanzt wohl den
Hochzeitreigen
Die Herzallerliebste
mein.

Das ist ein Klingen und
Dröhnen,
Ein Pauken und ein
Schalmei'n;
Dazwischen schluchzen und
stöhnen
Die lieblichen
Engelein.

Hör' ich das Liedchen klingen

Hör' ich das Liedchen
klingen,
Das einst die Liebste sang,
So will mir die Brust zerspringen
Von wildem Schmerzdrang.

Es treibt mich ein dunkles
Sehnen
Hinauf zur Waldeshöh',
Dort löst sich auf in
Tränen
Mein übergrosses Weh.

Ein Jüngling Liebt ein Mädchen

Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen,
Die hat einen andern erwählt;
Der andre liebt eine andre,
Und hat sich mit dieser
vermählt.

Das Mädchen nimmt aus Ärger
Den ersten besten Mann,
Der ihr in den Weg gelaufen;
Der Jüngling ist übel dran.

Es ist eine alte Geschichte,
Doch bleibt sie immer neu;
Und wem sie just passieret,
Dem bricht das Herz entzwei.

What a fluting and fiddling

What a fluting and
fiddling,
what a blaring of
trumpets;
that must be my dearest
love
dancing at her wedding
feast.

What a booming and
ringing,
what a drumming and
piping;
with lovely little
angels
sobbing and groaning
between.

When I hear the little song

When I hear the little
song
my beloved once sang,
my heart almost bursts
with the wild rush of pain.

A dark longing drives
me
up to the wooded heights,
where my overwhelming
grief
dissolves into tears.

A boy loves a girl

A boy loves a girl
who chooses another;
he in turn loves another
and marries
her.

The girl, out of pique,
takes the very first man
to come her way;
the boy is badly hurt.

It's an old story,
yet remains ever new;
and he to whom it happens,
it breaks his heart in half.

Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen

Am leuchtenden
Sommermorgen
Geh' ich im Garten herum.
Es flüstern und sprechen die
Blumen,
Ich aber wandle stumm.

Es flüstern und sprechen die
Blumen,
Und schau'n mitleidig mich an:
Sei unsrer Schwester nicht
böse,
Du trauriger, blasser Mann.

Ich hab im Traum geweinet

Ich hab' im Traum geweinet,
Mir träumte, du lägest im
Grab.
Ich wachte auf, und die Träne
Floss noch von der Wange
herab.

Ich hab' im Traum geweinet,
Mir träumt', du verliessest
mich.
Ich wachte auf, und ich weinte
Noch lange bitterlich.

Ich hab' im Traum geweinet,
Mir träumte, du wärest mir
noch gut.
Ich wachte auf, und noch immer
Strömt meine Tränenflut.

Allnächtlich im Traume

Allnächtlich im Traume seh'
ich dich,
Und sehe dich freundlich
grüssen,
Und laut aufweinend stürz'
ich mich
Zu deinen süssen Füssen.

Du siehest mich an
wehmütiglich
Und schüttelst das blonde
Köpfchen;
Aus deinen Augen
schleichen sich
Die Perletränenröpfchen.

One bright summer morning

One bright summer
morning
I walk round the garden.
The flowers whisper and
talk,
but I move silently.

The flowers whisper and
talk,
and look at me in pity:
be not angry with our
sister,
you sad, pale man.

I wept in my dream

I wept in my dream,
I dreamt you lay in your
grave.
I woke, and tears
still flowed down my
cheeks.

I wept in my dream,
I dreamt you were leaving
me.

I woke, and wept on
long and bitterly.

I wept in my dream,
I dreamt you loved me
still.

I woke, and still
my tears stream.

Nightly in my dreams

Nightly in my dreams I
see you,
and see your friendly
greeting,
and weeping loud, I hurl
myself
down at your sweet feet.

Wistfully you look at
me,
shaking your fair little
head;
tiny little pearl-like
tears
trickle from your eyes.

Du sagst mir heimlich ein
leises Wort,
Und gibst mir den Strauss
von Zypressen.
Ich wache auf, und der
Strauss ist fort,
Und's Wort hab' ich
vergessen.

Aus alten Märchen

Aus alten Märchen winkt es
Hervor mit weisser Hand,
Da singt es und da klingt
es
Von einem Zauberland;

Wo bunte Blumen
blühen
Im goldnen Abendlicht,
Und lieblich duftend
glühen,
Mit bräutlichem Gesicht;

Und grüne Bäume singen
Uralte Melodein,
Die Lüfte heimlich
klingen,
Und Vögel schmettern drein;

Und Nebelbilder steigen
Wohl aus der Erd' hervor,
Und tanzen luft'gen Reigen
Im wunderlichen Chor;

Und blaue Funken brennen
An jedem Blatt und Reis,
Und rote Lichter rennen
Im irren, wirren Kreis;

Und laute Quellen brechen
Aus wildem Marmorstein,
Und seltsam in den
Bächen
Strahlt fort der Widerschein.

Ach, könnt ich dorthin
kommen,
Und dort mein Herz
erfreu'n,
Und aller Qual entnommen,
Und frei und selig sein!

Ach! jenes Land der Wonne,
Das seh' ich oft im Traum,
Doch kommt die Morgensonne,
Zerfließt's wie eitel Schaum.

You whisper me a soft
word
and hand me a wreath of
cypress.
I wake up and the wreath
is gone,
and I cannot remember
the word.

A white hand beckons

A white hand beckons
from fairy tales of old,
where there are sounds
and songs
of a magic land;

Where brightly coloured
flowers
bloom in golden twilight,
and glow sweet and
fragrant
with a bride-like face;

And green trees
sing primeval melodies,
mysterious breezes
murmur,
and birds warble;

And misty shapes rise up
from the very ground,
and dance airy dances
in a strange throng;

And blue sparks blaze
on every leaf and twig
and red fires race
madly round and round;

And loud springs gush
from wild marble cliffs.
And strangely in the
streams
the reflection shines on.

Ah, could I but reach that
land,
and there make glad my
heart,
and be relieved of all pain,
and be blissful and free!

Ah, that land of delight,
I see it often in my dreams,
but with the morning sun
it melts like mere foam.

Die alten, bösen Lieder The bad old songs

Die alten, bösen Lieder,
Die Träume böse und arg,
Die lasst uns jetzt begraben,
Holt einen grossen Sarg.

The bad old songs,
the bad and bitter dreams,
let us now bury them,
fetch me a large coffin.

Hinein leg' ich gar manches,
Doch sag' ich noch nicht was;

I have much to put in it,
though what I won't yet
say;

Der Sarg muss sein noch
grösser
Wie's Heidelberger Fass.

the coffin must be even
larger
than the Vat at Heidelberg.

Und holt eine Totenbahre,
Und Bretter fest und dick;
Auch muss sie sein noch
länger,
Als wie zu Mainz die Brück'.

And fetch a bier
made of firm thick timber:
and it must be even
longer
than the bridge at Mainz.

Und holt mir auch zwölf
Riesen,
Die müssen noch stärker
sein,
Als wie der starke
Christoph,
Im Dom zu Köln am
Rhein.

And fetch for me twelve
giants,
they must be even
stronger
than Saint Christopher
the Strong
in Cologne cathedral on
the Rhine.

Die sollen den Sarg
forttragen,
Und senken in's Meer hinab;
Denn solchem grossen Sarge
Gebührt ein grosses Grab.

They shall bear the coffin
away,
and sink it deep into the sea;
for such a large coffin
deserves a large grave.

Wisst ihr, warum der Sarg
wohl
So gross und schwer mag
sein?
Ich senkt' auch meine Liebe
Und meinen Schmerz hinein.

Do you know why the
coffin
must be so large and
heavy?
I'd like to bury there my love
and my sorrow too.

Interval

A POETESS'S LOVE

Rita Strohl (1865-1941)

La flûte de Pan from 12 *chants de Bilitis*

(by 1898)

Pierre Louÿs

The flute of Pan

Pour le jour des Hyacinthies,
il m'a donné une syrinx
faite de roseaux bien
taillés, unis avec la blanche

For Hyacinthus day he
gave me a syrinx made
of carefully cut reeds,
bonded with white wax

cire qui est douce à mes
lèvres comme le miel.

which tastes sweet to
my lips like honey.

Il m'apprend à jouer, assise sur
ses genoux; mais je suis un
peu tremblante. Il en joue
après moi, si doucement que
je l'entends à peine.

He teaches me to play, as
I sit on his lap; but I am
a little fearful. He plays
it after me, so gently
that I scarcely hear him.

Nous n'avons rien à nous dire,
tant nous sommes près l'un
de l'autre; mais nos chansons
veulent se répondre, et tour à
tour nos bouches s'unissent
sur la flûte.

We have nothing to say,
so close are we one to
another, but our songs
try to answer each
other, and our mouths
join in turn on the flute.

Il est tard; voici le chant des
grenouilles vertes qui
commence avec la nuit. Ma
mère ne croira jamais que
je suis restée si longtemps
à chercher ma ceinture
perdue.

It is late; here is the song
of the green frogs that
begins with the night.
My mother will never
believe I stayed out so
long to look for my lost
sash.

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

La chevelure from *Chansons de Bilitis* (1897-8)

Pierre Louÿs

The tresses of hair

Il m'a dit: 'Cette nuit, j'ai rêvé.
J'avais ta chevelure autour
de mon cou. J'avais tes
cheveux comme un collier
noir autour de ma nuque et
sur ma poitrine.

He said to me: 'Last night I
dreamed. I had your
tresses around my neck. I
had your hair like a black
necklace all round my
nape and over my breast.

'Je les caressais, et c'étaient les
miens; et nous étions liés pour
toujours ainsi, par la même
chevelure la bouche sur la
bouche, ainsi que deux
lauriers n'ont souvent qu'une
racine.

I caressed it and it was
mine; and we were
united thus forever by
the same tresses,
mouth on mouth, just
as two laurels often
share one root.

'Et peu à peu, il m'a semblé,
tant nos membres étaient
confondus, que je devenais
toi-même ou que tu entrais
en moi comme mon
songe.'

And gradually it seemed
to me, so intertwined
were our limbs, that I
was becoming you, or
you were entering into
me like a dream.'

Quand il eut achevé, il mit
doucement ses mains sur
mes épaules, et il me
regarda d'un regard si
tendre, que je baissai les
yeux avec un frisson.

When he had finished, he
gently set his hands on
my shoulders and
gazed at me so
tenderly that I lowered
my eyes with a shiver.

Rita Strohl

From 12 chants de Bilitis

Pierre Louÿs

La chevelure

Il m'a dit: 'Cette nuit, j'ai rêvé.
J'avais ta chevelure autour
de mon cou. J'avais tes
cheveux comme un collier
noir autour de ma nuque et
sur ma poitrine.

'Je les caressais, et c'étaient les
miens; et nous étions liés pour
toujours ainsi, par la même
chevelure la bouche sur la
bouche, ainsi que deux
lauriers n'ont souvent qu'une
racine.

'Et peu à peu, il m'a semblé,
tant nos membres étaient
confondus, que je devenais
toi-même ou que tu entras
en moi comme mon
songe.'

Quand il eut achevé, il mit
doucement ses mains sur
mes épaules, et il me
regarda d'un regard si
tendre, que je baissai les
yeux avec un frisson.

Roses dans la nuit

Dès que la nuit monte au ciel,

Le monde est à nous, et aux
dieux.

Nous allons des champs à la
source,

Des bois obscurs aux clairières,
Où nous mènent nos pieds
nus.

Les petites étoiles brillent
assez

Pour les petites ombres que
nous sommes.

Quelquefois, sous les
branches basses,

Nous trouvons des biches
endormies.

The tresses of hair

He said to me: 'Last night I
dreamed. I had your
tresses around my neck. I
had your hair like a black
necklace all round my
nape and over my breast.

I caressed it and it was
mine; and we were
united thus forever by
the same tresses,
mouth on mouth, just
as two laurels often
share one root.

And gradually it seemed
to me, so intertwined
were our limbs, that I
was becoming you, or
you were entering into
me like a dream.'

When he had finished, he
gently set his hands on
my shoulders and
gazed at me so
tenderly that I lowered
my eyes with a shiver.

Roses in the night

As soon as night reaches
the sky,

the world belongs to us,
and the gods.

We go from fields to
spring,

dark woods to glades,
wherever our bare feet
take us.

The little stars shine
bright enough

for the little shadows that
we are.

Sometimes, beneath low
boughs

we find sleeping
deer.

Mais plus charmant la nuit
que toute autre chose,

Il est un lieu connu de nous
seuls

Et qui nous attire à travers la
forêt:

Un buisson de roses
mystérieuses.

Car rien n'est divin sur la
terre

A l'égal du parfum des roses
dans la nuit.

Comment se fait-il qu'au
temps où j'étais seule

Je ne m'en sentais pas
enivrée?

Les remords

D'abord je n'ai pas répondu,
Et j'avais la honte sur les
joues,

Et les battements de mon
cœur

Faisaient mal à mes seins.

Puis j'ai résisté, j'ai dit: «Non.
Non.»

J'ai tourné la tête en arrière
Et le baiser n'a pas franchi
mes lèvres,

Ni l'amour mes genoux
serrés.

Alors il m'a demandé pardon,

Il m'a embrassé les cheveux,
J'ai senti son haleine brûlante,

Et il est parti... Maintenant je
suis seule.

Je regarde la place vide,
Le bois désert, la terre

foulée.

Et je mords mes poings
jusqu'au sang

Et j'étouffe mes cris dans
l'herbe.

But lovelier in the night
than all else -

it is a place known only to
us

and which draws us
through the forest -

a bush of mysterious
roses.

For nothing is divine on
earth

like the scent of roses in
the night.

How can it be that when I
was alone

I did not feel intoxicated
by it?

Remorse

At first I didn't answer,
and my cheeks flushed
with shame,

and the beating of my
heart

hurt my breasts.

Then I resisted, I said: 'No.
No.'

I turned my head away
and the kiss did not pass
my lips,

nor love my closed knees.

Then he asked my
forgiveness,

he kissed my hair,
I felt his burning breath,

and he left... Now I am
alone.

I look at the empty space,
the deserted wood, the
trampled ground.

And I bite my fists to
blood

and stifle my cries in the
grass.

Le sommeil interrompu Sleep, interrupted

Toute seule je m'étais
endormie,
Comme une perdrix dans la
bruyère...
Le vent léger, le bruit des
eaux,
La douceur de la nuit
m'avaient retenue là.

All alone I was
sleeping,
like a partridge in the
heather...
The gentle wind, the
sound of water,
the softness of the night
held me there.

Je me suis endormie,
imprudente,
Et je me suis réveillée en criant,
Et j'ai lutté, et j'ai pleuré;
Mais déjà il était trop tard.
Et que peuvent les mains
d'une enfant?

I was sleeping,
unwary,
and I woke crying out,
and I fought, and I wept;
but it was already too late.
And what can a child's
hands do?

Il ne me quitta pas. Au
contraire,
Plus tendrement dans ses
bras,
Il me serra contre lui et je ne
vis plus
Au monde ni la terre ni les
arbres
Mais seulement la lueur de
ses yeux...

He did not leave me. On
the contrary,
still more tenderly in his
arms
he held me to him and I
no longer saw
anything of the earth or
the trees
but only the gleam of his
eyes...

A toi, Kypris victorieuse, je
consacre
Ces offrandes encore
mouillées de rosée,
Vestiges des douleurs de la
vierge,
Témoins de mon sommeil et
de ma résistance.

To you, victorious Kypris,
I consecrate
these offerings still wet
with dew,
relics of a virgin's
sorrows,
testament to my sleep
and to my resistance.

Claude Debussy

L'isle joyeuse (1903-4)

Angélique Ionatos (1954-2021)

From *Sappho de Mytilène* (1990)

Sappho, adapted by Odysseus Elytis

Astéron Panton

Most beautiful star of all

ἀστέρων πάντων ὁ κάλλιστος
Ἔσπερε πάντα φέρων ὅσα
φαινολις ἐσκέδασ'
Αυως
φέρεις ὄιν φέρεις αἶγα
φέρεις ἀπυ μάτερι
παῖδα

Most beautiful star of all
Evening star, bringing back
everything scattered by
shining Dawn
the sheep and the goats
and the child from its
mother

Anthe' Amerghissan

Gathering flowers

ἄνθε' ἀμέργισαν παῖδ' ἄγαν
ἀπάλαν
πόλυ πάκτιδος
ἀδυμελεστέρα
γάλακτος λευκοτέρα
ῥύδατος ἀπαλωτέρα
πηκτίδων ἐμμελεστέρα
ἵππου γαυροτέρα
ρόδων ἀζροτέρα
ίματιου ἐάνου
μαλακωτέρα
χρυσού τιμιθέρα

Such a sweet girl
gathering flowers
gifted with a voice lovelier
than the lyre
whiter than milk
more dulcet than water
more melodious than lyres
more proud than a horse
more delicate than roses
more supple than a lovely
garment
more precious than gold

Rita Strohl

Berceuse from 12 *chants de Bilitis*

Pierre Louÿs

Dors: j'ai demandé à
Sardes tes jouets, et tes
vêtements à Babylone.
Dors, tu es fille de Bilitis
et d'un roi du soleil
levant.

Sleep: I have sent for toys
from Sardinia, and
clothes from Babylon.
Sleep; you are the
daughter of Bilitis and a
king of the rising sun.

Les bois, ce sont les palais
qu'on bâtit pour toi seule et
que je t'ai donnés. Les
troncs des pins, ce sont les
colonnes; les hautes
branches, ce sont les
voûtes.

The woods are the palaces
built for you alone, which I
have given you. The
trunks of pines are the
columns; the high
branches, the vaulted
ceilings.

Dors. Pour qu'il ne t'éveille
pas, je vendrai le soleil à la
mer. Le vent des ailes de la
colombe est moins léger
que ton haleine.

Sleep. That it might not
wake you, I will sell the sun
to the sea. Your breath is
lighter than the wind from
a dove's wings.

Dors. Fille de moi, chair
de ma chair, tu diras quand
tu ouvriras les yeux, si tu
veux la plaine ou la ville, ou
la montagne ou la lune, ou
le cortège blanc des dieux.

Sleep. Daughter of mine,
flesh of my flesh, when
you open your eyes, tell
me if you want meadow or
town, or the mountain, the
moon, or the white
procession of the gods.

Translations of Schumann by Richard Stokes from The Book of Lieder published by Faber & Faber, with thanks to George Bird, co-author of The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder, published by Victor Gollancz Ltd. Strohl 'La flûte de Pan' and 'La chevelure' and Debussy by Richard Stokes from A French Song Companion (Johnson/Stokes) published by OUP. All other Strohl and Ionatos by Jean du Monde.