

# WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 16 September 2023  
1.00pm

## Inheriting the Earth

Ruby Hughes soprano  
United Strings of Europe

Julian Azkoul director

Eleanor Fagg violin

Julia Loucks violin

Ariel Lang violin

Helena Buckie violin

Christine Anderson viola

Michelle Bruil viola

Raphael Lang cello

Kirsten Jenson cello

Marianne Schofield double bass

Parker Ramsey harp

Joanna Marsh (b.1970)

*In Winter's House* (2019) *arranged by Julian Azkoul*

Lili Boulanger (1893-1918)

*Reflets* (1911) *arranged by Rhian Samuel*

Rhian Samuel (b.1944)

*My River Runs to Thee* from *Lovesongs and Observations* (1989)  
*arranged by Rhian Samuel*

Oswaldo Golijov (b.1960)

*3 Songs for soprano and orchestra* (2002)  
*arranged by Julian Azkoul*

*Night of the Flying Horses • Lúa Descolorida •  
How Slow the Wind*

Joanna Marsh (b.1970)

*Another Eden* (2022)  
Commissioned by United Strings of Europe

Errollyn Wallen (b.1958)

*Timeless* (2022, rev. 2023)  
*On the Mountain* (2010, rev. 2023)  
*Rain* (1998, rev. 2023)



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The fragile beauty of the natural world is a theme that has long interested musicians, whether obliquely via the inspiration of nature and poetry or, in more recent works especially, by directly drawing an audience's attention to our responsibilities as custodians of the planet: 'inheriting the earth' and nurturing it for future generations.

Originally composed for a choir of tenors and basses but later arranged for strings, **Joanna Marsh's** *In Winter's House* is to a poem by Jane Draycott (b.1954). Written from the perspective of a child whose imagination is sparked by the season's play of darkness and light, the piece communicates a sense of hope glimmering in winter's gloom. Marsh's opening motif becomes integral to the fabric of the music, developing a glowing harmonic richness as the song unfolds. Joanna Marsh addresses the erosion of earth's beauty and the deep desire to preserve it in *Another Eden*, a work commissioned by the United Strings of Europe. *Another Eden* is for strings divided evenly into six parts, and is structured as a passacaglia – a form which, like a chaconne, is built around a recurring line; but whereas in a chaconne this is restricted to the bass, in a passacaglia the recurring theme may be used in other parts of the texture.

The watery imagery of poetry by Maurice Maeterlinck and Emily Dickinson, in settings by **Lili Boulanger** and **Rhian Samuel**, reminds us of the delicate ecosystems found in our rivers and seas. According to her sister, the teacher Nadia Boulanger, Lili's gifts developed early: 'From the age of six to 16, she studied harmony, played a little piano, violin, cello and even the harp, while discovering new scores, such as Debussy's *Pelléas*.' Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* was to a Maeterlinck libretto, and although the poet was accustomed to such prominent composers setting his texts, Lili Boulanger was the only composer he would allow to adapt his play *La princesse Maleine*. In 1913 Lili Boulanger became the first woman to win the prestigious Prix de Rome, and her seductive, impressionistic 'Reflets' was composed not long before this achievement, in 1911, to Maeterlinck's melancholy and dream-like text. We hear an arrangement of 'Reflets' by Welsh composer Rhian Samuel, followed by one of Samuel's six Emily Dickinson settings, *Lovesongs and Observations*. In 'My River Runs to Thee', in Samuel's arrangement for voice, harp and strings, the fluid soprano line and swelling dynamics echo the poem's imagery, while shifting harmony traces its passionate emotional undercurrent, culminating in a radiant final chord.

Two of Dickinson's poems are used in the last of Argentine composer **Oswaldo Golijov's** *3 Songs for soprano and orchestra*, each of which was written separately before being brought together as a set and arranged by **Julian Azkoul**. First comes 'Night of the Flying Horses' to words originally by Sally Potter from her film *The Man Who Cried*, an ill-fated love

story between a Romani man and Jewish woman. Golijov combines the Yiddish lullaby 'Close your eyes', a sorrowful Romanian song called a *doina* and a theme taken from the film's soundtrack by the Romani band Taraf de Haïdouks. 'Lúa Descolorida' was composed in 1999 for Dawn Upshaw. The Galician poet Rosalia de Castro's poem is in Galego (the language of Galicia) and, according to the composer, 'defines despair in a way that is simultaneously tender and tragic'. Golijov adds that his 'musical setting is a constellation of clearly defined symbols that affirm contradictory things at the same time'. The final song is 'How Slow the Wind', which comes from the Dickinson lines: 'How slow the wind, how slow the sea, how late their feathers be!' Golijov explains: 'I had in mind one of those seconds in life that is frozen in the memory, forever – a sudden death, a single instant in which life turns upside down'.

There are few composers more alive to the shifting, awe-inspiring power of nature than **Errollyn Wallen**, who resides in a lighthouse on Strathy Point in the far north of Scotland. Wallen finds the sea's motion and the lighthouse's isolation a perfect combination for productivity: 'the sea is very busy, so I should be busy, too'; and the place has a special atmosphere: 'I carry it in my heart wherever I go'. In common with Dickinson's use of watery themes to reflect human feeling, Wallen's poem 'Timeless' connects the narrator with nature: 'I am timeless like the water / That will carry me home...' 'Timeless' is from Wallen's song cycle *The Lake*, composed and premiered in 2022.

At the request of Ruby Hughes, Errollyn Wallen made new arrangements of 'Timeless', and of 'Rain' and 'On the Mountain', for this recital. Wallen, who makes her own Wigmore Hall debut on 28 October, says of this collaboration: 'Ruby has done so much for me and my music through her many performances of my music. She has a very special relationship and understanding of my work. My hope is that these arrangements, for voice and string orchestra, will bring a new dimension to the songs and I am delighted to be working with United Strings of Europe for the first time.'

'Rain' is one of Wallen's earliest songs: 'I recorded it on my labour-of-love first album *Meet Me at Harold Moores* which I also produced. The CD travelled to space on the STS-115 shuttle with my astronaut friend, Steve MacLean, who said that "Rain" was the song he listened to most while in space.' 'On the Mountain' is a deeply moving song dedicated to the memory of Martin Luther King Jnr, in which the Biblical image of the mountain top symbolises both the stature of the man, and the 'mountain of love' that is his legacy.

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**Joanna Marsh** (b.1970)

**In Winter's House** (2019)

arranged by Julian Azkoul

**Lili Boulanger** (1893-1918)

**Reflets** (1911)

arranged by Rhian Samuel

*Maurice Maeterlinck*

**Reflections**

Sous l'eau du songe qui  
s'élève

Mon âme a peur, mon âme a  
peur.

Et la lune luit dans mon cœur

Plongé dans les sources du  
rêve!

Sous l'ennui morne des  
roseaux,

Seul le reflet profond des  
choses,

Des lys, des palmes et des  
roses

Pleurent encore au fond des  
eaux.

Les fleurs s'effeuillent une à  
une

Sur le reflet du firmament.

Pour descendre,  
éternellement

Sous l'eau du songe et dans  
la lune.

Beneath the water of the  
dream that rises,

my soul is afraid, my soul  
is afraid.

And the moon shines into  
my heart

that is bathed in the  
dream's source!

Beneath the sad tedium  
of the reeds,

only the deep reflection  
of things,

of lilies, palms and roses,

still weep on the water's  
bed.

One by one the flowers  
shed their leaves

upon the firmament's  
reflection

to descend, eternally,

beneath the dream's  
water and into the  
moon.

**Rhian Samuel** (b.1944)

**My River Runs to Thee from *Lovesongs***

**and *Observations*** (1989)

arranged by Rhian Samuel

*Emily Dickinson*

My River runs to thee—

Blue Sea! Wilt welcome me?

My River wait reply—

Oh Sea—look graciously—

I'll fetch thee Brooks

From spotted nooks—

Say—Sea—Take Me!

**Oswaldo Golijov** (b.1960)

**3 Songs for soprano and orchestra** (2002)

arranged by Julian Azkoul

**Night of the Flying Horses**

*Barry Davis*

Mach tsu di eigelech

Un du vest koomen

Tsu yenem zissn land

Fun baley-khloymess

Close your eyes

and you shall go

to that sweet land

all dreamers know

Avoo milch oon honik

Flissn tomid

Un dayn mameh

Hit dir op.

Where milk and honey

always flow

and mama

watches over you.

Farshpray dein fligelech

Faygele meins

Mein tochter sertseh

Mein klayn zingfaygele

Spread your wings

my Fegele

my darling girl

my singing bird

Hayb oyf dein ponim

Aroyf tsoom himmel

Ich vel dich onkookn

Vee doo fleegst.

Lift your face

towards the sky

I will be watching

as you fly.

Gedenkshe (teirinke)

Az koomt der morgn

Vet zein der tatte

Ahaym gefloygn

Remember dear

when morning comes

your mama's here:

fly home to me.

Dos land foon chloymess

Mooztoo aveklozn

Dein eign zisser haym

Vaystoo iz doh.

The land of dreams

must let you go

your own sweet home

is here, you know.

## Lúa Descolorida

*Rosalía de Castro*

Tristeza cal a miña.  
Ten a morada escura,  
Se sabe onde a morte  
Pois nin neste nin noutros

Ó espazo que recorres  
Nin no mundo en que estou  
nin nas alturas.  
Mindos teréis fortuna.  
Me vises de tan alto.

Me leve adonde non  
recorden nunca,  
Mais non lle contes nada,

Lúa descolorida  
Lúa descolorida  
Lévame, caladiña, nun teu  
raio.  
Eu ben sei que n'alumas

E dille que me leve adonde  
habita.  
Dille que corpo e alma  
xuntamente  
Descolorida lúa,  
Como cor de ouro pálido,

Astro das almas orfas,  
Vai contaloó teu dono,

Vesme i eu non quixera

sadness as sad as mine.  
has her dark mansion,  
If you know where Death  
because my fate won't  
change

Take me, silently, in your  
ray

neither in this world, not  
in the heights above.  
here or in other worlds.  
to see me from the  
heights above.  
to a place where I won't  
be remembered,  
But don't tell him  
anything,

moon, colourless:  
Moon, colourless  
to the space of your  
journey.  
I know that you don't  
illuminate  
and tell him to take me to  
his place.  
tell her to take my body  
and soul together  
moon, colourless,  
like the colour of pale  
gold:  
Star of the orphan souls,  
Go and tell it to your  
master  
you see me here and I  
wouldn't like you

## How Slow the Wind

*Emily Dickinson*

How slow the Wind –  
How slow the sea –  
How late their feathers be!

Is it too late to touch you, Dear?  
We this moment knew –  
Love Marine and Love terrene –  
Love celestial too –

## Joanna Marsh (b.1970)

### Another Eden (2022)

## Errollyn Wallen (b.1958)

### Timeless (2022, rev. 2023)

*Errollyn Wallen*

When I sing in the night  
When I glide across oceans and stars  
See the Northern Lights  
Touch the Milky Way

I am timeless like the water  
That will carry me home to the Lake  
Where the souls of those who love do wait

When I sing in the night  
When I glide across oceans and stars  
See the Northern Lights  
Touch the Milky Way

I am timeless like the water

That will carry me home  
Home to the Lake

### On the Mountain (2010, rev. 2023)

to the memory of Martin Luther King

*Errollyn Wallen*

He sits on the mountain

He sits on the mountain  
That's where you'll find him

All alone

He walks on the mountain of love  
And what have I done?

I've led a blameless life  
But have I had a dream?  
On the mountain?

And I've waited so long  
And I've waited so long  
And I've waited so long  
And I've suffered so long

How we've suffered  
And we've waited  
And called out your name  
And we pray for a sign  
But these chains weigh us down

And we can't see your face  
And these chains drag us down  
And we're

All alone

All alone

He had a dream on the mountain top  
Where is that dream on the mountain top?

He had a dream that put hope, like a child's heart

Now he's gone

Now he's gone

Now he's gone

## **Rain** (1998, rev. 2023)

*Errollyn Wallen*

And another day  
As I rise up  
To greet the rain.

And another year  
Since we first heard  
There would be  
No sun at all.

But how wonderful is the rain.

You should find yourself  
Something that's big and bright  
And orange.

Maybe I should  
Paint myself a large square  
Of  
Blue.

But how wonderful is the rain.