

WIGMORE HALL 125

Sunday 19 July 2026
3.00pm

Nombulelo Yende soprano
Mariusz Kłubczuk piano

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

4 Lieder Op. 27 (1894)

No. 1 *Ruhe, meine Seele* • No. 2 *Cäcilie* •

No. 3 *Heimliche Aufforderung* • No. 4 *Morgen*

Sergey Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

In the silence of the secret night Op. 4 No. 3 (1890-3)

Sing not to me, beautiful maiden Op. 4 No. 4

Twilight Op. 21 No. 3 (1902)

Lilacs Op. 21 No. 5

How fair this spot Op. 21 No. 7

In my garden at night Op. 38 No. 1 (1916)

Sleep Op. 38 No. 5

Sibusiso Njeza (b.1982)

Winnie's Aria from *Madiba, the African Opera* (2013)

Wamuhle Mzansi Africa (by 2019)

Margaret Bonds (1913-1972)

The Negro Speaks of Rivers (1941)

He's got the whole world in His hand (pub. 1963)



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Like so many young composers, **Strauss** honed his craft by writing songs. From 1885 (when he turned 21) to 1891, he published a volume of Lieder almost every year, before embarking on his first opera, the decidedly (and derivatively) Wagnerian *Guntrum*. What brought him back to the intimate world of song was his marriage to Pauline de Ahna on 10 September 1894. An aspiring young soprano, Pauline had taken the part of Freihild in the première of *Guntrum*, as well as singing Elisabeth in Wagner's *Tannhäuser* at Bayreuth. The 4 Lieder, Op. 27, were written to celebrate the couple's wedding and contain some of Strauss's most inspired music.

Strauss generally avoided grouping his songs into cycles, but when the four numbers of Op. 27 are considered in order of composition, a narrative begins to emerge. The words of 'Ruhe, meine Seele' (No. 1), written on 7 May 1894, suggest a longing for peace after a period of anxiety. Next came 'Morgen' (No. 4), written on 21 May, in which a pair of lovers silently reflect on the happiness that they hope to share together in future. This was followed the very next day by 'Heimliche Aufforderung' (No. 3), in which the lovers steal away from the crowd to enjoy a moment of blissful intimacy. 'Cécilie' (No. 2) was added on 9 September, the eve of Strauss's wedding to Pauline, and captures his evident excitement at the life that awaited them.

Pauline was delighted by this musical offering and often programmed the songs in her solo recitals. What Strauss's poets made of such uxorious inspiration is less clear. Heinrich Hart was a pioneer of naturalism in German literature, and Karl Henckell and John Henry Mackay were associated with radical political circles in Berlin, a city with a very different atmosphere to Strauss's comfortably bourgeois Munich. Indeed, Mackay was an outspoken advocate for gay rights, and his 1926 novel, *Der Puppenjunge* (The Hustler), was described by Christopher Isherwood as painting 'a picture of the Berlin sexual underworld early in this century which I know, from my own experience, to be authentic'.

In 1906, **Rachmaninov** left Russia, settling in Dresden where he composed such masterpieces as his Second Symphony, First Piano Sonata, Third Piano Concerto and *The Isle of the Dead*. He also encountered Strauss's operas, *Salome* and *Elektra*. *Salome* he found 'intolerable', and he was even harsher on what he described as 'the stupendous ugliness of *Elektra*, of which I understood not a note'. Rachmaninov would surely been more generous had he known the lush romanticism of Strauss's Lieder, which share many of the same sources of inspiration as his own songs.

The 6 Romances, Op. 4, date from 1890-3 and reflect the intense emotional attachments that were formed during long summers spent in the Russian countryside. *In the silence of the secret night* sets

intensely erotic words by Afanasy Fet. It is dedicated to Vera Skalon, Rachmaninov's teenage sweetheart, whose mother put an end to their budding romance. Rachmaninov was luckier when it came to Natalia Satina, for whom *Sing not to me, beautiful maiden* was written. Although she and Rachmaninov were first cousins – and hence forbidden to marry by the Orthodox church – they finally wed in 1902 after a long courtship. To pay for a honeymoon that took the young couple to Vienna, Venice, Lucerne and Bayreuth, Rachmaninov composed the 12 Romances, Op. 21, knowing his publisher would pay him handsomely. Despite the haste in which they were written, they contain some of Rachmaninov's finest music. Dedicated to the soprano, Nadezha Zabela, *Twilight* is a delicate portrait of a woman contemplating the evening sky in silent, solitary rapture. Both *Lilacs* and *How fair this spot* take poems by early 20th-century women poets – Yekaterina Beketova and Glafira Galina respectively. Rachmaninov's literary taste was sometimes the object of criticism, and in 1912, he received an anonymous letter from the budding symbolist poet, Marietta Shaginyan, taking him to task for setting so much supposedly mediocre verse. It was Shaginyan who proposed the modernists poets that Rachmaninov included in his 6 Poems, Op. 38 (1916), although she was offended that he dedicated them not to her, but to the soprano, Nina Koshets (with whom he may have been romantically involved at the time).

When Rachmaninov arrived in the United States in 1918, he was frequently asked what he made of modern American music. 'America is young,' he replied to one interviewer, 'but as time goes on it will gradually acquire its own folk songs, and until this comes about the natural expression of its music will be as many-tongued as the sum of the various nationalities who are finding a home here.' **Bonds** was one of the pioneering African American musicians set on forging that cosmopolitan American sound. The first African American soloist to appear with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, she performed Florence Price's Piano Concerto at the 1933 World's Fair. *The Negro Speaks of Rivers* sets words by Langston Hughes, one of the leaders of the Harlem Renaissance. Bonds discovered the poem when still a student at Northwestern University and drew inspiration from it as she battled prejudice and discrimination. *He's got the whole world in His hand* is an African American spiritual, which Bonds treats as wholly integral to the classical art-song tradition. Born in 1982, **Sibusiso Njeza** is one of the young black composers to have come to maturity in post-apartheid democratic South Africa. 'Winnie's Aria' is from *Madiba, an African Opera* (2014), which celebrates the life of Nelson Mandela, and *Wamuhle Mzansi Africa* speaks to the choral tradition of which Njeza is such a prominent representative.

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Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

4 Lieder Op. 27 (1894)

No. 1 Ruhe, meine Seele!

Karl Friedrich Henckell

Nicht ein Lüftchen, Regt sich leise, Sanft entschlummert Ruht der Hain; Durch der Blätter Dunkle Hülle Stiehlt sich lichter Sonnenschein. Ruhe, ruhe, Meine Seele, Deine Stürme Gingen wild, Hast getobt und Hast gezittert, Wie die Brandung, Wenn sie schwillt! Diese Zeiten Sind gewaltig, Bringen Herz und Hirn in Not – Ruhe, ruhe, Meine Seele, Und vergiss, Was dich bedroht!	Rest, my soul! Not even a soft breeze stirs, in gentle sleep the wood rests; through the leaves' dark veil bright sunshine steals. Rest, rest, my soul, your storms were wild, you raged and you quivered, like breakers, when they surge! These times are violent, cause heart and mind distress – rest, rest, my soul, and forget what threatens you!
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No. 2 Cäcilie

Heinrich Hart

Wenn Du es wüsstest, Was träumen heisst Von brennenden Küssen, Vom Wandern und Ruhen Mit der Geliebten, Aug' in Auge Und kosend und plaudernd – Wenn Du es wüsstest, Du neigtest Dein Herz.	Cecily If you knew what it is to dream of burning kisses, of walking and resting with one's love, gazing at each other and caressing and talking – if you knew, your heart would turn to me.
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Wenn Du es wüsstest, Was bangen heisst In einsamen Nächten, Umschauert vom Sturm, Da Niemand tröstet Milden Mundes Die kampfmüde Seele – Wenn Du es wüsstest, Du kämest zu mir.	If you knew what it is to worry on lonely nights, in the frightening storm, with no soft voice to comfort the struggle-weary soul – if you knew, you would come to me.
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Wenn Du es wüsstest, Was leben heisst Umhaucht von der Gottheit	If you knew what it is to live enveloped in God's
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Weltschaffendem Atem, Zu schweben empor Lichtgetragen, Zu seligen Höh'en – Wenn Du es wüsstest, Du lebstest mit mir.	world-creating breath, to soar upwards, borne on light to blessed heights – if you knew, you would live with me.
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No. 3 Heimliche Aufforderung

John Henry Mackay

Auf, hebe die funkelnde Schale empor zum Mund, Und trinke beim Freudenmahle dein Herz gesund.	Secret invitation Come, raise to your lips the sparkling goblet, and drink at this joyful feast your heart to health.
Und wenn du sie hebst, so winke mir heimlich zu, Dann lächle ich, und dann trinke ich still wie du...	And when you raise it, give me a secret sign, then I shall smile and drink as quietly as you...
Und still gleich mir betrachte um uns das Heer Der trunkenen Schwätzer – verachte sie nicht zu sehr.	And quietly like me, look around at the hordes of drunken gossips – do not despise them too much.
Nein, hebe die blinkende Schale, gefüllt mit Wein, Und lass beim lärmenden Mahle sie glücklich sein.	No, raise the glittering goblet, filled with wine, and let them be happy at the noisy feast.
Doch hast du das Mahl genossen, den Durst gestillt, Dann verlasse der lauten Genossen festfreudiges Bild,	But once you have savoured the meal, quenched your thirst, leave the loud company of happy revellers,
Und wandle hinaus in den Garten zum Rosenstrauch, – Dort will ich dich dann erwarten nach altem Brauch,	And come out into the garden to the rose- bush, – there I shall wait for you as I've always done,
Und will an die Brust dir sinken, eh du's gehofft, Und deine Küsse trinken, wie ehemals oft,	And I shall sink on your breast, before you could hope, and drink your kisses, as often before,
Und flechten in deine Haare der Rose Pracht – O komm, du wunderbare, ersehnte Nacht!	And twine in your hair the glorious rose – Ah! come, o wondrous, longed-for night.

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

No. 4 Morgen!

John Henry Mackay

Und morgen wird die Sonne
wieder scheinen
Und auf dem Wege, den ich
gehen werde,
Wird uns, die Glücklichen,
sie wieder einen,
Inmitten dieser
sonnenatmenden Erde ...

Und zu dem Strand, dem
weiten, wogenblauen,
Werden wir still und
langsam niedersteigen,
Stumm werden wir uns in
die Augen schauen,
Und auf uns sinkt des
Glückes stummes
Schweigen ...

Tomorrow!

And tomorrow the sun
will shine again
and on the path that I
shall take,
it will unite us, happy
ones, again,
amid this same sun-
breathing earth ...

And to the shore, broad,
blue-waved,
we shall quietly and
slowly descend,
speechless we shall gaze
into each other's eyes,
and the speechless
silence of bliss shall fall
on us ...

Sergey Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

In the silence of the secret night Op. 4 No. 3

(1890-3)

Afanasy Fet

O, dolga budu ya, v molchani
nochi tainoi,
Kovarnyi lepet tvoi, ulybku,
vzor, vzor sluchainyi,
Perstam poslushnuyu volos,
volos tvoikh gustuyu pryad
Iz myslei izgonyat i snova
prizyvay;
Sheptat i popravlyat bylye
vyrazheniya
Rechei moikh s toboi,
ispolnennykh smushcheniya,
I v opyaneni, naperekor
umu,
Zavetnym imenem budit
nochnuyu tmu.
O, dolgo budu ya, v molchani
nochi tainoi,
Zavetnym imenem budit
nochnuyu tmu.

O, long will I, in the silence
of the mysterious night,
your sly chatter, smile,
glance, casual glance,
hair pliant to my fingers,
your thick shock of hair,
banish from my thoughts
and summon back again,
whisper and improve past
words
I spoke to you, so full of
shy confusion,
and in rapture against all
reason,
awake night's darkness with
your cherished name.
O, long will I, in the silence
of the mysterious night,
awake night's darkness with
your cherished name.

Sing not to me, beautiful maiden Op. 4 No. 4

(1890-3)

Alexander Pushkin

Ne poi, krasavitsa, pri
mne
Ty pesen Gruzii pechalnoi:
Napominayut mne one
Druguyu zhizn i bereg
dalnoi.

Uvy, napominayut
mne
Tvoi zhestokiye napevy
I step, i noch, i pri
lune
Cherty dalyokoi, bednoi
devy!...

Ya prizrak milyi, rokovoï,
Tebya uvidev, zabyvayu;
No ty poyosh i predomnoi
Ego ya vnov voobrazhayu.

Ne poi, krasavitsa, pri
mne
Ty pesen Gruzii pechalnoi:
Napominayut mne one
Druguyu zhizn i bereg
dalnoi.

Sing not to me, beautiful
maiden,
your songs of sad Georgia:
they remind me
of another life and distant
shore.

Alas, they bring back
memories,
your cruel melodies,
of the steppe at night,
and, in the moonlight,
the features of a poor
maiden far away!...

Seeing you, I forget
that dear, fateful vision;
but when you sing, again
I imagine it before me.

Sing not to me, beautiful
maiden,
your songs of sad Georgia:
they remind me
of another life and distant
shore.

Twilight Op. 21 No. 3 (1902)

Jean-Marie Guyau, trans. Ivan Tkhorzhevsky

Ona zadumalas. Odná pered
oknom,
Sklanyas, ona sidit
i v sumrake
nochnom
Mertsayet dolgii vzor; i v
sineve bezbrezhnoi
Temneyushchikh nebss
ronyaya luch svoi
nezhnyi,
Voskhodyat zvyozdochki
besshumnoyu tolpoi;
I kazhetsya, shto tam kakoi-
ta svetlyi roi
Tainstvenna parit,
i, slovna
voskhishchyonnyi,
Trepeshchet nad yeyo
golovkoyu sklonyonnyi.

She's lost in thought. Alone,
before the window,
she sits, her head
inclined, and in the
evening twilight a long
gaze radiates from her eyes;
and in the boundless blue
of the darkening sky,
sending down tender
rays of light,
little stars come out in a
silent throng;
and it seems some kind
of bright swarm
soars there mysteriously,
and, in heightened
excitement,
trembles high above her
lowered head.

Lilacs Op. 21 No. 5 (1902)

Ekaterina Beketova

Poutru, na zare, Po rosistoi trave, Ya poidu svezhim utrom dyshat; I v dushistuyu ten, Gde tesnitsya siren, Ya poidu svoyo schastye iskat...	In the morning, at dawn, through dewy grass, I walk and breathe the fresh morning air, and to the fragrant shade, where lilacs cluster, I'll go in search of my happiness...
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V zhizni schastye odno Mne naiti suzhdeno, I to schastye v sireni zhiviot; Na zelyonykh vetvyakh, Na dushistykh kistyakh Moyo bednoye schastye tsvetyot...	Only one happiness am I destined to find in life, and that happiness lives in the lilacs; on green branches, in fragrant clusters, my poor happiness blossoms...
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How fair this spot Op. 21 No. 7 (1902)

Galina

Zdes khorosho...Vzglyani: vdali Ognyom gorit reka, Tsvetnym kovrom luga legli, Beleyut oblaka.	Here it's so fine...Look: in the distance the river glitters like fire, the meadows are a carpet of colour, there are white clouds overhead.
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Zdes net lyudei...Zdes tishina... Zdes tolko Bog da ya. Tsvety, da staraya sosna, Da ty, mechta moya...	Here there are no people ...it's so quiet... here are only God and I. And the flowers, and the old pine tree, and you, my dream...
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In my garden at night Op. 38 No. 1 (1916)

Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Blok, after Avetik Isahakian

Nochyu v sadu u menya Plachet plakuchaya iva, I bezuteshna ona Ivushka, grustnaya iva.	At night in my garden a weeping willow weeps, and nothing will console her, sad willow, sad willow tree.
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Ranneye utro blesnyot – Nezhnaya devushka-zorka Ivushke, plachushchey gorko, Slyozy kudryami sotryot.	With morning's first light – dawn, tender maiden, from the willow, weeping bitterly, will wipe away the tears with her tresses.
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Sleep Op. 38 No. 5 (1916)

Fyodor Sologub

V mire net nichego Dozhdelenneye sna, Chary yest u nego, U nego tishina. U nego na ustakh Ni pechal i ni smekh, I v bezdonnykh ochakh Mnogo tainykh utekh. U nego shiroki, Shiroki dva kryla, I legki, tak legki, Kak polnochnaya mgla. Ne ponyat, kak nesyot, I kuda i na chyom On krylom ne vzmakhnet I ne dvinet plechom.	Nothing in the world is more wished for than sleep, he has powers to charm, he has stillness. On his lips there is neither sorrow nor laughter, and in his fathomless eyes are many secret pleasures. He has wide, two wide wings, and they're light, as light as midnight darkness. How you're borne is unknown, and whence, and on what, he won't flap his wing, and he won't move his shoulder.
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Sibusiso Njeza (b.1982)

Winnie's Aria from *Madiba, the African Opera* (2013)

I don't know what's gotten into me,
I can't stop thinking about him,
He looks old but his smile.
I like his tallness, oh I love this tallness,
His voice, his voice makes my knees weak and sweeps
me off my feet,
But my father will never agree,
But I don't care, this is the father of my children.

Wamuhle Mzansi Africa (by 2019)

When I think about how beautiful it is, tears well up in my
eyes.
When I hear those sounds, I feel like singing and
humming.
Hey! The beauty of mountains, forests and seas, gently
flowing rivers,
Oh! How beautiful you are South Africa.
When I think of the plains, the stars, the moon and the
sun,
When I hear the birds, I want to sing and chirp.
You are kind, gentle, and humble, you are a land of milk
and honey.
You are powerful, skilful,
Shine brightly star of Africa,
My home, my Mzansi,
Oh! How beautiful you are South Africa.

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

Margaret Bonds (1913-1972)

The Negro Speaks of Rivers (1941)

Langston Hughes

I've known rivers:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the
flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the Pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln
went down to New Orleans and I've seen its muddy
bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:

Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

He's got the whole world in His hand (pub. 1963)

Traditional

He's got the whole world in His hand. ...

He's got the woods and the waters in His hand,
He's got the sun and the moon right in His hand,
He's got the whole world in His hand.

He's got the birds and the bees right in His hand,
He's got the beast of the field right in His hand,
He's got the whole world in His hand.

He's got you and me right in His hand,
He's got ev'rybody in His hand,
He's got the whole world in His hand.

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