

WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 19 March 2023
7.30pm

The Coleridge-Taylor Series is made possible with support from the Wigmore Hall Endowment Fund.

Across the pond

Elizabeth Llewellyn soprano
Jess Dandy contralto
Simon Lepper piano
Paterson Joseph actor

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912) From *African Romances* Op. 17 (1897)
An African love song • A prayer •
Dawn • How shall I woo thee?

Spiritual
Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
Deep River
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child from *24 Negro
Melodies* Op. 59 No. 1 (pub. 1905)

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)
From *Biblical Songs* Op. 99 (1894)
Clouds and darkness • The Lord is my shepherd •
I will sing new songs unto the Lord

Interval

Amy Beach (1867-1944)
3 Browning Songs Op. 44 (1889-1900)
*The year's at the spring • Ah, Love, but a day! •
I send my heart up to thee!*

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957) Schneeglöckchen Op. 9 No. 1 (1911-3)
Ständchen Op. 9 No. 3 (1911-3)
Liebesbriefchen Op. 9 No. 4 (1911-3)
Sommer Op. 9 No. 6 (1911-3)

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
The Soul's Expression Op. 42 (1900)
The Soul's Expression • Tears • Grief • Comfort

with readings of letters and articles written by Coleridge-Taylor, Booker T Washington, and poetry
and letters written by Paul Laurence Dunbar

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On 17 February 1897 the African American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar arrived in Liverpool aboard the *Auronia* to begin a 5-and-a-half-month tour of poetry readings in Britain. At the same time the 21-year-old Black British composer **Samuel Coleridge-Taylor** was in his final year of study at the Royal College of Music. Coleridge-Taylor knew Dunbar's poetry and searched him out when he heard that he was in London, hoping to collaborate with him in writing some vocal music. The two met and, on 5 June, gave a joint recital at the Salle Erard in Great Marlborough Street, with Coleridge-Taylor singing and playing his songs and Dunbar reciting his poetry. After the concert Coleridge-Taylor and Dunbar together selected the seven poems that were to make up the *African Romances*; they were composed in just a few weeks in June and July 1897, and were published that August.

Two years previously, in America, Alice Ruth Moore, aged just 20, had published *Violets and Other Tales*, a collection of poems and short stories. Dunbar had fallen in love with a photograph of her in the *Boston Monthly Review* shortly afterwards and had written to her. They corresponded for two years and finally met in February 1897, a few days before Dunbar left for England. He proposed to her that day, and they were married on 6 March 1898, in secret because of her family's opposition. Several of the poems of the *African Romances* refer to their romance. The songs' date of 1897 makes them possibly the first art songs ever published by a Black composer setting words by a Black poet. But except for the use of the word 'African' in the title and text of 'An African love song', none of the songs, in either their words or their music, contain any explicitly African elements; they are in fact very 'European' in style. However, Dunbar awakened in Coleridge-Taylor an awareness of his African heritage, especially the tradition of Spirituals, and many of his subsequent compositions, including the *African Suite* for piano and *24 Negro Melodies*, 16 of which are based on Spirituals, display a more overtly 'African' flavour. This new musical awareness was matched by a political awareness; Coleridge-Taylor was the youngest delegate at the First Pan-African Conference, held in London in 1900, which called for self-determination for the colonised nations of Africa, and civil and political rights for all oppressed peoples.

Both **Antonín Dvořák** and **Erich Wolfgang Korngold** were born in what is now the Czech Republic, then part of Austro-Hungary, and both (one briefly, the other permanently) settled in America. Dvořák lived there from 1892 to 1895; while there he became interested in Native American and African American music. The composer Harry T Burleigh introduced him to Spirituals, which Dvořák began to incorporate into his works; his 'New World' Symphony, for instance, uses a theme similar to 'Swing low, sweet chariot'. Coleridge-Taylor had loved Dvořák's music since his student days, and Dvořák's embracing of Spirituals became another spur for Coleridge-Taylor to do the

same with his own compositions. Dvořák's *Biblical Songs* were written during his time in America.

Korngold was born in 1897, the year that Dunbar and Coleridge-Taylor met. He went to America in 1934, settling in Hollywood to write film music, and becoming an American citizen in 1943. His *Einfache Lieder* ('Simple songs') Op. 9 were however written in his teens, while living in Vienna.

Coleridge-Taylor visited America three times; in 1904, 1906 and 1910. His music was becoming widely performed there and *The New York Times* referred to him as 'The African Mahler' – Gustav Mahler being well-known in America as conductor of the New York Symphony and New York Philharmonic Orchestras and at the Met. The highlight of Coleridge-Taylor's first visit was a triumphant performance of his cantata *Hiawatha* in Washington, after which he was invited to meet President Roosevelt in the White House, a rare event then for someone of African descent. His success as a composer and conductor in Britain was in sharp contrast to the situation in the States, where it was impossible for African American classical musicians to make a career. This 'celebrity' status meant that Coleridge-Taylor was seen as a champion for the cause of freedom in America, with a choral society and even several schools named after him.

Amy Beach is the only composer in tonight's concert born in America. Her *3 Browning Songs*, setting poems by Robert Browning that speak of the triumph and power of love, connect three marriages in which love overcame substantial obstacles. The songs were begun in 1899 in Boston, Massachusetts; in the same year in London, Coleridge-Taylor married Jessie Walmisley, a singing student contemporary with him at the RCM. Their engagement was against the wishes of Jessie's racist parents (though they later relented and attended the wedding). 53 years previously Elizabeth Barrett's marriage to Robert Browning had been virulently opposed by her father (who never relented). Amy Beach's husband had initially tried to curtail her musical activities; despite her having been a child prodigy pianist, he only allowed her to give two concerts a year and only reluctantly permitted her to compose, insisting that she live 'according to his status' and exist merely 'as a society matron'. She later claimed she was nevertheless happy.

Elizabeth Barrett's family were slave owners in Jamaica, but she campaigned for the abolition of slavery. The four poems of hers that Coleridge-Taylor selected for his cycle *The Soul's Expression* in 1900 can be read as summarising an important part of what he worked for through his music; to shine a light on the struggles of Black people coming through slavery and prejudice to the hope and expectation of finding a place of acceptance and comfort.

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Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912)

From *African Romances Op. 17* (1897)

Paul Laurence Dunbar

An African love song

My heart to thy heart,
My hand to thine;
My lip to thy lips,
Kisses are wine
Brewed for the lover in sunshine and shade;
Let me drink deep, then, my African maid.

Lily to lily,
Rose unto rose;
My love to thy love
Tenderly grows.
Rend not the oak and the ivy in twain,
Nor the swart maid from her swarthier swain.

A prayer

O Lord, the hard-won miles
Have worn my stumbling feet:
Oh, soothe me with thy smiles,
And make my life complete.

The thorns were thick and keen
Where'er I trembling trod;
The way was long between
My wounded feet and God.

Where healing waters flow
Do thou my footsteps lead.
My heart is aching so;
Thy gracious balm I need.

Dawn

An angel, robed in spotless white,
Bent down and kissed the sleeping Night.
Night woke to blush; the sprite was gone.
Men saw the blush and called it Dawn.

How shall I woo thee?

How shall I woo thee to win thee, mine own?
Say in what tongue shall I tell of my love.
I who was fearless so timid have grown,
All that was eagle has turned into dove.
The path from the meadow that leads to the bars
Is more to me now than the path of the stars.

How shall I woo thee to win thee, mine own,
Thou who art fair and as far as the moon?

Had I the strength of the torrent's wild tone,
Had I the sweetness of warblers in June;
The strength and the sweetness might charm and
persuade,
But neither have I my petition to aid.

How shall I woo thee to win thee, mine own?
How shall I traverse the distance between
My humble cot and your glorious throne?
How shall a clown gain the ear of a queen?
Oh teach me the tongue that shall please thee the best,
For till I have won thee my heart may not rest.

Spiritual

Deep River

Traditional

Deep river, my home is over Jordan.
Deep river, Lord, I want to cross over into campground.

Oh, don't you want to go to that Gospel-feast?
That Promised Land, where all is peace?

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child from *24 Negro Melodies Op. 59 No. 1* (pub. 1905)

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

From *Biblical Songs Op. 99* (1894)

Liturgical text

Clouds and darkness

Oblak a mrákota jest vůkol něho, Spravedlnost a soud základ trůnu jeho. Óheň předchází jej a zapaluje	Clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgement are the habitation of his seat. There shall go a fire before him:
Vůkol nepřátele jeho. Zasvěcujít' se po okršku světa blýskání jeho; To vidouc země děsí se. Hory jako vosk rozplývají se před obličejem Hospodina, Panovníka vši země. A slávu jeho spatřují všichni národové.	and burn up his enemies on every side. His lightnings gave shine unto the world: the earth saw it, and was afraid. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord: at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. And all the people have seen his glory.

The Lord is my shepherd

Hospodin jest můj pastýř; Nebudu míti nedostatku. Na pastvách zelených pase mne, K vodám tichým mne přivodí.	The Lord is my shepherd: therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture: and lead me beside the waters of comfort.
Duši mou občerstvuje; Vodí mne po stezkách Spravedlnosti pro jméno své. Byť se mi dostalo jíti Přes údolí stínu smrti: Nebudut' se báti zlého, Nebo Ty se mnou jsi; A prut Tvůj a hůl Tvá, Tot' mne potěšuje.	He shall convert my soul and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff comfort me.

I will sing new songs unto the Lord

Zpívejte Hospodinu píseň novou, Neboť jest divné věci učinil; Zvuk vydejte, prozpěvujte A žalmy zpívejte. Zvuč, moře, i to, což v něm jest; Okršlek světa, i ti, což na něm bydlí. Řeky rukama plesejte, Spolu s nimi i hory prozpěvujte. Plesej, pole, a vše, což na něm; Plesej, země, zvuč i moře, I což v něm jest.	O sing unto the Lord a new song: for he hath done marvellous things Shew yourselves joyful unto the Lord, all ye lands: sing, rejoice, and give thanks. Let the sea make a noise, and all that therein is: the round world, and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands, and let the hills be joyful together. Let the field be joyful, and all that is in it. Let the sea make a noise, and all that therein is.
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Interval

Amy Beach (1867-1944)

3 Browning Songs Op. 44 (1889-1900)

Robert Browning

The year's at the spring

The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearl'd;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in His heaven –
All's right with the world!

Ah, Love, but a day!

Ah, Love, but a day,
And the world has changed!
The sun's away,
And the bird estranged;
The wind has dropped,
And the sky's deranged;
Summer has stopped.

Look in my eyes!
Wilt thou change too?
Should I fear surprise?
Shall I find aught new
In the old and dear,
In the good and true,
With the changing year?

Thou art a man,
But I am thy love.
For the lake, its swan;
For the dell, its dove;
And for thee — (oh, haste!)
Me, to bend above,
Me, to hold embraced.

I send my heart up to thee!

I send my heart up to thee, all my heart
In this my singing,
For the stars help me, and the sea, and the sea bears part;
The very night is clinging
Closer to Venice's streets to leave one space
Above me, whence thy face
May light my joyous heart to thee, to thee its dwelling
place.

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957)

Schneeglöckchen

Op. 9 No. 1 (1911-3)

Joseph, Freiherr von
Eichendorff

'S war doch wie ein leises
Singen
In dem Garten heute nacht,
Wie wenn laue Lüfte
gingen:
'Süsse Glöcklein, nun
erwacht,
Denn die warme Zeit wir
bringen,
Eh's noch Jemand hat
gedacht,' –
'S war kein Singen, 's war ein
Küssen,
Rührt die stillen Glöcklein
sacht,
Dass sie alle tönen müssen
Von der künft'gen bunten
Pracht.
Ach, sie konnten's nicht
erwarten,
Aber weiss vom letzten
Schnee
War noch immer Feld und
Garten,
Und sie sanken um vor Weh.
So schon manche Dichter
streckten
Sangesmüde sich hinab,
Und der Frühling, den sie
weckten,
Rauschet über ihrem Grab.

Snowdrop

There was a soft
singing
in the garden last night,
as though warm breezes
were blowing:
'Sweet snowdrops, wake
up, now,
for we bring the warm
days,
before anyone could
guess.' –
There was no singing but
much kissing,
gently shake your silent
bells,
so that they all ring
with the bright splendour
soon to be.
Ah, they couldn't
wait,
but field and garden were
still
white with the recent
snow,
and they wilted with grief.
Thus have many poets
laid themselves
down, weary with singing,
and the Spring, which
they awoke,
rustles above their grave.

Ständchen Op. 9 No. 3

(1911-3)

Joseph, Freiherr von
Eichendorff

Auf die Dächer zwischen
blassen
Wolken scheint der Mond
herfür,
Ein Student dort auf den
Gassen
Singt vor seiner Liebsten
Tür.

Serenade

From pallid clouds the
moon
looks out across the
roofs,
there in the street a
student sings
before his sweetheart's
door.

Und die Brunnen rauschen
wieder
Durch die stille Einsamkeit,
Und der Wald vom Berge
nieder,
Wie in alter, schöner
Zeit.
So in meinen jungen Tagen
Hab ich manche
Sommernacht
Auch die Laute hier
geschlagen
Und manch lust'ges Lied
erdacht.

Aber von der stillen
Schwelle
Trugen sie mein Lieb zur
Ruh,
Und du, fröhlicher Geselle,
Singe, sing nur immer zu!

Liebesbriefchen Op. 9

No. 4 (1911-3)

Elisabeth Honold

Fern von dir
Denk' ich dein,
Kindelein,

Einsam bin ich,
Doch mir blieb
Treue Lieb'.

Was ich denk',
Bist nur,
Herzensruh.

Sehe stets
Hold und licht
Dein Gesicht.

Und in mir
Immerzu
Tönest du.

Bist's allein,
Die Welt
Mir erhellt.

Ich bin dein,
Liebchen fein,
Denke mein!

And again the fountains
murmur
in the silent loneliness,
and the woods on the
mountain
murmur, as in good old
times.
Likewise in my young days,
often on a summer's
night
I too plucked my lute
here,
and composed some
merry songs.

But from that silent
threshold
my love's been taken to
rest.
And you, my blithe friend,
sing on, just sing on!

Love note

Far from you
I think of you,
dear child.

I am lonely,
but my love
has stayed true.

I think
only of you,
o peace of my heart.

I always see,
fair and bright,
your face.

And you sound
within me
always.

It is you alone
who brightens
for me the world.

I am yours,
my sweetest,
think of me!

Sommer Op. 9 No. 6

(1911-3)

Siegfried Trebitsch

Unter spärlich grünen
Blättern,
Unter Blumen, unter
Blüten
Hör' ich fern die Amsel
schmettern
Und die kleinen Drossel
wüten.

Auch ein Klingen fein und
leise,
Schneller Tage schneller
Grüsse,
Eine wehe Sommerweise,
Schwer von einer letzten
Süsse.

Und ein glühendes Verbrennen
Schwebt auf heissen
Windeswellen,
Taumelnd glaub' ich zu
erkennen
Ungeschriener Schreie
Gellen.

Und ich sitze still und
bebe,
Fühle meine Stunden
rinnen,
Und ich halte still und lebe,
Während Träume mich
umspinnen.

Summer

Among meagre green
leaves,
among flowers, among
blossom,
I hear the distant call of
the blackbird
and the harsh cry of the
small thrush.

And also the soft and
delicate sound
of days and greetings
quickly passing.
A sad summer melody,
suffused with a final
sweetness.

And a burning glow
is borne on the waves of a
parched wind;
reeling, I seem to
recognise
the ring of unuttered
screams.

And I sit motionless and
tremble,
feel my hours on earth
slip away,
and I stay still and live,
while dreams weave their
web around me.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

The Soul's Expression Op. 42 (1900)

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

The Soul's Expression

With stammering lips and insufficient sound
I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and night
Which dream and thought and feeling interwound,
And inly answering all the senses round
With octaves of a mystic depth and height
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual ground.
This song of soul I struggle to outbear
Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,
And utter all myself into the air;
But if did it, - as the thunder-roll
Breaks its own cloud, my flesh would perish there
Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

Tears

Thank God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
More grief than ye can weep for. That is well-
That is light grieving! Lighter, none befell
Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
Tears! What are tears? The babe weeps in its cot,
The mother singing, at her marriage-bell
The bride weeps, and before the oracle
Of high-faned hills the poet has forgot
Such moisture on his cheeks. Thank God for grace,
Ye who weep only! If, as some have done,
Ye grope tear-blinded in a desert place
And touch but tombs, - look up! those tears will run
Soon in long rivers down the lifted face,
And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.

Grief

I tell you, hopeless grief is passionless;
That only men incredulous of despair,
Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air
Beat upward to God's throne in loud access
Of shrieking and reproach. Full desertness
In souls as countries lieth silent-bare
Under the blanching, vertical eye-glare
Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted man, express
Grief for thy Dead in silence like to death -
Most like a monumental statue set
In everlasting watch and moveless woe
Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.
Touch it; the marble eyelids are not wet:
If it could weep, it could arise and go.

Comfort

Speak low to me, my Saviour, low and sweet
From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low
Lest I should fear and fall, and miss Thee so
Who art not missed by any that entreat.
Speak to me as to Mary at thy feet!
And if no precious gums my hands bestow,
Let my tears drop like amber while I go
In reach of thy divinest voice complete
In humanest affection - thus, in sooth,
To lose the sense of losing. As a child,
Whose song-bird seeks the wood for evermore
Is sung to in its stead by mother's mouth
Till, sinking on her breast, love-reconciled,
He sleeps the faster that he wept before.

Translations of Korngold by Richard Stokes.