

WIGMORE HALL

Wednesday 19 October 2022
7.30pm

Masabane Cecilia Rangwanasha soprano
Simon Lepper piano

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

From *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1892-99, rev. 1901)
Rheinlegendchen • Wo die schönen Trompeten
blasen • Wer hat dies Liedlein erdacht?

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Die Loreley S273/1 (1841)
Elsa's Traum from *Aus Lohengrin* S446 (1854)
based on Richard Wagner

Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

From *Wesendonck Lieder* (1857-8)
Der Engel • Im Treibhaus • Träume
Interval

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

Knoxville: Summer of 1915 Op. 24 (1947)

Stephanus Le Roux Marais (1896-1979)

Mali die slaaf se lied (1932)

Trad/South African

Thula Baba *arranged by Iain Farrington*

Selection of Spirituals introduced from the stage

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Des Knaben Wunderhorn ('The Youth's Magic Horn') is a collection of German folk verses compiled by the poets Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano while travelling in the Rhine region. The poems have been set by Robert Schumann, Mendelssohn, Brahms and Richard Strauss – but generally to light-hearted music. **Mahler** seems to have felt a deeper affinity with the texts, which inspired from him a great outpouring of music.

In total, Mahler composed two dozen *Wunderhorn* songs; unified by their musical landscape but independent in order, they may be performed in any combination. One of the most charming, the lilting 'Rheinlegendchen' (1893) is in the *Ländler* dance style, and was so well received at its first performance that the audience demanded an encore. The piano interludes are suggestive of folk-like fiddle music, and the song's apparent simplicity is undercut by some striking key-changes, especially the harmonic descent used to illustrate the ring sinking into the Rhine.

'Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen' (1898) is one of *Wunderhorn's* dramatic high-points: foreboding martial figures set the scene for a young woman visited by her lover – or his wraith – on the eve of battle. In 'Wer hat dies Liedlein erdacht?' (1892) Mahler carries us along with a playful perpetual motion in the piano, over which the voice unfurls Alpine yodelling figures, contrasted with a mock-serious central section of Schubertian modulations.

We remain in the Rhine region for **Liszt's** song *Die Loreley*, S273 which almost certainly influenced the opening of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. This is the first of two versions of this song (the second dates from 1854-9); Liszt seems to have been fascinated by Heinrich Heine's poetic account of a siren on the banks of the Rhine luring sailors to their deaths. The voice's lines are shapely and mesmerising, while the watery piano writing, initially timorous, eventually builds to threatening waves. Yet rather than dividing the material simplistically, with singer as siren and piano as ocean, Liszt gives the piano haunting material symbolic of the siren, while the voice takes the form of the narrator.

Liszt was entrusted with directing the first performance of **Wagner's** *Lohengrin* when the composer was exiled from Germany on account of his revolutionary politics. *Aus Lohengrin* (1854) is a three-part piano transcription of extracts from Wagner's work; its central movement is *Elsas Traum*, Elsa's Act I vision of the knight who will be her champion. Whereas Wagner's original music was composed seamlessly so that each section flows into the next, Liszt adds a more conclusive ending to each of the three pieces in his transcription.

On hearing *Lohengrin* conducted by Liszt at Weimar, Hans von Bülow decided to devote his life to music; he then rose to prominence as a conductor. But his wife, Liszt's daughter Cosima, would run off with Wagner – who became Liszt's son-in-law when he and Cosima married. Wagner had a history of this kind of behaviour: his

Wesendonck-Lieder (1857-8) and *Tristan und Isolde* stemmed from his friendship with Otto Wesendonck (a retired silk merchant and Wagner's patron), and subsequent infatuation with Wesendonck's wife, Mathilde.

Wagner set Mathilde Wesendonck's 5 *Gedichte* between November 1857 and May 1858. Along with *Tristan* and the *Sonate für das Album von Frau MW* for solo piano, they are a monument to his feelings for her. Two of the songs, 'Im Treibhaus' and 'Träume', were described by Wagner as 'studies for *Tristan und Isolde*'.

The first song of the five, 'Der Engel', contrasts heavenly angels (represented by the music's gentle ascent) with earthly concerns (repeated chords), Wagner's harmony suggestive of liturgical music to reflect Mathilde Wesendonck's text. The third song, 'Im Treibhaus' – which is audibly related to the sombre prelude to Act III of *Tristan* – is set in a greenhouse; the branches of palm trees reach desperately for the air, only to find nothingness. Wagner wrote to Mathilde on 28 September 1861 that his setting of 'Träume', the last song, was 'finer than all I have made!' Suffused with longing, this song anticipates the love duet in Act II of *Tristan und Isolde*; Wagner also arranged the song for solo violin and chamber orchestra as a birthday present to Mathilde, conducting this version at the Wesendoncks' villa on 23 December 1857.

Samuel Barber found composing songs to be 'a natural thing to do' and favoured the voice's emotive qualities, as his partner and fellow composer Menotti emphasised: 'There is a certain indolence towards the use of the voice today, a tendency to treat the voice instrumentally, as if composers feared that its texture is too expressive, too *human*'. Barber's setting of excerpts from James Agee's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* was commissioned by soprano Eleanor Steber and is Barber's most archetypally 'American' work, conjuring up a childhood in a small Southern town by using bluesy ideas and a flexible sense of meter – reflecting Agee's aim that his words should convey 'a kind of parallel to improvisation in jazz' – as well as vivid word-painting. Another American composer, David Diamond, argued that the piece represented 'the pinnacle beyond which many a composer will find it impossible to go'.

A direct contemporary of Barber's, but less widely performed, South African composer **Stephanus le Roux Marais** studied in Cape Town and at the Royal College of Music in London before pursuing a career as a teacher and church organist. Marais pioneered Afrikaans art song, of which 'Mali die slaaf se lied' ('Mali the slave's song') is a fine example. The third of Marais's 5 *Art Songs* of 1931-2, this heartfelt ballad is about a slave yearning for home, and here precedes a traditional South African song, *Thula Baba*, arranged by **Iain Farrington**, as well as a selection of Spirituals.

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Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

From *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*

(1892-99, rev. 1901)

Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano

Rheinlegendchen

Little Rhine legend

Bald gras ich am Neckar,
Bald gras ich am Rhein,
Bald hab ich ein Schätzkel,
Bald bin ich allein.

I mow by the Neckar,
I mow by the Rhine;
at times I've a sweetheart,
at times I'm alone.

Was hilft mir das Grasen,
Wenn d'Sichel nicht schneidet,
Was hilft mir ein Schätzkel,
Wenn's bei mir nicht bleibt.

What use is mowing,
if the sickle won't cut,
what use is a sweetheart,
if she'll not stay.

So soll ich denn grasen
Am Neckar, am Rhein,
So werf ich mein goldenes
Ringlein hinein.

So if I'm to mow
by the Neckar, and Rhine,
I'll throw in their waters
my little gold ring.

Es fließet im Neckar
Und fließet im Rhein,
Soll schwimmen hinunter
Ins Meer tief hinein.

It'll flow in the Neckar
and flow in the Rhine,
and float right away
to the depths of the sea.

Und schwimmt es das Ringlein,
So frisst es ein Fisch,
Das Fischlein soll kommen
Aufs Königs sein Tisch.

And floating, the ring
will be gulped by a fish,
the fish will be served
at the King's own table.

Der König tät fragen,
Wems Ringlein sollt sein?
Da tät mein Schatz sagen,
Das Ringlein g'hört mein.

The King will enquire
whose ring it might be;
my sweetheart will say
the ring belongs to me.

Mein Schätzlein tät springen,
Berg auf und Berg ein,
Tät mir wiedrum bringen
Das Goldringlein fein.

My sweetheart will bound
over hill, over dale,
and bring back to me
my little gold ring.

Kannst grasen am
Neckar,
Kannst grasen am Rhein,
Wirf du mir nur
immer
Dein Ringlein hinein.

You can mow by the
Neckar,
and mow by the Rhine,
if you'll always keep
throwing
your ring in for me.

**Wo die schönen
Trompeten blasen**

**Where the splendid
trumpets sound**

Wer ist denn draussen und
wer klopft an,
Der mich so leise wecken kann?
Das ist der Herzallerliebste
dein,
Steh auf und lass mich zu dir
ein.

Who stands outside and
knocks at my door,
waking me so gently?
It is your own true dearest
love,
arise, and let me
in.

Was soll ich hier nun länger
stehn?
Ich seh die Morgenröt
aufgehn,
Die Morgenröt, zwei helle
Stern,
Bei meinem Schatz da wär
ich gern,
Bei meinem Herzallerlieble.

Why leave me longer
waiting here?
I see the rosy dawn
appear,
the rosy dawn and two
bright stars.
I long to be beside my
love,
beside my dearest love.

Das Mädchen stand auf, und
liess ihn ein,
Sie heisst ihn auch
willkommen sein.
Willkommen, lieber Knabe
mein,
So lang hast du
gestanden.

The girl arose and let him
in,
she bids him welcome
too.
O welcome, dearest love
of mine,
too long have you been
waiting.

Sie reicht ihm auch die
schneeweisse Hand.
Von Ferne sang die
Nachtigall,
Das Mädchen fing zu weinen
an.

She gives to him her
snow-white hand,
from far off sang the
nightingale,
the girl began to
weep.

Ach weine nicht, du Liebste
mein,
Aufs Jahr sollst du mein
eigen sein;
Mein eigen sollst du werden
gewiss,
Wies keine sonst auf Erden ist.
O Lieb auf grüner Erden.

Ah, do not weep, my
dearest love,
within a year you shall be
mine,
you shall be mine most
certainly,
as no one else on earth.
O love upon the green earth.

Ich zieh' in Krieg auf grüne
Haid',
Die grüne Haide, die ist so
weit.
Allwo dort die schönen
Trompeten blasen,
Da ist mein Haus von
grünem Rasen.

I'm going to war, to the
green heath,
the green heath so far
away.
There where the splendid
trumpets sound,
there is my home of
green turf.

Wer hat dies Liedlein erdacht?

Dort oben am Berg in dem
hohen Haus
Da gucket ein fein's, lieb's
Mädel heraus,
Es ist nicht dort daheime,
Es ist des Wirts sein
Töchterlein,
Es wohnt auf grüner Heide.

Mein Herzle ist wund,
Komm, Schätzle, mach's
g'sund.
Dein schwarzbraune Äuglein,
Die hab'n mich verwund't.
Dein rosiger Mund
Macht Herzen gesund,
Macht Jugend verständig,
Macht Tote lebendig,
Macht Kranke gesund.

Wer hat denn das schöne
Liedlein erdacht?
Es haben's drei Gäns' übers
Wasser gebracht,
Zwei graue und eine
weisse;
Und wer das Liedlein nicht
singen kann,
Dem wollen sie es pfeifen.
Ja!

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Die Loreley S273/1 (1841) Lorelei *Heinrich Heine*

Ich weiss nicht, was soll es
bedeuten,
Dass ich so traurig bin;
Ein Märchen aus alten
Zeiten,
Das kommt mir nicht aus
dem Sinn.

Die Luft ist kühl und es
dunkelt,
Und ruhig fließt der
Rhein;
Der Gipfel des Berges funkelt
Im Abendsonnenschein.

Die schönste Jungfrau sitzt
Dort oben
wunderbar,
Ihr goldnes Geschmeide
blitzet,

Who made up this little song?

High in the mountain
stands a house,
from it a sweet pretty
maid looks out.
But that is not her home,
she's the innkeeper's
young daughter.
She lives on the green moor.

My heart is sick.
Come, my love, and cure
it.
Your dark brown eyes
have wounded me.
Your rosy lips
can cure sick hearts,
make young men wise,
make dead men live,
can cure the sick.

Who made up this pretty
little song?
Three geese brought it
across the water,
two grey ones and a white
one;
and for those who can't
sing this song,
they will pipe it to them.
They will!

Sie kämmt ihr goldenes
Haar.

Sie kämmt es mit goldenem
Kamme
Und singt ein Lied dabei;
Das hat eine wundersame,
Gewaltige Melodei.

Den Schiffer im kleinen
Schiffe
Ergreift es mit wildem Weh;
Er schaut nicht die
Felsenriffe,
Er schaut nur hinauf in die
Höh'.

Ich glaube, die Wellen
verschlingen
Am Ende Schiffer und Kahn;
Und das hat mit ihrem Singen
Die Loreley getan.

she combs her golden
hair.

She combs it with a
golden comb
and sings a song the while;
it has an awe-inspiring,
powerful melody.

It seizes the boatman in
his skiff
with wildly aching pain;
he does not see the rocky
reefs,
he only looks up to the
heights.

I think at last the waves
swallow
the boatman and his boat;
and that, with her singing,
the Lorelei has done.

Elsa's Traum from *Aus Lohengrin* S446 (1854) based on Richard Wagner

Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

From *Wesendonck Lieder* (1857-8) *Mathilde Wesendonck*

Der Engel

In der Kindheit frühen
Tagen
Hört' ich oft von Engeln
sagen,
Die des Himmels hehre
Wonne
Tauschen mit der Erdensonne,

Dass, wo bang ein Herz in
Sorgen
Schmachtet vor der Welt
verborgen,
Dass, wo still es will
verbluten,
Und vergehn in Tränenfluten,

Dass, wo brünstig sein Gebet
Einzig um Erlösung fleht,
Da der Engel niederschwebt,
Und es sanft gen Himmel
hebt.

Ja, es stieg auch mir ein
Engel nieder,

The angel

In the early days of
childhood
I often heard tell of angels
who exchange heaven's
pure bliss
for the sun of earth,

So that, when a sorrowful
heart
hides its yearning from
the world,
and would silently bleed
away
and dissolve in streams of
tears,

And when its fervent
prayer
begs only for deliverance,
that angel will fly down
and gently raise the heart
to heaven.

And to me too an angel
descended,

Und auf leuchtendem Gefieder
Führt er, ferne jedem
Schmerz,
Meinen Geist nun himmelwärts!

and now on shining wings
bears my spirit, free from
all pain,
towards heaven!

Im Treibhaus

In the greenhouse

Hochgewölbte
Blätterkronen,
Baldachine von Smaragd,
Kinder ihr aus fernen
Zonen,
Saget mir, warum ihr klagt?

High-arching leafy
crowns,
canopies of emerald,
you children who dwell in
distant climes,
tell me, why do you lament?

Schweigend neiget ihr die
Zweige,
Malet Zeichen in die
Luft,
Und der Leiden stummer
Zeuge
Steiget aufwärts, süsser Duft.

Silently you bend your
branches,
inscribe your symbols on
the air,
and a sweet fragrance
rises,
as silent witness to your
sorrows.

Weit in sehndem Verlangen
Breitet ihr die Arme aus,
Und umschlinget
wahnbefangen
Öder Leere nicht'gen Graus.

With longing and desire,
you open wide your arms,
and embrace in your
delusion
desolation's awful void.

Wohl, ich weiss es, arme
Pflanze;
Ein Geschicke teilen wir,
Ob umstrahlt von Licht und
Glanze,
Unsre Heimat ist nicht hier!

I am well aware, poor
plant;
we both share a single fate,
though bathed in
gleaming light,
our homeland is not here!

Und wie froh die Sonne
scheidet
Von des Tages leerem Schein,
Hüllet der, der wahrhaft
leidet,
Sich in Schweigens Dunkel
ein.

And just as the sun is
glad to leave
the empty gleam of day,
the true sufferer veils
himself
in the darkness of silence.

Stille wird's, ein säuselnd
Weben
Füllet bang den dunklen
Raum:
Schwere Tropfen seh ich
schweben
An der Blätter grünem
Saum.

It grows quiet, a whirring
whisper
fills the dark room
uneasily:
I see heavy droplets
hanging from
the green edge of the
leaves.

Träume

Dreams

Sag, welch wunderbare
Träume
Halten meinen Sinn umfassen,
Dass sie nicht wie leere
Schäume
Sind in ödes Nichts
vergangen?

Say, what wondrous
dreams are these
embracing all my senses,
that they have not, like
bubbles,
vanished to a barren
void?

Träume, die in jeder
Stunde,
Jedem Tage schooner
blühn,
Und mit ihrer
Himmelskunde
Selig durchs Gemüte
ziehn!

Dreams, that with every
hour
bloom more lovely every
day,
and with their heavenly
tidings
float blissfully through
the mind!

Träume, die wie hehre
Strahlen
In die Seele sich versenken,
Dort ein ewig Bild zu
malen:
Allvergessen,
Eingedenken!

Dreams, that with
glorious rays
penetrate the soul,
there to paint an eternal
picture:
forgetting all,
remembering one!

Träume, wie wenn
Frühlingssonne
Aus dem Schnee die Blüten
küsst,
Dass zu nie geahnter
Wonne
Sie der neue Tag begrüsst,

Dreams, as when the
Spring sun
kisses blossoms from the
snow,
so the new day might
welcome them
in unimagined bliss,

Dass sie wachsen, dass sie
blühen,
Träumend spenden ihren
Duft,
Sanft an deiner Brust
verglühen,
Und dann sinken in die Gruft.

So that they grow and
flower,
bestow their scent as in a
dream,
fade softly away on your
breast
and sink into their grave.

Interval

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

Knoxville: Summer of 1915 Op. 24 (1947)

James Agee

[We are talking now of summer evenings in Knoxville Tennessee in the time that I lived there so successfully disguised to myself as a child.]

...It has become that time of evening when people sit on their porches, rocking gently and talking gently, and watching the street and the standing up into their sphere of possession of the trees, of birds' hung havens, hangars. People go by: things go by. A horse, drawing a buggy, breaking his hollow iron music on the asphalt: a loud auto; a quiet auto; people in pairs, not in a hurry, scuffling, switching their weight of aestival body, talking casually, the taste hovering over them of vanilla, strawberry, paste-board, and starched milk, the image upon them of lovers and horsemen, squared with clowns in hueless amber.

A streetcar raising its iron moan; stopping: belling and starting, stertorous; rousing and raising again its iron increasing moan and swimming its gold windows and straw seats on past and past and past, the bleak spark crackling and cursing above it like a small malignant spirit set to dog its tracks: the iron whine rises on rising speed: still risen, faints: halts: the faint stinging bell: rises again, still fainter: fainting, lifting, lifts, faints foregone: forgotten. Now is the night one blue dew.

Now is the night one blue dew, my father has drained, he has coiled the hose.

Low on the length of lawns, a frailing of fire who breathes...

Parents on porches: rock and rock. From damp strings morning glories hang their ancient faces.

The dry and exalted noise of the locusts from all the air at once enchants my eardrums.

On the rough wet grass of the backyard my father and mother have spread quilts. We all lie there, my mother, my father, my uncle, my aunt, and I too am lying there. They are not talking much, and the talk is quiet, of nothing in particular, of nothing at all in particular, of nothing at all. The stars are wide and alive, they seem each like a smile of great sweetness, and they seem very near. All my people are larger bodies than mine . . . with voices gentle and meaningless like the voices of sleeping birds. One is an artist, he is living at home. One is a musician, she is living at home. One is my mother who is good to me. One is my father who is good to me. By some chance, here they are, all on this earth; and who shall ever tell the sorrow of being on this earth, lying, on quilts, on the grass, in a summer evening. among the sounds of the night.

May God bless my people, my uncle, my aunt, my mother, my good father, oh, remember them kindly in their time of trouble, and in the hour of their taking away.

After a little I am taken in and put to bed. Sleep, soft smiling, draws me unto her: and those receive me, who quietly treat me, as one familiar and well-beloved in that home: but will not, oh, will not, not now, not ever; but will not ever tell me who I am.

Stephanus Le Roux Marais (1896-1979)

Mali die slaaf se lied
(1932)

Mali the slave's song

Van die lotosland waar die
lilies groei
En die koningsblom op die
boomstam bloei;
Waar jare deur die somer
woon
En elke dag met glorie kroon;

Waar sag die koel
suidostewind
Die geil-groen veld begroet
as vrind;
En sagter teen die wit strand
slaan
Die branders van die
oseaan -
Daarvandaan, daarvandaan
Kom ek wat Malie heet!

From the lotus land
where the lilies grow
and the orchards blossom
on the tree trunks
where they last the whole
summer
and crown every day with
glory,
where the cool
southeastern wind
softly greets the verdant
field as a friend
and the waves of the
ocean
touch the white beach
even more softly;
that is where I am from!
I, whose name is Mali!

Vry was ek waar die lotos
groeï -
Vry waar die koningsblomme
bloei;
Waar elke middag sag die
reën
Sy gloed ontel'bre tranes
ween
Oor atap-hut en silwerstrand,

Oor fyn-bewerkte
sawaland;
Waar oor die statige
vulkaan
Die rookwolk in die môre
staan -
Daarvandaan, daarvandaan
Kom ek wat Malie heet!

I was free where the lotus
grows free,
where the orchards
blossom,
where every afternoon
the rain
softly cries its countless
tears
over thatched huts and
silvery beaches,
over plowed fields of rice
patties,
where a cloud of smoke
envelops
the stately volcano every
morning;
that is where I am from!
I, whose name is Mali!

Trad/South African

Thula Baba

arranged by Iain Farrington

We are unable to provide a text and translation for this song on this occasion.

Selection of Spirituals introduced from the stage

Translations of Mahler, Liszt and Wagner 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. Text and translation of Marais kindly provided by the artists.