

WIGMORE HALL

Thursday 19 September 2024
1.00pm

Bella Marslen soprano
Eliran Kadussi countertenor
Johannes Moore baritone
Archie Bonham piano
JongSun Woo piano

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)	C'est l'extase from <i>Ariettes oubliées</i> (1885-7, rev. 1903) En sourdine from <i>Fêtes galantes Book I</i> (1891)
Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-1894)	L'île heureuse (1889)
Pauline Viardot (1821-1910)	Lamento (1886)
Henri Duparc (1848-1933)	Chanson triste (1868)
Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)	From <i>La bonne chanson</i> Op. 61 (1892-4) <i>La lune blanche luit dans les bois</i> • <i>L'hiver a cessé</i>
Henri Dutilleux (1916-2013)	Il n'y avait que des troncs déchirés from <i>3 sonnets de Jean Cassou</i> (1946-54)
Cécile Chaminade (1857-1944)	Mignonne (by 1892)
Emmanuel Chabrier	Villanelle des petits canards (1889)
Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)	Histoires naturelles (1906) <i>Le paon</i> • <i>Le grillon</i> • <i>Le cygne</i> • <i>Le martin-pêcheur</i> • <i>La pintade</i>
Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)	Pastorale (1855)
Charles Gounod (1818-1893)	L'arithmétique (pub. 1853)

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The fourth, 'expanded' year of the Wigmore French Song Exchange returns with two Wigmore Hall lunchtime recitals (19 September and 18 October 2024).

Devised by **Dame Felicity Lott** and **François Le Roux**, two great champions of the *mélodie*, the Wigmore French Song Exchange offers gifted singers – and for the first time pianists, guided by the celebrated **Sebastian Wybrew** – a year of coaching from their mentors and guest teachers, culminating in these showcase performances.

We wanted to share our love of French song with a new generation of singers. Come and hear beautiful young voices in this rich and varied repertoire, with well-known and lesser-known songs, plus duets. I hope that - like me - you will make some great discoveries! – Dame Felicity Lott

Bella Marslen (soprano)

Bella Marslen is a postgraduate student at the Royal College of Music, studying classical voice with Professor Janis Kelly. She is an Andrew Treagus Scholar supported by the Colin and Mimi Watts Scholarship. Bella was a 2022/2023 Young Artist and Bendat Scholar with West Australian Opera. Her performed roles include Lauretta and Una Conversa – *Gianni Schicchi*/Suor Angelica (2021, Freeze Frame Opera); Soprano Soloist – *Bach Easter Oratorio* (2023, West Australian Opera); and First Wood Sprite – *Rusalka* (2024, West Australian Opera). Bella was a Finalist Prize winner in the 2024 Joan Sutherland & Richard Bonyngel Bel Canto Awards.

Eliran Kadussi (countertenor)

Rising countertenor Eliran Kadussi recently completed his postgraduate studies at Guildhall School of Music & Drama in London. He is a 2023-24 Alvarez Young Artist of Garsington Opera and a Young Artist of Opera Prelude. He has collaborated with renowned companies, including Grange Park Opera, Hampstead Garden Opera, Tête à Tête Festival and the London Handel Festival. On the opera stage, Eliran has performed works by Handel, Monteverdi, Britten and Stravinsky, as well as contemporary compositions, demonstrating his versatility and musical insight. He is supported by AICF, Help Musicians UK, International Opera Awards, IVAI, and the Ronen Foundation.

Johannes Moore (baritone)

Johannes is a graduate from the Royal Academy of Music Opera School. He performed roles including: Sid (*Albert Herring*), Slook (*La Cambiale di Matrimonio*), Antonio and Il Conte (cover, *Le Nozze di Figaro*) and Nick Shadow (cover, *The Rakes Progress*). Other roles include Sir John Falstaff in Vaughan Williams *Sir John in Love* with British Youth

Opera. He studied at the prestigious Solti Accademia, and is currently performing at Glyndebourne. As a recitalist, he has performed at Wigmore Hall, Leeds Lieder, and St John's Smiths Square. He is the winner of the Richard Lewis Song prize at the Royal Academy, the David Clover competition and the Copenhagen Lied-Duo competition. Recent oratorio highlights include Handel's *Messiah* at the Royal Albert Hall and Mephistopheles in Lili Boulanger's *Faust et Hélène*.

Archie Bonham (piano)

Archie Bonham is the Adami Award for Collaborative Piano Fellow at the Royal College of Music in London. Equally at home in vocal and instrumental chamber music, Archie received pianist prizes at the Maureen Lehane Vocal Awards at Wigmore Hall and the Ashburnham English Song Competition. He is a Britten Pears and Shipston Song Young Artist, and in 2024 was a Fellow in Vocal Collaborative Piano at the Aspen Music Festival and School working in the vocal studio of Renée Fleming.

JongSun Woo (piano)

JongSun Woo is a pianist, praised for her 'poetic and characterful' (*The Guardian*) playing. JongSun received the Gerald Moore Award from the Royal Philharmonic Society and the Pianist's Prize at the Maureen Lehane Vocal Awards. With her duo partner Giacomo Schmidt, she has recently won prizes at International Schubert Competition in Dortmund, IVC in 's Hertogenbosch and International Student Lied Duo Competition in Groningen. She accompanied Felix Gygli when he won the Ferrier Awards 2023 at Wigmore Hall. JongSun was a scholar of Lied Akademie 2021/22 Liedzentrum Heidelbergger Frühling, and she is also a Samling Artist and Britten-Pears Young Artist.

Debussy composed his *Ariettes oubliées*, on poems by Paul Verlaine, between 1885 and 1887, and revised them in 1903 when he added a dedication to the soprano Mary Garden, the 'unforgettable Mélisande' to whom 'this music (already a little old) ... in affection and admiration'. But when Debussy first wrote the songs, the singer he had in mind was Marie-Blanche Vasnier, an earlier muse (with whom Debussy was infatuated for a time) at whose house he first encountered Verlaine's poetry. It is certainly possible to see the whole set as a declaration of love, expressed at its most languorous in 'C'est l'extase'. The first book of *Fêtes galantes* was originally composed in 1882 (later much revised), again written for Vasnier, and setting Verlaine's poetry. In 'En sourdine', Debussy evokes a mysterious world of dreams, with some arrestingly beautiful harmonies in the piano part. The song is marked 'Rêveusement' ('dreamlike'), and it is a magically inventive musical response to the poem.

For 'L'île heureuse', written in 1889, **Chabrier** set words by the young Symbolist poet Ephraïm Mikhaël who died in 1890 at the age of 23. The piano introduction is full of syncopations and the song captures the rapture of a boat journey to an enchanted island. **Pauline Viardot's** 'Lamento' was composed on a poem by Théophile Gautier in which each verse ends: 'Ah! sans amour, s'en aller sur la mer!' ('Alas! to set sail loveless across the sea!'). The mood of quiet desperation which pervades Viardot's setting is established from the outset.

Fauré's song cycle *La bonne chanson* was composed in 1893-4 and includes some of his greatest Verlaine settings. The Fauré scholar Jean-Michel Nectoux described the cycle as 'far more than just a volume of songs. It reaches the proportions almost of a vocal symphony.' One of the most important thematic elements of the cycle is heard in 'La lune blanche': the 'Lydia' theme (from Fauré's earlier song of the same name), which emerges in the piano part to memorable effect. 'L'hiver a cessé' is the final song – added a few months after the rest of *La bonne chanson* had been composed – and it is a kind of miniature summation of the whole cycle, with haunting reminiscences of its main themes.

The poet Jean Cassou was director of the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris before being dismissed by the Vichy government. He subsequently became a leading figure in the French Resistance and wrote his sonnets when he was imprisoned. They were published clandestinely and **Dutilleul** first read them in 1944, though it was not until a decade later that he decided to set some of the sonnets. 'Il n'y avait que des troncs déchirés' ('Only torn tree-trunks') inspired him to compose a song in which the music is filled with bitterness and rage.

Chaminade wrote extensively for voice and piano and in 1892-3 two albums of her songs (37 in all) were

published, among them 'Mignonne', taken from the *Ode à Cassandre* by the Renaissance poet Pierre de Ronsard (described by his contemporaries as the 'prince of poets'). The care with which Chaminade sets these words, and the piano refrain which holds the whole song together, reveal a composer of considerable sensitivity and sophistication. Rosemonde Gérard was still in her teens when Chabrier set her 'Villanelle des petits canards' in 1889 – one of several songs he composed at the time about animals including turkeys, pigs and cicadas. Gérard's poem about ducklings was first published the following year with a delightful pictorial title page depicting a family of ducks on the river. Beloved by Poulenc (and recorded by him with the baritone Pierre Bernac), this song combines Chabrier's supreme skill – so lightly worn – with the surest musical wit.

Chabrier's animal songs had an important influence on **Ravel's** *Histoires naturelles*, which he started to compose in October 1906. Roger Nichols has written of the particular significance of this cycle in Ravel's output, a work in which the composer 'openly questioned the barrier set up in France between "popular" and "serious" music'. When the songs were first performed at a Société nationale concert on 12 January 1907 by Jane Bathori (dedicatee of 'Le paon') and Ravel, there was an outcry – not only from the more traditionally-minded members of the audience but also from Ravel's teacher Fauré (who remarked that he was 'not happy with people setting stuff like this') and even Debussy who criticised Ravel's 'Americanism' in the cycle. Some of this has to do with Ravel's deliberately colloquial approach to word setting, but more than a century after the debacle of the première, it is easy to appreciate the skill with which Ravel has produced a musical equivalent of Jules Renard's poems. The poet's aim had been to get inside the minds of the animals themselves, and Ravel was attracted to the musical challenge of mirroring this idea. The five songs depict the peacock (with many humorous touches, such as the piano glissando when its tail is fanned out), the cricket (thought by some of his friends to be something of a musical self-portrait), the swan (graceful and elegant – dedicated to the great *mécène* or patron Misia Sert), the kingfisher and the guinea-fowl.

Saint-Saëns's 'Pastorale' dates from 1855 when the composer was 20. On an undemanding text (birds singing, brooks babbling and the like), he has fashioned a gentle duet for two voices over a rippling accompaniment. **Gounod's** 'L'arithmétique' is another duet, published as one of his *Mémoires enfantines* of 1857, and setting a light-hearted poem by Charles Turpin about the desirability of accurate counting – but not counting too well!

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Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

C'est l'extase from Ariettes oubliées (1885- 7, rev. 1903)

Paul Verlaine

C'est l'extase langoureuse,
C'est la fatigue amoureuse,
C'est tous les frissons des
bois
Parmi l'étreinte des brises,
C'est, vers les ramures
grises,
Le chœur des petites voix.

It is languorous rapture,
it is amorous fatigue,
it is all the tremors of the
forest
in the breezes' embrace,
it is, around the grey
branches,
the choir of tiny voices.

Ô le frère et frais
murmure!
Cela gazouille et susurre,

Cela ressemble au cri doux
Que l'herbe agitée
expire ...
Tu dirais, sous l'eau qui vire,

Le roulis sourd des
cailloux.

O the delicate, fresh
murmuring!
The warbling and
whispering,
it is like the soft cry
the ruffled grass gives
out ...
You might take it for the
muffled sound
of pebbles in the swirling
stream.

Cette âme qui se lamente
En cette plainte dormante
C'est la nôtre, n'est-ce pas?
La mienne, dis, et la tienne,
Dont s'exhale l'humble
antienne
Par ce tiède soir,
tout bas?

This soul which grieves
in this subdued lament,
it is ours, is it not?
Mine, and yours too,
breathing out our humble
hymn
on this warm evening,
soft and low?

En sourdine from Fêtes galantes Book I (1891)

Paul Verlaine

Calmes dans le demi-jour
Que les branches hautes
font,
Pénétrons bien notre amour
De ce silence profond.

Calm in the twilight
cast by lofty
boughs,
let us steep our love
in this deep quiet.

Fondons nos âmes, nos
cœurs
Et nos sens
extasiés,
Parmi les vagues langueurs
Des pins et des arbousiers.

Let us blend our souls,
our hearts
and our enraptured
senses
with the hazy languor
of arbutus and pine.

Ferme tes yeux à demi,
Croise tes bras sur
ton sein,
Et de ton cœur
endormi
Chasse à jamais tout
dessein.

Half-close your eyes,
fold your arms across
your breast,
and from your heart now
lulled to rest
forever banish all
desire.

Laissons-nous persuader
Au souffle berceur
et doux
Qui vient à tes
pieds rider
Les ondes de
gazon roux.

Let us both succumb
to the gentle and lulling
breeze
that comes to ruffle at
your feet
the waves of russet grass.

Et quand, solennel,
le soir
Des chênes noirs tombera,
Voix de notre désespoir,
Le rossignol chantera.

And when, solemnly,
evening
falls from the black oaks,
voice of our despair,
the nightingale shall sing.

Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-1894)

L'île heureuse (1889) **The happy isle** *Ephraïm Mikhaël*

Dans le golfe aux jardins
ombreux,
Des couples blonds
d'amants heureux
Ont fleuri les mâts
langoureux
De ta galère,
Et, caressé de doux
été,
Notre beau navire
enchanté
Vers des pays de
volupté
Fend l'onde claire!

By the shady gardens of
the gulf,
blond pairs of happy
lovers
have garlanded the
languorous masts
of your galley,
and, caressed by gentle
summer,
our beautiful enchanted
ship,
bound for the land of
delight,
cleaves the limpid waves!

Vois, nous sommes les
souverains
Des lumineux déserts
marins,
Sur les flots ravis et
sereins
Berçons nos rêves!
Tes pâles mains ont le
pouvoir
D'embaumer au loin l'air
du soir,
Et dans tes yeux je
crois revoir
Le ciel des grèves!

Behold, we are the
sovereigns
of the ocean's luminous
wastes;
on waves, delightful and
serene,
let us rock our dreams!
Your pale hands have the
power
to scent from afar the
evening air,
and in your eyes I seem to
glimpse again
the skyline of the shore!

Song continues overleaf. Please turn the page as quietly as possible.

Mais là-bas, là-bas, au soleil,	But there, over there in the sun,
Surgit le cher pays vermeil	looms the dear vermilion land,
D'où s'élève un chant de réveil	where a song of wakening rises
Et d'allégresse;	and of joy;
C'est l'île heureuse aux cieux légers	it is the happy isle of gentle skies,
Où, parmi les lys étrangers,	where among exotic lilies
Je dormirai dans les vergers,	I shall sleep in the orchards
Sous ta caresse.	and your embrace!

Pauline Viardot (1821-1910)

Lamento (1886)

Théophile Gautier

Ma belle amie est morte:
Je pleurerai toujours;
Dans la tombe elle emporte
Mon âme et mes amours.
Dans le ciel, sans m'attendre,
Elle s'en retourna;
L'ange qui l'emmena
Ne voulut pas me prendre.
Que mon sort est amer!
Ah! sans amour, s'en aller sur la mer!

Lamentation

My dearest love is dead:
I shall weep for evermore;
To the tomb she takes with her
My soul and all my love.
Without waiting for me
She has returned to Heaven;
The angel who took her away
Did not wish to take me.
How bitter is my fate!
Alas! to set sail loveless across the sea!

Sur moi la mer immense
S'étend comme un linceul;
Je chante ma romance
Que le ciel entend seul.
Ah! comme elle était belle,
Et comme je l'aimais!
Je n'aimerai jamais
Une femme autant qu'elle.
Que mon sort est amer!
Ah! sans amour, s'en aller sur la mer!

The immense sea before me
Is spread like a shroud;
I sing my song
Which heaven alone can hear.
Ah! how beautiful she was,
And how I loved her!
I shall never love a woman
As I loved her.
How bitter is my fate!
Alas! to set sail loveless across the sea!

Henri Duparc (1848-1933)

Chanson triste (1868)

Jean Lahor

Dans ton cœur dort un clair de lune,
Un doux clair de lune d'été,

Song of sadness

Moonlight slumbers in your heart,
a gentle summer moonlight,

Et pour fuir la vie importune,	and to escape the cares of life
Je me noierai dans ta clarté.	I shall drown myself in your light.
J'oublierai les douleurs passées,	I shall forget past sorrows,
Mon amour, quand tu berceras	my sweet, when you cradle
Mon triste cœur et mes pensées	my sad heart and my thoughts
Dans le calme aimant de tes bras.	in the loving calm of your arms.

Tu prendras ma tête malade,	You will rest my poor head,
Oh! quelquefois, sur tes genoux,	ah! sometimes on your lap,
Et lui diras une ballade	and recite to it a ballad
Qui semblera parler de nous;	that will seem to speak of us;

Et dans tes yeux pleins de tristesses,	And from your eyes full of sorrow,
Dans tes yeux alors je boirai	from your eyes I shall then drink
Tant de baisers et de tendresses	so many kisses and so much love
Que peut-être je guérirai.	that perhaps I shall be healed.

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

From *La bonne chanson* Op. 61 (1892-4)

Paul Verlaine

La lune blanche luit dans les bois

La lune blanche
Luit dans les bois;
De chaque branche
Part une voix
Sous la ramée ...

Ô bien-aimée.

L'étang reflète,
Profond miroir,
La silhouette
Du saule noir
Où le vent pleure ...

Rêvons, c'est l'heure.

Un vaste et tendre Apaisement

The white moon

The white moon
gleams in the woods;
from every branch
there comes a voice
beneath the boughs ...

O my beloved.

The pool reflects,
deep mirror,
the silhouette
of the black willow
where the wind is weeping ...

Let us dream, it is the hour.

A vast and tender consolation

Semble descendre
Du firmament
Que l'astre irise ...

seems to fall
from the sky
the moon illumines ...

C'est l'heure exquise.

Exquisite hour.

L'hiver a cessé

Winter is over

L'hiver a cessé: la lumière est
tiède

Winter is over, the light is
soft

Et danse, du sol au
firmament clair.

and dances up from the
earth to the clear sky.

Il faut que le cœur le plus
triste cède

The saddest heart must
surrender

À l'immense joie épars dans
l'air.

to the great joy that fills
the air.

J'ai depuis un an le
printemps dans l'âme

For a year I have had
spring in my soul,

Et le vert retour du doux
floral,

and the green return of
sweet May,

Ainsi qu'une flamme entoure
une flamme,

like flame encircling
flame,

Met de l'idéal sur mon idéal.

adds an ideal to my ideal.

Le ciel bleu prolonge,
exhausse et couronne

The blue sky prolongs,
heightens, and crowns

L'immuable azur où rit
mon amour.

the steadfast azure where
my love smiles.

La saison est belle et ma part
est bonne

The season is fair and my
lot is happy

Et tous mes espoirs ont enfin
leur tour.

and all my hopes are at
last fulfilled.

Que vienne l'été! Que
viennent encore

Let summer come! Let
autumn

L'automne et l'hiver! Et
chaque saison

and winter come too!
Each season

Me sera charmante, ô Toi
que décore

will delight me, O you
graced with

Cette fantaisie et cette
raison!

imagination and good
sense!

Henri Dutilleux (1916-2013)

Il n'y avait que des troncs déchirés from 3 sonnets de Jean

Cassou (1946-54)

Jean Cassou

Only torn tree- trunks

Il n'y avait que des
troncs déchirés,

Only torn tree-trunks;
drunken flight

Que couronnaient des vols
de corbeaux ivres,

of crows above them; that
was all:

Et le château était couvert de
givre,

thick frost was on the
fortress wall

Ce soir de fer où je m'y
présentai.

when I walked in, that iron
night.

Je n'avais plus avec moi ni
mes livres,

I'd lost my books; the soul
had gone,

Ni ma compagne, l'âme, et
ses péchés,

my bosom friend, whose
sins were rife;

Ni cette enfant qui tant rêvait
de vivre

I'd lost that girl who
yearned for life

Quand je l'avais sur terre
rencontrée.

when we on earth stood
one to one.

Les murs étaient blanchis au
lait de sphinge

White sphinx's-milk ran
down the walls;

Et les dalles rougies au sang
d'Orphée.

red blood of Orpheus
stained the flags;

Des mains sans grâce
avaient tendu des linges

at windows blind as
walled-eyed trolls

Aux fenêtres borgnes
comme des fées.

Crude hands had strung a
screen of rags:

La scène était prête pour des
acteurs

a stage for actors who
enjoyed

Fous et cruels à force de
bonheur.

being both cruel and
paranoid.

Cécile Chaminade (1857-1944)

Mignonne (by 1892)

Pierre de Ronsard

My love

Mignonne, allons voir si la
rose,

My love, let us see if the
rose,

Qui ce matin avait
desclose

which this morning
displayed

Sa robe de pourpre
au soleil,

its purple raiment to the
sun,

N'a point perdu cette
vesprée

has not all but lost this
evening

Les plis de sa robe
pourprée

the folds of its purpled
robe,

Et son teint au
vôtre pareil.

and its colour, alike to
your own.

Las! voyez comme en peu
d'espace,

Alas! See how in a short
time,

Mignonne, elle a, dessus la
place,

my sweet, she has, right
here,

Las! Las! ses beautés laissé
cheoir!

alas! alas! let her beauties
fall away.

O vraiment marâtre
nature,

O truly cruel mother
nature,

Puisqu'une telle fleur ne
dure,

that such a flower only
lasts

Que du matin jusques au
soir!

from morning until
evening!

Song continues overleaf. Please turn the page as quietly as possible.

Donc, si vous m'en croyez, Mignonne, Tandis que votre âge fleuronne Dans sa plus verte nouveaueté, Cueillez, cueillez votre jeunesse: Comme à cette fleur la vieillesse Fera ternir votre beauté.	So if you believe me, darling, while your age is in bloom, in its greenest newness, gather up your youth: as with this flower, age will tarnish your beauty.
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Emmanuel Chabrier

Villanelle des petits canards (1889)

Rosemonde Gérard

Ils vont, les petits
canards,
Tout au bord de la rivière,
Comme de bons
campagnards!

Barboteurs et frétilards,
Heureux de troubler l'eau
claire,
Ils vont, les petits
canards,

Ils semblent un peu jobards,
Mais ils sont à leur
affaire,
Comme de bons
campagnards!

Dans l'eau pleine de
têtards,
Où tremble une herbe
légère,
Ils vont, les
petits canards,

Marchants par groupes
épars,
D'une allure régulière,
Comme de bons
campagnards!

Dans le beau vert
d'épinards
De l'humide cressonnière,
Ils vont, les petits
canards,

Et quoiqu'un peu
gouenards,
Ils sont d'humeur débonnaire

Villanelle of the little ducks

There they go, the little
ducks,
all along the river bank,
like good
country-folk!

Paddling and waggling,
happy to muddy the clear
water,
they go on their way, the
little ducks,

A little gullible, perhaps,
but they go about their
business,
like good
country-folk!

Into the tadpole-teeming
water,
where a delicate weed is
trembling,
they make their way, the
little ducks,

Walking in scattered
groups,
with a regular gait,
like good
country-folk!

In the beautiful spinach
green
of the moist watercress,
they make their way, the
little ducks,

And though a little
mocking
they're by nature
benevolent,

Comme de bons campagnards!	like good country-folk!
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Faisant, en cercles bavards, Un vrai bruit de pétaudière, Ils vont, les petits canards,	Chattering in circles, making a terrible racket, they go on their way, the little ducks,
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Dodus, lustrés et gaillards, Ils sont gais à leur manière, Comme de bons campagnards!	Plump and glossy and cheery, with a gaiety all their own, like good country-folk!
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Amoureux et nasillards, Chacun avec sa commère, Ils vont, les petits canards, Comme de bons campagnards!	Amorous and snuffling, each one with his lady, they go on their way, the little ducks, like good country-folk!
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Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Histoires naturelles (1906)

Jules Renard

Le paon

Il va sûrement se marier
aujourd'hui.

Ce devait être pour hier.
En habit de gala, il était
prêt. Il n'attendait
que sa fiancée. Elle
n'est pas venue.
Elle ne peut
tarder.

Glorieux, il se promène avec
une allure de prince indien
et porte sur lui les riches
présents d'usage. L'amour
avive l'éclat de ses
couleurs et
son aigrette tremble
comme
une lyre.

La fiancée n'arrive
pas.

Il monte au haut du toit et
regarde du côté du soleil.
Il jette son cri
diabolique:

Léon! Léon!

C'est ainsi qu'il
appelle sa fiancée.

Il ne voit rien
venir et personne
ne répond. Les volailles
habituelles ne lèvent
même point la tête.

The peacock

He will surely get
married today.

It was to have been
yesterday. In full regalia
he was ready. It was
only his bride he was
waiting for. She has not
come. She cannot be
long.

Proudly he processes
with the air of an Indian
prince, bearing about
his person the
customary lavish gifts.
Love burnishes the
brilliance of his colours,
and his crest quivers
like a lyre.

His bride does not
appear.

He ascends to the top of
the roof and looks
towards the sun. He
utters his devilish cry:

Léon! Léon!

It is thus that he
summons his bride. He
can see nothing
drawing near, and no
one replies. The fowls
are used to all this and
do not even raise their

Elles sont lasses de l'admirer. Il redescend dans la cour, si sûr d'être beau qu'il est incapable de rancune.

Son mariage sera pour demain.

Et, ne sachant que faire du reste de la journée, il se dirige vers le perron. Il gravit les marches, comme des marches de temple, d'un pas officiel.

Il relève sa robe à queue toute lourde des yeux qui n'ont pu se détacher d'elle.

Il répète encore une fois la cérémonie.

heads. They are tired of admiring him. He descends once more to the yard, so sure of his beauty that he is incapable of resentment.

His marriage will take place tomorrow.

And, not knowing what to do for the rest of the day, he heads for the flight of steps. He ascends them, as though they were the steps of a temple, with a formal tread.

He lifts his train, heavy with eyes that have been unable to detach themselves.

Once more he repeats the ceremony.

Le grillon

C'est l'heure où, las d'errer, l'insecte nègre revient de promenade et répare avec soin le désordre de son domaine.

D'abord il ratisse ses étroites allées de sable.

Il fait du bran de scie qu'il écarte au seuil de sa retraite.

Il lime la racine de cette grande herbe propre à le harceler.

Il se repose.

Puis, il remonte sa minuscule montre.

A-t-il fini? Est-elle cassée? Il se repose encore un peu.

Il rentre chez lui et ferme sa porte.

Longtemps il tourne sa clef dans la serrure délicate.

Et il écoute: point d'alarme dehors.

Mais il ne se trouve pas en sûreté.

Et comme par une chaînette dont la poulie grince, il descend jusqu'au fond de la terre.

On n'entend plus rien.

Dans la campagne muette, les peupliers se dressent

The cricket

It is the hour when, weary of wandering, the black insect returns from his outing and carefully restores order to his estate.

First he rakes his narrow sandy paths.

He makes sawdust which he scatters on the threshold of his retreat.

He files the root of this tall grass likely to annoy him.

He rests.

Then he winds up his tiny watch.

Has he finished? Is it broken? He rests again for a while.

He goes inside and shuts the door.

For an age he turns his key in the delicate lock.

And he listens: nothing untoward outside.

But he does not feel safe.

And as if by a tiny chain on a creaking pulley, he lowers himself into the bowels of the earth.

Nothing more is heard.

In the silent countryside the poplars rise like

comme des doigts en l'air et désignent la lune.

fingers in the air, pointing to the moon.

Le cygne

Il glisse sur le bassin, comme un traîneau blanc, de nuage en nuage. Car il n'a faim que des nuages floconneux qu'il voit naître, bouger, et se perdre dans l'eau.

C'est l'un d'eux qu'il désire. Il le vise du bec, et il plonge tout à coup son col vêtu de neige.

Puis, tel un bras de femme sort d'une manche, il le retire.

Il n'a rien.

Il regarde: les nuages effarouchés ont disparu.

Il ne reste qu'un instant désabusé, car les nuages tardent peu à revenir, et, là-bas, où meurent les ondulations de l'eau, en voici un qui se reforme.

Doucement, sur son léger coussin de plumes, le cygne rame et s'approche ...

Il s'épuise à pêcher de vains reflets, et peut-être qu'il mourra, victime de cette illusion, avant d'attraper un seul morceau de nuage.

Mais qu'est-ce que je dis? Chaque fois qu'il plonge, il fouille du bec la vase nourrissante et ramène un ver.

Il engraisse comme une oie.

The swan

He glides on the pond like a white sledge, from cloud to cloud. For he is hungry only for the fleecy clouds that he sees forming, moving, dissolving in the water. It is one of these that he wants. He takes aim with his beak and suddenly immerses his snow-clad neck.

Then, like a woman's arm emerging from a sleeve, he draws it back up.

He has caught nothing.

He looks about: the startled clouds have vanished.

Only for a second is he disappointed, for the clouds are not slow to return, and, over there, where the ripples fade, there is one reappearing.

Gently, on his soft cushion of down, the swan paddles and approaches ...

He exhausts himself fishing for empty reflections, and perhaps he will die, a victim of that illusion, before catching a single shred of cloud.

But what am I saying? Each time he dives, he burrows with his beak in the nourishing mud and brings up a worm.

He's getting as fat as a goose.

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

Le martin-pêcheur

Ça n'a pas mordu, ce soir,
mais je rapporte une rare
émotion.

Comme je tenais ma perche
de ligne tendue, un martin-
pêcheur est venu s'y poser.

Nous n'avons pas d'oiseau
plus éclatant.

Il semblait une grosse fleur
bleue au bout d'une longue
tige. La perche pliait sous
le poids. Je ne respirais
plus, tout fier d'être pris
pour un
arbre par un martin-
pêcheur.

Et je suis sûr qu'il ne s'est
pas envolé de peur, mais
qu'il a cru qu'il ne faisait
que passer d'une branche
à une autre.

The kingfisher

Not a bite, this evening,
but I had a rare
experience.

As I was holding out my
fishing rod, a kingfisher
came and perched
on it.

We have no bird more
brilliant.

He was like a great blue
flower at the tip of a
long stem. The rod bent
beneath the weight. I
held my breath, so
proud to be taken for a
tree by a kingfisher.

And I'm sure he did not
fly off from fear, but
thought he was simply
flitting from one branch
to another.

La pintade

C'est la bossue da
ma cour. Elle ne
rêve que plaies
à cause de
sa bosse.

Les poules ne lui disent rien:
brusquement, elle se
précipite et les
harcèle.

Puis elle baisse sa tête,
penche le corps, et, de
toute la vitesse de ses
pattes maigres, elle court
frapper, de son bec dur,
juste au centre de la roue
d'une dinde.

Cette poseuse
l'agaçait.

Ainsi, la tête bleuie, ses
barbillons à vif, cocardière,
elle rage du matin au soir.
Elle se bat sans motif,
peut-être parce qu'elle
s' imagine toujours
qu'on se moque de sa
taille, de son crâne
chauve et de sa queue
basse.

Et elle ne cesse de
jeter un cri discordant
qui perce l'air
comme une
pointe.

The guinea-fowl

She is the hunchback of
my barnyard. She
dreams only of
wounding, because of
her hump.

The hens say nothing to
her: suddenly, she
swoops and harries
them.

Then she lowers her
head, leans forward,
and, with all the speed
of her skinny legs, runs
and strikes with her
hard beak at the very
centre of a turkey's tail.

This poseuse was
provoking her.

Thus, with her bluish
head and raw wattles,
pugnaciously she rages
from morn to night. She
fights for no reason,
perhaps because she
always thinks they are
making fun of her
figure, of her bald head
and drooping tail.

And she never stops
screaming her
discordant cry, which
pierces the air like a
needle.

Parfois elle quitte la cour
et disparaît. Elle laisse
aux volailles pacifiques
un moment de répit.
Mais elle revient
plus turbulente et
plus criarde. Et,
frénétique, elle se vautre
par terre.

Qu'a-t-elle
donc?

La sournoise fait
une farce.

Elle est allée pondre son
œuf à la campagne.

Je peux le chercher si ça
m'amuse.

Elle se roule dans la
poussière, comme une
bossue.

Sometimes she leaves
the yard and vanishes.
She gives the peace-
loving poultry a
moment's respite. But
she returns more rowdy
and shrill. And in a
frenzy she wallows in
the earth.

Whatever's wrong with
her?

The cunning creature is
playing a trick.

She went to lay her egg
in the open country.

I can look for it
if I like.

And she rolls in the
dust, like a
hunchback.

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

Pastorale (1855)

*Philippe Néricault
Destouches*

Pastorale

Ici les tendres oiseaux
Goûtent cent douceurs
secrètes,

Et l'on entend ces
côteaux

Retentir des chansonnettes
Qu'ils apprennent aux échos.

Sur ce gazon les
ruisseaux,

Murmurent leurs
amourettes,

Et l'on voit jusqu'aux
ormeaux,

Pour embrasser les
fleurettes,

Pencher leurs jeunes
rameaux.

Ici les tendres oiseaux ...

Here the sweet birds
taste a hundred secret
delights,

and you can hear these
hills

resound with little songs
they teach to the echoes.

On this meadow the
streams

murmur their fleeting
romances,

and you can see the elm
trees

lower their young
limbs

to embrace the
flowerlets.

Here the sweet birds ...

Charles Gounod (1818-1893)

L'arithmétique (pub. 1853)

Charles Turpin

Arithmetic

L'art de compter avec
exactitude

Est fort nécessaire
ici-bas;

The art of counting with
precision

is very necessary here on
earth;

C'est pour avoir négligé son
étude
Qu'on trouve tant de
fous,
Hélas! tant de fous qui ne
calculent pas.

it's on account of
neglecting their studies
that one finds so many
fools,
alas! so many fools who
can't figure things out.

Cultiver cet art
salutaire,
C'est apprendre à garder
son bien.
Car mes amis sur cette
terre,
Sachez qu'on a souvent
affaire
A des gens qui comptent
trop bien.

Cultivating this beneficial
art
means leaning to take
care of what's yours.
Because, my friends on
this here earth,
know that one often has
to deal
with people who can
count all too well!

Translations of Debussy, Chabrier, Duparc, Fauré and Ravel by Richard Stokes from A French Song Companion (Johnson/Stokes) published by OUP. Viardot by Richard Stokes. Dutilleux by Timothy Adès. Gounod by Jean du Monde.