

# WIGMORE HALL

Friday 22 July 2022 7.30pm Time's cruel hand

**James Gilchrist** tenor

**Anna Tilbrook** piano

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**Franz Schubert** (1797-1828)

An Schwager Kronos D369 (1816)

**Carl Friedrich Zelter** (1758-1832)

Um Mitternacht (1818)

**Carl Maria von Weber** (1786-1826)

Die Zeit Op. 13 No. 5 (pub. 1811)

**Johannes Brahms** (1833-1897)

Auf dem Kirchhofe Op. 105 No. 4 (c.1888)

**Franz Schubert**

Auf einen Kirchhof D151 (1815)

Herbst D945 (1828)

**Hugo Wolf** (1860-1903)

Herbst (1878)

**Robert Schumann** (1810-1856)

Aufträge Op. 77 No. 5 (1850)

**Franz Schubert**

Der Einsame D800 (1825)

Interval

**John Dowland** (1563-1626)

His golden locks (pub. 1597)

**John Danyel** (c.1564-1626)

Time, cruel time (pub. 1606)

**Alec Roth** (b.1948)

Autumnal (2010)

**Imogen Holst** (1907-1984)

Little Thinkest Thou, Poore Flower (1937)

**Rebecca Clarke** (1886-1979)

Eight o'clock (1927)

**Gerald Finzi** (1901-1956)

Farewell to Arms Op. 9 (1926-44)

*Introduction • His golden locks*

**Benjamin Britten** (1913-1976)

Winter Words Op. 52 (1953)

*At day-close in November • Midnight on the Great Western • Wagtail and baby • The little old table • The Choirmaster's Burial • Proud songsters • At the railway station, Upway • Before life and after*

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It was Shakespeare, in Sonnet No. 60, who likened Time to a 'cruel hand' that destroys youth and beauty, but the same theme has obsessed artists of all eras – not least the Lieder composers of the 19th Century. 'An Schwager Kronos' makes Time's inexorable progress palpable through the piano's unfaltering quavers; **Schubert's** melody, meanwhile, asserts the determination of Goethe's protagonist to seize what joy he can before reaching the journey's inevitable destination. Schubert famously never succeeded in meeting Goethe, but the poet enjoyed a close friendship with **Zelter**, to whom he sent 'Um Mitternacht' in 1818: Zelter's setting registers the passage from past to future with subtle melodic variations above a constant harmonic backdrop. **Weber's** 'Die Zeit' is a poised response to Stoll's personification of Time as a white-clothed woman weaving by an open grave; **Brahms's** 'Auf dem Kirchhofe' begins in similar vein with a romantic depiction of a rainy graveyard, giving way in the final couplet to a chorale-derived melody.

'Auf einen Kirchhof' also moves from melancholy contemplation to religiously inspired hope; no such consolation is found in 'Herbst', a masterpiece from Schubert's final year. Autumn winds blow throughout the song as quivering piano semiquavers; the destruction of 'life' and 'love' that the season inflicts is deftly underlined by Schubert with melismas on these climactic words. **Wolf's** 1878 vision of autumn is less obviously pictorial, but even more desolate, reflecting Lenau's suggestion that the protagonist has never tasted the joys of springtime. Regret at lost opportunities is more delicately evoked in **Schumann's** 'Aufträge', whose brilliant piano part represents the speed of the messengers with whom the lover vainly struggles to keep up. Its charm is shared by Schubert's setting of 'Der Einsame', whose protagonist's contentment with his lot seems somewhat untypical of his century!

The passing of time is not a preoccupation confined to 19th-century composers, as the next sequence of songs confirms. 'His golden locks' was sung at the court of Queen Elizabeth I in 1590 on the retirement of Sir Henry Lee as Queen's Champion; it sets a text entitled 'A Farewell to Arms' by the well-known playwright George Peele, believed by some to have collaborated with Shakespeare on *Titus Andronicus*. **John Danyel** was a contemporary of **Dowland** whose music is similarly rich in chromaticism and dissonance: 'Time, cruel time' sets a text by Danyel's brother, Samuel, a celebrated poet. Donne's 'The Autumnal' inspired **Alec Roth** to compose both this song (originally scored, like Dowland's and Danyel's, for voice and lute) and a subsequent string quartet: unlike many of the texts heard tonight, the lines extracted by Roth celebrate rather than lament the process of ageing, a sentiment enhanced by this haunting setting. Donne's 'The Blossom', whose opening stanzas **Imogen Holst** sets in 'Little Thinkest Thou, Poore Flower', offers a more wistful account of the passage of time; Holst's poignant setting shows the influence of Britten, whom she assisted in Aldeburgh for many years. 'Eight o'clock', **Rebecca**

**Clarke's** Housman setting from 1927 whose impact belies its brief duration, is undoubtedly the darkest song in tonight's programme, with its precise delineation of the final seconds of a condemned man.

**Finzi** was already familiar with Dowland's setting of 'His golden locks' when he first set the same words in the 1920s; in 1941, prompted in part by Leslie Boosey's reluctance to publish *Farewell to Arms* in its current form during wartime, he added a setting of a Ralph Knevet text that seemed to him to set the scene perfectly: it describes a soldier laying down his arms, beginning with the same striking image of a helmet being turned into a beehive also used by Peele. Finzi set Knevet's text as a recitative-like 'Introduction' with close thematic connections to the ritornello that shapes the 'Aria'; despite the twenty-year gap in composition, the two sections join perfectly to form one of Finzi's most successful and moving works, whether in its original form for small orchestra or the piano version heard tonight.

Appropriately enough in a programme concerned with the passing of time, evocations of autumn give way in the last work to an exploration of winter. **Britten** first encountered the poetry of Thomas Hardy in 1949 when he and Peter Pears visited Christopher Isherwood in Los Angeles and the exiled writer gave him Hardy's *Collected Poems* as a birthday present, but it was not until March 1953 – in the period between completing his Coronation opera, *Gloriana*, and rehearsing it at Covent Garden – that he began to set ten of Hardy's poems. Ultimately only eight would be included in *Winter Words*, which Pears and Britten premièred at Harewood House on 8 October the same year.

'At day-close in November' begins the sequence with an eerie, harmonically restless depiction of a tree-dominated landscape. 'Midnight on the Great Western' is notable for its imitation of the whistling and clanking of the train carrying a journeying boy – perhaps a refugee? – to a new life. The mood lifts slightly in 'Wagtail and baby', presenting the baby who observes various human/animal interactions as a symbol of hope; there is humour, too, in the way in which 'The little old table' represents the table's insistent creak, and in the affectionate parody of Church of England mores and music making in 'The Choirmaster's Burial'. 'Proud songsters' is a crystalline representation of the insistent cacophony of birdsong; the themes of children and railways return in 'At the railway station, Upway', though here the boy never gets on the train and is condemned to play his violin on the platform. The final song, 'Before life and after', is perhaps the finest: its theme of primal innocence (represented by piano triads) corrupted by the 'disease of feeling' anticipates *The Turn of the Screw*, composed a year later.

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## Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

### An Schwager Kronos

D369 (1816)

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

Spute dich, Kronos!  
Fort den rasselnden Trott!  
Bergab gleitet der Weg;  
Ekles Schwindeln zögert  
Mir vor die Stirne dein Zaudern.  
Frisch, holpert es gleich,  
Über Stock und Steine den Trott  
Rasch in's Leben hinein!

Nun schon wieder  
Den er atmenden Schritt  
Mühsam Berg hinauf!  
Auf denn, nicht träge denn,  
Strebend und hoffend hinan!

Weit, hoch, herrlich rings den Blick  
Ins Leben hinein;  
Vom Gebirg' zum  
Gebirg'  
Schwebet der ewige Geist,  
Ewigen Lebens ahndevoll.

Seitwärts des Überdachs Schatten  
Zieht dich an  
Und ein Frischung  
verheissender Blick  
Auf der Schwelle des Mädchens  
da.  
Labe dich – Mir auch, Mädchen,  
Diesen schäumenden Trank,  
Diesen frischen Gesundheitsblick!

Ab denn, rascher hinab!  
Sieh, die Sonne sinkt!  
Eh' sie sinkt, eh' mich Greisen  
Ergreift im Moore Nebelduft,  
Entzahnte Kiefern schnattern  
Und das schlotternde Gebein –

Trunken vom letzten Strahl  
Reiss mich, ein Feuermeer  
Mir im schäumenden Aug',  
Mich geblendeten Taumelnden  
In der Hölle nächtliches Tor.

Töne, Schwager, ins Horn,  
Rassle den schallenden Trab,  
Dass der Orkus vernehme: wir  
kommen,  
Dass gleich an der Tür  
Der Wirt uns freundlich empfangen.

### To Coachman Chronos

Make haste, Chronos!  
Away at a rattling trot!  
The road runs downhill;  
I grow nauseous and giddy  
at your dawdling.  
Quick, though the road is rough,  
speed past hedge and ditch  
headlong into life!

Now once more  
you toil uphill  
out of breath!  
Up then, don't be sluggish,  
upwards, striving, hoping!

Wide, high, glorious  
the view all around into life;  
from mountain range to  
mountain range  
the eternal spirit soars,  
presaging eternal life.

A shade-giving roof  
draws you aside  
and the girl's  
gaze  
promises refreshment on the  
step.

Take comfort – give me too, lass,  
this foaming draught,  
this fresh, health-giving look!

Downhill, then, faster down!  
See, the sun is sinking!  
Before it sinks and I, an old man,  
am trapped on the misty moor,  
with toothless jaws chattering  
and limbs shaking –

Snatch me, still drunk  
with its last rays, a fiery sea  
glinting in my eyes,  
dazzled and reeling  
into Hell's night gate.

Coachman, sound your horn,  
clatter resoundingly on,  
let Orcus know: we're  
coming,  
so mine host will be there  
to greet us at the gate.

## Carl Friedrich Zelter (1758-1832)

### Um Mitternacht (1818)

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

Um Mitternacht ging ich, nicht  
eben gerne,  
Klein kleiner Knabe, jenen  
Kirchhof hin  
Zu Vaters Haus, des Pfarrers;  
Stern an Sterne,  
Sie leuchteten doch alle gar zu  
schön;  
Um Mitternacht.

Wenn ich dann ferner in des  
Lebens Weite  
Zur Liebsten musste, musste,  
weil sie zog,  
Gestirn und Nordschein über  
mir im Streite,  
Ich gehend, kommend  
Seligkeiten sog;  
Um Mitternacht.

Bis dann zuletzt des vollen  
Mondes Helle  
So klar und deutlich mir ins  
Finstere drang,  
Auch der Gedanke willig, sinnig,  
schnelle  
Sich ums Vergangne wie ums  
Künftige schlang;  
Um Mitternacht.

### At midnight

At midnight, as a very little boy,  
I would walk,  
far from willingly, past that  
churchyard  
to father's vicarage; star on  
star,  
how beautifully they all  
shone;  
at midnight.

When further on in life I had to  
go  
to my beloved, had to because  
she drew me on,  
I saw the stars and Northern  
Lights compete;  
I came, I went, drinking in her  
bliss;  
at midnight.

Until at last the moon's full  
radiance  
pierced my darkness so clearly  
and brightly,  
that also my thoughts, willingly,  
meaningfully, swiftly  
embraced the past and the  
future;  
at midnight.

## Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826)

### Die Zeit Op. 13 No. 5

(pub. 1811)

*Josef Ludwig Stoll*

Es sitzt die Zeit im weissen Kleid  
Und webt und singt und webt.  
Sie sitzt über ein offenes Grab  
Es rollen ihr lächelnd die Tränen  
herab.

Es sitzt die Zeit im weissen Kleid  
Und webt und singt und webt.  
So sitzt sie singend viel tausend  
Jahr  
Und weint und lächelt und webt  
immerdar.

### Time

Time sits robed in white  
and weaves and sings and weaves.  
She sits by an open grave,  
tears roll smiling down her  
cheeks.

Time sits robed in white  
and weaves and sings and weaves.  
Thus she sits for thousands of  
years  
and weeps and smiles and  
weaves for ever.

## Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

### Auf dem Kirchhofe

#### Op. 105 No. 4 (c.1888)

*Baron Detlev von Liliencron*

Der Tag ging regenschwer und  
sturbewegt,

Ich war an manch vergessnem  
Grab gewesen.

Verwittert Stein und Kreuz, die  
Kränze alt,

Die Namen überwachsen, kaum  
zu lesen.

Der Tag ging sturbewegt und  
regenschwer,

Auf allen Gräbern fror das Wort:  
Gewesen.

Wie sturместot die Säрге  
schlummerten –

Auf allen Gräbern taute still:  
Genesen.

### In the Churchyard

The day was heavy with rain  
and storms,

I had stood by many a forgotten  
grave.

Weathered stones and crosses,  
faded wreaths,

The names overgrown, scarcely  
to be read.

The day was heavy with storms  
and rains,

On each grave froze the word:  
Deceased.

How the coffins slumbered,  
dead to the storm –

Silent dew on each grave  
proclaimed: Released.

## Franz Schubert

### Auf einen Kirchhof D151

(1815)

*Franz von Schlechta*

Sei gegrüsst, geweihte Stille  
Die mir sanfte Trauer  
weckt

Wo Natur die bunte Hülle  
Freundlich über Gräber deckt.

Leicht von Wolkenduft getragen  
Senkt die Sonne ihren Lauf  
Aus der finstern Erde schlagen  
Glühend rote Rammen auf!

Ach, auch ihr, erstarrte Brüder  
Habet sinkend ihn  
vollbracht;  
Sankt ihr auch so herrlich nieder  
In des Grabes Schauernacht?

Schlummert sanft, ihr kalten  
Herzen  
In der düstern langen Ruh',  
Eure Wunden, eure Schmerzen  
Decket mild die Erde zu!

Neu zerstören, neu erschaffen  
Treibt das Rad der  
Weltenuhr.  
Kräfte, die am Fels erschlaffen  
Blühen wieder auf der Flur!

### To a churchyard

I greet you, holy stillness,  
which awakens within me gentle  
sorrow,  
where kindly nature drapes  
her bright mantle over graves.

Lightly borne by hazy clouds  
the sun sinks in its course,  
from the dark earth  
glowing red flames leap up!

Ah, you too, lifeless brothers,  
have sunk down to fulfil your  
course;  
did you, too, sink so gloriously  
into the dread night of the grave?

Slumber softly, cold  
hearts,  
in your long, sombre peace;  
your wounds, your pain  
are gently covered by the earth!

To destroy and to create anew  
the wheel of the world's clock  
drives on;  
forces that languish in the rock  
blossom again in the meadows.

Und auch du, geliebte Hülle,  
Sinkest zuckend einst hinab  
Und erblühst in schöner  
Fülle  
Neu, ein Blümchen auf dem Grab.

Wankst, ein Flämmchen durch  
die Grüfte  
Irrest flimmernd durch dies  
Moor;  
Schwingst, ein Strahl, dich  
durch die Lüfte,  
Klingest hell, ein Ton,  
empor!

Aber du, das in mir lebet,  
Wirst auch du des Wurmes  
Raub?  
Was entzückend mich erhebet,  
Bist auch du nur eitel Staub?

Nein! Was ich im Innern fühle,  
Was entzückend mich erhebt  
Ist der Gottheit reine Hülle  
Ist ihr Hauch, der in mir lebt.

### Herbst D945 (1828)

*Ludwig Rellstab*

Es rauschen die Winde  
So herbstlich und kalt;  
Verödet die Fluren,  
Entblättert der Wald.  
Ihr blumigen Auen!  
Du sonniges Grün!  
So welken die Blüten  
Des Lebens dahin.

Es ziehen die Wolken  
So finster und grau;  
Verschwunden die Sterne  
Am himmlischen Blau!  
Ach, wie die Gestirne  
Am Himmel entfliehn,  
So sinket die Hoffnung  
Des Lebens dahin!

Ihr Tage des Lenzes  
Mit Rosen geschmückt,  
Wo ich die Geliebte  
Ans Herze gedrückt!  
Kalt über den Hügel  
Rauscht, Winde, dahin!  
So sterben die Rosen  
Der Liebe dahin.

And you too, beloved mortal frame,  
will one day sink down, quivering,  
and blossom anew in glorious  
fullness,  
as a flower on the grave.

You will waver, as a flame,  
through the graves,  
you will flicker, lost, across the  
moor;  
as a shaft of light, you will  
pierce the air,  
as a resonant tone, you will soar  
upwards.

But you, who live within me,  
will you, too, fall prey to the  
worm?  
You who exalt and delight me,  
are you, too, but vain dust?

No, what I feel deep inside me,  
what exalts and delights me  
is the pure spirit of the Godhead,  
is his breath, which lives within me.

### Autumn

The winds are blowing  
so autumnal and cold;  
the fields are barren,  
leafless the woods  
You blossoming meadows!  
You sunlit green!  
Thus do life's blossoms  
wither away.

The clouds drift by  
so sombre and grey;  
the stars have faded  
from the heavenly blue!  
Ah, as the stars  
flee from the sky,  
thus does life's hope  
fade away!

You days of spring  
adorned with roses,  
when I pressed my beloved  
against my heart!  
Howl on, chill winds,  
across the hills!  
Thus do love's roses  
die away.

## Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)

### Herbst (1878)

*Nikolaus Lenau*

Nun ist es Herbst, die Blätter  
fallen,  
Den Wald durchbraust des  
Scheidens Weh,  
Den Lenz und seine  
Nachtigallen  
Verträumt' ich auf der wüsten See.

Der Himmel schien so mild, so  
helle,  
Verloren ging sein warmes Licht;  
Es blühte nicht die Meereswelle,  
Die rohen Winde sangen nicht.

Und mir verging die Jugend traurig,  
Des Frühlings Wonne blieb  
versäumt;  
Der Herbst durchweht mich  
trennungsschaurig,  
Mein Herz dem Tod  
entgegenträumt.

### Autumn

Autumn is come, the leaves are  
falling,  
the ache of parting sighs  
through the wood,  
spring and its nightingales I  
dreamt away,  
as I sailed on the desolate sea.

The heavens seemed so mellow,  
so clear,  
their warm light has vanished;  
the ocean waves did not blossom,  
the biting winds did not sing.

And my youth passed sadly by,  
the joys of spring were not  
tasted;  
autumn pierces me with a  
parting shudder,  
my heart dreams on towards  
death.

## Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

### Aufträge Op. 77 No. 5

(1850)

*Christian L'Egru*

Nicht so schnelle, nicht so schnelle!  
Wart' ein wenig, kleine Welle!  
Will dir einen Auftrag geben  
An die Liebste mein.  
Wirst du ihr vorüberschweben,  
Grüsse sie mir fein!

Sag, ich wäre mitgekommen,  
Auf dir selbst herab  
geschwommen:  
Für den Gruss einen Kuss  
Kühn mir zu erbitten,  
Doch der Zeit Dringlichkeit  
Hätt' es nicht gelitten.

Nicht so eilig! halt! erlaube,  
Kleine, leichtbeschwingte Taube!  
Habe dir was aufzutragen  
An die Liebste mein!  
Sollst ihr tausend Grüsse sagen,  
Hundert obendrein.

### Messages

Not so fast, not so fast!  
Wait a moment, little wave!  
I've a message to give you  
for my sweetheart.  
If you glide past her,  
greet her fondly!

Say I'd have come too,  
sailing on your  
back:  
and would have boldly  
begged a kiss for my greeting,  
but pressing time  
did not allow it.

Not so fast! Stop! Allow me,  
little light-winged dove,  
to entrust you with something  
for my sweetheart!  
Give her a thousand greetings,  
and a hundred more.

Sag, ich wär' mit dir geflogen,  
Über Berg und Strom gezogen:  
Für den Gruss einen Kuss  
Kühn mir zu erbitten;  
Doch der Zeit Dringlichkeit  
Hätt' es nicht gelitten.

Warte nicht, dass ich dich  
treibe,  
O du träge Mondesscheibe!  
Weisst's ja, was ich dir befohlen  
Für die Liebste mein:  
Durch das Fensterchen  
verstohlen  
Grüsse sie mir fein!

Sag, ich wär' auf dich gestiegen,  
Selber zu ihr hinzufliegen:  
Für den Gruss einen Kuss  
Kühn mir zu erbitten,  
Du seist schuld, Ungeduld  
Hätt' mich nicht gelitten.

Say, I'd have flown with you  
over mountain and river:  
and would have boldly  
begged a kiss for my greeting,  
but pressing time  
did not allow it.

Don't wait for me to drive you  
on,  
you lazy old moon!  
You know what I ordered you  
to do for my sweetheart:  
peep secretly through the  
windowpane  
and give her my love!

Say I'd have climbed on you  
and flown to her in person:  
and would have boldly  
begged a kiss for my greeting,  
that it's my fault  
impatience did not allow it.

*Texts continue overleaf*

## Franz Schubert

### Der Einsame D800 (1825)    The recluse

*Karl Gottlieb Lappe*

Wenn meine Grillen schwirren,  
Bei Nacht, am spät erwärmten  
Herd,  
Dann sitz' ich, mit vergnügtem  
Sinn,  
Vertraulich zu der Flamme hin,  
So leicht, so unbeschwert.

Ein trautes stilles  
Stündchen  
Bleibt man noch gern am Feuer  
wach.  
Man schürt, wenn sich die Lohe  
senkt,  
Die Funken auf, und sinnt und  
denkt:  
Nun abermal ein Tag!

Was Liebes oder Leides  
Sein Lauf für uns daher gebracht,  
Es geht noch einmal durch den  
Sinn;  
Allein das Böse wirft man hin.  
Es störe nicht die Nacht.

Zu einem frohen Traume  
Bereitet man gemach sich zu.  
Wenn sorgelos ein holdes Bild  
Mit sanfter Lust die Seele füllt,  
Ergibt man sich der Ruh.

O wie ich mir gefalle  
In meiner stillen Ländlichkeit!  
Was in dem Schwarm der lauten  
Welt  
Das irre Herz gefesselt hält,  
Gibt nicht Zufriedenheit.

Zirpt immer, liebe Heimchen,  
In meiner Klause, eng und klein.  
Ich duld' euch gern: ihr stört  
mich nicht.  
Wann euer Lied das Schweigen  
bricht,  
Bin ich nicht ganz allein.

When my crickets chirrup at night  
by the late-burning  
hearth,  
I sit contentedly in my  
chair,  
confiding to the flame,  
so light-heartedly, so at ease.

For one more sweet and  
peaceful hour  
it's good to linger by the  
fire,  
stirring the embers when the  
blaze dies down,  
musing and  
thinking:  
Well, that's another day!

Whatever joy or sorrow  
it has brought us,  
runs once more through the  
mind;  
but the bad is cast aside,  
so as not to spoil the night.

We gently prepare ourselves  
for pleasant dreams.  
When a lovely image fills the soul  
with carefree, tender joy,  
we succumb to sleep.

Oh, how I love  
my quiet rustic life!  
What holds the wayward heart  
captive in the bustle  
of the noisy world,  
cannot bring contentment.

Chirp away, friendly house crickets  
in my narrow little room.  
I gladly put up with you: you're  
no trouble.  
When your song breaks the  
silence,  
I'm no longer all alone.

## John Dowland (1563-1626)

### His golden locks (pub. 1597)

*Sir Henry Lea*

His golden locks Time hath to silver turned.  
O Time too swift! Oh swiftness never ceasing!  
His youth 'gainst Time and Age hath ever spurned,  
But spurned in vain; youth waneth by increasing.  
Beauty, strength, youth are flowers but fading seen;  
Duty, faith, love are roots and ever green.

His helmet now shall make a hive for bees,  
And lover's sonnets turn to holy psalms.  
A man-at-arms must now serve on his knees,  
And feed on prayers which are Age's alms.  
But though from Court to cottage he depart,  
His Saint is sure of his unspotted heart.

And when he saddest sits in homely cell,  
He'll teach his swains this carol for a song:  
Blest be the hearts that wish my Sovereign well.  
Curst be the soul that think her any wrong.  
Goddess, allow this aged man his right  
To be your bedesman now that was your knight.

## John Danyel (c.1564-1626)

### Time, cruel time (pub. 1606)

*Samuel Danyel*

Time, cruel Time, canst thou subdue that brow  
That conquers all but thee, and thee too stays,  
As if she were exempt from scythe or bow,  
From love and years, unsubject to decays?  
Or art thou grown in league with those fair eyes,  
That they might aid thee to consume our days?  
Or dost thou love her for her cruelties,  
Being merciless like thee that no man weighs?  
Then do so still, although she makes no 'steem  
Of days nor years, but lets them run in vain.  
Hold still thy swift-winged hours, that wond'ring seem  
To gaze on her, even to turn back again;  
And do so still, although she nothing cares.  
Do as I do, love her although in vain.  
Hold still. Yet, O I fear, at unawares  
Thou wilt beguile her though thou seem'st so kind.

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## Interval

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## Alec Roth (b.1948)

### Autumnal (2010)

*John Donne*

No spring nor summer beauty hath such grace  
As I have seen in one autumnal face.

Young beauties force our love, and that's a rape,  
This doth but counsel, yet you cannot scape.  
If 'twere a shame to love, here 'twere no shame;  
Affection here takes reverence's name.

Were her first years the golden age? That's true,  
But now she's gold oft tried and ever new.  
That was her torrid and inflaming time,  
This is her tolerable tropic clime.

This is Love's timber, youth his underwood;  
There he, as wine in June, enrages blood,  
Which then comes seasonanbliest when our taste  
And appetite to other things is past.

Here where still evening is, not noon nor night,  
Where no voluptuousness, yet all delight.  
In all her words, unto all hearers fit,  
You may at revels, you at council, sit.

If we love things long sought, age is a thing  
Which we are fifty years in compassing;  
If transitory things, which soon decay,  
Age must be loveliest at the latest day.

## Imogen Holst (1907-1984)

### Little Thinkst Thou, Poore Flower (1937)

*John Donne*

Little think'st thou, poor flower,  
Whom I've watch'd six or seven days,  
And seen thy birth, and seen what every hour  
Gave to thy growth, thee to this height to raise,  
And now dost laugh and triumph on this bough,  
Little think'st thou,  
That it will freeze anon, and that I shall  
To-morrow find thee fallen, or not at all.

Little think'st thou, poor heart,  
That labourest yet to nestle thee,  
And think'st by hovering here to get a part  
And think'st by hovering here to get a part  
And hopest her stiffness by long siege to bow:  
Little think'st thou  
That thou to-morrow, ere the sun doth wake,  
Must with the sun and me a journey take.

But thou, which lovest to be  
Subtle to plague thyself, wilt say,  
Alas ! if you must go, what's that to me?  
Here lies my business, and here I will stay:  
You go to friends, whose love and means present  
Various content  
To your eyes, ears, and taste, and every part.  
If then your body go, what need your heart?

Well then, stay here; but know,  
When thou hast stay'd and done thy most,  
A naked thinking heart, that makes no show,  
Is to a woman but a kind of ghost;  
How shall she know my heart; or having none,  
Know thee for one?  
Practice may make her know some other part,  
But take my word, she doth not know a heart.

Meet me in London, then,  
Twenty days hence, and thou shalt see  
Me fresher and more fat, by being with men,  
Than if I had stay'd still with her and thee.  
For God's sake, if you can, be you so too:  
I will give you  
There to another friend, whom we shall find  
As glad to have my body as my mind.

## Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979)

### Eight o'clock (1927)

*AE Housman*

He stood, and heard the steeple  
Sprinkle the quarters on the morning town.  
One, two, three, four, to market-place and people  
It tossed them down.

Strapped, noosed, nighing his hour,  
He stood and counted them and cursed his luck;  
And then the clock collected in the tower  
Its strength, and struck.

## Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)

### Farewell to Arms Op. 9 (1926-44)

*Ralph Knevet, George Peele*

The helmet now an hive for bees becomes,  
And hilts of swords may serve for spiders' looms;  
Sharp pikes may make  
Teeth for a rake;  
And the keen blade, th'arch enemy of life,  
Shall be degraded to a pruning knife.  
The rustic spade  
Which first was made  
For honest agriculture, shall retake  
Its primitive employment, and forsake  
The rampires steep  
And trenches deep.  
Tame conies in our brazen guns shall breed,  
Or gentle doves their young ones there shall feed.  
In musket barrels  
Mice shall raise quarrels  
For their quarters. The ventriloquious drum,  
Like lawyers in vacations, shall be dumb.  
Now all recruits,  
But those of fruits,  
Shall be forgot; and th'unarmed soldier  
Shall only boast of what he did whilere,  
In chimney's ends  
Among his friends.

His golden locks Time hath to silver turned.  
O Time too swift! Oh swiftness never ceasing!  
His youth 'gainst Time and Age hath ever spurned,  
But spurned in vain; youth waneth by increasing.  
Beauty, strength, youth are flowers but fading seen;  
Duty, faith, love are roots and ever green.

His helmet now shall make a hive for bees,  
And lover's sonnets turn to holy psalms.  
A man-at-arms must now serve on his knees,  
And feed on prayers which are Age's alms.  
But though from Court to cottage he depart,  
His Saint is sure of his unspotted heart.

And when he saddest sits in homely cell,  
He'll teach his swains this carol for a song:  
Blest be the hearts that wish my Sovereign well.  
Curst be the soul that think her any wrong.  
Goddess, allow this aged man his right  
To be your bedesman now that was your knight.

## Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

### Winter Words Op. 52 (1953)

*Thomas Hardy*

#### At day-close in November

The ten hours' light is abating,  
And a late bird wings across,  
Where the pines, like waltzers waiting,  
Give their black heads a toss.

Beech leaves, that yellow the noontime,  
Float past like specks in the eye;  
I set every tree in my June time,  
And now they obscure the sky.

And the children who ramble through here  
Conceive that there never has been  
A time when no tall trees grew here,  
That none will in time be seen.

#### Midnight on the Great Western

In the third-class seat sat the journeying boy,  
And the roof-lamp's oily flame  
Played down on his listless form and face,  
Bewrapt past knowing to what he was going,  
Or whence he came.

In the band of his hat the journeying boy  
Had a ticket stuck; and a string  
Around his neck bore the key of his box,  
That twinkled gleams of the lamp's sad beams  
Like a living thing.

What past can be yours, O journeying boy  
Towards a world unknown,  
Who calmly, as if incurious quite  
On all at stake, can undertake  
This plunge alone?

Knows your soul a sphere, O journeying boy,  
Our rude realms far above,  
Whence with spacious vision you mark and mete  
This region of sin that you find you in,  
But are not of?

#### Wagtail and baby

A baby watched a ford, whereto  
A wagtail came for drinking;  
A blaring bull went wading through,  
The wagtail showed no shrinking.



A stallion splashed his way across,  
The birdie nearly sinking;  
He gave his plumes a twitch and toss,  
And held his own unblinking.

Next saw the baby round the spot  
A mongrel slowly slinking;  
The wagtail gazed, but faltered not  
In dip and sip and prinking.

A perfect gentleman then neared;  
The wagtail, in a winking,  
With terror rose and disappeared;  
The baby fell a thinking.

### **The little old table**

Creak, little wood thing, creak,  
When I touch you with elbow or knee;  
That is the way you speak  
Of one who gave you to me!

You, little table, she brought –  
Brought me with her own hand,  
As she looked at me with a thought  
That I did not understand.

Whoever owns it anon,  
And hears it, will never know  
What a history hangs upon  
This creak from long ago.

### **The Choirmaster's Burial**

He often would ask us  
That, when he died,  
After playing so many  
To their last rest,  
If out of us any  
Should here abide,  
And it would not task us,  
We would with our lutes  
Play over him  
By his grave brim  
The psalm he liked best –  
The one whose sense suits –  
'Mount Ephraim' –  
And perhaps we should seem  
To him, in Death's dream,  
Like the seraphim.

As soon as I knew  
That his spirit was gone  
I thought this his due,  
And spoke thereupon.  
'I think', said the vicar,

'A read service quicker  
Than viols out of doors  
In these frosts and hoars.  
That old fashioned way  
Requires a fine day,  
And it seems to me  
It had better not be.'

Hence, that afternoon,  
Though never knew he  
That his wish could not be,  
To get through it faster  
They buried the master  
Without any tune.

But 'twas said that, when  
At the dead of next night  
The vicar looked out,  
There struck on his ken  
Thronged roundabout,  
Where the frost was graying  
The headstoned grass,  
A band all in white  
Like saints in church glass,  
Singing and playing  
The ancient stave  
By the choirmaster's grave.

Such the tenor man told  
When he had grown old.

### **Proud songsters**

The thrushes sing as the sun is going,  
And the finches whistle in ones and pairs,  
And as it gets dark loud nightingales in bushes  
Pipe, as they can when April wears,  
As if all Time were theirs.

These are brand new birds of twelve months' growing,  
Which a year ago, or less than twain,  
No finches were, nor nightingales, nor thrushes,  
But only particles of grain,  
And earth, and air, and rain.

## At the railway station, Upway

'There is not much that I can do,  
For I've no money that's quite my own!  
Spoke up the pitying child –  
A little boy with a violin  
At the station before the train came in.  
'But I can play my fiddle to you,  
And a nice one 'tis, and good in tone!'

The man in the handcuffs smiled;  
The constable looked, and he smiled, too,  
    As the fiddle began to twang;  
And the man in the handcuffs suddenly sang  
    With grimful glee:  
    'This life so free  
    Is the thing for me!'

And the constable smiled, and said no word,  
As if unconscious of what he heard;  
And so they went on till the train came in –  
The convict, and boy with the violin.

## Before life and after

A time there was – as one may guess  
And as, indeed, earth's testimonies tell –  
Before the birth of consciousness,  
    When all went well.

None suffered sickness, love, or loss,  
None knew regret, starved hope, or heart-burnings;  
None cared whatever crash or cross  
    Brought wrack to things.

If something ceased, no tongue bewailed,  
If something winced and waned, no heart was wrung;  
If brightness dimmed, and dark prevailed,  
    No sense was stung.

But the disease of feeling germed,  
And primal rightness took the tinct of wrong;  
Ere nescience shall be reaffirmed  
    How long, how long?

*Translations of all Schubert except 'Auf einen Kirchhof', Brahms and Schumann 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. Zelter and Weber by Richard Stokes. 'Auf einen Kirchhof' by Richard Wigmore from Schubert – The Complete Song Texts published by Victor Gollancz Ltd. Wolf by Richard Stokes © from The Complete Songs of Hugo Wolf. Life, Letters, Lieder (Faber, 2021)*