

# WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 22 October 2022  
7.30pm

## Ludlow English Song Day

*Still alive & frying bacon.* Gerald Finzi's life in songs and letters  
Devised by Iain Burnside from Diana McVeagh's recent edition

Robert Murray tenor  
James Atkinson baritone  
Iain Burnside piano

Katy Hamilton reader  
Donald Macleod reader  
Ian Skelly reader

Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)	Let me enjoy the earth from <i>Till Earth Outwears</i> Op. 19a (before 1936) When I set out for Lyonesse from <i>Earth and Air and Rain</i> Op. 15 (1932-5)
Ernest Bristow Farrar	Brittany from <i>2 Pastorals</i> Op. 21 (pub. 1920)
Gerald Finzi	As I lay in the early sun from <i>Oh fair to see</i> Op. 13b (1921 rev. 1956)
Ivor Gurney (1890-1937)	Even such is time (1917)
Gerald Finzi	Ditty from <i>A Young Man's Exhortation</i> Op. 14 (1928) For Life I had never cared greatly from <i>I said to love</i> Op. 19b (pub. 1958) Epeisodia from <i>Before and After Summer</i> Op. 16 (?1932) To Lizbie Brown from <i>Earth and Air and Rain</i> Op. 15 (pub. 1936) The Sigh from <i>A Young Man's Exhortation</i> Op. 14 (1928) Since we loved from <i>Oh fair to see</i> Op. 13b (1921) June on Castle Hill from <i>To a Poet</i> Op. 13a (1940)
Martin Bussey (b.1958)	In days like these (2021)
Gerald Finzi	To a Poet a thousand years hence from <i>To a Poet</i> Op. 13a (1920s) His golden locks from <i>Farewell to Arms</i> Op. 9 (1926) On parent knees from <i>To a Poet</i> Op. 13a (1935) The dance continued from <i>A Young Man's Exhortation</i> Op. 14 (?1928-9)

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The Ludlow Song Weekend began with **Finzi**, in the work of the Finzi Trust and Friends. It seems fitting, therefore, to end this Ludlow Day in his company, in a recital inspired by Diana McVeagh's recently published edition of Gerald Finzi's letters, a collection of more than 1,600 letters that offers remarkable insight into Finzi's life and work.

Gerald Finzi was born in London on 14 July 1901. He showed an enthusiasm for music, and by the time he and his mother moved to Harrogate following the outbreak of war in 1914, the young Finzi had already started to compose. There, he began taking composition lessons with **Ernest Farrar**. However, in late 1915 Farrar enlisted for the army, so Finzi continued his studies with Edward Bairstow at York Minster. It was in Bairstow's rooms that Finzi had what Diana McVeagh has described as his 'moment on the road to Damascus'. In 1920, he took a newly published song by **Ivor Gurney**, 'Sleep', to show Bairstow. Elsie Suddaby, at Bairstow's for a singing lesson, tried it through. It was a revelation; an affirmation of Finzi's own growing belief in the medium of song.

Inspired by Gurney, and by the roster of other composers and artists who had emerged out of Gloucestershire, Finzi moved to the county with his mother in 1922. He began to correspond and meet with other composers, including Vaughan Williams, Herbert Howells and Edmund Rubbra. By the time he left Gloucestershire for London in 1926, Finzi had achieved publication of songs, choral works and his first orchestral work, *A Severn Rhapsody*; and he had started work on what some regard as his masterpiece, *Dies Natalis*, which would eventually when completed be premièred at Wigmore Hall. Finzi was becoming an established composer.

On his last new year's eve in the county, at the end of 1925, Finzi walked up to the church on top of Chosen Hill to hear the ringing in of the new year. In London the following year, the memory of that night on Chosen Hill became the inspiration for a nocturne for orchestra, *New Year Music*. In 1926, Finzi also began the first of his song cycles to poems by Thomas Hardy. Of Finzi's c.160 songs, nearly half are settings of Hardy, many of them gathered into cycles: *A Young Man's Exhortation* (1926-9), *Earth and Air and Rain* (pub. 1936), *Before and After Summer* (pub. 1949) and two posthumously gathered sets, *Till Earth Outwears* and *I said to love*. Finzi was in the habit of keeping completed songs in a drawer until such time as they might find some companions to make a work of greater substance and standing than a single song. The songs in the posthumous collections therefore date variously from the 1920s to his final weeks in 1956. Settings of other poets heard here are from similar posthumous gatherings, *Oh fair to see* and *To a Poet*.

Finzi's musical circle, reputation and catalogue of works continued to grow. He was studying with RO

Morris, through whom Finzi met both Arthur Bliss and Howard Ferguson, the latter of whom became a close friend and ally. In 1928 a violin concerto begun in Gloucestershire was premièred under the direction of Vaughan Williams. Finzi obtained a teaching post at the Royal Academy of Music, but gave it up in 1933 when he married artist Joyce Black; Joy. The Finzis moved to Aldbourne, Wiltshire, before acquiring some land near Newbury where they built a home for themselves and their sons, Kiffer (Christopher) and Nigel. From 1939, Church Farm, Ashmansworth, became a haven not only for the Finzis, but for wartime refugees and for other composers, musicians and artists whom the Finzis encouraged. As well as encouraging the living, they also championed the likes of Gurney, John Stanley and William Boyce.

In 1951 Finzi was diagnosed as having cancer of the lymph nodes. It came at a time of some success, with recent premières of the Clarinet Concerto and *Intimations of Immortality*. In the wake of his diagnosis, he undertook his most ambitious instrumental work: the Cello Concerto. Completed in 1955, the concerto received its first performance at the Cheltenham Festival, with Barbirolli conducting the Hallé orchestra and soloist Christopher Bunting, a pupil of Pablo Casals.

That new year's eve on Chosen Hill came once more to mind, providing inspiration for a Christmas scene, *In Terra Pax*. First performed at Ashmansworth with his own Newbury String Players, Finzi scored the work for full orchestra for the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival, where he conducted the work in September 1956. During the festival, the Finzis took the Vaughan Williamses up to Chosen Hill to show them the place that had inspired *In Terra Pax*. There, they went briefly into the sexton's cottage, where one of the children had chickenpox. At the time it seemed unimportant, but, being vulnerable with his treatment for lymphoma, in the days that followed, Finzi contracted shingles, which developed into chickenpox. He was taken to hospital, where, on the evening of his admission, he was able to listen to a broadcast of his Cello Concerto. The following day, 27 September 1956, Finzi died.

In *To a Poet*, Flecker writes of how an artist, through their work, 'send[s their] soul through time and space/To greet you.' In Finzi's words, 'I like to think that in each generation may be found a few responsive minds'. 'To shake hands with a good friend over the centuries is a pleasant thing, and the affection which an individual may retain after his departure is perhaps the only thing which guarantees an ultimate life to his work.' Through his work, Finzi lives on, and with ready hands and minds we can reach out to greet him.

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**Gerald Finzi** (1901-1956)

Let me enjoy the earth from *Till Earth Outwears*

**Op. 19a** (before 1936)

*Thomas Hardy*

Let me enjoy the earth no less  
Because the all-enacting Might  
That fashioned forth its loveliness  
Had other aims than my delight.

About my path there flits a Fair,  
Who throws me not a word or sign;  
I'll charm me with her ignoring air,  
And laud the lips not meant for mine.

From manuscripts of moving song  
Inspired by scenes and dreams unknown  
I'll pour out raptures that belong  
To others, as they were my own.

And some day hence, towards Paradise  
And all its blest – if such should be –  
I will lift glad, afar-off eyes,  
Though it contain no place for me.

**When I set out for Lyonesse from *Earth and Air and Rain* Op. 15** (1932-5)

*Thomas Hardy*

When I set out for Lyonesse,  
A hundred miles away,  
The rime was on the spray,  
And starlight lit my lonesomeness  
When I set out for Lyonesse  
A hundred miles away.

What would bechance at Lyonesse  
While I should sojourn there  
No prophet durst declare,  
Nor did the wisest wizard guess  
What would bechance at Lyonesse  
While I should sojourn there.

When I came back from Lyonesse  
With magic in my eyes,  
All marked with mute surmise,  
My radiance rare and fathomless,  
When I came back from Lyonesse  
With magic in my eyes!

**Ernest Bristow Farrar**

**Brittany from 2 Pastorals Op. 21** (pub. 1920)

*EV Lucas*

In Brittany the churches  
All day are open wide,  
That anyone who wishes to  
May pray or rest inside.  
The priests have rusty cassocks,  
The priests have shaven chins,  
And poor old bodies go to them  
With lists of little sins.

In Brittany the churches  
Are cool and white and quaint,  
With here and there a crucifix  
And here and there a saint;  
And here and there a little shrine,  
With candles short or tall  
That Bretons light for love of Him  
The Lord who loveth all.

**Gerald Finzi**

**As I lay in the early sun from *Oh fair to see***

**Op. 13b** (1921 rev 1956)

*Edward Shanks*

As I lay in the early sun,  
Stretched in the grass, I thought upon  
My true love, my dear love,  
Who has my heart for ever,  
Who is my happiness when we meet,  
My sorrow when we sever.  
She is all fire when I do burn,  
Gentle when I moody turn,  
Brave when I am sad and heavy  
And all laughter when I am merry.  
And so I lay and dreamed and dreamed,  
And so the day wheeled on,  
While all the birds with thoughts like mine  
Were singing to the sun.

**Ivor Gurney** (1890-1937)

**Even such is time** (1917)

*Walter Raleigh*

Even such is Time, that takes on trust  
Our youth, our joys, our all we have,  
And pays us but with Age and Dust;  
Who in the dark and silent grave,  
When we have wandered all our ways,  
Shuts up the story of our days.  
But from this earth, this grave, this dust,  
The Lord shall raise me up I trust!

## Gerald Finzi

### Ditty from *A Young Man's Exhortation* Op. 14

(1928)

Thomas Hardy

Beneath a knap where flown  
Nestlings play,  
Within walls of weathered stone,  
Far away  
From the files of formal houses,  
By the bough the firstling browses,  
Lives a Sweet: no merchants meet,  
No man barter, no man sells  
Where she dwells.

Upon that fabric fair  
'Here is she!'  
Seems written everywhere  
Unto me.  
But to friends and nodding neighbours,  
Fellow wights in lot and labours,  
Who descry the times as I,  
No such lucid legend tells  
Where she dwells.

Should I lapse to what I was  
Ere we met;  
(Such will not be, but because  
Some forget  
Let me feign it) — none would notice  
That where she I know by rote is  
Spread a strange and withering change,  
Like a drying of the wells  
Where she dwells.

To feel I might have kissed —  
Loved as true —  
Otherwhere, nor Mine have missed  
My life through,  
Had I never wandered near her,  
Is a smart severe — severer  
In the thought that she is nought,  
Even as I, beyond the dells  
Where she dwells.

And Devotion droops her glance  
To recall  
What bond-servants of Chance  
We are all.  
I but found her in that, going  
On my errant path unknowing,  
I did not out-skirt the spot  
That no spot on earth excels —  
Where she dwells!

### For Life I had never cared greatly from *I said to love* Op. 19b (pub. 1958)

Thomas Hardy

For Life I had never cared greatly,  
As worth a man's while;  
Peradventures unsought,  
Peradventures that finished in nought,  
Had kept me from youth and through manhood till lately  
Unwon by its style.

In earliest years — why I know not —  
Viewed it askance;  
Conditions of doubt,  
Conditions that leaked slowly out,  
May haply have bent me to stand and to show not  
Much zest for its dance.

With symphonies soft and sweet colour  
It courted me then,  
Till evasions seemed wrong,  
Till evasions gave in to its song,  
And I warmed, until living aloofly loomed duller  
Than life among men.

Anew I found nought to set eyes on,  
When, lifting its hand,  
It uncloaked a star,  
Uncloaked it from fog-damps afar,  
And showed its beams burning from pole to horizon  
As bright as a brand.

And so, the rough highway forgetting,  
I pace hill and dale  
Regarding the sky,  
Regarding the vision on high,  
And thus re-illumed have no humour for letting  
My pilgrimage fail.

### Epeisodia from *Before and After Summer*

#### Op. 16 (?1932)

Thomas Hardy

Past the hills that peep  
Where the leaze is smiling,  
On and on beguiling  
Crisply-cropping sheep;  
Under boughs of brushwood  
Linking tree and tree  
In a shade of lushwood,  
There caressed we!

Hemmed by city walls  
That outshut the sunlight,  
In a foggy dun light,  
Where the footstep falls  
With a pit-pat wearisome  
In its cadency

On the flagstones drearishome  
There pressed we!

Where in wild-winged crowds  
Blown birds show their whiteness  
Up against the lightness  
Of the clammy clouds;  
By the random river  
Pushing to the sea,  
Under bents that quiver  
There shall rest we.

**To Lizbie Brown from *Earth and Air and Rain* Op. 15** (pub. 1936)  
*Thomas Hardy*

Dear Lizbie Browne,  
Where are you now?  
In sun, in rain? —  
Or is your brow  
Past joy, past pain,  
Dear Lizbie Browne?

Sweet Lizbie Browne,  
How you could smile,  
How you could sing! —  
How archly wile  
In glance-giving,  
Sweet Lizbie Browne!

And, Lizbie Browne,  
Who else had hair  
Bay-red as yours,  
Or flesh so fair  
Bred out of doors,  
Sweet Lizbie Browne?

When, Lizbie Browne,  
You had just begun  
To be endeared  
By stealth to one,  
You disappeared  
My Lizbie Browne!

Ay, Lizbie Browne,  
So swift your life,  
And mine so slow,  
You were a wife  
Ere I could show  
Love, Lizbie Browne.

Still, Lizbie Browne,  
You won, they said,  
The best of men  
When you were wed  
Where went you then,  
O Lizbie Browne?

Dear Lizbie Browne,  
I should have thought,  
'Girls ripen fast',  
And coaxed and caught  
You ere you passed,  
Dear Lizbie Browne!

But, Lizbie Browne,  
I let you slip;  
Shaped not a sign;  
Touched never your lip  
With lip of mine,  
Lost Lizbie Browne!

So, Lizbie Browne,  
When on a day  
Men speak of me  
As not, you'll say,  
'And who was he?' —  
Yes, Lizbie Browne.

**The Sigh from *A Young Man's Exhortation* Op. 14** (1928)  
*Thomas Hardy*

Little head against my shoulder,  
Shy at first, then somewhat bolder,  
And up eyed;  
Till she, with a timid quaver,  
Yielded to the kiss I gave her;  
But, she sighed.

That there mingled with her feeling  
Some sad thought she was concealing  
It implied.  
— Not that she had ceased to love me,  
None on earth she set above me;  
But she sighed.

She could not disguise a passion,  
Dread, or doubt, in weakest fashion  
If she tried:  
Nothing seemed to hold us sundered,  
Hearts were victors; so I wondered  
Why she sighed.

Afterwards I knew her thoroughly,  
And she loved me staunchly, truly,  
Till she died;  
But she never made confession  
Why, at that first sweet concession,  
She had sighed.

It was in our May, remember;  
And though now I near November  
And abide  
Till my appointed change, unfretting,  
Sometimes I sit half regretting  
That she sighed.

## Since we loved from *Oh fair to see* Op. 13b

(1921)

Robert Bridges

Since we loved, — (the earth that shook  
As we kissed, fresh beauty took) —  
Love hath been as poets paint,  
Life as heaven is to a saint;

All my joys my hope excel,  
All my work hath prosper'd well,  
All my songs have happy been,  
O my love, my life, my queen.

## June on Castle Hill from *To a Poet* 13a (1940)

FL Lucas

On its grassy brow  
Not a tower now,  
Not a stone:  
Not a trumpet-call  
Not a hushed foot-fall  
Alone  
Wild parsley waves its white flags far unfurled  
Above a warless world.

Earth sleeps in peace;  
Yet without cease  
The sky  
Throbs angrily  
As the laden bee  
Sails by,  
And, with a secret string, that sullen hum  
Whispers of wars to come.

## Martin Bussey (b.1958)

### In days like these (2021)

Gerald Finzi

Your trouble sounds pretty much like mine in 1928 [...], the  
warning, enforced rest [...]. [E]ven though 'mental rest' is  
too much to ask for in times like these. [...]

It's nice of you to ask for Dies Natalis. [...] I like this on the  
whole & am not perturbed because, like most of my  
work, it's rather a flop. It wants the cathedral & not  
Wigmore Hall. [...]

I'm doing my best to get a few loose ends finished before  
the inevitable call-up next year. But although music  
needs no justification, it is difficult, & needs courage, to  
feel that one's own work is worth while in days like these.  
[...]

Yrs,

Gerald.

## Gerald Finzi

### To a Poet a thousand years hence from *To a Poet* Op. 13a (1920s)

James Elroy Flecker

I who am dead a thousand years,  
And wrote this sweet archaic song,  
Send you my words for messengers  
The way I shall not pass along.

I care not if you bridge the seas,  
Or ride secure the cruel sky,  
Or build consummate palaces  
Of metal or of masonry.

But have you wine and music still,  
And statues and a bright-eyed love,  
And foolish thoughts of good and ill,  
And prayers to them who sit above?

How shall conquer? Like a wind  
That falls at eve our fancies blow,  
And old Maeonides the blind  
Said it three thousand years ago.

O friend unseen, unborn, unknown,  
Student of our sweet English tongue,  
Read out my words at night alone:  
I was a poet, I was young.

Since I can never see your face  
And never shake you by the hand,  
I send my soul through time and space  
To greet you. You will understand.

### His golden locks from *Farewell to Arms* Op. 9 (1926)

Ralph Knevet, George Peele

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.

**On parent knees from *To a Poet Op. 13a* (1935)**

*William Jones*

On parent knees, a naked new-born child,  
Weeping thou sat'st, while all around thee smil'd:  
So live, that sinking to thy life's last sleep,  
Calm thou may'st smile, while all around thee weep.

**The dance continued from *A Young Man's Exhortation Op. 14* (?1928-9)**

*Thomas Hardy*

Regret not me;  
Beneath the sunny tree  
I lie uncaring, slumbering peacefully.

Swift as the light  
I flew my faery flight;  
Ecstatically I moved, and feared no night.

Did not know  
That heydays fade and go,  
But deemed that what was would be always so.

I skipped at morn  
Between the yellowing corn,  
Thinking it good and glorious to be born.

I ran at eves  
Among the piled-up sheaves,  
Dreaming, 'I greave not, therefore nothing grieves'

Now soon will come  
The apple, pear, and plum,  
And hinds will sing, and autumn insects hum.

Again you will fare  
To cider-makings rare,  
And junketings; but I shall not be there.

Yet gaily sing  
Until the pewter ring  
Those songs we sang when we went gipsying.

And lightly dance  
Some triple-timed romance  
In coupled figures, and forget mischance;

And mourn not me  
Beneath the yellowing tree;  
For I shall mind not, slumbering peacefully.