

WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 26 November 2023
3.00pm

BBC Cardiff Singer Recital

Gihoon Kim baritone
Simon Lepper piano

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

4 Serious Songs Op. 121 (1896)

*Denn es gehet dem Menschen • Ich wandte mich •
O Tod • Wenn ich mit Menschen*

Sergey Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

The Dream Op. 8 No. 5 (1893)

She is as lovely as the noon Op. 14 No. 9 (1896)

Oh no, I beg you, forsake me not Op. 4 No. 1 (1892)

Sing not to me, beautiful maiden Op. 4 No. 4 (?1892-3)

When yesterday we met Op. 26 No. 13 (1906)

Christ is risen Op. 26 No. 6 (1906)

In the silence of the secret night Op. 4 No. 3 (?1892)

He took all from me Op. 26 No. 2 (1906)

Fragment from Musset Op. 21 No. 6 (1902)

Wonju Lee (b.1979)

Yeon

Mukhyang

Hyeyoung Cho (b.1969)

Monnijeo



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Brahms's *4 Serious Songs* date from 1896 and their sobriety reflects something of the composer's sense of his own mortality. He showed the score to friends at a party held to celebrate his 63rd birthday on 7 May that year, saying, 'I offered this to myself as a gift today. Yes, to myself! If you read the text, you'll understand why.' Shortly afterwards, they become an unanticipated memorial to Clara Schumann, who died on 20 May. They were premièred in Vienna on 9 November 1896, just five months before Brahms's own death.

Their texts are drawn from the Bible, yet their spirituality is ambiguous. Baptised into the Lutheran Church, Brahms often turned to the words of the German Bible in his choral works, of which *A German Requiem* (1865-8) is surely the most famous. Yet his attitude to organised religion was, like many at the time, sceptical, and he treated Biblical texts as sources of human wisdom rather than divine revelation or creedal doctrine. He referred to them as 'serious' rather than 'sacred', and in a letter to his publisher, claimed that 'they are seriously disturbing, and therefore so godless that the police could prohibit them – if they weren't all taken from the Bible.'

The first three songs take words from the *Book of Ecclesiastes* that focus on the vanity of human existence. Their tone can be bleak and unrelenting, and their chorale-like textures are more reminiscent of sacred music than the lyricism of profane song. Even here, though, there are moments of light and hope. The second and third songs begin in the minor, yet they modulate to the major, and their prophetic austerity conceals the prospect of salvation. Then, in the fourth and final song, Brahms turns to the New Testament, setting the comforting words of Paul's *Letter to the Corinthians* with its famous evocation of 'faith, hope and charity'.

Brahms takes poems from a single source to create a cycle that has both a poetic narrative and a sense of unfolding musical drama. But songs can be arranged according to the principle of the anthology too – bouquets, as it were, made up of contrasting and complementary scents and shades. After all, the Greek word 'anthos' means 'flower', and the rest of the songs in this afternoon's programme have been collated in a way that highlights their shared themes and moods.

Rachmaninov grouped his songs in this manner, plucking texts from a variety of poets both Russian and European. His earliest songs – the *4 Romances* Op. 4 (1893), *6 Romances* Op. 8 (1893) and *12 Romances* Op. 14 (1896) – show a fondness for lyrical landscapes and moments of intensely felt emotion, and alongside texts by classical poets from the 19th Century (Fet, Heine, Pushkin), he experimented with more recent verses by Minsky and Merezhkovsky. Significantly, each of the five songs from the 1890s performed today was dedicated to an important woman in Rachmaninov's life. Two were inspired by his puppyish infatuation with

the three Skalon sisters ('A dream' is dedicated to Natalia Skalon, and 'In the silence of the secret night' to her younger sister, Vera, whose name is sounded in the piano part). 'Oh no, I beg you, forsake me not' records his passion for Anna Lodyzhenskaya, who is also the dedicatee of his fateful First Symphony. 'She is as lovely as the noon' honours the singing of Yelizaveta Lavrovskaya (who famously proposed *Eugene Onegin* to Tchaikovsky). 'Sing not to me, beautiful maiden' was written for his first cousin, Natalia Satina – who would eventually become his wife.

Later on, other influences were to shape Rachmaninov's songs. In 1897, he met the great bass, Fyodor Chaliapin, who opened the way to a more dramatic approach to musical narrative. The following year, composer and singer studied the score of *Boris Godunov* together, and in the *12 Romances* Op. 21 (1902) and the *15 Romances* Op. 26 (1906), one can hear just how much Rachmaninov had learned from Musorgsky's radical treatment of musical declamation ('When yesterday we met' amounts to a miniature dramatic *scena*). Rachmaninov's poetic tastes evolved too, and the four songs from the early 1900s included in this programme explore aspects of philosophy, religion and the vagaries of human existence. Lyric poetry can sometimes seem divorced from the realities of life, yet in 'Christ is risen', Merezhkovsky imagines Christ's sorrow at the fallenness of the world. The original version of his poem contained a verse that the censor struck out: in it, Merezhkovsky prophesises that Christ will return only when all tyrants are deposed and all slaves freed. Rachmaninov has often been seen as nostalgic, romantic and even apolitical, yet this song – written in the wake of the Russian Revolution of 1905 – retains its enduring and tragic topicality.

The modern art-song repertoire may have emerged in 19th-century Europe, yet it has since travelled around the world, where it interacts with vernacular traditions to this day. This afternoon's concert concludes with three contemporary *kagok* from Gihoon Kim's homeland. *Kagok* can also refer to the ancient, aristocratic form of song culture that has been recognised as one of Korea's most important forms of intangible cultural heritage, yet the music of the pieces performed today are altogether closer to the Western song tradition. *Kagok* can often be lyric and wistful, as in the songs of **Wonju Lee** (b. 1979). 'Yeon' might be translated as 'longing' or even 'destiny', and in 'Mukhyang' ('Scents of Indian Ink'), she evokes a powerful sense of nostalgia. Born a decade earlier than Wonju Lee, **Hyeyoung Cho** (b. 1969) explores a similar emotional palette in her song, 'Monnijeo' ('Unable to forget'). Even for those unfamiliar with the Korean words, music conveys their poetic essence.

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Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

4 Serious Songs Op. 121 (1896)

Liturgical text

Denn es gehet dem Menschen

Denn es gehet dem Menschen
wie dem Vieh, wie dies stirbt,
so stirbt er auch, und haben alle einerlei Odem; und der Mensch hat nichts mehr
denn das Vieh; denn es ist alles eitel.

Es fährt alles an einen Ort; es ist alles von Staub gemacht, und wird wieder zu Staub.

Wer weiss, ob der Geist des Menschen aufwärts fahre, und der Odem des Viehes unterwärts unter die Erde fahre?

Darum sahe ich, dass nichts
bessers ist, denn dass der Mensch fröhlich sei in seiner
Arbeit; denn das ist sein Teil. Denn wer will ihn dahin bringen,
dass er sehe, was nach ihm geschehen wird?

For that which befalleth the sons of men

For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts;
as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath
no pre-eminence above a beast; for all is vanity.

All go unto one place; all are of dust, and all turn to dust again.

Who knoweth the spirit of man goeth upward and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?

Wherefore I perceive that there
is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own
works, for that is his portion. For who shall bring him to
see what shall happen after him?

Ich wandte mich

Ich wandte mich, und sahe an
alle, die Unrecht leiden unter
der Sonne; und siehe, da waren
Tränen derer, die Unrecht litten
und hatten keinen Tröster,
und
die ihnen Unrecht täten,
waren
zu mächtig, dass sie keinen
Tröster haben konnten.

Da lobte ich die Toten,
die
schon gestorben waren, mehr

als die Lebendigen, die noch das Leben hatten.
Und der noch nicht ist,
ist
besser als alle beide, und
des
Bösen nicht inne wird, das unter
der Sonne geschieht.

O Tod

O Tod, wie bitter bist du,
wenn an dich gedenket ein Mensch, der gute Tage
und
genug hat und ohne
Sorge
lebet; und dem es wohl geht
in allen Dingen und
noch
wohl essen mag!
O Tod, wie wohl tust du dem
Dürftigen, der da
schwach
und alt ist, der in
allen
Sorgen steckt, und
nichts
Bessers zu hoffen, noch
zu
Erwarten
hat!

So I returned

So I returned, and considered all
the oppressions that are done
under the sun; and behold the
tears of such as were
oppressed,
and they had no
comforter; and
on the side of their
oppressors
there was power; but they had
no comforter.

Wherefore I praised the dead
which are already dead more
than the living which are yet alive.
Yea, better is he than
both they,
which hath not yet been,
who
hath not seen the evil
work
that is done under the sun.

O death

O death, how bitter is the remembrance
of thee to a man that liveth at rest in his
possessions,
unto the man that hath
nothing to
vex him, and that hath
prosperity
in all things; yea, unto him
that
is yet able to receive meat!
O death, acceptable is thy
sentence
unto the needy and unto
him
whose strength faileth,
that is
now in the last age, and is
vexed
with all things, and to him
that
despaireth, and hath lost
patience!

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

Wenn ich mit Menschen

Wenn ich mit Menschen- und mit Engelzungen redete, und hätte der Liebe nicht, so wär ich ein tönend Erz, oder eine klingende Schelle.

Und wenn ich weissagen könnte und wüsste alle Geheimnisse und alle Erkenntnis, und hätte allen Glauben, also, dass ich Berge versetzte, und hätte der Liebe nicht, so wäre ich nichts.

Und wenn ich alle meine Habe den Armen gäbe, und liesse meinen Leib brennen, und hätte der Liebe nicht, so wäre mirs nichts nütze.

Wir sehen jetzt durch einen Spiegel in einem dunkeln Worte, dann aber von Angesicht zu Angesichte. Jetzt erkenne ichs stückweise, dann aber werd ichs erkennen, gleichwie ich erkennet bin.

Nun aber bleibet Glaube, Hoffnung, Liebe, diese drei; aber die Liebe ist die grösste unter ihnen.

Though I speak with the tongues of men

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, it profiteth me nothing ...

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Sergey Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

The Dream Op. 8 No. 5 (1893)

Aleksey Pleshcheyev, after Heinrich Heine

I u menya byl krai rodnoj;
Prekrasen on!
Tam yel kachalas nado mnoi...
No to byl son!

Semya družei zhiva byla.
So vsekh storon
Zvuchali mne lyubvi slovo...
No to byl son!

I too had a native land;
so beautiful!
A fir tree swayed above me there ...
but it was a dream!

My family were living friends
and all around me
words of love were spoken ...
but it was a dream!

She is as lovely as the noon Op. 14 No. 9 (1896)

Nikolay Minsky

Ona, kak polden,
khorosha,
Ona zagadochnei
polnochi.
U nei neplakavshiy
ochi
I ne stradavshaya dusha.

A mne, chya zhizn borba i
gore,
Po nei tomitsya suzhdeno.
Tak vechno plachushcheye
more
V bezmolvnyi bereg
vlyubleno.

She is as beautiful as
midday,
more enigmatic than
midnight.
Her eyes have no known
weeping
nor her soul suffering.

And I, who know but strife
and grief,
am destined to long for her.
Thus eternally the
weeping sea
is drawn by love to the
silent shore.

Oh no, I beg you, forsake me not Op. 4 No. 1 (1892)

Dmitry Merezkovsky

O, net, molyu, ne
ukhodi!
Vsya bol nichto pered
razlukoi,
Ya slishkom schastliv etoi
mukoi,
Silne prizhmi menya k
grudi,

Skazhi lyublyu. Prishyol ya
vnov,
Bolnoi, izmuchennyi i bednyi.
Smotri, kakoi ya slabyi,
bednyi,
Kak mne nuzhna tvoya
lyubov...

Muchenii novykh vpered
Ya zhdu kak lasku, kak
potseluya
I ob odnom molyu,
toskuya:
O, bud so mnoi, ne
ukhodi!

Oh no, I beg you, do not
leave!
This pain is slight compared
to separation,
I'm too happy in this state
of torment,
press me hard against
your breast,
Say 'I love you'. I've come
to you again,
sick, tormented and pale.
See how weak and pitiful I
am,
how much I need your
love...

New torments lie ahead,
I greet them like caresses,
like kisses,
and beg for one thing
only in my agony,
oh, stay with me, do not
leave!

Sing not to me, beautiful maiden Op. 4 No. 4

(?1892-3)

Aleksandr Sergeyeovich Pushkin

Ne poi, krasavitsa, pri
mne
Ty pesen Gruzii pechalnoi:
Napominayut mne one
Druguyu zhizn i bereg
dalnoi.

Sing not to me, beautiful
maiden,
your songs of sad Georgia:
they remind me
of another life and distant
shore.

Uvy, napominayut
mne
Tvoi zhestokiye napevy
I step, i noch, i pri
lune
Cherty dalyokoi, bednoi
devy!...

Alas, they bring back
memories,
your cruel melodies,
of the steppe at night,
and, in the moonlight,
the features of a poor
maiden far away!...

Ya prizrak milyi, rokovoi,
Tebya uvidev, zabyvayu;
No ty poyosh i predο mnoi
Ego ya vnov voobrazhayu.

Seeing you, I forget
that dear, fateful vision;
but when you sing, again
I imagine it before me.

Ne poi, krasavitsa, pri
mne
Ty pesen Gruzii pechalnoi:
Napominayut mne one
Druguyu zhizn i bereg
dalnoi.

Sing not to me, beautiful
maiden,
your songs of sad Georgia:
they remind me
of another life and distant
shore.

When yesterday we met Op. 26 No. 13 (1906)

Yakov Polonsky

Vchera my vstretilis: Ona
ostanovilas,
Ya takzhe ... my v glaza drug
drugu posmotreli ...

Yesterday we chanced to
meet: she stopped,
so did I ... we looked into
each other's eyes ...

O, Bozhe! kak ona s
tekh por
pereminilas,

Oh God! How she has
changed since our last
meeting,

V glazakh potukh ogon, i
shchyoki pobledneli ...
I dolgo na neyo glyadel ya
molcha strogo ...

her eyes have lost their light,
her cheeks their colour ...
for a long time I gazed at
her, in silence, sternly ...

Mne ruku protyanuv,
bednyazhka
ulybnulas;

the poor thing offered me
her hand, and gave me
a smile;

Ya govorit khotel;
ona zhe radi
Boga,

I was about to speak, but
she bade me for God's
sake

Velela mne molchat, i tut zhe,
otvernulas,

to be still, and quickly
turned away,

I brovi sdvinula, I vydernula
ruku,

and frowned, and
withdrew her hand,

I molvila: 'Proshchaite, do
svidanya!'

and spoke: 'Farewell ...
goodbye ...!'

A ya khotel skazat: 'Na
vechnuyu razluku

And I wanted to say: 'So
we part forever,

Proshchai, pogibsheye, no
miloe sozdanye.'

farewell, thou being,
ruined, but still dear.'

Christ is risen Op. 26 No. 6 (1906)

Dmitry Merezhkovsky

'Khristos voskres!' – poyut vo
khrame;
No grustno mne... dusha
molchit.
Mir polon krovyu i
slezami,
I etot gimn pred
altaryami
Tak oskorbitelno
zvuchit.

'Christ is risen!' – they
sing in church;
but I am sad...my soul is
mute.
The world is soaked in
blood and tears,
and this hymn sung
before the altar
sounds so insulting and
unjust.

Kogda b On byl mezh nas i
videl,
Chego dostig nash slavnyi
vek,
Kak brata brat
vozenavidel,
Kak opozoren
chelovek,

If He were among us and
could see
what our glorious age has
wrought,
how brother looks on
brother in hatred,
how man has fallen in
disgrace,

I esli b zdes, v blestyashchem
khrame
'Khristos voskres' On
uslykhal,
Kakimi b gorkimi slezami,
Pered tolpoi On
zarydal!

and here among us, in
this glittering church,
if He heard the words
'Christ has risen,'
what a bitter flood of tears
he would shed before the
crowd!

In the silence of the secret night Op. 4 No. 3

(?1892)

Afanasy Afanasyevich Fet

O, dolga budu ya, v molchani
nochi tainoi,

O, long will I, in the silence of
the mysterious night,

Kovarnyi lepet tvoii, ulybku,
vzor, vzor sluchainyi,

your sly chatter, smile,
glance, casual glance,

Perstam poslushnuyu volos,
volos tvoikh gustuyu pryad

hair pliant to my fingers, your
thick shock of hair,

Iz myslei izgonyat i snova
prizyvay;

banish from my thoughts
and summon back again,

Sheptat i popravlyat bylye
vyrazheniya

whisper and improve past
words

Rechei moikh s toboi,
ispolnennykh smushcheniya,

I spoke to you, so full of
shy confusion,

I v opyaneni, naperekor
umu,

and in rapture against all
reason,

Zavetnym imenem budit
nochnuyu tmu.

awake night's darkness with
your cherished name.

O, dolga budu ya, v molchani
nochi tainoi,

O, long will I, in the silence of
the mysterious night,

Zavetnym imenem budit
nochnuyu tmu.

awake night's darkness with
your cherished name.

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

He took all from me Op. 26 No. 2 (1906)

Fyodor Tyutchev

Vsyo otnyal u menya kaznyashchii Bog: Zdorovye, silu, voli, vozdukh, son. Odu tebya pri mne ostavil On, Chtob ya Yemu yeshchyo molitsya mog.	Chastising God has taken everything away from me: health, willpower, breath, sleep. You alone are all that He has left me, that I might still find strength to pray to Him.
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Fragment from Musset Op. 21 No. 6 (1902)

Aleksey Apukhtin

Chto tak usilenno serdtse bolnoye Byotsya, i prosit, i zhazhdet pokoya? Chem ya vzvolnovan, ispugan v nochi? Stuknula dver, zastonav i zanoya... Gasnushchei lampy blesnuli luchi... Boze moi! Dukh mne v grudi zakhvatilo! Kto-to zovyot menya, shepchet unylo... Kto-to voshyol...Moya kelya pusta, Net nikogo, eto polnoch probilo... O, odinochestvo, o, nishcheta!	Why does my sick heart so violently beat, and beg, and thirst for peace? Why am I troubled, afraid in the night? A door slammed, groaning and whining... rays of the spluttering lamp glittered... my God! It takes my breath away! Someone calls me, in a pitiful whisper... someone entered...my cell is empty, I'm alone, that was midnight striking... O loneliness, O poverty!
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Wonju Lee (b.1979)

Yeon

Kim Dong-hyeon

시리게 푸르른 그대 고운 날개 내 맘 가까이 날아오지 않네 이슬된 서러움에 실어 나를 데려가 주오 달을 듯한 그대의 품으로	Your beautiful wings bitterly blue will not come fluttering nearer to my heart. Carry me upon the dews of vaped sorrow into your arms— so close, close enough to touch.
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여리게 남은 듯 그대 고운 향기 내 맘 가까이 돌아오지 않네 그대의 내가 멀지 않아 나를 사랑해주오	Your beautiful fragrance as if fragile will not come returning nearer to my heart. I that belong to you am not far away. Love me, please
---	--

기억 속의 나라면

If it's I that live in your
memory

아 영원한 그리움
나 차가운 눈물에 지워도
기다리네
기나긴 내 사랑

Ah this eternal longing
though cold tears may
erase
I wait
for my love endless.

미련을 버리고
편히 잠들라
그 무엇도 남지 않을 듯
꼭 나를 기억해주오
숨결까지
눈물까지
내 모든 것
그대에게로

Let go of your regrets and
sleep well.
Be sure to remember me
as if nothing at all will
remain.
Even my breaths
even my tears
my all
to you.

Mukhyang

Won Seok

당신의 향기 그리워
잠 못 이루는 밤
내 마음 새가 되어
고향에 나르니
어린 소녀 먹을 갈아
묵향을 날리고
어머니는 하얀 화선지 위에
시를 쓰시네
당신이 그리워 이밤 지샬때
묵향이 내 마음 위로 하네.

Scent of Ink

This sleepless night
missing your scent
my heart, turning into a
bird,
flew home.
Grinding an ink stick
a young girl sends aloft
the scent of ink.
Mother is writing a poem
on a white mulberry
paper.
This night I spend
sleepless
with the thought of you,
the scent of ink
consoles my heart.

Hyeyoung Cho (b.1969)

Monnijeo

Kim Sowol

I Cannot Forget

못잊어 못잊어 못잊어 못잊어
생각이 나겠지요

못잊어 못잊어 못잊어 못잊어
생각이 나겠지요

그런대로 한 세상 지내시구려

그런대로 한 세상 지내시구려

사노라면 사노라면 잊힐 날

잊힐 날 있으리다

못잊어 못잊어 못잊어 못잊어
생각이 나겠지요

못잊어 못잊어 못잊어 못잊어
생각이 나겠지요

그런대로 세월만 가라시구려

그런대로 세월만 가라시구려

못잊어도 못잊어도 더러는

더러는 잊히오리다

그러나 또 한곳 이렇지요

그리워 살뜰히 못잊는데

어쩌면 생각이 떠지나요

I cannot forget I cannot
forget I cannot forget
I cannot forget, so I'll be
remembering.

Let this life happen by as
it will, one way or
another

as life goes on, as life
goes on,
a day of forgetting, a day
of forgetting may
come.

I cannot forget I cannot
forget I cannot forget
I cannot forget, so I'll be
remembering.

Let time pass by as it will,
one way or another

though I cannot forget,
though I cannot forget,
I may happen to forget
once in a while, once in
a while.

But then again,
how can the
remembering ever
grow less
when, with such longing,
I can never so
painstakingly forget?

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