

WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 26 November 2023
7.30pm

Devotions

Ema Nikolovska mezzo-soprano
Kunal Lahiry piano

Priaulx Rainier (1903-1986)	We cannot bid the fruits from <i>Cycle for Declamation</i> (1953)
Aaron Copland (1900-1990)	There came a wind like a bugle from <i>12 poems of Emily Dickinson</i> (1949-50)
Franz Schubert (1797-1828)	Herbst D945 (1828)
Sergey Prokofiev (1891-1953)	Lento ma non troppo from <i>5 Melodies</i> Op. 35 (1920)
Aaron Copland	Dear March, Come In! from <i>12 poems of Emily Dickinson</i>
Franz Schubert	Auflösung D807 (1824)
Aaron Copland	The world feels dusty from <i>12 poems of Emily Dickinson</i>
Sergey Prokofiev	Andante non troppo from <i>5 Melodies</i> Op. 35
Franz Schubert (1797-1828)	Verklärung D59 (1813)
Aaron Copland	Why do they shut me out of heaven? from <i>12 poems of Emily Dickinson</i>
Franz Schubert	Der Unglückliche D713 (1821)
	Nacht und Träume D827 (1823)

Interval

Aaron Copland	Nature, the Gentlest Mother from <i>12 poems of Emily Dickinson</i>
Emily Doolittle (b.1972)	Vocalise (for Bees) (2008)
Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)	Vocalise-étude (1935)
George Crumb (1929-2022)	The Fly from <i>Sun and Shadow (Spanish Songbook II)</i> (2009)
Héloïse Werner (b.1991)	Le cœur crucifié (2019)
Franz Schubert	Die Rose D745 (1822)
Aaron Copland	When they come back from <i>12 poems of Emily Dickinson</i>
Franz Schubert	Die Mutter Erde D788 (1823)
Nahre Sol (b.1991)	Apperceptive Algorithms (2022)

*Time • digital prayers •
journey to the center of the Internet • Gido*

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Devotions presents a jointly curated programme by Ema Nikolovska and Kunal Lahiry in which song itself is revealed as a mediator, moving between the macro to the microscopic: from evocations of the natural world, to the embodiment of the human voice in all its fragility. Taking historical and contemporary music and poetry as starting points, the programme presents a collage of styles – from Lieder to *vocalise*, and three contemporary works – which, in their juxtapositions, present the audience with questions about nature, transience, death and transfiguration.

Taken as a whole, what do these songs say about one another, and about our relationship to nature, seen as a force for both threat and inspiration, or consolation and escape? The audience is given space to discover their own perspective, for, while the shifts in style place great demands on the performers, the primary intention is not to demonstrate virtuosity, but rather to create a stream-of-consciousness experience in which listeners can forge their own connections, and perhaps also renew their relationships with existing repertoire.

Rainier's vocal solo *Cycle for Declamation* was composed in 1953 for Peter Pears, and sets three *Meditations* from John Donne's *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*. In Rainier's setting of *Wee cannot bid the fruits*, human virtues and vices are characterised by the seasons. As such, through Donne's Elizabethan poetry, the song signals the scope of the programme to follow in its traversal of the cycles of the natural world, and their influence on humanity.

Copland completed his *12 Songs of Emily Dickinson* in 1950, and the second song 'There came a wind like a bugle' continues the declamatory feel of the Rainier, while introducing nature as a potentially terrifying force; indifferent to human sentiments for the afterlife.

Schubert's 'Herbst' reflects the ceaseless toil of nature in melancholy and nostalgia, dwelling in the fading symbolism of autumn — wilting flora and ominous weather — in the poem by Ludwig Rellstab.

Vocalises recur in this programme to represent the changing of the seasons, while also moving our attention from the poetry of the songs to the physicality of singing itself, thereby showing us the aesthetic range of song as a *genre*, with its power to both conjure imaginary worlds and render vivid the corporeal presence of the voice.

Prokofiev originally wrote his *5 Melodies* in 1920 as *vocalises* (later arranged for violin), around the same time as his opera *The Love for Three Oranges*. It prepares the shift to a brighter tone in Copland's sixth Dickinson song 'Dear March, Come in!' Schubert's 'Auflösung' summons an even greater celestial energy in the poem by Mayrhofer, where the transcendent passions of the soul and the 'fires of rapture' overcome even the sun itself. By contrast, Copland returns to themes of finitude in his fourth song, where Dickinson's lines in 'The world feels dusty' invoke the Christian image of humanity being made of, and ultimately returning to, dust.

Via another impassioned Prokofiev *vocalise*, the tension between unending nature and the mortality of human life

comes into focus in Schubert's 'Verklärung'. The rhetorical feel that Schubert sets up is echoed in Copland's setting of Dickinson's *Why do they shut me out of Heaven?* In the poem, Dickinson seems to reject the idea of heaven in favour of the natural world, despite its capriciousness. Rejection, loss and resignation also form the basis of Schubert's 'Der Unglückliche', which proceeds through five dramatically contrasting sections related to each of the five strophes.

Schubert's 'Nacht und Träume' conflates two Collin poems, whom the song memorialises in its slow and hushed contemplation of night and dreams. Musing on similar themes of tenderness while beckoning a new dawn to follow the nocturne, Copland's first Dickinson song 'Nature, the Gentlest Mother' calls to mind birdsong and bells, symbolising the regularity, permanence and all-embracing maternal force of nature. **Emily Doolittle's** 'Vocalise (for Bees)' similarly evokes fauna while drawing our attention to the micro-mechanics of the voice. By contrast, **Messiaen's** 'Vocalise-étude' from 1935 highlights the voice as an indelibly melodic presence, as it weaves between the rich and crystalline modal harmonies of the piano.

Crumb's 'The Fly' offers yet another insect evocation in setting Lorca's poem (*Mosca*) as if from the perspective of the fly, repeatedly buzzing against a window pane, while **Héloïse Werner's** 'Le cœur crucifié' sees the singer pick up a wood block to surgically and mechanically mark time as they speak of dissecting the organ only to find sorrow at its centre.

Schubert's 'Die Rose' draws our attention to themes of transience through the classic metaphor of the rose, lamenting its short yet sweet life. Whereas Schubert's song seems content in savouring the rose's brief bloom, in Copland's eighth Dickinson song 'When they come back', the voice of the poet appears worried that the joy of spring will not return at all. Thus, where other songs in Copland's cycle and the whole programme speak to time in the external world, this song prompts contemplation of personal death. In 'Die Mutter Erde', Schubert strikes a more reassuring and mellow tone while still reflecting this theme of the inevitable, as the song gently rocks 'in the lap of mother earth'.

In the concluding work, **Nahre Sol's** *Apperceptive Algorithms* presents four movements that survey temporality from a contemporary digital perspective. In the opening piece, Mario Romano's poem *Time* juxtaposes classic literary references against internet-age symbols of an ungraspable sublime, while in the second piece, Daniel Gerzenberg's poem reveals smartphones as our new god, and hearer of our prayers. Ling Ling's *Journey to the center of the Internet* launches a comic book scene wherein a character becomes seemingly lost among cyberspace encounters and feelings of fragmentation; a pixelation of the self. The fourth piece *Gido* sees the singer pick up a woodblock once again in the programme's final wordless *vocalise*.

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Priault Rainier (1903-1986)

We cannot bid the fruits from *Cycle for Declamation* (1953)

John Donne

We cannot bid the fruits come in May, nor the leaves to stick in December. There are of them that will give, that will do justice, that will pardon, but they have their own seasons for all these, and he that knows not them, shall starve before that gift come. Reward is the season of one man, and importunity of another; fear is the season of one man, and favour of another; friendship is the season of one man, and natural affection of another; and he that knows not their seasons, nor cannot stay them, must lose the fruits.

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

There came a wind like a bugle from 12 *poems of Emily Dickinson* (1949-50)

Emily Dickinson

There came a wind like a bugle;
It quivered through the grass,
And a green chill upon the heat
So ominous did pass
We barred the window and the doors
As from an emerald ghost;
The doom's electric moccasin
That very instant passed.
On a strange mob of panting trees,
And fences fled away.

And rivers where the houses ran
The living looked that day.
The bell within the steeple wild
The flying tidings whirled.
How much can come
And much can go,
And yet abide the world!

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

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.

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.

Sergey Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Lento ma non troppo from 5 *Melodies* Op. 35 (1920)

Aaron Copland

Dear March, Come In! from *12 poems of Emily Dickinson*

Emily Dickinson

Dear March, come in!
How glad I am!
I looked for you before.
Put down your hat –
You must have walked –
How out of breath you are!
Dear March, how are you?
And the rest?
Did you leave Nature well?
Oh, March, come right upstairs with me,
I have so much to tell!

I got your letter, and the bird's;
The maples never knew
That you were coming, – I declare,
How red their faces grew!
But, March, forgive me –
And all those hills
You left for me to hue,
There was no purple suitable,
You took it all with you.

Who knocks? That April?
Lock the door!
I will not be pursued!
He stayed away a year, to call
When I am occupied.
But trifles look so trivial
As soon as you have come,
And blame is just as dear as praise
And praise as mere as blame.

Franz Schubert

Auflösung D807 (1824) *Dissolution*

Johann Mayrhofer

Verbirg dich, Sonne, Denn die Glutten der Wonne Versengen mein Gebein; Verstummet Töne, Frühlings Schöne Flüchte dich, und lass mich allein!	Conceal yourself, sun, for the fires of rapture scorch my whole being; fall silent, sounds, spring beauty flee, and leave me to myself!
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Quillen doch aus allen Falten Meiner Seele liebliche Gewalten; Die mich umschlingen, Himmlisch singen – Geh' unter Welt, und störe Nimmer die süssen ätherischen Chöre!	For sweet powers well up from every recess of my soul, and envelop me with celestial song – dissolve, world, and never more disturb the sweet ethereal choirs!
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Aaron Copland

The world feels dusty from *12 poems of Emily Dickinson*

Emily Dickinson

The world feels dusty
When we stop to die;
We want the dew then,
Honors taste dry.

Flags vex a dying face
But the least fan
Stirred by a friend's hand
Cools like the rain.

Mine be the ministry
When thy thirst comes,
Dews of thyself to fetch
And holy balms.

Sergey Prokofiev

Andante non troppo from *5 Melodies Op. 35*

Franz Schubert

Verklärung D59 (1813)

*Johann Gottfried Herder,
after Alexander Pope*

Lebensfunke, vom Himmel
entglüht,
Der sich loszuwinden
müht!
Zitternd, kühn, vor Sehnen
leidend,
Gern und doch mit
Schmerzen scheidend –
End', o end' den Kampf,
Natur!
Sanft ins Leben
Aufwärts schweben
Sanft hinschwinden lass
mich nur.

Horch! mir lispeln Geister zu:
„Schwester-Seele, komm zur
Ruh!“

Zieh'et was mich sanft von
innen?

Was ist es, was mir meine
Sinnen

Mir den Hauch zu rauben
droht?

Seele, sprich, ist das der Tod?

Die Welt entweicht, sie ist
nicht mehr.

Engel-Einklang um mich
her!

Ich schweb' im Morgenrot! –
Leih'et, o leih'et mir eure
Schwingen:

Ihr Bruder, Geister, helf'et mir
singen:

„O Grab, wo ist dein
Sieg?“

Wo ist dein Pfeil, o
Tod?“

Transfiguration

Heaven-kindled spark of
life,
that toils to wrench itself
away,
trembling, brave,
enduring longing,
gladly, yet in agony,
departing!
End, oh end the battle,
nature!
Only let me into life gently
upwards float
and gently
vanish!

Hark, spirits whisper to me:
'Sister-soul, come to rest.'

Does something draw me
gently hence?

What is it that threatens
to deprive me
of my sense and of my
breath?

Speak, soul, is it Death?

The world vanishes, it is
no more.

All around me angel
harmony!

In the dawn of day I float!
Lend, oh lend me your
wings,

brothers, spirits, help me
sing:

'O grave, where is your
victory?'

Where, O Death, your
arrow?'

Aaron Copland

Why do they shut me out of heaven? from 12 poems of Emily Dickinson

Emily Dickinson

Why do they shut me out of heaven?
Did I sing too loud?
But I can sing a little minor,
Timid as a bird.

Wouldn't the angels try me
Just once more?
Just see if I troubled them –
But don't shut the door!

Oh, if I were the gentlemen
In the white robes
And they were the little hand that knocked –
Could I forbid?

Franz Schubert

Der Unglückliche D713 (1821)

Karoline Pichler

Die Nacht bricht an, mit
leisen Lüften sinket
Sie auf die müden
Sterblichen herab;
Der sanfte Schlaf, des Todes
Bruder, winket,
Und legt sie freundlich in ihr
tätlich Grab.

Jetzt wachet auf der
lichtberaubten Erde
Vielleicht nur noch die
Arglist und der Schmerz,
Und jetzt, da ich durch nichts
gestöret werde,
Lass deine Wunden bluten,
armes Herz.

Versenke dich in deines
Kummers Tiefen,
Und wenn vielleicht in der
zerrissnen Brust
Halb verjährte Leiden
schliefen,
So wecke sie mit grausam
süßer Lust.

Berechne die verlornen
Seligkeiten,
Zähl' alle, alle Blumen in dem
Paradies,
Woraus in deiner Jugend
goldnen Zeiten
Die harte Hand des
Schicksals dich verstieß.

The unhappy one (1821)

Night falls, descending
with light breezes
upon weary
mortals;
gentle sleep, death's
brother, beckons,
and lays them fondly in
their daily graves.

Now only malice and
pain
perchance watch over the
earth, robbed of light;
and now, since nothing
may disturb me,
let your wounds bleed,
poor heart.

Plunge to the depths of
your grief,
and if perchance half-
forgotten sorrows
have slept in your
anguished heart,
awaken them with cruelly
sweet delight.

Consider your lost
happiness,
count all the flowers in
paradise,
from which, in the golden
days of your youth,
the harsh hand of fate
banished you.

Du hast geliebt, du hast das Glück empfunden, Dem jede Seligkeit der Erde weicht.	You have loved, you have experienced a happiness which eclipses all earthly bliss.
Du hast ein Herz, das dich verstand, gefunden, Der kühnsten Hoffnung schönes Ziel erreicht.	You have found a heart that understands you, your wildest hopes have attained their fair goal.

Da stürzte dich ein grausam Machtwort nieder, Aus deinen Himmeln nieder, und dein stilles Glück, Dein allzuschönes Traumbild kehrte wieder Zur besser'n Welt, aus der es kam, zurück.	Then the cruel decree of authority dashed you down from your heaven, and your tranquil happiness, your all-too-lovely dream vision, returned to the better world from which it came.
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Zerrissen sind nun alle süßen Bande, Mir schlägt kein Herz mehr auf der weiten Welt.	Now all the sweet bonds are torn asunder; no heart now beats for me in the whole world.
---	--

Nacht und Träume Night and dreams

D827 (1823)

Matthäus von Collin

Heil'ge Nacht, du sinkest nieder; Nieder wallen auch die Träume, Wie dein Mondlicht durch die Räume, Durch der Menschen stille Brust.	Holy night, you float down; dreams too drift down, like your moonlight through space, through the silent hearts of men.
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Die belauschen sie mit Lust, Rufen, wenn der Tag erwacht: Kehre wieder, heil'ge Nacht! Holde Träume, kehret wieder!	They listen to them with delight, cry out when day awakes: come back, holy night! Sweet dreams, come back again!
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Interval

Aaron Copland

Nature, the Gentlest Mother from *12 poems of Emily Dickinson*

Emily Dickinson

Nature, the gentlest mother
Impatient of no child,
The feeblest or the waywardest, –
Her admonition mild

In forest and the hill
By traveller is heard,
Restraining rampant squirrel
Or too impetuous bird.

How fair her conversation,
A summer afternoon, –
Her household, her assembly;
And when the sun goes down

Her voice among the aisles
Incites the timid prayer
Of the minutest cricket,
The most unworthy flower.

When all the children sleep
She turns as long away
As will suffice to light her lamps;
Then, bending from the sky,

With infinite affection
And infiniter care,
Her golden finger on her lip,
Wills silence everywhere.

Emily Doolittle (b.1972)

Vocalise (for Bees) (2008)

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

Vocalise-étude (1935)

George Crumb (1929-2022)

The Fly from *Sun and Shadow (Spanish Songbook II)* (2009)

After Federico García Lorca

(Buzzing outside the window.)
I think of people knocking.
And raise the glass.

(Buzzing inside the window.)
I think of people in chains.
And let it escape!

(Desperate it knocks again
on the iridescent panel!)

Margarita, Margarita, Margarita,
your tender little heart
scratches the polished glass of my soul.

Héloïse Werner (b.1991)

Le cœur crucifié (2019) The crucified heart

Philothée Gaymard

Il a pris le cœur et l'a
déposé
Comme on immobilise un
papillon,
Avec précaution,
Pour ne pas s'en mettre sur
les doigts.
Il a découpé les peaux,
toutes fines,
Et il les a épinglées,
Et le cœur ressemble à un
petit animal à dix, douze,
quinze membres,
Ecartelé.

He has taken the heart
and set it down
as you'd immobilise a
butterfly,
with care,
so as not to get any on his
hands.
He has cut up the skin,
very thin,
and he has pinned it up,
and the heart looks like a
little animal with ten,
twelve, fifteen limbs,
stretched on the rack.

Maintenant il fouille.
Il entre dans les plis et les
recoins,
Les fossés, les sillons, les
sommets,
Tout ce que dans un cœur
on peut posséder.
Et au centre du cœur il ne
trouve rien
Que la vie calcifiée qui sent le
chagrin
Que des chairs grises que
patiemment il recoud.

Now he digs.
He gets inside the folds
and the recesses,
the cavities, the furrows,
the nodes,
everything which you
might find in a heart.
And at the centre of the
heart he finds nothing
but life, petrified, which
smells of grief
like the grey flesh that he
patiently stitches back up.

Franz Schubert

Die Rose D745 (1822) The rose

Friedrich Schlegel

Es lockte schöne Wärme,
Mich an das Licht zu wagen,
Da brannten wilde Glut;
Das muss ich ewig klagen.
Ich konnte lange
blühen
In milden, heitern Tagen;
Nun muss ich frühe welken,
Dem Leben schon entsagen.

Lovely warmth tempted me
to venture into the light.
There fires burned furiously;
I must for ever bemoan that.
I could have bloomed for
long
in mild, bright days.
Now I must wither early,
renounce life prematurely.

Es kam die Morgenröte,
Da liess ich alles Zagen
Und öffnete die Knospe,
Wo alle Reize lagen.
Ich konnte freundlich
duften
Und meine Krone tragen,
Da ward zu heiss die Sonne,
Die muss ich drum verklagen.

The red dawn came,
I abandoned all timidity
and opened the bud
in which lay all my charms.
I could have spread sweet
fragrance
and worn my crown ...
then the sun grew too hot –
of this I must accuse it.

Was soll der milde
Abend?
Muss ich nun traurig fragen.
Er kann mich nicht mehr retten,
Die Schmerzen nicht verjagen.
Die Röte ist verblichen,
Bald wird mich Kälte nagen.
Mein kurzes junges
Leben
Wollt' ich noch sterbend sagen.

Of what avail is the mild
evening?
I must now ask sadly.
It can no longer save me,
or banish my sorrows.
My red colouring is faded,
soon cold will gnaw me.
As I die I wished to tell
once more
of my brief young life.

Aaron Copland

When they come back from 12 poems of Emily Dickinson

Emily Dickinson

When they come back,
If blossoms do –
I always feel a doubt
If blossoms can be born again
When once the art is out.

When they begin,
If Robins do –
I always had a fear
I did not tell, it was their last
Experiment last year.

When it is May,
If May return –
Had nobody a pang
That on a face so beautiful
He might not look again?

If I am there –
One does not know
What party one may be
Tomorrow, – but if I am there
I take back all I say!

Franz Schubert

Die Mutter Erde D788

(1823)

Friedrich Leopold, Graf zu Stolberg-Stolberg

Des Lebens Tag ist schwer
und schwühl,
Des Todes Atem leicht und
kühl,
Er wehet freundlich uns hinab
Wie welkes Laub ins stille
Grab.

Es scheint der Mond, es fällt
der Tau
Auf's Grab wie auf die
Blumenau;
Auch fällt der Freunde Trän
hinein
Erhell't von sanfter Hoffnung
Schein.

Uns sammelt alle, klein und
gross,
Die Mutter Erd' in ihren Schoss;
O sähn wir ihr ins
Ange-sicht,
Wir scheuten ihren Busen
nicht!

Mother Earth

Life's day is heavy and
sultry,
the breath of death is
light and cool;
fondly it wafts us down,
like withered leaves, into
the silent grave.

The moon shines, the
dew falls
on the grave as on the
flowery meadow;
the tears of friends also
fall,
lit by the gleam of gentle
hope.

Mother Earth gathers us
all, great and small,
in her lap;
if we would only look
upon her face
we should not fear her
bosom.

Nahre Sol (b.1991)

Apperceptive Algorithms (2022)

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Time

Mario Romano

Birth I know
Purist
Romance ...
Time

digital prayers

Daniel Gerzenberg

help me ... help me!!!
help me smartphone in
this world
help me world with these
smartphones
with smartphones -
smartphones
help me god in this
godless world ...
help me god in this world

hilf mir gott in dieser
gottlosen welt ...
hilf mir gott in dieser welt

journey to the center of the Internet

Ling Ling

and my miraculouos journey
I hope you enjoy it ...
this is the story of my life

Gido

Translations of 'Herbst', 'Auflösung' and 'Nacht und Träume' 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. 'Verklärung' by George Bird and Richard Stokes from The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder, published by Victor Gollancz Ltd. 'Der Unglückliche', 'Die Rose' and 'Die Mutter Erde' by Richard Wigmore from Schubert – The Complete Song Texts published by Victor Gollancz Ltd. Werner by Jean du Monde.