

WIGMORE HALL 125

Tuesday 27 January 2026
1.00pm

Voices of Terezín

Simon Wallfisch baritone
Joseph Middleton piano

Viktor Ullmann (1898-1944)

Beryozkele from *3 jiddische Lieder* Op. 53 (1944)

Lieder der Tröstung (1943)

Tote wollen nicht verweilen • Erwachen zu Weihnachten

From *Drei chinesische Lieder* (1943)

Wanderer erwacht in der Herberge • Der Müde Soldat

Carlo Sigmund Taube (1897-1944)

Ein jüdisches Kind

Pavel Haas (1899-1944)

4 Songs on Chinese Poetry (1944)

Zaslech jsem divoké husy • V bambusovém háji •

Daleko měsíc je od domova • Probděná noc

Leo Strauss (1847-1944)

Als Ob! (c.1942-4) arranged by Iain Farrington

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Ich wandte mich und sahe an alle from *4 Serious Songs* Op. 121 (1896)

Viktor Ullmann

From *Der Mensch und sein Tag* Op. 47 (1943)

III. Heimat • IV. Der Liebsten •

X. Verdämmern • XI. Nacht

Johannes Brahms

Wenn ich mit Menschen und mit Engelszungen redete from *4 Serious Songs* Op. 121

Viktor Ullmann

XII. Stille from *Der Mensch und sein Tag* Op. 47

Ilse Weber (1903-1944)

Wiegala

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Kaddisch from *2 mélodies hébraïques* (1914)

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Terezín (German: Theresienstadt) is a small town situated roughly half-way between Dresden and Prague in what is now the Czech Republic. Founded in 1780 on the orders of the Habsburg Emperor Joseph II as a garrison to protect the borders of the Austro-Hungarian Empire from a growing Prussian military threat, today it is best known as a former Nazi-controlled ghetto and transit camp for Jews during World War II. Some 140,000 men, women and children were interned there during World War II, of which 33,000 would die of malnutrition or disease, and another 88,000 would be murdered after subsequent deportation to Auschwitz.

Thus, a town established at the height of the European Enlightenment became part of a system of industrialised killing that represented its ultimate abnegation. And if that were not irony enough, it also became a 'model Jewish city' for Nazi propaganda purposes, 'Hitler's gift to the Jews' no less. In which the Nazis allowed music and art to flourish, albeit under observation.

As a result, many significant Jewish musicians, writers and other arts professionals were imprisoned there and – notwithstanding the terrible circumstances – many also continued to make great art in ways that provided both a degree of comfort for their fellow prisoners and, despite the oppressive censorship, which also served as subtle acts of resistance.

One of the greatest composers was **Viktor Ullmann**. Born in Teschen (now Cieszyn) into a family of Roman Catholic converts of Jewish descent, he was educated in Vienna and Prague. After serving in the Austrian army in the First World War he worked variously as a musical director, teacher, journalist and anthroposophical bookstore owner.

Ullmann shared with many others of his generation an interest in the fusion of elements that might otherwise be viewed as irreconcilable opposites (such as tradition and modernity, tonality and atonality, high art and kitsch). His music also frequently contains quotations from, or allusions to, pre-existing works.

In 'Goethe und Ghetto' a remarkable essay also written while in Terezín, Ullmann explicitly linked his experience of suffering at Terezín to the formal character of his creative work. It has been only more recently that we have started fully to recognise, in turn, that the music he and others created there is of lasted value and importance not only in the context of Holocaust memorialisation, but also in the history of musical modernism more generally.

Beryozkele (Little Birch Tree) is the first of three Yiddish songs that were arranged by Viktor Ullmann in Terezín in 1944, the source being a published volume of Yiddish folksongs by the ethnographer Menachem Kipnis, who himself died in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1942. Through careful use of musical allusion and artful accompaniment, Ullmann imbues this source material with deep pathos.

'Tote wollen nicht verweilen' and 'Erwachen zu Weihnachten' are both settings of poems by the Swiss theosophist poet Albert Steffen (1884-1963) and were

originally composed for voice and string trio for performance in Terezín. The estranged lyricism and acerbic harmony give these settings an appropriately haunting, and indeed haunted, character that also is found in his settings of two ancient Chinese poems 'Wanderer erwacht in der Herberge', by Tang Dynasty poet Li-Tai-Po (701-762), and 'Der müde Soldat', from the *Shijing Book of Odes*. Both had been translated into German by Alfred Henschke (1890-1928) under the pen-name of 'Klabund' and had obvious relevance for Ullmann and his audience.

Terezín also had a lively cabaret scene from which survived the lyrics to *Als Ob!* [As if!] which were penned by **Leo Strauss**, son of the famous Viennese operetta composer Oskar Strauss. The American multi-instrumentalist, Willy Schwartz (b.1949) later set them to music in the style of 'The Ghetto Swingers', Roma musicians who regularly performed at the 'Karussell' cabaret in Terezín.

The original score for the *Studie für Streichorchester* by **Pavel Haas** similarly did not survive his murder in Auschwitz, but it was later reconstructed from surviving orchestral parts. Born in Brno and later studying with Leoš Janáček, Haas also had an interest in Chinese poetry. His 4 *chinesische Lieder*, composed in 1944, were settings of Czech translations by the poet Bohumil Mathesius (1888-1952). The presence of folk-song-like insistent ostinatos and a driving lyricism also suggests his continuing high regard for the music of Janáček.

The only composition by the eminent pianist, conductor, and composer **Carlo Taube** to have survived is his lullaby *Ein jüdisches Kind*, to a text by his wife Erika Taube (1913-44). It poignantly describes the predicament of a Jew born without a homeland, destined to a 'a stranger in every town'.

Ullmann's *Der Mensch und sein Tag* is a song cycle setting of 12 texts by the Czech poet, novelist, and scholar Hans Günther Adler (1910-88). Adler was one of the fortunate few who survived the Holocaust and also took custody of Ullmann's surviving scores. His wife, parents, and some 16 other members of his immediate family, however, were murdered.

Wiegala is a song by the Jewish poet and composer **Ilse Weber** who penned it while she was working as a nurse caring for young children at Terezín. When they were deported to Auschwitz to be murdered, including her own son, she chose to accompany them and shared their fate.

A considerable amount of pre-existing music was also performed at Terezín, including – famously – an arrangement of Verdi's *Requiem*. **Ravel's** 'Kaddisch' from his *Deux Mélodies hébraïques* was composed in 1914 and is a setting of the solemn Jewish prayer for the dead and serves here as a fitting reminder that the lives and art lost in Terezín was ultimately a profound loss for every one of us.

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Viktor Ullmann (1898-1944)

Beryozkele from 3 Little birch tree
jiddische Lieder Op. 53
(1944)
David Einhorn

Ruig, schockelt ihr Gelocktes grines Kepel	Calmly sways her curled green little head,
Mein wejsinke Berjoskele un davent On a Schir;	My little white birch, and prays without a break;
Jedes Bletele ihr's Scheptshet schtil a t'file.	Each little leaf whispers quietly its own prayer
Sej schejn, klein Berjoskele, mispallel Ejch far mir!	Beautiful little birch tree pray also for me!
Fun die weite Felder is A Wintele gekumen Und erzejt die Bletelech Legends on a Schir.	From the far fields a breeze is come and tells the leaves legends without end,
Epes hot in Harzen tief Bei mir genumen Benken.	Something has brought about a deep longing inside my heart.
Sej schejn, klein Berjoskele, mispallel Ejch far mir!	Beautiful little birch tree, pray also for me!

Lieder der Tröstung (1943)
Albert Steffen

Tote wollen nicht verweilen	The dead do not want to linger
Tote wollen nicht Verweilen:	The dead do not want to linger:
Wie sie wallen, Wie sie eilen, Werfen immer neue Hüllen von den Seelen Und erfüllen so ihr Wesen und genesen.	How they wander, as they hurry, throw ever new covers from the souls and so fill their being and recover.
Wasser sind wir, Tot der Tränen. Luft, erlöst von allem Sehnen, Sonne, selig in dem	We are water, dead of tears. Air, redeemed from all longing, Sun, blessed in the

Lichte,
Jenseits jeglichem
Gewichte.
light,
beyond all
weight.

Erdenerbe,
Es ersterbe.
Earth's inheritance,
it is dying.

Erwachen zu
Weihnachten
(fragment)

Augen noch im Schlaf Geschlossen schauen Wie auf Purpurschwingen Engel goldne Schalen Bringen. Schon von Sonne Überflossen sehn sie, Wie die erdschweren Lasten immer Wiederkehren.	Eyes still closed in sleep look as if on purple wings angels bring golden bowls. Already overflowing with sun, they see how the earth's heavy burdens return again and again.
Prüfe mit dem Himmelsblicke deinen Leib im Tageslichte: Abwärtsziehende Gewichte einst Verschuldeter Geschicke. Wer erkennt im Reich Der Sterne, trägt das Leid der Erde gerne.	Examine your body in the daylight with the gaze of heaven: downward pulling weights of once indebted destinies. He who recognises in the realm of the stars gladly bears the suffering of the earth.

From *Drei chinesische Lieder* (1943)

Wanderer erwacht in
der Herberge
Alfred Henschke, after Li-
Tai-Po

Ich erwache leicht Geblendet, Ungewohnt eines Fremden Lagers.	I wake up slightly dazzled unaccustomed to a strange camp.
Ist es Reif, der über Nacht den Boden Weiss befiel?	Is it frost that has covered the ground in white overnight?
Ich schau in den Mond, Neige das Haupt, Denke an mein Wanderziel.	I look at the moon, bow my head, I think of my destination.

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

Der Müde Soldat

Anonymous

Ein kahles Mädchen.
Heckenblass entlaubt.
Sie steht am Weg,
Ich gehe weit vorbei.

So steh'n sie alle Reih
An Reih und Haupt
An Haupt.

Was weiss ich noch
Von heiligen Gewässern,
Was von des Dorfes
Abendrot.

Ich bin gespickt mit
Tausend Messern und
Müde von dem vielen Tod.

Der Kinder Augen sind
Wie goldner Regen,
In ihren Händen glüht
Die Schale Wein.
Ich will mich unter
Bäumen schlafen legen
Und kein Soldat mehr sein.

The tired soldier

A bald girl.
Pale and roughly sheared.
She stands by the path,
I give her a wide berth.

So they all stand row
upon row and head
upon head.

What else do I know
of sacred waters,
of the village's
sunset.

I'm riddled with a
thousand knives and
tired from all the death.

The children's eyes are
like golden rain,
the bowl of wine glows
in their hands.
I want to go to sleep
under the trees
and no longer be a soldier.

Carlo Sigmund Taube (1897-1944)

Ein jüdisches Kind

Erika Taube

Du bist ein Kind wie
All die vielen,
Die auf der ganzen
Erde sind,
Wie all die anderen
Gespielen
Und doch bist du so
Anders, Kind.

Du bist ein Kind,
Dem Heimat fehlt,
In allen Städten bist
Du fremd.
So lang dich nicht das
Wort beseelt:
Heimat, dein Herz ist
Ungehemmt.

A Jewish child

You are a child like
so many others,
in the whole
wide world,
like the other playful
children,
and yet, you are so
different, child.

You are a child who
has no homeland, in
every place you are a
stranger. As long as
the word Homeland
is not in your soul,
your heart will be
untethered.

Pavel Haas (1899-1944)

4 Songs on Chinese Poetry (1944)

Zaslech jsem divoké husy

*Bohumil Mathesius, after
Wei Yingwu*

Domov je tam,
Daleko tam,
Mělo bys domů,
Zbloudilé srdce!

Za cizí noci,
V podzimmím dešti,
Když nejvic studil
Smutku chladný van;
Ve vysokém domě svém
zaslech jsem
Křik divokých husí.

Právě přilétly.

I heard the wild geese

Your homeland is there,
far away in the distance,
you should go home,
my errant heart.

In the strange night-time,
in the autumn rain,
when one feels most
the chill wind of sorrow;
in my highland home I
heard
the whooping of wild geese.

They have just returned.

V bambusovém háji

*Bohumil Mathesius, after
Wang Wei*

V bambusech nejsou
lidé,
V bambusech sedím sám,
Tu na loutnu zahraju
tíše,
Tu sobě zahvívám.

Kdo, řekněte lidé, kdo
ví,
Kde v bambusech sedím
sám
A na východ srpečku luny
Bambusem
pozírám?

In the bamboo grove

In the bamboo no human
soul,
in the bamboo I sit alone,
here I play quietly on my
lute,
here I whistle to myself.

Who then, dear people,
who knows,
where I sit alone in the
bamboo
and through the stems
gaze on the rising
crescent moon?

Daleko měsíc je od domova

*Bohumil Mathesius, after
Zhang Jiuling*

Z temného moře vyrůstá
měsíc,
V daleké zemi teď rozkvétá
též.
Láska svůj truchlí daremný
sen,
Čeká na vzdálený
večer.

Jasněji měsíc svítí v hoře
mé.
Oblékám noční šat, chladné
je jíní.
Ruce mé, ruce, kterak jste
prázdné,
Říci to všechno!

Spánku, sen dej mi,
O návratu domů,
Spánku, sen nemůžeš
dát:
Mě toužení stále mne
budí.

Probděná noc

*Bohumil Mathesius, after
Chan I*

Větrem se bambus
houpá,
Na kámen měsíce sed.
Do chvění Mléčné dráhy
Stín divoké kachny
vzlét.

Na naše shledání myslím,
Víčka mívá sen.
Zatím co radosti zpívám,
Strak repot vzbouzí už
den.

The moon is far from home

Out of the dark sea the
moon rises,
in a distant land it now
also waxes.
Love laments its vain
dream,
it waits for the distant
evening.

The moon shines more
brightly upon my grief.
I put on night clothes; the
hoarfrost is cold.
My arms, my hands, you
are too weak
to write all that down?

O sleep, bring me a dream
about going back home!
O sleep, you cannot give
me that dream:
my longing keeps waking
me up.

A sleepless night

The bamboo sways in the
wind,
the moon sits above a stone.
Into the flickering Milky Way
soars the shadow of a
wild duck.

I think of our reunion,
dreaming shuns my eyelids.
While I sing for pleasure,
the chattering of magpies
already rouses the day.

Leo Strauss (1847-1944)

Als Ob! (c.1942-4)

Leo Strauss
arranged by Iain Farrington

Ich kenn ein kleines Städtchen,
Ein Städtchen ganz tipp topp!
Ich nenn es nicht beim Namen,
Ich nenn die Stadt, 'Als Ob'.

As If!

I know a little town
it really is tip top!
I won't call it by name,
I'll call it: 'As If'!

Nicht alle Leute dürfen
In dieser Stadt hinein,
Es müssen Auserwählte,
Der 'Als Ob' Rasse sein.

Sie leben dort ihr Leben
Als ob's ein Leben wär
Und freuen sich mit Gerüchten
Als ob's die Wahrheit wär.

Die Menschen auf die Strassen
Sie laufen im Gallop,
Auch wenn sie nichts zu tun
hat,
Tut man sich so als ob!

Es gibt auch ein
Kaffeehaus
Gleich dem Kaffee de l'Europe,
Und bei
Musikbegleitung
Fühlt man sich so als ob!

So Mancher ist auch
Manchmal,
Mit Manchem ziemlich grob!
Daheim war er kein Grosser,
Hier tut er so als
ob!

Des Morgens und des
Abends
Trinkt man als ob Kaffee
Am Samstag, ja am
Samstag
Da gibt's als ob Haschée.

Mann stellt sich an um Suppe
Als ob was wäre drinn
Und mann genießt die
Dorsche
Als als ob Vitamine.

Mann legt sich auf den Boden
Als wäre es ein Bett
Und denkt an seine
Lieben
Als ob man Nachricht hätt.

Mann trägt das schwere
Schicksal
Als ob es nicht so schwer
Und spricht von einer Zukunft
Als ob es Morgen
wär.

Not everyone
is allowed into this town,
only the chosen ones,
the 'As If' race.

They live their life there,
as if it were a life
and believe in rumours
as if they were the truth.

The people on the street
run fast everywhere,
even if they have nothing
to do,
they run as if they did.

There's even a Coffee
House,
called Café de l'europe,
and with musical
accompaniment,
one feels exactly as if...

Some people are
sometimes
rather rude and stuck up!
At home he was a nobody,
here he pretends as if he
were a somebody!

Every morning and
evening
we drink 'as if' coffee
on Saturday, yes, on
Saturday,
there's even 'as if' Hachée!

One lines up for soup
as if there were anything in it
and one savours the
cod
as if it were vitamins.

One lies on the hard floor
as if it were a bed
and thinks about one's
loved ones
as if they had received news.

One carries the terrible
fate
as if it were not so bad
and speaks from a future,
as if it were already
tomorrow.

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

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Ich wandte mich und
sahe an alle from 4
Serious Songs Op. 121
(1896)
Biblical text

So I returned and
considered all the
impressions

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 taten,
waren
Zu mächtig, dass sie
keinen
Tröster haben konnten.

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.

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.

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.

Viktor Ullmann

From *Der Mensch und sein Tag Op. 47* (1943)
Hans Günther Adler

III. Heimat

Home

Im Grund, im kühlen
Grund.
So bunt.
Der Felder Wogen,
Wiesenrund.
Im Grundgeborgen Herz
und Mund.

In the ground, the cool
ground.
So colourful.
The waves of the fields,
the meadow round.
In the ground, heart and
mouth.

IV. Der Liebsten

The loved one

Bei dir, in Lachen und in
Tränen.
Die Nähe, Hand und
Mund.
Das Sehnen vergeht.
Bei dir kein blindes
Wähnen.

With you, in laughter and
in tears.
The closeness, hand and
mouth.
The longing fades.
With you, no blind
pondering.

X. Verdämmern

Twilight

Hinab, hinab.
Die Glocke stimmt.
Wolken glühen.
Abend glimmt.
Hinab, hinab.
Der Mondhauch schwimmt.

Down, down, down.
The bell rings.
Clouds glow.
Evening glows.
Down, down, down.
The moon's breath floats.

XI. Nacht

Night

Komm, weicher Schlaf!
Komm, süsse Nacht!
Entspannt das Land,
Gedämpfte Pracht.
Und einsam in den
Grund gedacht.

Come, soft sleep!
Come, sweet night!
Relax the land,
steamed splendour.
And lonely thought into
the ground.

Johannes Brahms

Wenn ich mit Menschen und mit Engelszungen redete from 4 Serious Songs Op. 121

Biblical text

Wenn ich mit Menschen- und
Mit Engelnzungen 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
Ange-sicht
Zu Angesichte. Jetzt erkenne
Ichs stückweise, dann aber
Werd ichs erkennen, gleichwie
Ich erkennt bin.

Nun aber bleibet Glaube,
Hoffnung, Liebe, diese drei;
Aber die Liebe ist die grösseste
Unter ihnen.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels

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.

Viktor Ullmann

XII. Stille from *Der Mensch und sein Tag* Op. 47

Hans Günther Adler

Ruhe.
Schweigen.
Schauen und Beachten.
Still in seligem
Betrachten.
Vor der Gottheit
übernachten.

Stillness

Peace.
Silence.
Looking and observing.
Still in blissful
contemplation.
Spend the night before
the deity.

Ilse Weber (1903-1944)

Wiegala

Ilse Weber

Wiegala, wiegala, weier,
Der Wind spielt auf der Leier.
Er spielt so süß im grünen
Ried,
Die Nachtigall, die singt ihr
Lied.
Wiegala, wiegala, weier,
Der Wind spielt auf der Leier.

Wiegala, wiegala, werne,
Der Mond ist die Laterne,
Er steht am dunklen
Himmelszelt
Und schaut hernieder auf
die Welt.
Wiegala, wiegala, werne,
Der Mond ist die Lanterne.

Wiegala, wiegala, wille,
Wie ist die Welt so stille!
Es stört kein Laut die süsse
Ruh,
Schlaf, mein Kindchen,
schlaf auch du.
Wiegala, wiegala, wille,
Wie ist die Welt so stille!

Cradle song

Lullaby, lullaby, bire,
the wind plays on the lyre.
He's playing sweetly in
the reeds,
the nightingale sings in
the meads.
Lullaby, lullaby, bire,
the wind plays on the lyre.

Lullaby, lullaby, blatern,
the moon, she is a lantern,
she looks from heaven's
tent up high
a twinkle in her tired
eye.
Lullaby, lullaby, plantern,
the moon, she is a lantern.

Lullaby, lullaby, blying,
the world in stillness lying!
No sound disturbs your
peace and rest,
my baby, huddle in your
nest.
Lullaby, lullaby, blying,
the world in stillness lying!

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Kaddisch from *2 mélodies hébraïques*

(1914)

Yithgaddal weyithkaddash scheméh rabba be'olmâ	May thy glory, O King of Kings, be exalted, O thou
Diverâ 'khire' outhé veyamli'kh mal'khouté behayyé'khôn,	who art to renew the world and resurrect the dead.
Ouvezome'khôu ouve' hayyé de'khol beth yisraël	May thy reign, Adonai, be proclaimed by us, the sons of Israel,
Ba'agalâ ouvizman qariw weimrou: Amen.	today, tomorrow, for ever. Let us all say: Amen.
Yithbara'kh Weyischtaba'h weyith paêr weyithromam	May thy radiant name be loved, cherished, praised, glorified.
Weyithnassé weyithhaddar weyith'allé weyithhallal	May it be blessed, sanctified, exalted, thy name which soars
Scheméh dequoudschâ beri'kh hou, l'êla ule'êla	above the heavens, above our praises, above our hymns,
Min kol bir'khatha weschiratha touschbehatha	above all our benisons. May merciful heaven grant us
Wene'hamathâ daamirân ah! Be'olma ah!	tranquillity, peace, happiness. Ah!
We'imrou: Amen.	Let us all say: Amen.

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