

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 27 May 2023
1.00pm

Supported by The Woolbeding Charity

Seven Ages

Mark Padmore tenor • Roderick Williams baritone • Julius Drake piano
Rory Kinnear actor • Pandora Colin actor

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)	All the world's a stage from <i>As You Like It</i>
Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)	Infant Joy from <i>10 Blake Songs</i> (1957)
Thom Gunn (1929-2004)	Baby Song
Franz Schubert (1797-1828)	Der Vater mit dem Kind D906 (1827)
Carol Ann Duffy (b.1955)	A Child's Sleep
Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)	Wagtail and baby from <i>Winter Words</i> Op. 52 (1953)
Robin Robertson (b.1955)	Keys to the Doors
Aaron Copland (1900-1990)	The Little Horses (1952)
AA Milne (1882-1956)	The End
Benjamin Britten	Midnight on the Great Western from <i>Winter Words</i> Op. 52 (1953)
Paul Henry (b.1959)	Daylight Robbery
Benjamin Britten	Black Day from <i>Who are these Children?</i> Op. 84 (1969)
Cecil Day-Lewis (1904-1972)	Walking Away
Franz Schubert	Willkommen und Abschied D767 (1822)
John Donne (1572-1631)	The Sun Rising
Robert Schumann (1810-1856)	Widmung from <i>Myrthen</i> Op. 25 (1840)
William Shakespeare	Sonnet 109
Ralph Vaughan Williams	It Was a Lover and His Lass (1922)
William Shakespeare	Prologue from <i>Henry V</i>
George Butterworth (1885-1916)	The lads in their hundreds from <i>6 Songs from A Shropshire Lad</i> (1911)
Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)	Bleuet (1939)
Chidiok Tichborne (1562-1586)	Elegy
Ralph Vaughan Williams	The Sky above the Roof (1908)
Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)	Prison Op. 83 No. 1 (1894)
Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979)	One Art
Ralph Vaughan Williams	The vagabond from <i>Songs of Travel</i> (1901-4)
William Wordsworth (1770-1850)	Old Man Travelling
Benjamin Britten	As it is, plenty from <i>On This Island</i> Op. 11 (1937)
Bai Juyi (772-846)	On his Baldness
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)	Phänomen Op. 61 No. 3 (1873-4)
Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000)	The Bean Eaters
Samuel Barber (1910-1981)	Bessie Bobtail Op. 2 No. 3 (1934)
Charles Causley (1917-2003)	Death of a Poet
Frank Bridge (1879-1941)	Journey's End (1925)
Raymond Carver (1938-1988)	Late Fragment
Henry Purcell (1659-1695)	Now that the sun hath veiled his light (An Evening Hymn on a Ground) Z193 (pub. 1688)

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In 1623, seven years after **William Shakespeare's** death, his friends John Heminges and Henry Condell published the so-called First Folio containing 36 of his plays. The editors implored their audience to 'Reade him, therefore; and againe and againe: And if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to understand him.' Certainly Shakespearean thought has come to shape the literature – and language – of Britain ever since, and tonight's concert takes its inspiration from the famous passage of *As You Like It*, in which the life of a man is divided into seven stages. The vast majority of our poets featured here (spoken and sung) are also men; but there are words from **Elizabeth Bishop** and **Carol Ann Duffy** along the way.

Vaughan Williams was in his mid-eighties when he wrote 'Infant Joy', one of ten settings of poems by William Blake. It is a touching portrait of a newborn who still knows only joy and happiness, and was originally composed for voice and oboe: two melodic lines weaving and dancing together. **Schubert's** 'Der Vater mit dem Kind' also paints an idyllic picture of fatherhood, a little child falling sweetly asleep in the arms of a doting parent who lets fall a tear 'from the bottom of his heart'.

We hear two songs from **Britten's** opus of Hardy settings, *Winter Words*. 'Wagtail and baby' tells of the baby learning that man, above all animals, is the most terrifying to the natural world – even if he presents as 'a perfect gentleman'. The wagtail dips, dives and calls in the pianist's right hand, taking flight in raucous fear at the appearance of the man. 'Midnight on the Great Western' features an older protagonist in the form of a journeying boy. He travels third class through the dark to the sound of clacking rail tracks and the shrieking train whistle.

Between these two we hear **Aaron Copland's** 'The Little Horses', taken from his second volume of *Old American Songs* of 1952. This is a lullaby of a different hue from Schubert's, the elegant simplicity of the rocking music contrasted with the pert, cheery clomp of the many horses the baby is promised when he wakes. To close boyhood, we hear a song from Britten's late cycle *Who are these Children?* – and an all too-familiar childish problem. 'Black Day' sees its hero roundly told off and earns a series of 'skelps' for misbehaving.

In Schubert's 'Willkommen und Abschied' we are greeted with an ardent young man, riding through the night to meet a beautiful young woman – he has found true love, however secretly he must snatch moments with her. **Robert Schumann's** 'Widmung' begins his wedding cycle *Myrthen* for Clara Wieck, and the speaker defines every aspect of his life in terms of his lover, 'my guardian angel, my better self!' We return to Vaughan Williams and Shakespeare for the touching duet 'It Was a Lover and His Lass'.

After youthful love comes, in Shakespeare's words, 'a soldier, full of strange oaths'. We hear Housman's poem *The Lads in their Hundreds* realised by **George Butterworth**, himself a soldier who lost his life in the Somme in 1916. The music here is simple and unclouded: it is Housman's all-knowing narrator who reveals the fate of these innocents. **Poulenc's** 'Bleuet' – 'cornflower', and a reference to the blue-grey uniform of a new army recruit – sets an Apollinaire text of 1917. In contrast to the touching naïveté of Housman's lads, this young soldier 'has seen such dreadful things' that his music aches with heartbreak.

We hear the Shakespearean phase of 'justice' in two settings of the same poem. In 1873 Paul Verlaine shot his lover, Arthur Rimbaud (who was not seriously injured) and was subsequently sent to prison, where he wrote these words. **Fauré's** setting was written first, in 1894, the piano's constant pulsing chords creating a sense of time slowed to a muddy crawl, and the bars of the poet's cell. Vaughan Williams set an English translation of the same text 12 years later, the focus this time entirely on the view beyond Verlaine's cell in the luminous, floating music that rises above the prison walls.

In his last phase of maturity, our hero now becomes a wanderer – or, in this case, 'The Vagabond', from Vaughan Williams's *Songs of Travel*, which is subtitled 'To an air of Schubert.' Little wonder that the macho striding of this figure has prompted comparisons with the self-destructive protagonist of *Winterreise*. Perhaps 'As it is, plenty' from Britten's *On This Island* provides a cause for such determined walking away: a relationship failed, to the sound of distorted 1930s dance music, the wittiness of word and tone failing to conceal the painful tragedy that lurks beneath.

Some hope is offered in **Brahms's** duet 'Phänomen' of 1873-4. Here, the old man is reassured that he too may find love again, in a touching parallel with rainbows after rainfall. But **Samuel Barber's** 'Bessie Bobtail' tells a different story altogether: an old woman, alone and obsessive (voice and piano circle the same narrow ambit again and again, faltering as Bessie 'wambles' unsteadily along the road), desperate in her circling thoughts.

And so with **Frank Bridge** we come to 'Journey's End', a conversation between a mother and a young child who cannot comprehend the despair in his mother's voice as she answers his questions. We are taken, in other words, to a new dimension of the heartache first heard in the earliest songs tracing this life, between parent and child. Finally, in **Purcell's** 'An Evening Hymn on a Ground' we find repose: a sacred domestic song published in 1688. The serene, descending steps of the repeated bassline quietly lull us towards stillness – and into peace and rest at last.

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William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

All the world's a stage from *As You Like It*

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Infant Joy from 10 Blake Songs (1957)

William Blake

'I have no name:
I am but two days old.'
What shall I call thee?
'I happy am,
Joy is my name.'
Sweet joy befall thee!

Pretty Joy!
Sweet Joy, but two days old.
Sweet Joy I call thee:
Thou dost smile,
I sing the while,
Sweet joy befall thee!

Thom Gunn (1929-2004)

Baby Song

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Der Vater mit dem Kind D906 (1827)

Eduard von Bauernfeld

Dem Vater liegt das Kind im Arm,
Es ruht so wohl, es ruht so warm,
Es lächelt süß; lieb' Vater mein!
Und mit dem Lächeln schläft es ein.

Der Vater beugt sich, atmet kaum,
Und lauscht auf seines Kindes Traum;
Er denkt an die entschwund'ne Zeit
Mit wehmutsvoller Seligkeit.

Und eine Trän' aus Herzensgrund
Fällt ihm auf seines Kindes Mund;
Schnell küsst er ihm die Träne ab,

The father with his child

The child lies in its father's arms
resting so snug, resting so warm.
It smiles sweetly: 'Dear father!'
And with the smile falls asleep.

The father stoops, scarcely breathing,
listening to his child's dream;
he thinks of times past
with wistful happiness.

And a tear from deep in his heart
falls on the child's mouth;
quickly he kisses the tear away,

Und wiegt es leise auf und ab.

and rocks the child gently to and fro.

Um einer ganzen Welt Gewinn
Gäb er das Herzenskind nicht hin.

He would not give up his beloved child for all the world.

Du Seliger schon in der Welt,
Der so sein Glück in Armen hält!

Happy are you in this world,
who hold thus your happiness in your arms.

Carol Ann Duffy (b.1955)

A Child's Sleep

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Wagtail and baby from Winter Words Op. 52 (1953)

Thomas Hardy

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.

Robin Robertson (b.1955)

Keys to the Doors

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

The Little Horses (1952)

Traditional

Hush you bye,
Don't you cry,
Go to sleepy little baby.
When you wake,
You shall have
All the pretty little horses.
Blacks and bays,
Dapples and grays,
Coach and six-a little horses.
Blacks and bays,
Dapples and grays,
Coach and six-a little horses.

Hush you bye,
Don't you cry,
Go to sleepy little baby.
When you wake,
You'll have sweet cake and
All the pretty little horses.
A brown and gray and a black and a bay and a
Coach and six-a little horses.
A black and a bay and a brown and a gray and a
Coach and six-a little horses.

Hush you bye,
Don't you cry,
Oh you pretty little baby.
Go to sleepy little baby.
Oh you pretty little baby.

AA Milne (1882-1956)

The End

Benjamin Britten

Midnight on the Great Western from

Winter Words Op. 52 (1953)

Thomas Hardy

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?

Paul Henry (b.1959)

Daylight Robbery

Benjamin Britten

Black Day from *Who are these Children?*

Op. 84 (1969)

William Soutar

A skelp frae his teacher
For a' he cudna spell:
A skelp frae his mither
For cowpin owre the kail.
A skelp frae his brither
For clourin his braw bat:
And a skelp frae his faither
For the Lord kens what.

Cecil Day-Lewis (1904-1972)

Walking Away

Franz Schubert

Willkommen und Abschied D767 (1822)

*Johann Wolfgang von
Goethe*

Es schlug mein Herz,
geschwind zu Pferde!
Es war getan fast eh'
gedacht;
Der Abend wiegte schon die
Erde
Und an den Bergen hing die
Nacht
Schon stand im Nebelkleid
die Eiche,
Ein aufgetürmter Riese, da,
Wo Finsternis aus dem
Gesträuche
Mit hundert schwarzen
Augen sah.

Der Mond von einem
Wolkenhügel
Sah kläglich aus dem Duft
hervor,
Die Winde schwangen leise
Flügel,
Umsausten schauerlich mein
Ohr;
Die Nacht schuf tausend
Ungeheuer;
Doch frisch und fröhlich war
mein Mut:
In meinen Adern welches
Feuer!
In meinem Herzen welche Glut!

Dich sah ich, und die milde
Freude
Floss von dem süßen Blick
auf mich;
Ganz war mein Herz an
deiner Seite
Und jeder Atemzug für
dich.
Ein rosenfarbnes
Frühlingswetter
Umgab das liebliche Gesicht,
Und Zärtlichkeit für mich –
ihr Götter!
Ich hofft' es, ich verdient' es
nicht!

Doch ach! schon mit der
Morgensonne
Verengt der Abschied mir
das Herz:
In deinen Küssen, welche
Wonne!

Greeting and farewell

My heart pounded, quick,
to horse!
No sooner thought than
done;
evening already cradled
the earth,
and night clung to the
hills;
the oak-tree loomed in its
misty cloak,
towering like a giant, there,
where darkness peered
from bushes
with a hundred jet-black
eyes.

The moon gazed from a
bank of cloud
mournfully through the
haze,
the winds softly beat their
wings,
whirred eerily about my
ears;
night brought forth a
thousand monsters,
yet I was buoyant and
bright;
what fire in my
veins!
What ardour in my heart!

I saw you, felt the gentle
joy
of your sweet eyes flood
over me;
my heart was wholly at
your side
and every breath I took for
you.
A rose-red light of
spring
framed her lovely face,
and tenderness for me –
O gods!
This I had hoped but
never deserved!

But alas, with the morning
sun,
parting now constricts
my heart:
in your kisses what
delight!

In deinem Auge, welcher
Schmerz!

Ich ging, du standst und
sahst zur Erden,

Und sahst mir nach mit
nassem Blick:

Und doch, welch Glück
geliebt zu werden!

Und lieben, Götter, welch ein
Glück!

In your eyes what
pain!

I went, you stood there
gazing down,

and gazed moist-eyed
after me:

and yet, what joy to be
loved!

And to be in love, O gods,
what joy!

John Donne (1572-1631)

The Sun Rising

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Widmung from *Myrthen Op. 25* (1840) *Friedrich Rückert*

Dedication

Du meine Seele, du mein
Herz,
Du meine Wonn', o du mein
Schmerz,
Du meine Welt, in der ich
lebe,
Mein Himmel du, darein ich
schwebe,
O du mein Grab, in das hinab
Ich ewig meinen Kummer
gab!
Du bist die Ruh, du bist der
Frieden,
Du bist vom Himmel mir
beschieden.
Dass du mich liebst, macht
mich mir wert,
Dein Blick hat mich vor mir
verklärt,
Du hebst mich liebend über
mich,
Mein guter Geist, mein
bess'res Ich!

You my soul, you my
heart,
you my rapture, O you my
pain,
you my world in which I
live,
my heaven you, in which I
float,
O you my grave, into which
my grief forever I've
consigned!
You are repose, you are
peace,
you are bestowed on me
from heaven.
Your love for me gives me
my worth,
your eyes transfigure me
in mine,
you raise me lovingly
above myself,
my guardian angel, my
better self!

William Shakespeare

Sonnet 109

Ralph Vaughan Williams

It Was a Lover and His Lass (1922)

William Shakespeare

It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino
That o'er the green corn-field did pass.
In spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a-ding a-ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

This carol they began that hour,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
How that a life was but a flower
In spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a-ding a-ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

And therefore take the present time
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
For love is crownéd with the prime
In spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a-ding a-ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

William Shakespeare

Prologue from *Henry V*

George Butterworth (1885-1916)

The lads in their hundreds from 6 Songs

from A Shropshire Lad (1911)

AE Housman

The lads in their hundreds to Ludlow come in for the fair,
There's men from the barn and the forge and the mill and
the fold,
The lads for the girls and the lads for the liquor are there,
And there with the rest are the lads that will never be old.

There's chaps from the town and the field and the till and
the cart,
And many to count are the stalwart, and many the brave,
And many the handsome of face and the handsome of
heart,
And few that will carry their looks or their truth to the
grave.

I wish I could know them, I wish there were tokens to tell
The fortunate fellows that now you can never discern;
And then one could talk with them friendly and wish them
farewell
And watch them depart on the way that they will not
return.

But now you may stare as you like and there's nothing to
scan;

And brushing your elbow unguessed-at and not to be told
They carry back bright to the coiner the mintage of man,
The lads that will die in their glory and never be old.

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Bleuet (1939)

Guillaume Apollinaire

Jeune homme
De vingt ans
Qui as vu des choses si
affreuses
Que penses-tu des hommes
de ton enfance

Rookie

Young man
of twenty
you who have seen such
terrible things
what do you think of the
men from your childhood

Tu connais la bravoure et la
ruse

You know what bravery is
and cunning

Tu as vu la mort en face plus
de cent fois

You have faced death more
than a hundred times

Tu ne sais pas ce que c'est
que la vie

you do not know what life
is

Transmets ton
intrépidité

Hand down your
fearlessness

A ceux qui viendront
Après toi

to those who shall come
after you

Jeune homme
Tu es joyeux ta
mémoire est
ensanglantée

Young man
you are joyous your
memory is steeped in
blood

Ton âme est rouge aussi
De joie

your soul is red also
with joy

Tu as absorbé la vie de
ceux qui sont morts près
de toi

you have absorbed the life
of those who died
beside you

Tu as de la décision
Il est 17 heures et tu
saurais

You are resolute
it is 1700 hrs and you
would know

Mourir
Sinon mieux que tes aînés
Du moins plus pieusement
Car tu connais mieux
la mort que la
vie

how to die
if not better than your elders
at least with greater piety
for you are better
acquainted with death
than life

O douceur
d'autrefois

O sweetness of bygone
days

Lenteur
immémoriale

slow-moving beyond all
memory

Chidioc Tichborne (1562-1586)

Elegy

Ralph Vaughan Williams

The Sky above the Roof (1908)

Mabel Dearmer, after Paul Verlaine

What hast thou done O heart,
The sky above the roof
Simple and fair
Poured out in tears?
Plaintively sings
Murmurs of strife are here
Why dost thou weep O heart
Lost in the air
Drowsily rings
Bends in the heat
Ah God! A life is here,
A tree above the roof
A bird from out the blue
A bell from out the blue
Is calm and sweet
With thy spent years?

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Prison Op. 83 No. 1

(1894)

Paul Verlaine

Prison

Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit,
Si bleu, si calme!
Un arbre, par-dessus le toit,
Berce sa palme.

The sky above the roof –
so blue, so calm!
A tree, above the roof,
waves its crown.

La cloche, dans le ciel qu'on
voit,
Doucement tinte.
Un oiseau sur l'arbre qu'on
voit
Chante sa plainte.

The bell, in the sky that
you see,
gently rings.
A bird, on the tree that
you see,
plaintively sings.

Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, la vie
est là,
Simple et tranquille.
Cette paisible
rumeur-là
Vient de la ville.

My God, my God, life is
there,
simple and serene.
That peaceful murmur
there
comes from the town.

– Qu'as-tu fait, ô toi que voilà
Pleurant sans cesse,
Dis, qu'as-tu fait, toi que voilà,
De ta jeunesse?

O you, what have you done,
weeping without end,
say, what have you done
with your young life?

Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979)

One Art

Ralph Vaughan Williams

The vagabond from *Songs of Travel* (1901-4)

Robert Louis Stevenson

Give to me the life I love,
Let the lave go by me,
Give the jolly heaven above,
And the byway nigh me.
Bed in the bush with stars to see,
Bread I dip in the river -
There's the life for a man like me,
There's the life for ever.

Let the blow fall soon or late,
Let what will be o'er me;
Give the face of earth around,
And the road before me.
Wealth I seek not, hope nor love,
Nor a friend to know me;
All I seek, the heaven above,
And the road below me.

Or let autumn fall on me
Where afield I linger,
Silencing the bird on tree,
Biting the blue finger.
White as meal the frosty field—
Warm the fireside haven—
Not to autumn will I yield,
Not to winter even!

Let the blow fall soon or late...

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

Old Man Travelling

Benjamin Britten

As it is, plenty from *On This Island* Op. 11

(1937)

WH Auden

As it is, plenty;
As it's admitted ...

Due to copyright reasons, we are unable to reproduce the text for this song.

Bai Juyi (772-846)

On his Baldness

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Phänomen Op. 61 No. 3 Phenomenon

(1873-4)

Johann Wolfgang von
Goethe

Wenn zu der Regenwand Phöbus sich gattet, Gleich steht ein Bogenrand Farbig beschattet.	When the Sun-god mates with a curtain of rain, a rainbow springs up, shaded with colours.
--	--

Im Nebel gleichen Kreis Seh ich gezogen, Zwar ist der Bogen weiss, Doch Himmelsbogen.	I see this same circle drawn in the mist; though the bow is white, it is there in the heavens.
--	---

So sollst du, muntrer Greis, Dich nicht betrüben, Sind gleich die Haare weiss, Doch wirst du lieben.	So be of good cheer, old fellow, do not lose heart; though your hair be white, you shall still find love.
--	---

Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000)

The Bean Eaters

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

Bessie Bobtail Op. 2 No. 3 (1934)

James Stephens

As down the road she wambled slow,
She had not got a place to go:
She had not got a place to fall
And rest herself – no place at all!
She stumped along, and wagged her pate;
And said a thing was desperate.

Her face was screwed and wrinkled tight
Just like a nut – and, left and right,
On either side, she wagged her head
And said a thing; and what she said
Was desperate as any word
That ever yet a person heard.

I walked behind her for a while,
And watched the people nudge and smile:
But ever, as she went, she said,
As left and right she swung her head,
'O God He knows: And, God He knows!
And, surely God Almighty knows!'

Charles Causley (1917-2003)

Death of a Poet

Frank Bridge (1879-1941)

Journey's End (1925)

Humbert Wolfe

What will they give me, when journey's done?
Your own room to be quiet in, Son!

Who shares it with me? There is none
Shares that cool dormitory, Son!

Who turns the sheets? There is but one
And no one needs to turn it, Son!

Who lights the candle? Everyone
Sleeps without candle all night, Son!

Who calls me after sleeping? Son!
You are not called when journey's done.

Raymond Carver (1938-1988)

Late Fragment

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Now that the sun hath veiled his light (An Evening Hymn on a Ground) Z193 (pub. 1688)

William Fuller

Now that the sun hath veil'd his light
And bid the world goodnight,
To the soft bed my body I dispose,
But where shall my soul repose?
Dear God, even in thy arms;
And can there be any so sweet security?
Then to thy rest, O my soul, and, singing, praise
The mercy that prolongs thy days! Halleluia.

Translation of 'Der Vater mit dem Kind' by Richard Wigmore from Schubert – The Complete Song Texts published by Victor Gollancz Ltd. 'Willkommen und Abschied', Schumann and Brahms 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. Poulenc and Fauré by Richard Stokes from A French Song Companion (Johnson/Stokes) published by OUP.