

WIGMORE HALL

Monday 28 October 2024
1.00pm

ORA Singers Spirit of Shakespeare

Suzi Digby OBE artistic director

Lucy Cox soprano soloist
Clover Willis soprano
Natalie Houlston soprano
Áine Smith soprano
Rosanna Wicks soprano
Daisy Walford soprano

Luthien Brackett alto
Hannah Cooke alto
Martha McLorinan alto
Joy Sutcliffe alto
Jonathan Hanley tenor
Jack Harberd tenor

Benedict Munden tenor
Nicholas Todd tenor
Richard Bannan bass
Simon Grant bass
Edmund Saddington bass
Tim Murphy bass

Bob Chilcott (b.1955)

Richard Allain (b.1965)

Jonathan Dove (b.1959)

Michael Cavendish (1565-1628)

Thomas Morley (c.1557-1602)

Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)

John Tavener (1944-2013)

Libby Larsen (b.1950)

Philip Dutton (b.1992)

Jonathan Dove

John Bennet (c.1575-1615)

Jaakko Mäntyjärvi (b.1963)

The Isle is Full of Noises (2004)

If Music be the Food of Love (2015)

Come Unto These Yellow Sands from *Ariel* (1998)

Come, gentle swains (1601)

O mistress mine *arranged by Percy Grainger*

What is our life (pub. 1612)

Song for Athene (1993)

Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day? from *A Lover's Journey* (2000)

Time's Scythe (2024)

Commissioned by the Royal Philharmonic Society, with support from the Susan Bradshaw Composers' Fund

Is There More Toil? from *Ariel*

All creatures now are merry minded (1601)

4 Shakespeare Songs (1984)

Come Away, Death • Lullaby • Full Fathom Five •

Double, Double Toil and Trouble



This concert is being broadcast on BBC Radio 3

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Shakespeare lived in a profoundly musical age. His lifetime witnessed the great flowering of English composition represented by the figures of Byrd, Dowland and Morley. His plays contain various songs and musical references. But in the English Renaissance, music was more than art or entertainment. A current of thinking revived from Classical antiquity – and not yet banished by the scientific revolution – saw music as representing the proportional harmonies of the universe. By implication, music helped man to understand the world, and on this point Shakespeare was acutely perceptive. His writings apply musical language to questions of the heart; social and political order; even the structure of the cosmos. As Lorenzo tells Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice*, under a starry sky, 'There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st / But in his motion like an angel sings'.

Such musical awareness, alongside the poetic rhythms and resonances of his language, has long made Shakespeare attractive ground for composers. Today's programme begins and ends with works inspired by *The Tempest*. In this play, music is deployed by the magician Prospero through an invisible spirit, Ariel, to beguile a cast of shipwrecked islanders. **Bob Chilcott's** *The Isle is Full of Noises* sets Caliban's speech describing the 'sounds and sweet airs' which 'give delight, and hurt not', in music full of fleet-footed echoes. Contrastingly, **Jonathan Dove's** *Ariel* takes the form of a dramatic monologue for solo soprano. The first movement contains Ariel's beckoning song 'Come Unto These Yellow Sands', while 'Is There More Toil?' relates to the spirit's bid for freedom from its service to Prospero.

As Duke Orsino says in *Twelfth Night*, 'if music be the food of love, play on'. Many composers are drawn to Shakespeare's romantic side, and **Richard Allain's** setting of this famous speech is richly expressive. In the same play we also find the song 'O mistress mine'. An instrumental melody of that title appeared in a 1599 **Thomas Morley** publication, *Consort Lessons*. Whether Morley directly collaborated with Shakespeare cannot be known – it may have been an existing popular tune – but the words fit the melody, and **Percy Grainger's** 1903 choral version smuggles in a few naughty harmonic twists. Meanwhile, Shakespeare's most celebrated love sonnet – 'Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?' – appears in **Libby Larsen's** Valentine-themed suite *A Lover's Journey*, its words pampered with lush harmonies.

Two years after his *Consort Lessons*, in 1601, Morley published *The Triumphs of Oriana*, a collection of madrigals by 23 composers. They are festive in mood, and each madrigal ends with the same pastoral refrain, 'then sang the shepherds and nymphs of Diana: long live fair Oriana'. That is almost certainly a tribute to Elizabeth I, though *Triumphs* was not formally dedicated to her. We'll hear from two of the book's more obscure contributors: **Michael Cavendish's** *Come, gentle swains*, and **John Bennet's** *All creatures now are merry minded*. Both

showcase the nimble charm of the English madrigal during its golden age.

One of the finest English composers of Shakespeare's time, **Orlando Gibbons**, published a collection of his own madrigals in 1612. It included *What is our life*, whose text has been attributed to Walter Raleigh, and which exploits a common metaphor of the era – that our brief lives are a play. Gibbons's setting is expansive, starting with melancholy counterpoint in the minor mode, then becoming more lively. The theme of life's transience also runs through Shakespeare's *Sonnet 12*, which forms the inspiration for a new work by **Philip Dutton**, *Time's Scythe*. 'I was captivated', Dutton writes, 'by Shakespeare's vivid natural imagery – fading violets, barren trees, the setting sun – each symbolising life's inevitable decay. As a composer, time is something I deal with daily, which made the opportunity to compose a piece centred on it especially exciting'.

The issue of mortality becomes particularly poignant in the case of **John Tavener's** *Song for Athene*. Athene Hariades was a young friend of Tavener's who was tragically killed in a cycling accident. His song in memory of her sets an adapted line from Hamlet, 'may flights of angels sing thee to thy rest', combined with words from the Orthodox funeral service. The music's sustained drone and slowly wafting phrases, alternating between minor and major, create a powerfully meditative atmosphere. This moving work connected with the wider public when it was sung at the funeral of Princess Diana in 1997.

Jaakko Mäntyjärvi is not only a choral singer and composer, but also a professional Finnish-English translator – so it's no surprise that his music demonstrates good clarity of word-setting. His *4 Shakespeare Songs* also betray an interest in magical scenes. 'Come Away, Death' from *Twelfth Night* creates a sense of mystery with uncanny chord progressions, while the lullaby from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – a protective charm against creeping creatures – combines lilting rhythms with sinuous lines. 'Full Fathom Five' takes us back to Prospero's island in *The Tempest*, as Ariel describes a 'rich and strange' undersea world, haunted by the sound of pealing bells. Finally, another insistent rhythm runs through the witches' song from *Macbeth*, 'Double, Double, Toil and Trouble', which is further enlivened by theatrical flourishes.

The opening lines of 'Full Fathom Five' were quoted by the Renaissance scholar Frances Yates when she wrote that 'though Shakespeare never wielded a wand, he is a magician, master of the spell-binding use of words'. For this reason, many see Prospero as Shakespeare's symbolic self – the playwright-illusionist who suspends disbelief. The ongoing tradition of musical responses to Shakespeare's poetry and plays certainly supports that likeness. His 'sounds and sweet airs' continue to give delight, and strike a vital note in his enduring fascination.

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Bob Chilcott (b.1955)

The Isle is Full of Noises (2004)

William Shakespeare

Be not afeared: the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs,
That give delight and hurt not.

Be not afeared: the isle is full of noises,
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears;
And sometimes voices.

Be not afeared: the isle is full of noises.

Richard Allain (b.1965)

If Music be the Food of Love (2015)

William Shakespeare

If music be the food of love, play on,
Give me excess of it,
That surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken and so die.

That strain again, it had a dying fall.
O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odour.

Enough, no more,
'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou,
Notwithstanding thy capacity
Receiveth as the sea, nought enters there,
Of what validity and pitch so e'er,
But falls into abatement and low price,
Even in a minute!

So full of shapes is fancy,
That it alone is high fantastical.

Jonathan Dove (b.1959)

Come Unto These Yellow Sands from *Ariel* (1998)

William Shakespeare

Ssshhh...

Come unto these yellow sands, and then take hands.

Curtsied when you have and kissed the wild waves
whist,
Come, come!
Foot it featly here and there;

And, sweet sprites, the burden bear.

Hark! Hark! Bowwow! Bowwow!
The watchdogs bark.

Come unto these yellow sands, and then take hands.
Hark, hark! I hear the strain of strutting chanticleer
Cry cockadiddledow!
Ssshhh...

The never surfeited sea...

Michael Cavendish (1565-1628)

Come, gentle swains (1601)

Anonymous

Come, gentle swains, and shepherds' dainty
daughters,
Adorned with courtesy and comely duties.
Come, sing and joy and grace with lovely laughers,
The birthday of the beautiest of beauties.

Then sang the shepherds and nymphs of Diana:
Long live fair Oriana.

Thomas Morley (c.1557-1602)

O mistress mine

arranged by Percy Grainger

William Shakespeare

O mistress mine, where are you roaming?
O stay and hear, your true love's coming
That can sing both high and low.

Trip no further, pretty sweeting;
Journeys end in lovers' meeting,
Ev'ry wise man's son doth know.

What is love? 'Tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter;
What's to come is still unsure:

In delay there lies no plenty;
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty;
Youth's a stuff will not endure.

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

Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)

What is our life (pub. 1612)

attr. Walter Raleigh

What is our life? a play of passion.
Our mirth the music of division.
Our mothers' wombs the tiring-houses be,
Where we are dressed for this short comedy.
Heaven the judicious sharp spectator is,
That sits and marks still who doth act amiss.
Our graves that hide us from the searching sun
Are like drawn curtains when the play is done.
Thus march we, playing, to our latest rest,
Only we die in earnest, that's no jest.

John Tavener (1944-2013)

Song for Athene (1993)

William Shakespeare

Liturgical text

Alleluia.
May flights of angels sing thee to thy rest. Alleluia.
Remember me, O Lord, when you come into your
kingdom. Alleluia.
Give rest, O Lord, to your handmaid who has fallen
asleep. Alleluia.
The choir of saints have found the well-spring of life
and door of paradise. Alleluia.
Life: a shadow and a dream. Alleluia.
Weeping at the grave creates the song: Alleluia.
Come, enjoy rewards and crowns I have prepared for
you. Alleluia.

Libby Larsen (b.1950)

Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day? from *A Lover's Journey* (2000)

William Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of may,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed:
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed.
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Philip Dutton (b.1992)

Time's Scythe (2024)

William Shakespeare

When I do count the clock that tells the time,
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night;
When I behold the violet past prime,
And sable curls all silver'd o'er with white;
When lofty trees I see barren of leaves
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
And summer's green all girded up in sheaves
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard,
Then of thy beauty do I question make,
That thou among the wastes of time must go,
Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake
And die as fast as they see others grow;
And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence
Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence.

Jonathan Dove

Is There More Toil? from *Ariel*

William Shakespeare

Is there more toil?
Since thou dost give me pains,
Let me remember thee what thou hast promised,
Which is not yet performed me.
My liberty!

I drink the air before me!

Where the bee sucks, there suck I,
In a cow slip's bell I lie;
There I crouch when owls do cry
On the bat's back I do fly
After summer merrily shall I live now,
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough
I drink the air before me!
I go, I go, I go...

John Bennet (c.1575-1615)

All creatures now are merry minded (1601)

Anonymous

All creatures now are merry minded,
The shepherds' daughters playing,
The nymphs are falalaing.
Yond bugle was well winded.
At Oriana's presence each thing smileth.
The flowers themselves discover,
Birds over her do hover,
Music the time beguileth,
See where she comes,
With flow'ry garlands crowned,

Queen of all queens reknowned.

Then sang the shepherds and nymphs of Diana,
Long live fair Oriana.

Jaakko Mäntyjärvi (b.1963)

4 Shakespeare Songs (1984)

William Shakespeare

Come Away, Death

Come away, come away, Death,
And in sad cypress let me be laid.
Fly away, fly away, breath,
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.
My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,
O prepare it.
My part of death, no one so true
Did share it.

Not a flower, not a flower sweet
On my black coffin let there be strown.
Not a friend, not a friend greet
My poor corpse, where my bones shall be thrown.
A thousand thousand sighs to save,
Lay me O where
Sad true lover never find my grave,
To weep there.

Lullaby

You spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen.
Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong:
Come not near our fairy queen.
Philomel, with melody
Sing in our sweet lullaby:
Lulla, lulla, lullaby,
Lulla, lulla, lullaby.

Never harm nor spell nor charm
Come our lovely lady nigh.
So good night with lullaby.

Weaving spiders, come not here.
Hence, you long-legged spinners, hence!
Beetles black, approach not near;
Worm nor snail, do no offence.
Philomel, with melody
Sing in our sweet lullaby:
Lulla, lulla, lullaby,
Lulla, lulla, lullaby.

Full Fathom Five

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made.
Those are pearls that were his eyes -
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell.
Hark! Now I hear them: Ding, dong, bell.

Double, Double Toil and Trouble

Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.
Thrice, and once the hedge-pig whin'd.
Harpier cries: 'Tis time, 'tis time.
Round about the cauldron go,
In the poison'd entrails throw:
Toad that under cold stone
Days and nights had thirty-one
Swelter'd venom, sleeping got,
Boil thou first in the charmed pot.
Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

Fillet of a fenny snake
In the cauldron boil and bake,
Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog.
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg and owlet's wing.
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.
Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
Witch's mummy, maw and gulf
Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark,
Root of hemlock, digg'd in dark.
Liver of blaspheming Jew,
Gall of goat and slips of yew,
Sliver'd in the moon's eclipse,
Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips.
Finger of birth-strangl'd babe,
Ditch-delivered by a drab.
Make the gruel thick and slab.
Add thereto a tiger's chaudron,
For ingredients for our cauldron.
Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes.
Open, locks, whoever knocks!