

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 29 March 2025
7.30pm

Gautier Capuçon cello
Jérôme Ducros piano

Ángel Cabral (c.1911-1997)

Franz Lehár (1870-1948)

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Georges Bizet (1838-1875)

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Jacques Offenbach (1819-1880)

Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764)

Jules Massenet (1842-1912)

Sergey Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Charles Gounod (1818-1893)

Ennio Morricone (1928-2020)

Riccardo Cocciante (b.1946)

Georges Delerue (1925-1992)

Charles Aznavour (1924-2018)

Joseph Kosma (1905-1969)

Francis Lai (1932-2018)

Georges Brassens (1921-1981)

Philippe Sarde (b.1948)

Michel Legrand (1932-2019)

Michael Wilshaw (b.1945)

La Foule (1936)

Heure Exquise from *The Merry Widow* (1905)

Pavane pour une infante défunte (1899)

Beau soir (1891)

Habanera: L'amour est un oiseau rebelle from *Carmen* (1875)

Sicilienne Op. 78 (1898)

Barcarolle: Belle nuit, ô nuit d'amour from *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (1881)

Danse des Sauvages from *Les Indes galantes* (1735)

Méditation from *Thaïs* (1894) arranged by Martin Pierre Marsick

Dance of the Knights from *Romeo and Juliet* Op. 64 (1935)

Je veux vivre from *Roméo et Juliette* (1867)

Chi Mai (1971)

Belle from *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1998)

Thème de Camille (1963)

La Bohème (1965)

Les feuilles mortes (1945)

Un homme et une femme (1966)

Les copains d'abord (1964)

La chanson d'Hélène (1970)

Un été 42 (1971)

Les Champs-Élysées (as performed by Joe Dassin) (1969)



UNDER 35S

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When Edith Piaf recorded **Cabral's** song, *La Foule* ('The Crowd') in 1957, it became an instant hit. The whirling melody and giddy fairground harmonies evoke the intoxicating rush of first love in a festive crowd, only to turn to heartbreak when the crowd tears them apart, never to meet again.

Known more commonly as the *Merry Widow Waltz*, this tender, crooning tune from **Franz Léhar's** 1905 opera is sung when the two main protagonists – the glamorous Hanna Glawari and charming but proud Count Danilo – finally admit their love for one another.

Speaking of the enigmatic title of this work, *Pavane pour une infante défunte*, originally composed for solo piano in 1899, the Parisian composer **Maurice Ravel** wrote, 'It is not a funeral lament for a dead child, but rather an evocation of the pavane [a stately, 16th-century Spanish court dance] which could have been danced by such a little princess as painted by Velázquez.'

Rippling piano chords create an atmosphere of peace, as a searching, sinuous melody unfurls in the vocal line of *Beau soir*. Composed by **Claude Debussy** in 1891, this haunting setting of a poem by Paul Borget evokes the fleeting beauty of a sunset.

When **Georges Bizet's** opera, *Carmen*, premièred at the Parisian Opéra-Comique Theatre in 1875, it created a scandal. Audiences were shocked when mezzo-soprano Célestine Galli-Marié performed the heroine's sultry, sensuous aria, 'L'amour est un oiseau rebelle', in which she declares her freedom to love whomever she chooses.

The charming melody of *Sicilienne* for cello and piano was originally composed in 1892 as incidental music for a production of Molière's comedy, *Le bourgeois Gentilhomme*. Although that production was abandoned, **Fauré** later resurrected the piece for another play, Maeterlinck's Symbolist work, *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

Performed for the first time in 1881, **Jacques Offenbach's** final opera, *The Tales of Hoffmann*, depicts three fantastical love stories. The third of these revolves around the courtesan, Giulietta, and her lilting aria – 'Belle nuit, ô nuit d'amour' – takes the form of a traditional Venetian *barcarolle*, or gondolier's song.

Jean-Philippe Rameau's hugely successful opéra-ballet of 1735, *Les Indes galantes*, depicted four romantic tales from far-flung nations. The last of these was a comic love story set in North America, with ample opportunity for balletic interludes, as heard in this lively, catchy dance.

In **Jules Massenet's** 1894 opera, *Thaïs*, the eponymous heroine, a courtesan, captures the heart of the monk, Athanaël, prompting a crisis of faith. The tempo marking of this popular entre'acte, *Andante religioso*, suggests the opera's themes of desire and longing, and was originally composed for violin, orchestra, and off-stage chorus.

It seems unbelievable now that the initial response to **Prokofiev's** score for *Romeo and Juliet* in 1935, was that it was 'impossible to dance to'. The indissoluble conflict between the families of Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers is evoked in this jagged, proud march, the 'Dance

of the Knights' which alternates with enigmatic, tender interludes.

Keeping with the Shakespearean theme, **Gounod's** breathless ariette 'Je veux vivre' conveys the young Juliet's desire to live her youthful dreams. The aria was first performed in Paris, at the 1867 Universal Exhibition.

Originally heard in the 1971 film *Maddalena*, **Ennio Morricone's** melody, *Chi Mai* ('Whoever'), has become popular as a stand-alone piece, with its nostalgic air and distinctive, staccato melody that seems to float in mid-air.

This passionate song of yearning for Esmerelda, sung by three male characters, is the emotional heart of **Riccardo Cocciante's** 1998 French-language musical, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, based on the novel by Victor Hugo.

Delerue's melancholic, tender melody – *Thème de Camille* – is the theme from Jean-Luc Godard's film, *Le mépris* ('Contempt'), a new-wave cinematic masterpiece starring Brigitte Bardot, depicting the disintegration of a marriage.

Legendary singer-songwriter **Charles Aznavour's** signature tune *La bohème* evokes a bygone Montmartre. An aging artist recalls the days when he was hungry but happy: 'On était jeunes, on était fous' ('We were young, we were crazy.')

A bittersweet melancholy pervades this ode to autumnal transience, *Les feuilles mortes* (known as 'Autumn leaves' in the English-language version), composed by the Hungarian émigré, **Joseph Kosma**, with words by Jacques Prévert, in 1945.

The light-hearted theme of *Un homme et une femme* by the prolific film composer **Francis Lai** skips along with insouciant ease, reflecting the happy ending of the 1966 romantic comedy directed by Claude Lelouch.

Written in 1964, the jaunty, nautically-themed tune of *Les copains d'abord* by the great poet and songwriter **George Brassens** is a humorous ode to friendship, as hinted by the wordplay of the title, which translates as 'Friends first', but which when spoken, sounds like 'shipmates'.

Claude Sautet's 1970 drama film *Les Choses de la vie* ('The things of life') tells the tale of a love affair between a young woman and a married man, and the car crash that separates them, prompting a series of flashbacks. This poignant melody evokes the heartache of Pierre's lover.

French composer **Michael Legrand's** *Un été 42* was the soundtrack to the 1971 American coming-of-age film, *The Summer of '42*. It won him an Academy Award, and it's easy to hear why, with this expansive, romantic melody.

Les Champs-Élysées may seem every inch the archetypal French chanson, as performed by Joe Dassin in 1969, but the melody is taken from an earlier song by the English psychedelic pop group, Jason Crest, entitled *Waterloo Road*.

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