

# WIGMORE HALL

Monday 29 November 2021 7.30pm

**Julia Bullock** soprano

**Bretton Brown** piano

**Franz Schubert** (1797-1828)

**Hugo Wolf** (1860-1903)

**Franz Schubert**

**Connie Converse** (b.1924)

**Kurt Weill** (1900-1950)

**Luciano Berio** (1925-2003)

**Gioachino Rossini** (1792-1868)

**Luciano Berio**

**Gioachino Rossini**

**Luciano Berio**

**John Cage** (1912-1992)

**Pat Castleton** (d.1993)

**& Spencer Williams** (1889-1965)

**Cora "Lovie" Austin** (1887-1972)

**& Alberta Hunter** (1895-1984)

**Cora "Lovie" Austin**

**Billie Holiday** (1915-1959)

**& Sonny White** (1917-1971)

**Nina Simone** (1933-2003)

**& Weldon Jonathan Irvine, Jr.** (1943-2002)

**Nina Simone**

**Billy Taylor** (1921-2010)

Suleika I D720 (1821)

Spanisches Liederbuch Weltliche Lieder (1889)

*In dem Schatten meiner Locken • Bedeckt mich mit Blumen*

Rastlose Liebe D138 (1815)

There is a Vine *arranged by Jeremy Siskind & Bretton Brown*

One by One (1954) *arranged by Jeremy Siskind*

Lost in the Stars from *Lost in the Stars* (1949)

Denn wie man sich bettet, so liegt man from *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (1927-9)

Wie lange noch? (1944)

The Princess of Pure Delight from *Lady in the Dark* (1940)

Dolce cominciamento from *4 canzoni popolari* (1946-7 rev. 1952 rev. 1973)

Mi lagnerò tacendo 'Stabat Mater'

La donna ideale from *4 canzoni popolari*

Mi lagnerò tacendo 'Sorzico'

Ballo from *4 canzoni popolari*

*Interval*

Duet from *She is Asleep* (1943)

Driftin' Tide (1933) *arranged by Jeremy Siskind*

Downhearted Blues (1922) *arranged by Jeremy Siskind*

Lovie Austin Tribute *arranged by Jeremy Siskind*

Our Love Is Different (1939) *arranged by Jeremy Siskind*

Revolution (1969) *arranged by Julia Bullock*

Four Women (1965) *arranged by Jeremy Siskind*

I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free (1963) *arranged by Jeremy Siskind*

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*'When classical music was coming into my life and I was falling in love with it, I wasn't so much thinking about the differences between genres; it was more about: who has real resonance and power? Who has an inimitable voice; who is a legitimate soul singer; who is a great interpreter of texts, lyrics and melodies?' – Julia Bullock*

The exquisite timbre, captivating presence and expressive range of American soprano Julia Bullock has earned her worldwide plaudits across far-reaching projects, such as collaborations with Esa-Pekka Salonen at the San Francisco Symphony, starring roles in John Adams's 21st-century operas, and her Artist-in-Residence series (2018-19) at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. *The New York Times* has praised her as 'one of the singular artists of her generation'; *Vanity Fair* highlighted her 'young, highly successful, politically engaged' artistry, while *Musical America* pronounced her 2021 Artist of the Year and 'agent of change'.

Bullock's celebrated recital programmes reflect her eloquent and intuitive approach, both as a performer and curator; NPR described her online Tiny Desk recital (broadcast from her Munich home in December 2020) as a 'transcendent' experience. Her skill in illuminating and contextualising richly diverse material arguably stems from her own musical roots; she would begin her operatic training while still a high school student in St Louis, Missouri, and while simultaneously immersed in 'jazz, blues, folk and psychedelic music', spanning Nina Simone to Jimi Hendrix, Laura Nyro and Janis Joplin. Although she presented her debut US recital tour in 2014, tonight's one-off London date will mark the first live piano and voice recital that she has given in Europe; it will also reunite her with Juilliard peer Bretton Brown (who made his own acclaimed UK debut at Wigmore Hall in 2016).

'Wigmore Hall is such a beautiful intimate space with an amazing history, and it has extended invitations to pretty much everyone within Western European classical music that I cherish. I'm nervous about that,' laughs Bullock. She brings an unmistakably warm assurance and meticulous detail to her recital programme, guiding us through multiple points of reference and revelation.

'You call something a 'classic' when you can return to it multiple times and it reveals something new; a deeper understanding. It's very satisfying to return to some of the pieces that I programmed on my first recital tour,' she explains. 'For me, it's very explicit how this material is linked, in terms of poetry and also musically.'

The heart-stirring opening piece, **Schubert's** 'Suleika' (1821), features poetry that was originally accredited to Goethe (in his *West-östlicher Divan* collection), yet later revealed to be written by his confidante, Austrian actress and musician Marianne von Willemer.

'It got me thinking about how we want to appreciate women's contributions to culture, but historically, we've been in the habit of not giving them credit for their work,' explains Bullock. 'There's so much in this poem, which Schubert amplifies gorgeously: different abstracts about longing, seeking communion, projecting one's lover into nature, cultures colliding, sensualities, sexualities.'

The gloriously romantic 19th-century Lieder of Schubert and **Hugo Wolf** are followed by mid-20th-century compositions by **Connie Converse**: a ground-breaking though initially overlooked New York singer-songwriter. The haunting beauty of Converse's expressions seems intensified by the artist's disappearance in 1974.

'When I first heard Connie Converse's recordings, they reminded me of some of my favourite art songs,' recalls Bullock. She commissioned friend and regular collaborator, jazz pianist-composer **Jeremy Siskind**, to create new arrangements for 'There Is A Vine' and 'One By One'; Bullock's versions feel elegantly suspended in a state of yearning. She would later learn that Converse would move from solo guitar to voice and piano, and that the New Yorker also aspired to write an opera. 'Whatever my intuitive sense that Converse's music had a place in the recital hall, that was very much on her mind,' says Bullock.

The programme entwines folksongs about love by **Berio** and **Rossini**, and also celebrates **Kurt Weill's** sharp wit and 'emotional metabolism': '*Lady In The Dark* is a kind of fairytale; historically, these young princesses are centred in the story but rarely given agency over their lives,' says Bullock. 'Weill addresses that misogyny with humour, but he doesn't shy away from it.'

The theme of autonomy and empowerment becomes pronounced in the programme's second half, commencing with **John Cage's** wordless 'Duet' with prepared piano from *She Is Asleep*.

'The performer having agency is the ethos of Cage's work,' says Bullock. 'It's also striking that *She Is Asleep* was written in 1943; in a time of extreme violence in the world, he created this very delicate experimental piece.'

There follows a sequence of songs by female blues pioneers: 1920s bandleader, composer, musician and vocalist **Lovie Austin; Billie Holliday; Nina Simone**.

'So many black women were not only singing the blues; they were responsible for pushing the art form forward,' notes Bullock. 'They were totally liberated beings, and expressed themselves explicitly in their material. When I originally researched that, I was so excited by it; it was not a part of the history that had ever been brought to my attention.'

The penultimate track, Simone's 'Four Women', is rooted in a steady percussive quality, again explored through prepared piano, before **Billy Taylor's** inspirational 'I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free' (famously covered by Simone in 1967):

'I fell in love with this civil rights song and 20th-century spiritual in high school, but my own interpretation has changed over the years,' says Bullock. 'Offering it after "Four Women", which is so earthbound and grounded, feels joyous and liberating.'

Bullock brings expansive power to this most intimate musical form; the 'human heart' of these songs becomes the exhilarating pulse of her recital.

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## Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

### Suleika I D720 (1821)

*Marianne von Willemers*

Was bedeutet die Bewegung?  
Bringt der Ost mir frohe  
Kunde?  
Seiner Schwingen frische  
Regung  
Kühlt des Herzens tiefe Wunde.

Kosend spielt er mit dem Staube,  
Jagt ihn auf in leichten Wölkchen,  
Treibt zur sichern Rebenlaube  
Der Insekten frohes Völkchen.

Lindert sanft der Sonne Glühen,  
Kühlt auch mir die heißen Wangen,  
Küsst die Reben noch im  
Fliehen,  
Die auf Feld und Hügel  
prangen.

Und mir bringt sein leises  
Flüstern  
Von dem Freunde tausend  
Grüsse;  
Eh' noch diese Hügel düstern,  
Grüssen mich wohl tausend  
Küsse.

Und so kannst du weiter ziehen!  
Diene Freunden und  
Betrübten.  
Dort wo hohe Mauern glühen,  
Dort find' ich bald den  
Vielgeliebten.

Ach, die wahre Herzenskunde,  
Liebeshauch, erfrishtes Leben  
Wird mir nur aus seinem  
Munde,  
Kann mir nur sein Athem  
geben.

### Suleika I

What does the motion mean?  
Does the East bring me glad  
tidings?  
Its refreshing and stirring  
movement  
chills the deep wound of my heart.

It gently plays with the dust,  
chasing it into light clouds,  
and drives the cheerful insect-folk  
into the security of the arbor vines.

It softly relieves the sun's glow,  
it also cools my hot cheeks,  
as it flees, it kisses the  
vines,  
which shine forth on the fields  
and hills.

And its soft whispering brings  
me  
a thousand greetings from my  
beloved;  
before these hills grow dark,  
I am greeted by a thousand  
kisses.

And so, you can go on your way!  
Attend to friends and those  
distressed.  
There, where high walls glow,  
there, I shall soon find my  
dearly beloved.

Oh, the true tidings of his heart,  
love's breath, and refreshing life  
come to me only from his  
mouth,  
and can be given to me only by  
his breath.

## Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)

### Spanisches Liederbuch Weltliche Lieder

#### In dem Schatten meiner Locken (1889)

*Anonymous*

In dem Schatten meiner Locken  
Schlief mir mein Geliebter ein.  
Weck ich ihn nun auf? – Ach  
nein!

Sorglich strählt' ich meine krausen  
Locken täglich in der Frühe,  
Doch umsonst ist meine Mühe,  
weil die Winde sie zerzausen.

Lockenschatten,  
Windessausen  
Schlieferten den Liebsten ein.  
Weck ich ihn nun auf? – Ach  
nein!

Hören muss ich, wie ihn gräme,  
Dass er schmachtet schon so  
lange,  
Dass ihm Leben geb' und  
nehme  
Diese meine braune Wange,  
Und er nennt mich seine Schlange,  
Und doch schlief er bei mir ein.  
Weck ich ihn nun auf? – Ach  
nein!

#### Bedeckt mich mit Blumen (1889)

*María Doceo, trans. Emanuel  
Geibel*

Bedeckt mich mit Blumen, ich  
sterbe vor Liebe.  
Dass die Luft mit leisem Wehen  
nicht den süßen Duft mir  
entführe, bedeckt mich!  
Ist ja alles doch dasselbe,  
Liebesodem oder Däfte von  
Blumen.  
Von Jasmin und weissen Lilien  
sollt ihr hier mein Grab bereiten,  
ich sterbe.  
Und befragt ihr mich: Woran?  
sag' ich: Unter süßen Qualen  
vor Liebe.

#### In the shadow of my curly hair

In the shadow of my curly hair,  
my beloved has fallen asleep.  
Should I wake him now? – Ah,  
no!

Carefully, I comb my frizzy  
curls, early each day;  
but my efforts are in vain,  
because the winds dishevel them.

Shadow-casting curls, rustling  
wind,  
have lulled my darling to sleep.  
Should I wake him now? – Ah,  
no!

I must listen to him complain  
that he has pined for me so  
long,  
that life is given and taken away  
from him  
by my brown cheeks,  
and he calls me his snake,  
and yet he fell asleep by me.  
Should I awaken him now? –  
Ah, no!

#### Cover me with flowers

Cover me with flowers, I die of  
love.  
So that the air with gentle wafting  
doesn't take from me the sweet  
smell, cover me!  
Yet, all is the same,  
breath of love or scent of  
flowers.  
With jasmine and white lilies  
here you shall my grave  
prepare, I die.  
And if you all ask me: Why?  
I say: Under the sweet torments  
of love.

## Franz Schubert

### Rastlose Liebe D138

(1815)

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

Dem Schnee, dem Regen,  
Dem Wind entgegen,  
Im Dampf der Klüfte  
Durch Nebeldüfte,  
Immer zu! Immer zu!  
Ohne Rast und Ruh!

Lieber durch Leiden  
Möcht ich mich schlagen,  
Als so viel Freuden  
Des Lebens ertragen.

Alle das Neigen  
Von Herzen zu Herzen,  
Ach, wie so eigen  
Schaffet das Schmerzen!

Wie soll ich fliehen?  
Wälderwärts ziehen?  
Alles vergebens!  
Krone des Lebens,  
Glück ohne Ruh,  
Liebe, bist du!

### Restless love

Into the snow, into the rain,  
against the wind,  
in the mist of the ravines  
through the scent of fog,  
onwards! always onwards!  
Without rest and peace!

I would rather fight  
through suffering  
than endure  
so many joys of life.

All the attraction  
from one heart to another,  
ah, how uniquely  
that creates pain!

How shall I flee?  
To the forests?  
All in vain!  
Crown of life,  
happiness without peace,  
Love, that's what you are!

## Connie Converse (b.1924)

### There is a Vine

arranged by Jeremy Siskind & Bretton Brown

There is a vine growing on my garden wall,  
And it is brown and withered in the fall,  
And in the spring its leaves are green and blossoms all aflame,  
But, spring or fall, still I love you just the same.

There is a gate halfway down my garden wall,  
And in the night I lock it, bolts and all,  
And in the day it's open wide to all who would come through,  
But, day or night, it is never locked for you.

There is a tree growing by my garden gate  
And year by year it seems to stand and wait,  
And here am I beneath the tree, for I am waiting too,  
And, oh, my love, I will always wait for you.

### One by One (1954)

arranged by Jeremy Siskind

We go walking in the dark.  
We go walking out at night.

And it's not as lovers go,  
Two by two, to and fro;  
But it's one by one –

One by one in the dark.  
We go walking out at night.  
As we wander through the grass  
We can hear each other pass,  
But we're far apart –

Far apart in the dark.  
We go walking out at night.  
With the grass so dark and tall  
We are lost past recall  
If the moon is down –

And the moon is down.  
We are walking in the dark.  
If I had your hand in mine  
I could shine, I could shine

Like the morning sun –

Like the sun.

## Kurt Weill (1900-1950)

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### Lost in the Stars from *Lost in the Stars* (1949)

*Maxwell Anderson*

Before Lord God made the sea and the land,  
He held all the stars in the palm of his hand ...

### Denn wie man sich bettet, so liegt man from *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (1927-9)

*Bertolt Brecht*

Meine Herren, meine Mutter	Gentlemen, my mother once
prägte	marked
auf mich einst ein schlimmes Wort	me with a nasty word ...
...	

### Wie lange noch? (1944)

*Walter Mehring*

Ich wills dir gestehen es war  
eine Nacht  
Da hab ich mich willig dir  
hingegen ...

### How long?

I want to confess to you, it was  
a night  
when I willingly gave myself to  
you ...

## The Princess of Pure Delight from *Lady in the Dark*

(1940)

*Ira Gershwin*

The Prince in orange and the Prince in blue,  
And the Prince whose raiment was of lavender hue ...

## Luciano Berio (1925-2003)

### Dolce cominciamiento Sweet beginning from *4 canzoni popolari*

(1946-7 rev. 1952 rev. 1973)

*Anonymous*

Dolce cominciamiento  
Canto per la più fino  
Che sia al mio parimento  
D'Agn'infino a Messina  
Cio è la più avvenente.

Sweet beginning, I sing  
for the the finest one  
who in my opinion, may be  
the most gorgeous from  
from Angi until Messina.\*

Oh stella rilucente  
Che levi a la maitina  
Quando m'appare avante  
Li suoi dolci sembianti  
M'incendo la corina.

Oh shining star,  
that rises in the morning,  
when she appears in front of me,  
her sweet countenance,  
inflames my heart.

\*Agni and Messina: two towns in Sicily

## Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)

### Mi lagnerò tacendo 'Stabat Mater'

*Pietro Metastasio*

Mi lagnerò tacendo  
della mia sorte amara;  
ma ch'io non t'ami, o  
cara,  
non lo sperar da me.

In silence I will complain  
of my bitter fate;  
but for me not to love you, oh  
dear one,  
do not expect that from me.

Crudel'... no...

Cruel one... no...

## Luciano Berio

### La donna ideale from *4 canzoni popolari*

*Traditional Genovese*

L'ómo chi mojer vor piar  
De quatro cosse dee spiar.  
La primiera è com' el è na  
L'altra è se l'è ben accostumaa  
L'altra è como el è formaa  
La quarta è de quanto el è  
dotaa

If a man wants a woman,  
there are four things to ask:  
the first is if she's well-bred  
another is if she's well-mannered  
another is if she's well-shaped  
the fourth is if she has a good  
dowry

Se queste cosse ghe comprendi  
A lo nome de Dio la prendi.

if comprehensively she's got it all  
in God's name take her.

## Gioachino Rossini

### Mi lagnerò tacendo 'Sorzico'

*Pietro Metastasio*

Mi lagnerò tacendo  
della mia sorte amara;  
ma ch'io non t'ami, o  
cara,  
non lo sperar da me.

In silence I will complain  
of my bitter fate;  
but for me not to love you, oh  
dear one,  
do not expect that from me.

Crudel'... no...

Cruel one... no...

## Luciano Berio

### Ballo from *4 canzoni popolari*

*Traditional Sicilian*

La ra la ra la ra li...  
Amor fa disciare li più  
saggi  
e chi più l'ama meno ha in sè  
misura  
più folle è quello che più  
s'innamora

La ra la ra la ra li...  
Love drives out reason from the  
most wise  
and he who loves most has the  
least judgment.  
The most foolish is the one  
who's most in love.

La ra la ra la ra li...  
Amor non cura di fare suoi  
dannaggi  
co li suoi raggi mette tal calura  
che non puo raffreddare per  
freddura.

La ra la ra la ra li...  
Love doesn't care about the  
harm he does,  
his rays generate such a fever  
that not even the cold can cool  
it.

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## Interval

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## John Cage (1912-1992)

### Duet from *She is Asleep* (1943)

## Pat Castleton (d.1993) & Spencer Williams

(1889-1965)

### Driftin' Tide (1933)

arranged by Jeremy Siskind

All alone, I stand and watch the the ocean roll  
To bemoan, because the blues have got control ...

## **Cora “Lovie” Austin** (1887-1972) & **Alberta**

**Hunter** (1895-1984)

**Downhearted Blues** (1922)

arranged by Jeremy Siskind

Gee, but it's hard to love someone  
When that someone don't love you ...

### **Lovie Austin Tribute**

arranged by Jeremy Siskind

## **Billie Holiday** (1915-1959) & **Sonny White** (1917-1971)

**Our Love Is Different** (1939)

arranged by Jeremy Siskind

Our love is different, dear,  
It's like a mighty symphony ...

## **Nina Simone** (1933-2003) & **Weldon**

**Jonathan Irvine, Jr.** (1943-2002)

**Revolution** (1969)

arranged by Julia Bullock

We're talkin' about a revolution,  
because we see the face of things to come ...

## **Nina Simone**

**Four Women** (1965)

arranged by Jeremy Siskind

My skin is black  
My arms are long ...

## **Billy Taylor** (1921-2010)

**I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free** (1963)

arranged by Jeremy Siskind

I wish I knew how  
It would feel to be free ...