

# WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 29 October 2023  
3.00pm

Mingjie Lei tenor  
Jan Philip Schulze piano

Long Wang

Jǐn sè (2021)

Sergey Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

In my garden at night Op. 38 No. 1 (1916)

How fair this spot Op. 21 No. 7 (1902)

A-u! Op. 38 No. 6 (1916)

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Music for a while from *Incidental music for Oedipus, King of Thebes* Z583 (1692) realised by Benjamin Britten

Turn then thine eyes from *The Fairy Queen* Z629 (1692) realised by Benjamin Britten

Not all my torments can your pity move Z400 (1693) realised by Benjamin Britten

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Ständchen Op. 106 No. 1 (c.1888)

Auf dem See Op. 106 No. 2 (1885)

Es hing der Reif Op. 106 No. 3 (1888)

Meine Lieder Op. 106 No. 4 (1888)

Ein Wanderer Op. 106 No. 5 (1885)

Kurt Weill (1900-1950)

Lottery Agent's Tango from *Der Silbersee* (1932-3)

Lonely House from *Street Scene* (1946)

Buddy on the night shift from *Propaganda Songs* (1942)



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Arriving for a song recital at Wigmore Hall, it can be tempting to see this temple to music as a rather European affair, dedicated above all to the great masters of the classical past. But look closely at Gerald Moira's cupola over the stage, and you'll see a figure that represents the 'Soul of Music', gazing rapturously at the ball of fire above. This is the 'Genius of Harmony', and its rays – like those of the sun – illuminate the whole world. Music, too, reaches across boundaries of time and space, and in this programme, we are invited to embark on a journey that takes us from the theatres of 17th-century London to contemporary Beijing, travelling via the salons of 19th-century Germany and the concert halls of early 20th-century Moscow, the bars of Weimar Berlin and even the bright lights of Broadway.

We begin in Tang-dynasty China, with a poem by Li Shangyin (c.813-858). One of his most celebrated lyrics, *Jīn Sè* has been subjected to many and varied interpretations over the centuries. It opens with an image of an 'ornate zither' (other translations refer to it as 'sad', 'beautiful' or 'inlaid'), and in the lines that follow, the poet evokes the power of music to stir nostalgic memories. That power continues to inspire composers to this day, as in the case of **Long Wang**, a young pianist and composer at the China Conservatory of Music, who set 'Jīn Sè' to music in 2021.

In the case of **Rachmaninov**, it was the Russian landscape that provoked feelings of profound longing. 'How fair this spot' takes an exquisite and intimate lyric by Glafira Galina, a little-known woman poet of the turn of the century. When Rachmaninov wrote it in 1902, he could have had little idea that he would have to flee his homeland after the October Revolution in 1917. Not long before this, he completed his *6 Poems* Op. 38, of which the opening and closing numbers are heard today. Blok's translation of an Armenian poem by Isahakyan struck him with its 'musical feeling for nature', and in Balmont's torrid 'A-ul', the poet roams the mountains, calling out in vain for his beloved. Many of Rachmaninov's songs were written for Imperial Russia's leading vocalists and featured regularly in their public recitals. Others were rather less technically demanding and were targeted instead at talented amateurs who would perform them in salons and other domestic spaces.

But songs are not just meant for concert halls and private performance – they have often been heard on the theatrical stage too, from where they have made their way into everyday life. **Purcell's** 'Music for a while' has become so famous on its own that it is easy to forget that it was written for a production of Dryden and Lee's translation of Sophocles's *Oedipus* in London in 1692. That same year, Purcell composed *The Fairy Queen*, a loose adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, from which 'Turn then

thine eyes' is taken. Purcell is often seen as a quintessentially English composer, but in 'Not all my torments can your pity move', he paid homage to the florid expressivity of the Italian Baroque. After his death, Purcell's music was forgotten for nearly two centuries. A performance of *Dido and Aeneas* by students of the Royal College of Music in 1895 – designed to mark the bicentenary of his death – was the beginning of a major revival, and later on, **Britten** would arrange many of his songs for modern performance.

**Brahms** composed his 5 Lieder Op. 106 between 1885 and 1888, and although they were published as a single group in Berlin in 1889, they were not necessarily meant to be heard together. There is little to connect the individual songs, either stylistically or thematically. Instead, they constitute an anthology of individual verses, whose particular features are set in greater relief by a principle of contrast rather than similarity. Indeed, the very word 'anthology' derives from the Greek word for 'flower' (*anthos*) – making this a musical and poetic bouquet, whose perfumes, colours and textures we are invited to savour. Moreover, Brahms fashions his musical posy not from expensive, hot-house blooms, but from more diffident domestic species that are easily overlooked. His texts are taken from 19th-century poets such as Kugler, Köstlin, Groth, and Frey, many of whom he knew personally, and whose verses were popular with ordinary middle-class readers. Yet Brahms's genius was to treat even these poems with great delicacy and infinite respect, immortalising them for future generations, and for audiences around the world.

Brahms was born in Hamburg and spent most of his life in Vienna, where he came to represent the solidity and even conservatism of the Austro-German musical tradition. The same cannot be said of **Weill**. Born into an observant Jewish family in Dessau in 1900, he later studied in Berlin under Busoni. It was in 1920s Berlin that Weill became familiar with the city's lively cabaret scene and began to consort with left-wing radicals. The 'Lottery Agent's Tango' is taken from *Der Silbersee*, a musical that opened simultaneously in Leipzig, Erfurt and Magdeburg on 18 February 1933, just three weeks after the Nazis seized power. Soon afterwards, Weill fled first to London, and then to New York, where he died in 1950. *Street Scene*, which Weill described as an 'American opera', dates from 1946, and 'Lonely House' shows just how carefully he had listened to the jazz and blues that he had encountered in Harlem. 'Buddy on the Nightshift' was composed in 1942 for a popular review that was designed to sustain the morale of America's factory workers. We have come a long way from Li Shangyin's melancholy zither.

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## Long Wang

Jīn sè (2021)

*Li Shangyin, trans. Qin Da Chuan*

锦瑟无端五十弦，一弦一柱  
思华年。

庄生晓梦迷蝴蝶，望帝春心  
托杜鹃。

沧海月明珠有泪，蓝田日暖  
玉生烟。

此情可待成追忆，只是当时  
已惘然。

## The Inlaid Harp

Why should the Zither  
have fifty strings, why?  
Each fret, each chord  
retells the years of my  
youth.

Daydreaming, Chuang  
was enthralled in  
butterflies, King Wang  
committed his love to  
the cuckoos.

Pearls in the moonlit sea  
bore tears of a maid,  
jade stones burned in  
the sun at the field blue,  
and a moment that ought  
to have lasted for ever  
has come and gone  
before I knew.

## Sergey Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

### In my garden at night Op. 38 No. 1 (1916)

*Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Blok, after Avetik Isahakian*

Nochyu v sadu u menya  
Plachet plakuchaya iva,  
I bezuteshna ona  
Ivushka, grustnaya iva.

Ranneye utro blesnyot –  
Nezhnaya devushka-zorka  
Ivushke, plachushchey  
gorko,  
Slyozy kudryami  
sotryot.

At night in my garden  
a weeping willow weeps,  
and nothing will console her,  
sad willow, sad willow tree.

With morning's first light –  
dawn, tender maiden,  
from the willow, weeping  
bitterly,  
will wipe away the tears  
with her tresses.

### How fair this spot Op. 21 No. 7 (1902)

*Galina*

Zdes khorosho...Vzglyani:  
vdali  
Ognyom gorit reka,  
Tsvetnym kovrom luga  
legli,  
Beleyut  
oblaka.

Here it's so fine...Look: in  
the distance  
the river glitters like fire,  
the meadows are a carpet  
of colour,  
there are white clouds  
overhead.

Zdes net lyudei...Zdes  
tishina...  
Zdes tolko Bog da ya.  
Tsvety, da staraya  
sosna,  
Da ty, mechta moya...

Here there are no people  
...it's so quiet...  
here are only God and I.  
And the flowers, and the  
old pine tree,  
and you, my dream...

## A-u! Op. 38 No. 6 (1916)

*Konstantin Balmont*

Tvoy nezhnny smekh  
byl skazkoyu  
izmenchivoyu,  
On zval kak v son zovyet  
svirelnyy zvon.  
I vot venkom, stikhom tebya  
uvenchivayu.  
Udydom, bezhim vdvoyom  
na gornyy sklon.

No gde zhe ty?  
Lish zvon vershin  
pozvanivayet.

Tsvetku tsvetok sred dnya  
zazhyog svechu.  
I chey-to smekh vsyo v glub  
menya zamanivayet.  
Poyu, ishchu, 'A-u! A-u!'  
krichu.

Your gentle laughter was  
a fairy tale of changing  
mood,  
calling like a flute that  
summons me to dream.  
And so with a wreath of  
verse I crown you.  
Let's go, let's run together to  
the mountainous slope.

But where are you? I only  
hear the ringing sound  
of the heights.

A flower for a flower in  
daylight lit a candle.  
And someone's laughter  
deep inside allures me.  
I sing, I search. 'A-u', 'A-u!'  
I shout.

## Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

### Music for a while from *Incidental music for Oedipus, King of Thebes* Z583 (1692)

realised by Benjamin Britten  
*John Dryden/Nathaniel Lee*

Music for a while  
Shall all your cares beguile:  
Wond'ring how your pains were eas'd,  
And disdaining to be pleas'd,  
Till Alecto free the dead  
From their eternal bands,  
Till the snakes drop from her head,  
And the whip from out her hands.  
Music for a while  
Shall all your cares beguile.

### Turn then thine eyes from *The Fairy Queen* Z629 (1692)

realised by Benjamin Britten  
*Anonymous*

Turn then thine eyes  
Upon those glories there:  
And catching flames  
Will on thy cheek appear.

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

## Not all my torments can your pity move

**Z400** (1693)

realised by Benjamin Britten

*Anonymous*

Not all my torments can your pity move,  
Your scorn increases with my love.  
Yet to the grave I will my sorrow bear;  
I love, tho' I despair.

## Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

### Ständchen Op. 106

**No. 1** (c.1888)

*Franz Kugler*

Der Mond steht über dem  
Berge,  
So recht für verliebte Leut;  
Im Garten rieselt ein  
Brunnen,  
Sonst Stille weit und  
breit.

Neben der Mauer, im  
Schatten,  
Da stehn der Studenten drei  
Mit Flöt' und Geig' und  
Zither,  
Und singen und spielen dabei.

Die Klänge schleichen der  
Schönsten  
Sacht in den Traum hinein,  
Sie schaut den blonden  
Geliebten  
Und lispelt: „Vergiss nicht  
mein.“

### Auf dem See Op. 106

**No. 2** (1885)

*Christian Reinhold*

An dies Schifflein  
schmiege,  
Holder See, dich sacht!  
Frommer Liebe Wiege,  
Nimm sie wohl in Acht!

Deine Wellen rauschen;  
Rede nicht so laut!  
Lass mich ihr nur lauschen,  
Die mir viel  
vertraut!

### Serenade

The moon shines over the  
mountain,  
just right for people in love;  
a fountain purls in the  
garden –  
otherwise silence far and  
wide.

By the wall in the  
shadows,  
three students stand  
with flute and fiddle and  
zither,  
and sing and play.

The sounds steal softly  
into the dreams  
of the loveliest of girls,  
she sees her fair-headed  
lover  
and whispers:  
'Remember me.'

### On the lake

Cling gently to this little  
boat,  
O lovely lake!  
It is a cradle of devout love,  
so watch over it well!

Your waves roar;  
do not speak so loudly!  
Let me listen only to her  
who confides so much to  
me!

Deine Wellen zittern  
Von der Sonne Glut;  
Ob sie's heimlich  
wittern,  
Wie die Liebe  
tut?

Weit und weiter immer  
Rück den Strand hinaus!  
Aus dem Himmel nimmer  
Lass uns steigen aus!

Fern von Menschenreden  
Und von Menschensinn,  
Als ein schwimmend Eden  
Trag dies Schifflein hin!

### Es hing der Reif Op. 106 No. 3 (1888)

*Klaus Groth*

Es hing der Reif im  
Lindenbaum,  
Wodurch das Licht wie Silber  
floss;  
Ich sah dein Haus, wie hell im  
Traum  
Ein blitzend Feenschloss.

Und offen stand das Fenster  
dein,  
Ich konnte dir ins Zimmer  
sehn –  
Da tratst du in den  
Sonnenschein,  
Du dunkelste der Feen!

Ich bebt, in seligem  
Genuss,  
So frühlingswarm und  
wunderbar:  
Da merkt ich gleich an  
deinem Gruss,  
Dass Frost und Winter  
war.

Your waves shimmer  
from the heat of the sun;  
could they perhaps  
secretly sense  
the effect that love can  
have?

Leave the shore  
further and further behind!  
Never let us  
leave this paradise!

Far from human speech,  
far from human thought,  
like a floating Eden,  
bear this little boat away!

### Hoarfrost hung from the linden tree

Hoarfrost hung from the  
linden tree,  
through which light  
flowed like silver;  
I saw your house, bright  
as in a dream,  
a gleaming fairy castle.

And your window was  
open wide,  
I could look into your  
room –  
you then stepped into the  
sunshine,  
you the darkest of fairies!

I trembled in blissful  
pleasure,  
filled with springtime  
warmth and wonder:  
then I saw at once from  
your greeting  
that frost had set in and  
winter.

## Meine Lieder Op. 106

### No. 4 (1888)

Adolf Frey

Wenn mein Herz beginnt zu  
klingen  
Und den Tönen löst die  
Schwingen,  
Schweben vor mir her und  
wieder  
Bleiche Wonnen,  
unvergessen  
Und die Schatten von  
Zypressen -  
Dunkel klingen meine  
Lieder!

## My songs

When my heart begins to  
sound,  
And wings of melody  
unfold,  
Pale and unforgotten  
joys  
Hover to and fro before  
me,  
And the shadows of  
cypress trees.  
Dark is the sound of my  
songs!

## Ein Wanderer Op. 106

### No. 5 (1885)

Christian Reinhold

Hier, wo sich die Strassen  
scheiden,  
Wo nun gehn die Wege  
hin?  
Meiner ist der Weg der  
Leiden,  
Dess ich immer sicher bin.

## The wanderer

Here, where the roads  
divide,  
where do the paths now  
lead?  
Mine is the path of  
suffering,  
of that I can always be sure.

Wandrer, die des Weges  
gehen,  
Fragen freundlich,  
wohinaus?  
Keiner wird mich doch  
verstehen,  
Sag' ich ihm, wo ich zu Haus.

Other wanderers who set  
out  
ask affably: which way  
now?  
Not one of them will  
understand,  
if I say where I am at home.

Reiche Erde, arme Erde,  
Hast du keinen Raum für  
mich?  
Wo ich einst begraben  
werde,  
An der Stelle lieb' ich dich.

Rich earth, poor earth,  
have you no place for  
me?  
Where I shall one day be  
buried –  
that is where I shall love you.

## Kurt Weill (1900-1950)

### Lottery Agent's Tango from *Der Silbersee*

(1932-3)

Georg Kaiser

Was zahlen sie für einen  
Rat,  
Wie man sein Geld anlegt mit  
Nutzen?

What are you paying for a  
piece of advice  
about how to invest your  
money for profit?

Hast du Geld, lass' es nicht  
bei dir im Sack.

If you have money, don't  
leave it in your sack,  
go to the people and sow  
it.

Geh' zu den Menschen und  
säe es aus.

There is a field which is  
fertilized with blood,  
something grows there,  
something comes out  
of there

Das ist ein Acker, der düngt  
sich mit Blut,

Da wächst etwas,  
da kommt etwas  
heraus.

Das produziert die Krone des  
Gewinns:

it produces the crown of  
profit:

Zins und  
Zinseszins.

interest and compound  
interest.

Zuerst kommt das  
und dann kommt nichts  
danach.

First it comes and then  
nothing comes  
afterwards.

Für dich schliesst sich des  
Lebens Bilderbuch.

Life's picture book is  
closed to you.

Du schlägst nur pünktlich  
den Kalender auf

You always punch the  
calendar punctually

Und liest Termine und du  
liest genug.

and you read the schedule  
and you read enough.

Das kalkuliert die Krone des  
Gewinns:

It calculates the crown of  
profit:

Zins und  
Zinseszins.

interest and compound  
interest.

Trägst du ein Herz von  
Fleisch, erhärte es zu Stein

If you carry a heart of flesh,  
harden it to stone,

Und wund're dich nicht,  
wenn es nicht gleich  
gelingt.

and don't wonder when  
it's not equally  
successful.

Sei einmal hart vor einer  
grosser Not,

Be at once tough, before  
great poverty,

Bald siehst du zu, wenn wer  
ins Wasser springt.

soon you shall watch he who  
jumps into the water;

Das garantiert die Krone des  
Gewinns:

it guarantees the crown  
of profit:

Zins und  
Zinseszins.

interest and compound  
interest.

Bau' einen Turm von Quadern um dich, Du hörst nicht, wie sie draussen kläglich schrein. Sei blind - sei taub, erlass keine Schuld, Du büsst ja Geld und Geldes Nutzen ein. Verleugne nie die Krone des Gewinns: Zins und Zinseszins.	Build a tower of stone blocks around yourself, you don't belong as they are shrieking pitifully outside. Be blind, be deaf, remit no guilt, you forfeit both money and profit money. Never deny the crown of profit: interest and compound interest.
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Darum lerne, wie man's macht, Dass einem Zinseszins und Zinsesfreude lacht.	Learn about how one does it, how one laughs about compound interest and the joy of compound interest.
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Sie sind jetzt ein reicher Mensch...	You are now a rich man...
Sie haben viel Geld auf Ihrem Konto...	You have lots of money in your account...
Sie sind ein Millionär...	You are a millionaire...
Dann können Sie machen, was Sie wollen...	Now you can do what you want...

## Lonely House from *Street Scene* (1946)

*Langston Hughes*

At night when everything is quiet  
This old house seems to breathe a sigh ...

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## Buddy on the night shift from *Propaganda Songs* (1942)

*Oscar Hammerstein*

Hello there, buddy on the nightshift.  
I hope you slept all day ...

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