WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 2 October 2022 3.00pm

Winter Journey

Kieran Carrel tenor Jonathan Ware piano

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)	From <i>Winterreise</i> D911 (1827) Gute Nacht • Die Wetterfahne • Gefrorne Tränen • Erstarrung • Der Lindenbaum • Wasserflut • Auf dem Flusse • Rückblick • Irrlicht • Rast • Frühlingstraum • Einsamkeit
Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)	Winter Words Op. 52 (1953) At day-close in November • Midnight on the Great Western • Wagtail and baby • The little old table • The Choirmaster's Burial • Proud songsters • At the railway station, Upway • Before life and after

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It is no surprise that Schubert's Winterreise and Britten's Winter Words are often paired in concert. The Schubert-loving Britten surely wouldn't have used 'winter' in the title of a vocal work had he not anticipated listeners' minds wandering to, and drawing connections with, Schubert's monumental cycle. Alongside his composing schedule, Britten was an active and influential song pianist: he performed with many great singers of the 20th Century, but most regularly alongside his partner, the towering tenor Peter Pears. Their insightful Schubert interpretations remain important landmarks in the history of Schubert performance and reception. In touching video footage from 1968, Pears and Britten run through and discuss several songs from *Winterreise*; at one point, Pears remarks that 'it's really a cycle of an old man, an experienced man'. For this reason, the couple had not performed Winterreise publicly until 1961, when Pears was in his 50s. But the well-worn copies of the score held in their joint Library are symbols of the longstanding presence of this 'extraordinarily Romantic' music within the context of their private domestic music making, likely throughout their long relationship.

However weighty and worldly-wise its themes, *Winterreise* itself was the product of two young minds. The poet Wilhelm Müller died suddenly in 1827 at 32; **Schubert** set the poems to music that same year, and died in 1828 at 31. The composer was almost certainly aware that suffering lay ahead of him – he had contracted syphilis some years earlier – and his late works are often interpreted as standing in the shadow of death. We know deliberately little about the protagonist of *Winterreise*, but a reference in one song to his 'black hair' suggests that he, too, journeys towards premature death.

When we think of *Winterreise* today, we generally expect to hear 24 songs. A performance of the first 12 alone gives both a snapshot into the early chronology of the eventual longer work, and also a chance to appreciate a group of songs that were initially considered a complete cycle. In late 1826 or early 1827, Schubert encountered a set of poems in the periodical Urania, titled Wanderlieder von Wilhelm Müller. Die *Winterreise. In 12 Liedern*. He promptly set them to music and invited his friends to hear the songs in March 1827, but failed to show up to this informal première: it is possible that he had, by then, encountered the additional Müller poems and realised his work was not yet done. Some changes were subsequently made to the first set, including the transposition of the twelfth, 'Einsamkeit', out of D minor - which had provided cyclical unity with the key of the opening 'Gute Nacht'. Joseph von Spaun recalled that when Schubert eventually played the whole cycle to his friends, they were baffled by its sheer gloominess.

Wanderlieder is an appropriate term for the set of 12 – they sit firmly within the Romantic tradition of the soul-searching, nature-filled journey. We witness the protagonist reflecting upon his romantic rejection, reacting to landmarks and details of the world around

him and feeling the sharp effects of the weather and his waning energy. There's no shortage of Schubertian fingerprints, including sleight-of-hand motivic and harmonic transformations within and between songs that alter emotional states in an instant. While 'Einsamkeit' ends the 12 appropriately by reinforcing the bleak loneliness of the continuing journey, we do not quite experience the full psychological breakdown of the protagonist that comes towards the end of the cycle. One effect of ending *Winterreise* at its midpoint is that emotional space is opened up for other musical and poetic visions – and *Winter Words* is an ideal companion piece.

In 1953, when **Britten** composed *Winter Words* for Pears, the couple lived in Crag House on the Aldeburgh seafront. Thomas Hardy knew Aldeburgh Beach well from various sojourns, but while so much of Britten's inspiration came from his native coastal Suffolk, it was the rural West and South of England that permeated Hardy's literary imagination. Perhaps surprisingly, given several shared interests between poet and composer, *Winter Words* was Britten's only sustained engagement with Hardy.

These really are, to borrow Pears's words again, the poems of 'an old man, an experienced man'. Britten selected the eight poems from a collected edition, so each has a different provenance, but the title was adopted from that of Hardy's last volume, which was published posthumously following his death in 1928, at 87. No overarching narrative is imposed by Britten, but the poems are bound loosely by themes of innocence and experience, and of reminiscence both bitter and sweet. Hardy's detailed observations of everyday scenes, from which universal messages can be drawn, give rise to songs akin to miniature operas.

The songs are replete with vivid touches that bring the scenes to life: the piano is responsible for the creaking wood in 'The little old table', the chirruping and fluttering of the young birds, and the virtuosic flourishes and double-stops of the boy with the violin. The convincing train-whistle triads and jolting rhythmic thrust of 'Midnight on the Great Western' remind us that the trains Hardy (and Britten) knew offered greater sonic spectacle than anything pulling out of Paddington today. The piano momentum here calls to mind Schubert's similarly evocative conjuring of coaches and boats in various songs; we may wonder how, if he had lived longer, the railway might have entered into Schubert's musical imagination.

The emotional heart of the cycle is 'The Choirmaster's Burial': the soaring, angelic melismas, the lyrical piano transformation of the hymn-tune mentioned in the poem, and the concise narrative bracketing of the tale are all paradigmatic of Britten's powerful musical storytelling. The philosophical closing song, with its beseeching final question, gives rise to further vocal intensity characteristic of Britten's writing for Pears's voice.

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Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

From Winterreise D911 (1827) Wilhelm Müller

Gute Nacht

Fremd bin ich eingezogen, Fremd zieh' ich wieder aus. Der Mai war mir gewogen Mit manchem Blumenstrauss. Das Mädchen sprach von Liebe, Die Mutter gar von Eh' – Nun ist die Welt so trübe, Der Weg gehüllt in Schnee.

Ich kann zu meiner Reisen Nicht wählen mit der Zeit: Muss selbst den Weg mir weisen In dieser Dunkelheit. Es zieht ein Mondenschatten Als mein Gefährte mit, Und auf den weissen Matten Such' ich des Wildes Tritt.

Was soll ich länger weilen Dass man mich trieb' hinaus? Lass irre Hunde heulen Vor ihres Herren Haus! Die Liebe liebt das Wandern, – Gott hat sie so gemacht – Von einem zu dem andern – Fein Liebchen, gute Nacht!

Will dich im Traum nicht stören,
Wär' schad' um deine Ruh',
Sollst meinen Tritt nicht hören –
Sacht, sacht die Türe zu!
Schreib' im Vorübergehen
An's Tor dir gute Nacht,
Damit du mögest sehen,
An dich hab' ich gedacht.

Good night

A stranger I came, a stranger I depart. The month of May favoured me with many bouquets of flowers. The girl spoke of love, her mother of marriage even – and now the world's so bleak, the road concealed in snow.

I cannot choose the time for my journey: I must find my own way in this darkness. A shadow in the moonlight keeps me company, and on the white meadows I see the tracks of deer.

Why should I wait any longer for them to drive me out? Let stray dogs howl before their master's house! Love loves to wander – God has made it so – from one to another – my sweetest love, good night!

l'll not disturb your dreams, a shame to spoil your rest! You shall not hear my footsteps – as I softly close the door! l'll write 'good night' on your gate, as I pass, so that you may see l've thought of you.

Die Wetterfahne

Der Wind spielt mit der Wetterfahne Auf meines schönen Liebchens Haus. Da dacht' ich schon in meinem Wahne, Sie pfiff' den armen Flüchtling aus.

Er hätt' es eher bemerken sollen, Des Hauses aufgestecktes Schild, So hätt' er nimmer suchen wollen Im Haus ein treues Frauenbild.

Der Wind spielt drinnen mit den Herzen, Wie auf dem Dach, nur nicht so laut. Was fragen sie nach meinen Schmerzen? Ihr Kind ist eine reiche Braut.

Gefrorne Tränen

Gefrorne Tropfen fallen Von meinen Wangen ab: Ob es mir denn entgangen, Dass ich geweinet hab'?

Ei Tränen, meine Tränen, Und seid ihr gar so lau, Dass ihr erstarrt zu Eise, Wie kühler Morgentau?

Und dringt doch aus der Quelle Der Brust so glühend heiss, Als wolltet ihr zerschmelzen Des ganzen Winters Eis.

The weather-vane

The wind plays with the weather-vane on my beloved's house. In my folly I thought it mocked the wretched fugitive.

He should have noticed it sooner, this sign fixed on the house, he'd never then have thought to find a faithful woman there.

hearts inside, though less loudly than on the roof. What is my torment to them? Their child's a rich bride.

Frozen tears

Frozen drops fall from my cheeks: did I, then, not notice I've been weeping?

Ah tears, my tears, are you so tepid that you turn to ice like cool morning dew?

And yet you spring from my heart with such fierce heat, as if you would melt all the winter's ice.

Erstarrung

Ich such' im Schnee vergebens Nach ihrer Tritte Spur, Wo sie an meinem Arme Durchstrich die grüne Flur.

Ich will den Boden küssen, Durchdringen Eis und Schnee Mit meinen heissen Tränen, Bis ich die Erde seh'.

Wo find' ich eine Blüte, Wo find' ich grünes Gras? Die Blumen sind erstorben, Der Rasen sieht so blass.

Soll denn kein Angedenken Ich nehmen mit von hier? Wenn meine Schmerzen schweigen, Wer sagt mir dann von ihr?

Mein Herz ist wie erstorben, Kalt starrt ihr Bild darin: Schmilzt je das Herz mir wieder, Fliesst auch ihr Bild dahin.

Der Lindenbaum

Am Brunnen vor dem Tore Da steht ein Lindenbaum: Ich träumt' in seinem Schatten So manchen süssen Traum.

Ich schnitt in seine Rinde So manches liebe Wort; Es zog in Freud' und Leide Zu ihm mich immer fort.

lch mussť auch heute wandern Vorbei in tiefer Nacht, Da hab' ich noch im Dunkel Die Augen zugemacht.

Und seine Zweige rauschten, Als riefen sie mir zu: Komm her zu mir, Geselle, Hier findst du deine Ruh'!

Die kalten Winde bliesen Mir grad' in's Angesicht, Der Hut flog mir vom Kopfe, Ich wendete mich nicht.

Numbness

In vain I seek her steps in the snow, where we walked arm in arm through the green field.

I shall kiss the ground, pierce ice and snow with my hot tears, till I see the earth.

Where shall I find a flower where shall I find green grass? The flowers have withered, the grass looks so pale.

Is there no keepsake, then, for me to take from here? Who, when my grief is silent, will speak to me of her?

My heart seems dead, her cold image numb within: should my heart ever thaw, her image too will melt.

The linden tree

By the well, before the gate, stands a linden tree: I used to dream in its shade so many a sweet dream.

I used to carve in its bark so many a word of love; in joy and in sorrow I felt ever drawn to it.

I had to pass it again today at dead of night, and even in the dark, I closed my eyes.

And its branches rustled, as though calling me: come to me, my friend, here you shall find rest!

The cold winds blew full into my face, my hat flew from my head, I did not turn back. Nun bin ich manche Stunde Entfernt von jenem Ort, Und immer hör' ich's rauschen: Du fändest Ruhe dort!

Wasserflut

Manche Trän' aus meinen Augen Ist gefallen in den Schnee; Seine kalten Flocken saugen Durstig ein das heisse Weh.

Wenn die Gräser sprossen wollen, Weht daher ein lauer Wind, Und das Eis zerspringt in Schollen, Und der weiche Schnee zerrinnt.

Schnee, du weisst von meinem Sehnen: Sag', wohin doch geht dein Lauf? Folge nach nur meinen Tränen, Nimmt dich bald das Bächlein auf.

Wirst mit ihm die Stadt durchziehen, Muntre Strassen ein und aus: Fühlst du meine Tränen glühen, Da ist meiner Liebsten Haus.

Auf dem Flusse

Der du so lustig rauschtest, Du heller, wilder Fluss, Wie still bist du geworden, Gibst keinen Scheidegruss.

Mit harter, starrer Rinde Hast du dich überdeckt, Liegst kalt und unbeweglich Im Sande ausgestreckt.

In deine Decke grab' ich Mit einem spitzen Stein Den Namen meiner Liebsten Und Stund' und Tag hinein:

Den Tag des ersten Grusses, Den Tag, an dem ich ging, Many hours have passed since I left that place, yet still I hear the rustling: there shall you find rest!

Flood

Many a tear from my eyes

has fallen into the snow; the cold flakes thirstily drink my burning anguish.

When grass is ready to grow, a warm wind blows, and the ice breaks into fragments, and the soft snow melts.

Snow, you know of my longing: tell me where your path leads? You've only to follow my tears and the stream will bear you away.

It will carry you through the town, in and out of busy streets: when you feel my tears burning, that will be my lovedone's house.

On the river

You who murmured so merrily, you clear, raging stream, how silent you've become, you bid me no farewell.

You've covered yourself with a hard stiff crust, you lie cold and motionless, stretched out in the sand.

With a sharp stone I carve on your surface the name of my beloved, and the hour and the day:

The day of our first greeting, the day I went away, Um Nam' und Zahlen windet Sich ein zerbrochner Ring.

Mein Herz, in diesem Bache Erkennst du nun dein Bild? Ob's unter seiner Rinde Wohl auch so reissend schwillt?

Rückblick

- Es brennt mir unter beiden Sohlen, Tret' ich auch schon auf Eis und Schnee. Ich möcht' nicht wieder Atem holen, Bis ich nicht mehr die Türme seh'.
- Hab' mich an jeden Stein gestossen, So eilt' ich zu der Stadt hinaus:
- Die Krähen warfen Bäll' und Schlossen Auf meinen Hut von jedem Haus.
- Wie anders hast du mich empfangen, Du Stadt der Unbeständigkeit!
- An deinen blanken Fenstern sangen
- Die Lerch' und Nachtigall im Streit.
- Die runden Lindenbäume blühten, Die klaren Rinnen rauschten hell, Und ach, zwei Mädchenaugen glühten! -Da war's geschehn um dich,

Kömmt mir der Tag in die Gedanken, Möcht' ich noch einmal rückwärts sehn, Möcht' ich zurücke wieder wanken, Vor ihrem Hause stille stehn.

Gesell!

around the name and figure is wound a broken ring.

My heart, do you now see your own likeness in this stream? Is there such a raging torrent beneath its surface too?

A backward glance

- The ground blazes beneath my feet, though I walk on ice and snow. I shall not pause for breath again, till the towers are out of sight.
- l've stumbled over every stone in my haste to leave the town;
- the crows shied snow and hailstones onto my hat from every roof.
- How differently you welcomed me, city of inconstancy! Lark and nightingale vied in song at your gleaming windows.
- The rounded linden trees blossomed, the clear fountains murmured brightly, and ah! the girl's eyes flashed fire! and your fate, my friend, was sealed!
- When I think of that day, I long to look back once more, long to stumble back again, stand silently before her house.

Irrlicht

In die tiefsten Felsengründe Lockte mich ein Irrlicht hin: Wie ich einen Ausgang finde, Liegt nicht schwer mir in dem Sinn.

Bin gewohnt das Irregehen, 'S führt ja jeder Weg zum Ziel: Unsre Freuden, unsre Leiden, Alles eines Irrlichts Spiel!

Durch des Bergstroms trockne Rinnen Wind' ich ruhig mich hinab – Jeder Strom wird's Meer gewinnen, Jedes Leiden auch sein Grab.

Rast

Nun merk' ich erst, wie müd' ich bin, Da ich zur Ruh' mich lege; Das Wandern hielt mich munter hin Auf unwirtbarem Wege.

Die Füsse frugen nicht nach Rast, Es war zu kalt zum Stehen, Der Rücken fühlte keine Last, Der Sturm half fort mich wehen.

In eines Köhlers engem Haus Hab' Obdach ich gefunden; Doch meine Glieder ruhn nicht aus: So brennen ihre Wunden.

Auch du, mein Herz, in Kampf und Sturm So wild und so verwegen, Fühlst in der Still' erst deinen Wurm Mit heissem Stich sich regen!

Will-o'-the-wisp

A will-o'-the-wisp lured me into the deepest rocky chasm: how to find a way out does not greatly concern me.

l'm used to going astray, every path leads to one goal: our joys, our sorrows are all a will-o'-the-wisp's game!

Through the dry bed of a mountain stream I calmly make my way down – every river will reach the sea, every sorrow find its grave.

Rest

Only now as I lie down to rest, do I notice how tired I am; walking had kept me cheerful on the desolate road.

My feet demanded no rest, it was too cold for standing still, my back felt no burden, the storm helped to drive me on.

I have found shelter in a charcoal-burner's cramped hut; but my sores hurt so much that my limbs cannot rest.

You too, my heart, in storm and strife so audacious and so wild, you feel stirring in this stillness the fierce pangs of anguish!

Frühlingstraum

Ich traümte von bunten Blumen, So wie sie wohl blühen im Mai, Ich träumte von grünen Wiesen, Von lustigem Vogelgeschrei.

Und als die Hähne krähten, Da ward mein Auge wach; Da war es kalt und finster, Es schrieen die Raben vom Dach.

Doch an den Fensterscheiben Wer malte die Blätter da? Ihr lacht wohl über den Träumer, Der Blumen im Winter sah?

Ich träumte von Lieb' um Liebe, Von einer schönen Maid, Von Herzen und von Küssen, Von Wonne und Seligkeit.

Und als die Hähne krähten, Da ward mein Herze wach; Nun sitz' ich hier alleine Und denke dem Traume nach.

Die Augen schliess' ich wieder, Noch schlägt das Herz so warm. Wann grünt ihr Blätter am Fenster? Wann halt' ich mein Liebchen im Arm?

Einsamkeit

Wie eine trübe Wolke Durch heitre Lüfte geht, Wenn in der Tanne Wipfel Ein mattes Lüftchen weht:

So zieh' ich meine Strasse Dahin mit trägem Fuss, Durch helles, frohes Leben, Einsam und ohne Gruss.

Dream of Spring

I dreamt of colourful flowers, such as might bloom in May, I dreamt of green meadows and happy singing of birds.

And when the cocks crowed, my eyes awoke; it was dark and cold, the ravens screamed from the roof.

But who painted those leaves on the window-panes? Are you mocking the dreamer who saw flowers in winter?

I dreamt of loverequited, dreamt of a beautiful girl, of caressing and of kissing, of rapture and of joy.

And when the cocks crowed, my heart awoke; now I sit here alone, and think about the dream.

I close my eyes again, my heart still beats so warm. Leaves on my window, when will you turn green? When shall I hold my love in my arms?

Loneliness

Like a dark cloud drifting across clear skies, when a faint breeze blows through the fir-tops:

l go on my way with dragging steps, through life's bright joys, lonely and ignored. Ach, dass die Luft so ruhig! Ach, dass die Welt so licht! Als noch die Stürme tobten, War ich so elend nicht. Alas, why is the air so calm! Alas, why is the world so bright! While storms were still raging, I was not so wretched.

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Winter Words Op. 52 (1953) Thomas Hardy

At day-close in November

The ten hours' light is abating, And a late bird wings across, Where the pines, like waltzers waiting, Give their black heads a toss.

Beech leaves, that yellow the noontime, Float past like specks in the eye; I set every tree in my June time, And now they obscure the sky.

And the children who ramble through here Conceive that there never has been A time when no tall trees grew here, That none will in time be seen.

Midnight on the Great Western

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?

Wagtail and baby

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.

The little old table

Creak, little wood thing, creak, When I touch you with elbow or knee; That is the way you speak Of one who gave you to me!

You, little table, she brought – Brought me with her own hand, As she looked at me with a thought That I did not understand.

Whoever owns it anon, And hears it, will never know What a history hangs upon This creak from long ago.

The Choirmaster's Burial

He often would ask us That, when he died, After playing so many To their last rest, If out of us any Should here abide, And it would not task us, We would with our lutes Play over him By his grave brim The psalm he liked best -The one whose sense suits -'Mount Ephraim' -And perhaps we should seem To him, in Death's dream, Like the seraphim.

As soon as I knew That his spirit was gone I thought this his due, And spoke thereupon. 'I think', said the vicar, 'A read service quicker Than viols out of doors In these frosts and hoars. That old fashioned way Requires a fine day, And it seems to me It had better not be.'

Hence, that afternoon, Though never knew he That his wish could not be, To get through it faster They buried the master Without any tune.

But 'twas said that, when At the dead of next night The vicar looked out, There struck on his ken Thronged roundabout, Where the frost was graying The headstoned grass, A band all in white Like saints in church glass, Singing and playing The ancient stave By the choirmaster's grave.

Such the tenor man told When he had grown old.

Proud songsters

The thrushes sing as the sun is going, And the finches whistle in ones and pairs, And as it gets dark loud nightingales in bushes Pipe, as they can when April wears, As if all Time were theirs.

These are brand new birds of twelve months' growing, Which a year ago, or less than twain, No finches were, nor nightingales, nor thrushes, But only particles of grain, And earth, and air, and rain.

At the railway station, Upway

'There is not much that I can do, For I've no money that's quite my own!' Spoke up the pitying child – A little boy with a violin At the station before the train came in. 'But I can play my fiddle to you, And a nice one 'tis, and good in tone!'

The man in the handcuffs smiled; The constable looked, and he smiled, too, As the fiddle began to twang; And the man in the handcuffs suddenly sang With grimful glee: 'This life so free Is the thing for me!'

And the constable smiled, and said no word, As if unconscious of what he heard; And so they went on till the train came in – The convict, and boy with the violin.

Before life and after

A time there was – as one may guess And as, indeed, earth's testimonies tell – Before the birth of consciousness, When all went well.

None suffered sickness, love, or loss, None knew regret, starved hope, or heart-burnings; None cared whatever crash or cross Brought wrack to things.

If something ceased, no tongue bewailed, If something winced and waned, no heart was wrung; If brightness dimmed, and dark prevailed, No sense was stung.

But the disease of feeling germed, And primal rightness took the tinct of wrong; Ere nescience shall be reaffirmed How long, how long?

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