

WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 30 April 2023
7.30pm

Supported by the Rick Mather David Scrase Foundation

Sally Matthews soprano
Simon Lepper piano

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Wir wandelten Op. 96 No. 2 (1884)

Das Mädchen spricht Op. 107 No. 3 (1886)

Feldeinsamkeit Op. 86 No. 2 (c.1879)

Therese Op. 86 No. 1 (1878)

Es träumte mir, ich sei dir teuer Op. 57 No. 3 (c.1871)

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

Rückert Lieder (1901-2)

Ich atmet' einen linden Duft

Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder

Liebst du um Schönheit

Um Mitternacht

Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen

Interval

Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)

From *Mörrike Lieder* (1888)

Auf ein altes Bild • Das verlassene Mägdlein •

Im Frühling • Verborgenheit

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

4 Last Songs (1948)

Frühling • September •

Beim Schlafengehen • Im Abendrot

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Towards the end of 19th Century, Brahms was a venerated elder statesman of German music. Mahler, Wolf and Strauss were of the younger generation, all born in the 1860s, and found their distinctive compositional voices amidst the highly-charged musical and political atmosphere of the *fin-de-siècle*.

Tonight's **Brahms** selection dates from the 1870s and 1880s, and is bookended by two settings of Georg Friedrich Daumer, the poet to whom he turned most often. The composer's friend Elisabeth von Herzogenberg praised 'Wir wandelten' for its deeply-felt sentiment and perfect blend of words and music. Next comes the quick and quirky 'Das Mädchen spricht' – Otto Gruppe's strophic text uses an unusual poetic metre that must have appealed to Brahms's penchant for metrical play. The Hermann Allmers setting 'Feldeinsamkeit' was published as part of Op. 86 by Simrock, who recognised the song's immediate popularity by printing it again as a standalone edition. It's a wonderfully open setting that captures the poem's stillness and sense of awe, but not all appreciated the song: Allmers found the music to be too cultivated for the simplicity of his words, and it was a victim of the ill-tempered Wolf's ongoing vendetta against Brahms as music critic of the *Wiener Salonblatt*. We then hear flirtatious changes of pace and harmony in the suggestive 'Therese', and the set ends with a dream-song, 'Es träumte mir, ich sei dir teuer', which is slow and radiant with mirage-like harmonic motion.

Brahms died in Vienna in 1897, which was the year **Mahler** returned to the city after building his conducting career around Europe. While Brahms (and Strauss) commonly pulled together sets of songs from disparate poetic sources, the literary bases of Mahler's (and Wolf's) song collections are rather more singular. The *Rückert Lieder* are known in two versions: their dual status within the voice-piano *Lied* tradition and the burgeoning genre of orchestral song is fitting for a set that includes some of Mahler's most delicate, intimate, ambitious and 'symphonic' songs. Mahler himself performed the songs at the piano and conducted orchestral renditions, but never chose to orchestrate 'Liebst du um Schönheit' himself (it was later done by Max Puttmann for the publishers CF Kahnt).

Four of the songs were written in the summer months of 1901, while 'Liebst du um Schönheit' came in 1902. Unlike Mahler's other five settings of Friedrich Rückert's poems, which form the *Kindertotenlieder*, these ones do not constitute a fixed 'cycle', and their performance order is flexible. The opening flourish of 'Ich atmet' einen linden Duft' paves the way for a spine-tingling evocation of the scent of a lime tree. 'Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder' is a self-conscious song-about-song with a buzzing piano motion depicting the composer's busy thoughts. In 'Liebst du um Schönheit', an increasingly expressive melodic contour tracks a beseeching message about love. The remaining two – 'Um Mitternacht' and 'Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen' – are amongst Mahler's most profound and powerful songs, both at times expansive and sparse, despairing and transcendent.

Mahler and **Wolf** were exact contemporaries: born in provincial central European towns in 1860, in Vienna they became Conservatory classmates, friends, even briefly housemates, while developing in quite different musical directions. Both were also short-lived: Wolf died in 1903 at 42, following a long syphilitic decline, and Mahler died in 1911 at 50. While Mahler had symphonic and conducting successes, Wolf's reputation gained momentum based solely on his songs – he was self-conscious about being perceived only as a 'master of a small genre', and continued to strive towards his Wagnerian ideal of opera composition. But his handling of these small forms was revolutionary, not least through his bold, post-Wagnerian harmonic and tonal workings, and his astute distilling of poetic and musical visions into songs that are weighty and expansive while formally restrained.

Wolf's 53 *Mörrike Lieder* – on lyrics by his favourite poet, the conflicted priest Eduard Mörike – were written rapidly in Spring 1888, in a burst of creative activity following a cyclical depression. In the ekphrastic 'Auf ein altes Bild', musical antiquity is conjured – with a *fin-de-siècle* filter – by extensive contrary motion in the piano lines. The inscrutable, desolate piano figuration that opens 'Das verlassene Mägdlein' recurs as the song's unhappy tale unfolds, while complex chromaticism underpins 'Im Frühling', the cloud-watching protagonist of which faces rather more existential angst than that of Brahms's 'Feldeinsamkeit'. After this, 'Verborgenheit' turns hefty themes inwards, its call for seclusion from the world beginning and ending in a place of harmonic and textural stability.

Unlike Mahler and Wolf, **Strauss** lived to see the modernist musical advances of the first half of the 20th Century, not to mention the descent of Europe into two world wars. The *4 Last Songs* were written between May and September 1948, when Strauss was 84 and living in Switzerland with his wife, the soprano Pauline de Ahna. He died in 1949, before the première or publication of his final set of songs. The four poems – three by Hermann Hesse and one by Joseph, Freiherr von Eichendorff – share nostalgic, autumnal themes, and the music is resolutely late-Romantic. The first-composed but typically last-performed song, 'Im Abendrot', tells of two lovers contemplating the beauty of the world around them as they approach death together. The songs are familiar, but the performance version – a transcription using piano in place of a large orchestra – requires a much greater degree of reorientation on the part of the listener than does Mahler's *Rückert Lieder*, the chamber-like conception of which is inherent to both versions. The transcription of Strauss's songs distils orchestral splendour in unexpected ways, resulting in everything from virtuosic displays to achingly sparse lines, and it is always illuminating to hear duos navigate the transformation of the songs into something chamber-like and intimate.

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Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Wir wandelten Op. 96 No. 2 (1884) **We were walking**

*Georg Friedrich Daumer,
after Sándor Petőfi*

Wir wandelten, wir zwei
zusammen,
Ich war so still und du so
stille;
Ich gäbe viel, um zu erfahren,
Was du gedacht in jenem
Fall.

We were walking, we two
together;
I so silent and you so
silent;
I would give much to know
what you were thinking
then.

Was ich gedacht –
unausgesprochen
Verbleibe das! Nur Eines sag'
ich:
So schön war Alles, was ich
dachte,
So himmlisch heiter war es all!

What I was thinking – let
it remain
unsspoken! One thing only
I shall say:
all my thoughts were so
beautiful,
so heavenly and serene!

In meinem Haupte die
Gedanken
Sie läuteten, wie goldne
Glöckchen;
So wunderschüss, so
wunderlieblich
Ist in der Welt kein anderer
Hall.

The thoughts in my
mind
chimed like golden
bells:
so wondrously sweet and
lovely
is no other sound on
earth.

Das Mädchen spricht Op. 107 No. 3 (1886) **The maiden speaks**

Otto Friedrich Gruppe

Schwalbe, sag mir an,
Ist's dein alter Mann,
Mit dem du's Nest gebaut
Oder hast du jüngst erst
Dich ihm vertraut?

Tell me, swallow,
is it last year's mate
you've built your nest with,
or are you
but recently betrothed?

Sag, was zwitschert ihr,
Sag, was flüstert
ihr
Des Morgens so
vertraut?
Gelt, du bist wohl auch
Noch nicht lange Braut?

Say, what are you twittering,
say, what are you
whispering
so intimately in the
morning?
Am I right, you haven't long
been married either?

Feldeinsamkeit Op. 86 No. 2 (c.1879) **Alone in fields**

Hermann Allmers

Ich ruhe still im hohen
grünen Gras
Und sende lange meinen
Blick nach oben,
Von Grillen rings umschwirrt
ohn' Unterlass,
Von Himmelsbläue
wundersam umwoben.

I rest at peace in tall
green grass
and gaze steadily
aloft,
surrounded by unceasing
crickets,
wondrously interwoven
with blue sky.

Die schönen weissen Wolken
ziehn dahin
Durchs tiefe Blau, wie schöne
stille Träume; –
Mir ist, als ob ich längst
gestorben bin,
Und ziehe selig mit durch
ew'ge Räume.

The lovely white clouds
go drifting by
through the deep blue, like
lovely silent dreams;
I feel as if I have long
been dead,
drifting happily with them
through eternal space.

Therese Op. 86 No. 1 (1878) **Therese**

Gottfried Keller

Du milchjunger Knabe,
Was schaust du mich an?
Was haben deine Augen
Für eine Frage getan!

You beardless boy,
why do you look at me so?
What kind of question
have your eyes been asking!

Alle Ratsherrn in der Stadt
Und alle Weisen der
Welt
Bleiben stumm auf die
Frage,
Die deine Augen gestellt!

All the councillors in the city
and all the wise men in
the world
are dumbfounded by the
question
your eyes have put!

Ein Meermuschel liegt
Auf dem Schrank meiner Bas';
Da halte dein Ohr d'ran,
Dann hörst du etwas!

There's a sea-shell lying,
on my cousin's cabinet;
just put your ear to it,
and you'll hear something!

Es träumte mir, ich sei dir teuer Op. 57 No. 3 (c.1871) **I dreamed I was dear to you**

Georg Friedrich Daumer

Es träumte mir,
Ich sei dir teuer;
Doch zu erwachen
Bedurft ich kaum.
Denn schon im Traume
Bereits empfand ich,
Es sei ein Traum.

I dreamed
I was dear to you;
but I scarcely needed
to awaken.
For even in my dreams
I felt
it was a dream.

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

Rückert Lieder (1901-2)

Friedrich Rückert

Ich atmet' einen linden Duft I breathed a gentle fragrance

Ich atmet' einen linden
Duft.

Im Zimmer stand
Ein Zweig der Linde,
Ein Angebinde
Von lieber Hand;
Wie lieblich war der
Lindenduft!

I breathed a gentle
fragrance.

In the room stood
a spray of lime,
a gift
from a dear hand;
how lovely the fragrance
of lime was!

Wie lieblich ist der
Lindenduft!

Das Lindenreis
Brachst du gelinde;
Ich atme leis
Im Duft der Linde
Der Liebe linden Duft.

How lovely the fragrance
of lime is!

The spray of lime
was gently plucked by you;
softly I breathe
in the fragrance of lime
the gentle fragrance of love.

Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder Do not look into my songs!

Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder!
Meine Augen schlag' ich nieder,
Wie ertappt auf böser Tat;
Selber darf ich nicht getrauen,
Ihrem Wachsen zuzuschauen:
Deine Neugier ist Verrat!

Do not look into my songs!
I lower my gaze,
as if caught in the act;
I cannot even dare
to watch them growing:
your curiosity is treason!

Bienen, wenn sie Zellen
bauen,
Lassen auch nicht zu sich
schauen,

Schauen selbst auch nicht
zu.

Wenn die reichen
Honigwaben

Sie zu Tag befördert
haben,

Dann vor allen nasche du!

Bees, when they build
cells,
let no one watch
either,

and do not even watch
themselves.

When the rich
honeycombs

have been brought to
daylight,

you shall be the first to taste!

Liebst du um Schönheit If you love for beauty

Liebst du um Schönheit,
O nicht mich liebe!
Liebe die Sonne,
Sie trägt ein goldnes Haar.

If you love for beauty,
O love not me!
Love the sun,
she has golden hair.

Liebst du um Jugend,
O nicht mich liebe!
Liebe den Frühling,
Der jung ist jedes Jahr.

If you love for youth,
O love not me!
Love the spring
which is young each year.

Liebst du um Schätze,
O nicht mich liebe!
Liebe die Meerfrau,
Sie hat viel Perlen
klar.

If you love for riches,
O love not me!
Love the mermaid
who has many shining
pearls.

Liebst du um Liebe,
O ja mich liebe!
Liebe mich immer,
Dich lieb' ich immerdar.

If you love for love,
ah yes, love me!
Love me always,
I shall love you ever more.

Um Mitternacht

Um Mitternacht hab' ich
gewacht
Und aufgeblickt zum Himmel;
Kein Stern vom Sterngewimmel
Hat mir gelacht um Mitternacht.

At midnight

At midnight I kept
watch
and looked up to heaven;
not a star in the galaxy
smiled on me at midnight.

Um Mitternacht hab' ich
gedacht
Hinaus in dunkle
Schranken
Es hat kein Lichtgedanken
Mir Trost gebracht um
Mitternacht.

At midnight my thoughts
went out
to the dark reaches of
space;
no shining thought
brought me comfort at
midnight.

Um Mitternacht nahm ich in
acht
Die Schläge meines Herzens
Ein einz'ger Puls des
Schmerzens
War angefacht um
Mitternacht.

At midnight I paid
heed
to the beating of my heart;
a single pulse of
pain
was set alight at
midnight.

Um Mitternacht kämpft' ich
die Schlacht,
O Menschheit, deiner
Leiden;
Nicht konnt' ich sieentscheiden
Mit meiner Macht um
Mitternacht.

At midnight I fought the
fight,
O Mankind, of your
afflictions;
I could not gain victory
by my own strength at
midnight.

Um Mitternacht hab' ich die
Macht
In deine Hand gegeben:
Herr über Tod und Leben,
Du hältst die Wacht um
Mitternacht.

At midnight I gave my
strength
into Thy hands:
Lord over life and death,
thou keepest watch at
midnight.

Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen

Ich bin der Welt abhanden
gekommen,
Mit der ich sonst viele Zeit
verdorben.
Sie hat so lange nichts von
mir vernommen,
Sie mag wohl glauben, ich sei
gestorben.

Es ist mir auch gar nichts
daran gelegen,
Ob sie mich für gestorben hält.
Ich kann auch gar nichts
sagen dagegen,
Denn wirklich bin ich
gestorben der Welt.

Ich bin gestorben dem
Weltgetümmel,
Und ruh' in einem stillen Gebiet.
Ich leb' allein in meinem
Himmel,
In meinem Lieben, in
meinem Lied.

I am lost to the world

I am lost to the
world
with which I used to
waste much time;
it has for so long heard
nothing of me,
it may well believe that I
am dead.

Nor am I at all
concerned
if it should think me dead.
Nor can I deny
it,
for truly I am dead to the
world.

I am dead to the world's
tumult
and rest in a quiet realm.
I live alone in my
heaven,
in my loving, in my
song.

Interval

Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)

From *Mörke Lieder* (1888)

Eduard Mörke

Auf ein altes Bild

In grüner Landschaft
Sommerflor,
Bei kühlem Wasser, Schilf
und Rohr,
Schau, wie das Knäblein
Sündelos
Frei spielt auf der Jungfrau
Schoss!
Und dort im Walde
wonneseam,
Ach, grünet schon des
Kreuzes Stamm!

On an old painting

In the summer haze of a
green landscape,
By cool water, rushes and
reeds,
See how the Child, born
without sin,
Plays freely on the
Virgin's lap!
And there blissfully in the
wood
The Cross is already, alas,
in leaf!

Das verlassene Mägdlein

Früh, wann die Hähne krähn,
Eh' die Sternlein schwinden,
Muss ich am Herde stehn,
Muss Feuer zünden.

The forsaken servant-girl

Early at cockcrow,
before the tiny stars fade,
I must be at the hearth,
must light the fire.

Schön ist der Flamme Schein,
Es springen die Funken;
Ich schaue so darein,
In Leid versunken.

The flames are beautiful,
the sparks fly;
I gaze at them,
sunk in sorrow.

Plötzlich, da kommt es mir,
Treulooser Knabe,
Dass ich die Nacht von dir
Geträumet habe.

Suddenly I realise,
faithless boy,
that in the night
I dreamt of you.

Träne auf Träne dann
Stürzt hernieder;
So kommt der Tag heran –
O ging' er wieder!

Tear after tear
now tumbles down;
so the day dawns –
O that it were gone again!

Im Frühling

Hier lieg' ich auf dem
Frühlingshügel:
Die Wolke wird mein
Flügel,
Ein Vogel fliegt mir voraus.
Ach, sag' mir, alleinige
Liebe,
Wo du bleibst, dass ich bei
dir bliebe!
Doch du und die Lüfte, ihr
habt kein Haus.

In Spring

Here I lie on the
springtime hill:
the clouds serve as my
wings,
a bird flies ahead of me.
Ah tell me, one-and-only
love,
where you are, that I
might be with you!
But you and the breezes,
you have no home.

Der Sonnenblume gleich
steht mein Gemüte offen,
Sehnend,
Sich dehnend
In Lieben und Hoffen.
Frühling, was bist du gewillt?
Wann werd' ich gestillt?

Like a sunflower my soul
lies open,
yearning,
expanding
in love and hope.
Spring, what is your will?
When shall I be stilled?

Die Wolke seh' ich wandeln
und den Fluss,
Es dringt der Sonne goldner
Kuss
Mir tief bis in's Geblüt hinein;
Die Augen, wunderbar
berauschet,
Tun, als schliefen sie ein,
Nur noch das Ohr dem Ton
der Biene lauschet.

I see the clouds drift by,
the river too,
the sun kisses its golden
glow
deep into my veins;
my eyes, wondrously
enraptured,
close, as if in sleep,
only my ears still catch
the hum of the bee.

Ich denke dies und denke
das,
Ich sehne mich und weiss
nicht recht nach was:
Halb ist es Lust, halb ist es
Klage;
Mein Herz, o sage,
Was webst du für Erinnerung
In golden grüner Zweige
Dämmerung?
– Alte unnennbare Tage!

I muse on this, I muse on
that,
I yearn, and yet for what I
cannot say:
it is half joy, half
lament;
tell me, O heart,
what memories you weave
into the twilight green and
golden leaves?
– Past, unutterable days!

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

Verborgenheit

Lass, o Welt, o lass mich sein!
Locket nicht mit
Liebesgaben,
Lasst dies Herz alleine haben
Seine Wonne, seine Pein!

Was ich traure, weiss ich
nicht,
Es ist unbekanntes Wehe;
Immerdar durch Tränen
sehe
Ich der Sonne liebes Licht.

Oft bin ich mir kaum
bewusst,
Und die helle Freude zücket
Durch die Schwere, so mich
drückt
Wonniglich in meiner
Brust.

Lass, o Welt, o lass mich sein!
Locket nicht mit
Liebesgaben,
Lasst dies Herz alleine haben
Seine Wonne, seine Pein!

Withdrawal

Let, O world, O let me be!
Do not tempt with gifts of
love,
Let this heart keep to itself
Its rapture, its pain!

Why I grieve, I do not
know,
It is unknown grief;
Always through a veil of
tears
I see the sun's dear light.

Often when I'm lost in
thought,
Bright joy will flash
Through the oppressive
gloom,
Bringing rapture to my
breast.

Let, O world, O let me be!
Do not tempt with gifts of
love,
Let this heart keep to itself
Its rapture, its pain!

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

4 Last Songs (1948)

Frühling

Hermann Hesse

In dämmrigen Grüften
Träumte ich lang
Von deinen Bäumen und
blauen Lüften,
Von deinem Duft und
Vogelsang.

Nun liegst du erschlossen
In Gleiss und
Zier
Von Licht übergossen
Wie ein Wunder vor mir.

Du kennest mich
wieder,
Du lockest mich zart,
Es zittert durch all meine
Glieder
Deine selige Gegenwart.

Spring

In twilight caverns
I have long dreamt
of your trees and blue
skies,
your fragrance and
birdsong.

Now you lie revealed
in shining graceful
splendour,
bathed in light
like a miracle before me.

You recognise me once
more,
you lure me tenderly,
my whole frame
quivers
with your blissful presence.

September

Hermann Hesse

Der Garten trauert,
Kühl sinkt in die Blumen der
Regen.
Der Sommer schauert
Still seinem Ende entgegen.

Golden tropft Blatt um Blatt
Nieder vom hohen
Akazienbaum.
Sommer lächelt erstaunt und
matt
In den sterbenden
Gartenraum.

Lange noch bei den Rosen
Bleibt er stehn, sehnt sich
nach Ruh.
Langsam tut er die
Müdigwordnen Augen zu.

Beim Schlafengehen

Hermann Hesse

Nun der Tag mich müd
gemacht,
Soll mein sehnliches Verlangen
Freundlich die gestirnte
Nacht
Wie ein müdes Kind
empfangen.

Hände lasst von allem Tun,
Stirn vergiss du alles Denken,
Alle meine Sinne nun
Wollen sich in Schlummer
senken.

Und die Seele unbewacht
Will in freien Flügen schweben,
Um im Zauberkreis der
Nacht
Tief und tausendfach zu
leben.

September

The garden mourns,
the cool rain sinks into
the flowers.
Summer shudders
quietly to its close.

Leaf after golden leaf
falls from the tall
acacia.
Summer smiles, astonished
and drained,
into the garden's dying
dream.

For a long time it lingers
by the roses, yearning for
rest.
Slowly it closes
its now wearied eyes.

Going to sleep

Now that day has wearied
me,
may my yearning desire
be received by the starlit
night
like a tired
child.

Hands, refrain from all work,
brow, forget all thought,
all my senses now
long to sink in
slumber.

And the unwatched soul
longs to soar up freely,
to live in night's magic
circle
profoundly and a
thousandfold.

Im Abendrot

Joseph, Freiherr von
Eichendorff

Wir sind durch Not und
Freude
Gegangen Hand in Hand,
Vom Wandern ruhen
wir
Nun überm stillen Land.

Rings sich die Täler
neigen,
Es dunkelt schon die
Luft,
Zwei Lerchen nur noch
steigen
Nachträumend in den Duft.

Tritt her, und lass sie
schwirren,
Bald ist es Schlafenszeit,
Dass wir uns nicht verirren
In dieser Einsamkeit.

O weiter stiller Friede!
So tief im Abendrot
Wie sind wir
wandernde –
Ist dies etwa der
Tod?

At sunset

We have gone hand in
hand
through joys and distress,
now we rest from our
wanderings
high above the quiet land.

Around us the valleys
slope down,
the skies have begun to
darken,
only two larks, recalling a
dream,
soar up into the haze.

Come, and leave them to
fly,
soon it will be time to sleep,
we must not lose our way
in this solitude.

O vast and silent peace!
So deep in the sunset glow,
how weary we are with
wandering –
could this perhaps be
death?

*'Frühling', 'September', 'Beim Schlafengehen', from: Hermann Hesse,
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