

WIGMORE HALL 125

Saturday 31 January 2026
1.00pm

The Erlkings

Bryan Benner voice, guitar
Ivan Turkalj cello
Simon Teurezbacher tuba
Thomas Toppler drums, vibraphone

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Auf dem Wasser zu singen D774 (1823)
Der Jüngling am Bache D192 (1815)
Erlkönig D328 (1815)
Die Forelle D550 (1817)
From *Die schöne Müllerin* D795 (1823)
Danksagung an den Bach • Trockne Blumen
From *Winterreise* D911 (1827)
Gute Nacht • Frühlingstraum
Gretchen am Spinnrade D118 (1814)
An Sylvia D891 (1826)



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Radiohead. Reggae. Spaghetti Westerns. Baroque. Jazz. Coldplay power ballads. These are things which aren't usually witnessed in close proximity to one another, let alone cited as the inspirations behind an all-Schubert programme at Wigmore Hall. But today's performers, The Erlkings, are anything but conventional. Just as unexpected, in fact, may be the instrumental lineup (Bryan Benner on guitar and vocals, Ivan Turkalj on cello, Simon Teurezbacher on tuba and Thomas Toppler on vibraphone and percussion), which, for the past decade, the quartet has deployed in their reinterpretations of the Lieder canon's greatest hits.

Founded in 2015 by frontman, baritone, translator and self-professed 'Schubadour' Bryan Benner, the Vienna-based ensemble has more recently branched out into songs by Beethoven, Haydn and Schumann. But it all began with Franz Schubert – the Austrian composer born on this day in 1797, and whose 600 Lieder remain, for many, the pinnacle of the repertoire.

'I lived in Schubert's neighbourhood for many years,' reveals Bryan, who hails from Orlando, Florida, and now calls the Viennese capital home. 'I've sung and spent time in the house where he was born. For us, Schubert is literally a neighbour, someone who's right around the corner. That doesn't in any way detract from our reverence or respect or love of his work – but it makes him feel much more like a colleague or a family member; someone whose legacy and tradition we're in direct day-to-day contact with.'

That sense of direct contact is maintained in the group's unique creative process. 'Usually the first thing that happens,' explains Bryan, 'is I pick the songs and then do an English translation. I bring that to the group and then the four of us do a harmonic analysis of the piano score, where we'll write in the chords, like a jazz lead sheet.' He cites Schubert's uniquely 'vertical' style of composition as particularly conducive to this approach: 'Even though you get beautiful melodies and some more contrapuntal writing in his later work, for the most part, he's a very chordal composer'.

What then follows is a process of exploration and experimentation. 'Often I provide a harmonic base with the guitar,' continues Bryan. 'Our tuba player is usually looking to the left hand [of the piano part] for his line, and then our cello player is usually travelling in the middle of the harmonies, finding a complementary line to the vocal line that's been written in the piano. The drums are definitely the last thing that come in to support whatever we've discovered – unless, of course, Thomas is playing the vibraphone: then he's immediately involved from the start.'

It's a process that Benner says is different with every song, with some arrangements taking more time to emerge than others. Remarkably, the group never notates their interpretations. 'We only ever work from the piano scores, so we don't write out any of our arrangements – we're always reading from and working from the Schubert scores.'

Schubert remains at the heart of the endeavour – and yet, the results are rich and varied, illuminating the myriad worlds within Schubert's songs through a kaleidoscopic range of musical influences. In addition to the classical training shared by all four Erlkings, the members bring together a fascinating array of disciplines: from Bryan's singer-songwriting, to Thomas's background in jazz and (less conventionally), clowning, to Ivan's years touring with indie band, Hidden Cameras, and Simon's roots in the Austrian folk scene. 'All of those elements find a home in the music,' says Bryan, adding, 'We're not just trying to modernise everything: sometimes the palette that feels the most appropriate is a moment of 16th-century Baroque aesthetic. We just want to open it up so that there is the full spectrum to choose from.'

There is a playfulness to the group's magpie-like collisions of musical styles but they always seek to retain the spirit of the original. For Bryan, working with Schubert's songs is a balancing act between homage and creativity: 'It's all at once very humbling, and then at the same time requires a huge amount of arrogance. You're constantly feeling the presence of absolute genius in these songs, and then you go "We're going to do it a little different".'

Auf dem Wasser zu Singen was one of the earliest songs the group adapted, with the Neapolitan-style minor-key verses and major-key choruses prompting a rollicking 'oom-pah-pah' chorus in the drums and guitar. Described by Bryan as an 'experiment in a more jazzy kind of sound', **Der Jüngling am Bache** showcases the tuba's lyrical qualities. The suspenseful **Erlkönig** receives both a musical and narrative twist, with castanets and a surprise ending, while **Die Forelle** swings in a mischievous Caribbean-style reinvention. In **Danksagung an den Bach**, the first of two songs from *Die schöne Müllerin*, Bryan says, 'we establish a connection between the river and the vibraphone', while **Trockne Blumen** ('One of our all-time favourite songs') culminates in a final chapter that 'feels like a Coldplay stadium ballad when we're playing it'. **Gute Nacht**, the opening song of *Winterreise*, begins with a brooding cocktail of Radiohead's 'Exit Music' and the tumbleweed desolation of a Western soundtrack by Ennio Morricone, before the vibraphone lends a sickly halo to the fleeting, major-key central section. The cello leads the serenade in the mercurial, unsettled **Frühlingstraum**, and the sense of unease continues in **Gretchen am Spinnrade**, with the cellist's motoring semiquavers embodying both the spinning wheel, and the obsessive, awakening desire of the young Gretchen. Finally, **An Sylvia** rounds things off with a joyful flourish. It's a song which, according to Bryan, eluded the Erlkings for weeks. 'Then, finally, it all fell into place: I started playing a Dixieland rhythm, and everybody joined in.' Who could resist?

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Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Auf dem Wasser zu singen D774 (1823)

Friedrich zu Stolberg

Mitten im Schimmer
derspiegelnden Wellen
Gleitet, wie Schwäne,
derwankende Kahn;
Ach, auf der Freude sanft
schimmernden Wellen
Gleitet die Seele dahin wie
der Kahn;
Denn von dem Himmel
herab auf die Wellen
Tanzet das Abendrot rund
um den Kahn.

Über den Wipfeln des
westlichen Haines,
Winket uns freundlich der
rötliche Schein;
Unter den Zweigen des
östlichen Haines
Säuselt der Calmus im
rötlichen Schein;
Freude des Himmels und
Ruhe des Haines
Atmet die Seel' im
errötenden Schein.

Ach es entschwindet mit
tauigem Flügel
Mir auf den wiegenden
Wellen die Zeit.
Morgen entschwindet mit
schimmerndem Flügel
Wieder wie gestern und
heute die Zeit,
Bis ich auf höherem
strahlendem Flügel
Selber entschwinde der
wechselnden Zeit.

Der Jüngling am Bache D192 (1815)

Friedrich von Schiller

An der Quelle sass der
Knabe,
Blumen wand er sich zum
Kranz,
Und er sah sie fortgerissen,
Treiben in der Wellen
Tanz.
„Und so fliehen meine Tage
Wie die Quelle rastlos
hin!
Und so bleichet meine
Jugend,

To be sung on the water

Early one evening down
by the seaside
Gliding like swans were
the ships on the tide
Upon the glittering,
shimmering waves
Out flew my soul in the
sun's final rays
Down from the heavens the
light meets the water
Bathing the ships in a red,
golden light

Over the treetops the sun
hangs down low
Offers us kindly the last of
its glow
Shadows in mangroves
are secretly whispering
Deep in the boughs of the
easterly groves
Joy in the heavens and
peace in darkness
Both lie before me in
reddening light

The wings of my time here
beat ever so swiftly
Labouring softly in
eternal industry
All of my yesterdays racing
towards future days
Over the endlessly
swelling waves
Until at last, when my wings
have grown weary
I'll rest in the warmth of
the all-loving sea

The youth by the brook

By the stream I saw a
child
Throw a flower into the
water
Borne away by wild currents
It danced upon the
flowing waves
It reminds me of my soul
Just as restless as the
stream
And the burning light of
inconstant youth

Wie die Kränze schnell
verblühn!

„Fraget nicht, warum ich
traure
In des Lebens
Blütenzeit!
Alles freuet sich und
hoffet,
Wenn der Frühling sich
erneut.
Aber diese tausend
Stimmen
Der erwachenden
Natur
Wecken in dem tiefen
Busen
Mir den schweren Kummer nur.

„Was soll mir die Freude
frommen,
Die der schöne Lenz mir
beut?
Eine nur ist's, die ich
suche,
Sie ist nah und ewig
weit.
Sehnend breit' ich meine
Arme
Nach dem teuren Schattenbild,
Ach, ich kann es nicht
erreichen,
Und das Herz bleibt ungestillt!

„Komm herab, du schöne
Holde,
Und verlass dein stolzes
Schloss!
Blumen, die der Lenz
geboren,
Streu' ich dir in deinen
Schoss.
Horch, der Hain erschallt
von Liedern,
Und die Quelle rieselt
klar!
Raum ist in der kleinsten
Hütte
Für ein glücklich liebend
Paar.”

Which wilts as flowers
fade

Don't ask why I feel this
sadness
When I should be young
and enjoying life
And when all the world
around me
Is filled with joy and hope
of spring
When I hear these
cheerful voices
The awakening songs of
nature
In my heart I feel the
heavy longing
Of a life without you here

How could I enjoy the
springtime
And all the sweetness it
offers me
All the love I have is hers
alone
I feel her close but never
here
I reach out my arms to
hold her
But a shadow's all I feel
Oh, I cannot reach her
though I try
With every waking hour

Come to me, my heart's
desire
Leave behind the walls of
your proud, white castle
All the flowers of spring
I'll gather
And lay them gently at
your feet
Can't you hear the birds
are singing
And the stream is
bubbling softly
And a humble country
home is waiting where
Your love could dry my
tears

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

Erlkönig D328 (1815)

Johann Wolfgang von
Goethe

Wer reitet so spät durch
Nacht und Wind?
Es ist der Vater mit seinem
Kind;
Er hat den Knaben wohl in
dem Arm,
Er fasst ihn sicher, er hält ihn
warm.

“Mein Sohn, was birgst du so
bang dein Gesicht?”
“Siehst, Vater, du den
Erlkönig nicht?
Den Erlenkönig mit Kron’
und Schweif?”
“Mein Sohn, es ist ein
Nebelstreif.”

“Du liebes Kind, komm, geh
mit mir!
Gar schöne Spiele spiel’ ich
mit dir;
Manch’ bunte Blumen sind
an dem Strand;
Meine Mutter hat manch
gülden Gewand.”

“Mein Vater, mein Vater, und
hörest du nicht
Was Erlenkönig mir leise
verspricht?”
“Sei ruhig, bleibe ruhig, mein
Kind;
In dürren Blättern säuselt
der Wind.”

“Willst, feiner Knabe, du mit
mir gehn?
Meine Töchter sollen dich
warten schön;
Meine Töchter führen den
nächtlichen Reihn,
Und wiegen und tanzen und
singen dich ein.”

“Mein Vater, mein Vater, und
siehst du nicht dort
Erlkönigs Töchter am
düstern Ort?”
“Mein Sohn, mein Sohn, ich
seh’ es genau;
Es scheinen die alten
Weiden so grau.”

Erlking

Who rides through the night,
so late in the wild?
It is a father with his only
child
He rides with the boy fast
in his arms
He holds him tightly, he
holds him warm

‘My son, oh why are you
shaking with fear?’
‘Oh, Father, can’t you
see? The Erlking is
near!
The evil Erlking, with eyes
burning red!’
‘My son, it’s only in your
head’

‘My dear, sweet child,
come play with me
I’ll teach you nice games,
so much fun, you’ll see
I’ll crown you with flowers, so
fine to behold
My mother’s spinning you a
shirt made of gold’

‘Oh, Father, oh Father!
Can you not hear?
The Erlking whispering
into my ear!’
‘Take heart, have
courage, my son
It’s only the wind in the
leaves up above’

‘My lovely little child, won’t
you come with me?
All my beautiful daughters
will fawn over thee
My beautiful daughters
who sing all the time
And dance every night on
the banks of the Rhine’

‘Oh, Father, oh Father,
can you not see?
The Erlking’s daughters
are waiting for me!’
‘My son, my son, only now
do I see!
The Erlking is chasing us
hard through the trees!’

“Ich liebe dich, mich reizt
deine schöne Gestalt;
Und bist du nicht willig, so
brauch’ ich Gewalt.”
“Mein Vater, mein Vater,
jetzt fasst er mich an!
Erlkönig hat mir ein Leids
getan!”

Dem Vater grauset’s, er
reitet geschwind,
Er hält in Armen das
ächzende Kind,
Erreicht den Hof mit Müh
und Not;
In seinen Armen das Kind
war tot.

Die Forelle D550 (1817)

Christian Friedrich Daniel
Schubart

In einem Bächlein helle,
Da schoss in froher Eil’
Die launische Forelle
Vorüber wie ein
Pfeil.
Ich stand an dem Gestade,
Und sah in süßer
Ruh’
Des muntern Fischleins
Bade
Im klaren Bächlein zu.

Ein Fischer mit der
Rute
Wohl an dem Ufer stand,
Und sah’s mit kaltem
Blute,
Wie sich das Fischlein wand.
So lang dem Wasser Helle,
So dacht’ ich, nicht gebricht,
So fängt er die
Forelle
Mit seiner Angel nicht.

Doch endlich ward dem Diebe
Die Zeit zu lang. Er macht
Das Bächlein tückisch
trübe,
Und eh’ ich es gedacht,
So zuckte seine Rute,
Das Fischlein zappelt
dran,
Und ich mit regem
Blute
Sah die Betrogne an.

‘I love you, child, and I can
run faster than your horse
And if you’re not willing,
I’ll take you by force’
‘Oh, Father, oh Father,
he’s taking me away!
The evil Erlking has made
me his prey’

The father shivered, his
horse running wild
He held in his arms the
terrified child
At last they reached the
safe homestead
In his arms the boy was
dead

The trout

A-swimming in a river
That flows so happily by
A clever little trout fish
Just happened to catch
my eye
I stood along the bank
And watched the little fish
play
The trout enjoyed his
swimming
As I enjoyed my day

A fisherman with his
fishing rod
Stood on the other side
He watched the little
trout fish
With murder in his eyes
But so long as the water
Stays so crystal clear
The fisherman can’t catch
him
The trout has naught to fear

But soon that crafty fisher
He hatched a plan
To stir the mud beneath
the water
And oh, just as I feared
He quickly reeled his line in
And caught on his hook
my flapping friend
I sat and watched with
anger
The fish’s tragic end

From *Die schöne
Müllerin* D795 (1823)
Wilhelm Müller

Danksagung an den Bach

War es also
gemeint,
Mein rauschender Freund,
Dein Singen, dein Klingen,
War es also
gemeint?

Zur Müllerin hin!
So lautet der Sinn.
Gelt, hab' ich's verstanden?
Zur Müllerin hin!

Hat sie dich geschickt?
Oder hast mich berückt?
Das möcht' ich noch wissen,
Ob sie dich geschickt.

Nun wie's auch mag sein,
Ich gebe mich drein:
Was ich such', hab' ich
funden,
Wie's immer mag sein.

Nach Arbeit ich frug,
Nun hab' ich genug,
Für die Hände, für's
Herze
Vollauf genug!

From *The Fair Maid
of the Mill*

Thanksgiving to the brook

Was it planned from the
start,
My ever-flowing friend?
Your singing, your leading
Was it planned from the
start

To lead me to her side?
Was it your plan to guide?
Soft, do I see clearly
You have led me to her

Did she send you quick,
Or could this be a trick?
You must tell me now
Would you trick me in this?

Oh, what do I care
There's love in the air
I have found what I've
journeyed for
The answer to my prayers

Soon the whole day through
I'll have plenty to do
With my hands, with my
heart
I'll have plenty to do

Trockne Blumen

Ihr Blümlein alle,
Die sie mir gab,
Euch soll man legen
Mit mir ins Grab.

Wie seht ihr alle
Mich an so weh,
Als ob ihr wüsstet,
Wie mir gescheh'?

Ihr Blümlein alle,
Wie welk, wie blass?
Ihr Blümlein alle
Wovon so nass?

Ach, Tränen machen
Nicht maiengrün,
Machen tote Liebe
Nicht wieder blühn.

Und Lenz wird kommen
Und Winter wird gehen,
Und Blümlein werden
Im Grase stehn.

Und Blümlein liegen
In meinem Grab,
Die Blümlein alle,
Die sie mir gab.

Und wenn sie wandelt
Am Hügel vorbei,
Und denkt im Herzen:
Der meint' es treu!

Dann Blümlein alle,
Heraus, heraus!
Der Mai ist kommen,
Der Winter ist aus.

Withered flowers

These little flowers
To me she gave
And now they'll rest here
With me in my grave

Sweet little flowers,
You stare at me in pain
As though you know all
The troubles in my brain

Oh, sweet little flowers,
You seem pale to me
And covered in moisture,
How can that be?

These tears can't make
The bright green of spring
Or help save a love
From slowly dying

When springtime comes
And winter leaves at last
Then little flowers will
Bloom in the grass

So lay them gently
Upon my grave
These little flowers
To me she gave

And when she wanders
Alone through the hills
She'll know in her heart
That I love her still

Then bloom, you flowers,
At last, at last
The spring's upon us,
The winter is past

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
ändern –
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.

From *Winter Journey*

Good night

I came here as a stranger
Still a stranger leaving now
The month of May was
sweeter
With flowers all around
For she had spoken love
to me
Her parents offered her
hand
But now the world is hard
to see
And snow has covered
the land

The time to start my
wandering
Was never mine to choose
What path should I be
following?
My way is mine to lose
The only travellers by my
side
Are shadows and moon
glow
All creatures here have
gone to hide
Leaving only tracks in snow

Why stay to see them
scowling
Now that they have
thrown me out?
Let wild dogs keep howling
Outside of their master's
house
For love's in love with
wandering
The good Lord made it right
When love is done, keep
traveling
My sweet love, now good
night

I'll leave you to your
gentle sleep
And not disturb you
anymore
Nor wake you with my
noisy feet
Soft, soft, I'll close the door
I'll leave behind for you to
read
A note that says goodbye
So that you know, before I
leave
I thought of you, and I

Frühlingstraum

Ich träumte 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?

Dream of Spring

I dreamt of a field of
flowers
As bright as they blossom
in May
I dreamt of a lush green
meadow
Of singing birds at play

But then the cock was
crowing
My eyes, they opened wide
The room was dark and
freezing
The ravens were
screaming outside

Out on the frosty
window
Who painted these
perfect little leaves?
Do I hear everyone
laughing
At my winter fantasies?

I dreamt of love and
loving
I dreamt of a beautiful friend
From hugging and from
kissing
From pleasure that
knows no end

But then the cock was
crowing
And nothing was as it
seems
Now I am alone and freezing
Just thinking about my
dreams

My heart is warmly
beating
I'll close my eyes to all
harms
But when will the flowers
start blooming?
When will she be back in
my arms?

**Gretchen am
Spinnrade D118 (1814)**

*Johann Wolfgang von
Goethe*

Meine Ruh ist hin,
Mein Herz ist schwer;
Ich finde sie nimmer
Und nimmermehr.

Wo ich ihn nicht hab'
Ist mir das Grab,
Die ganze Welt
Ist mir vergällt.

Mein armer Kopf
Ist mir verrückt,
Mein armer Sinn
Ist mir zerstückt.

Meine Ruh ist hin,
Mein Herz ist schwer;
Ich finde sie nimmer
Und nimmermehr.

Nach ihm nur schau ich
Zum Fenster hinaus,
Nach ihm nur geh' ich
Aus dem Haus.

Sein hoher Gang,
Sein' edle Gestalt,
Seines Mundes Lächeln,
Seiner Augen Gewalt,

Und seiner Rede
Zauberfluss,
Sein Händedruck,
Und ach, sein Kuss!

Meine Ruh ist hin,
Mein Herz ist schwer;
Ich finde sie nimmer
Und nimmermehr.

Mein Busen drängt
Sich nach ihm hin.
Ach dürft' ich fassen
Und halten ihn,

Und küssen ihn
So wie ich wollt',
An seinen Küssen
Vergehen sollt'!

**Gretchen at the
spinning wheel**

All my patience is gone
My heart is sore
I've lost them forever
Forevermore

When he's not with me
The grave opens deep
The whole wide world
Is rank and spoiled

And my poor mind
Is breaking apart
And all of my thoughts
Are dark and distraught

These windows are only
For looking for him
These doors, they are only
To go see him again

The way that he walks
The way that he talks
And his lips when he smiles
His eyes burning hot

His way of speaking
Fills me with bliss
How he touches me
And oh, his kiss

My body is aching
And longing for him
Longing to take him
And hold on to him

My body is aching
And longing for him
Longing to take him
And hold on to him

To kiss his face
Is all that I need
To die in his kisses
Would bring me peace

If I could just kiss him
It's all that I need
To die in his kisses
Would bring me peace

An Sylvia D891 (1826)

*William Shakespeare, trans.
Eduard von Bauernfeld*

Was ist Silvia, saget an,
Dass sie die weite Flur
preist?
Schön und zart seh' ich sie
nah'n,
Auf Himmels Gunst und
Spur weist,
Dass ihr Alles untertan.

Ist sie schön und gut dazu?
Reiz labt wie milde
Kindheit;
Ihrem Aug' eilt Amor zu,
Dort heilt er seine Blindheit,
Und verweilt in süsser
Ruh.

Darum Silvia, tön', o Sang,
Der holden Silvia Ehren;
Jeden Reiz besiegt sie
lang,
Den Erde kann
gewähren:
Kränze ihr und
Saitenklang!

To Sylvia

Who is Silvia? What is she,
That all our swains
commend her?
Holy, fair, and wise is
she;
The heaven such grace
did lend her,
That she might admirèd be

Is she kind as she is fair?
For beauty lives with
kindness
Love doth to her eyes repair,
To help him of his blindness;
And, being helped,
inhabits there

Then to Silvia let us sing,
That Silvia is excelling;
She excels each mortal
thing
Upon the dull earth
dwelling;
To her let us garlands
bring