

# WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 3 October 2021 3.00pm

**Clara Osowski** mezzo-soprano

**Julius Drake** piano

**Franz Schubert** (1797-1828)

Geheimnis D491 (1816)  
Erlafsee D586 (1817)  
Heliopolis I D753 (1822)  
Der Sieg D805 (1824)  
Abendstern D806 (1824)  
Auflösung D807 (1824)  
Gondelfahrer D808 (1824)

**Dominick Argento** (1927-2019)

Casa Guidi (1983)  
*Casa Guidi • The Italian Cook and the English Maid • Robert Browning • The Death of Mr. Barrett • Domesticity*

**Rodolfo Halffter** (1900-1987)

2 Sonetos Op. 15 (1946)  
*Miró celia una rosa • Feliciano me adora*

**Samuel Barber** (1910-1981)

At Saint Patrick's Purgatory from *Hermit Songs* Op. 29 (1952-3)

**Silvestre Revueltas** (1899-1940)

Caminando from *2 Canciones* (1937)

**Libby Larsen** (b.1950)

Where the river bent from *Raspberry Island Dreaming* (2002)

**Virgil Thomson** (1896-1989)

Let's take a walk from *Mostly About Love* (1959)

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In 1818, **Franz Schubert** took up shared lodgings with the poet Johann Baptist Mayrhofer. By day a censor for the Austrian civil service, Mayrhofer spent his spare hours writing texts of incredible variety, often with dark and painful subtexts. Schubert had already set a number of his poems by the time the two men shared a house; but between 1814 and 1824 he completed 47 settings of Mayrhofer's words, of which we hear seven this evening.

That the addressee of 'Geheimnis' is Schubert himself gives us some hint of the friendly intimacy between the two men. Mayrhofer thought the young composer a genius, and here invokes the image of the river god ('The reed-crowned ancient who empties his urn'), the waters of inspiration trickling and sparkling through the musician's fingers. By contrast 'Erlafsee' was probably written for inclusion in an almanac, Franz Sartori's *Mahlerisches Taschenbuch* ('Pictorial Pocket-Book'), in a section on Lake Erlauf on the northern border of Steiermark. The opening contrast of 'wohl' and 'weh' seems to capture something essential about Mayrhofer's melancholy character, and that Schubertian magic of gentle brushes between major and minor.

Heliopolis I tells of a fabled sunny utopia, conjured from the gruff cold of the north: Schubert sends the piano towards the clouds as Heliopolis is described. As Mayrhofer wrote in his preface to the text, 'Even though we suffer the same fate as Icarus / We should once in a while dare to approach the sun!'. In 'Der Sieg', the Muses and the Sphinx appear almost side by side as our protagonist rejoices at the freedom of the afterlife, grandly strident chords accompanying his ascent. This is the first of four songs we hear today from 1824 – the four last settings that Schubert made of Mayrhofer's words.

'Abendstern' is a heart-twisting conversation of major and minor, love and loneliness, in which the poet addresses Venus. If one might presume that a song about the star of love would be more consoling than this bleak picture, 'Auflösung' – a cry for silence, solitude and dissolution – is taut as a wound spring in its joyful expectation. And last of all comes 'Gondelfahrer', the rich rocking of the lagoon beneath us and the tolling bells of St Mark's resonating through the keyboard.

We remain in Italy for **Dominick Argento's** 1983 cycle *Casa Guidi*. The five songs of this cycle set letters from Elizabeth Barrett Browning to her sister, Henrietta: from Florence to London, which struck a personal chord with Argento, who regularly lived and worked in Florence. We begin in 1847 after the Brownings' arrival, the moonlight and illuminations bringing wonder and sparkle to the writer's descriptions of her new home. In 'The Italian Cook and the English Maid', pompously worldly Alessandro leaves poor Wilson furious, much to Barrett Browning's amusement. 'Robert Browning', from a letter in their seventh year of marriage, sets up an extraordinary circling of semitones in a rich musical texture that seems to hint at Strauss's 4

*Last Songs*. In the final two songs of the set, the bleak tragedy of Elizabeth's father's death is juxtaposed with perfect 'Domesticity' – a family scene on a cold November evening, wrapped in romantic harmonies.

The 2 *Sonetas* of the Spanish composer **Rodolfo Halffter** were composed in 1946, whilst he was in exile in Mexico after his participation in the Spanish Civil War. Here he collaborated with local musicians such as Carlos Chávez, and even composed a film score for fellow exile, Luis Buñuel. Halffter's songs set the poetry of Juana Inés de la Cruz, a 17th-century Mexican poet, musician and nun. 'Miró Celia una rosa' sees Celia admiring the roses, and her insistence that they should remain lovely even with the knowledge of imminent demise. 'Feliciano me adora...' is a witty number in which our protagonist reveals that she despises the boy who loves her yet adores another... who in turn despises her. The quirky, bouncing accompaniment concludes with a brisk rising gesture that sounds like the pianist throwing his hands up in despair at such contrariness.

We also hear from a Mexican composer setting a Cuban poet: **Silvestre Revueltas's** 'Caminando', to a text by Nicolás Guillén. Revueltas is best known for his orchestral work *Sensemayá*, based on a Guillén poem about the ritual killing of a snake. 'Caminando' is an unsettling mix – musically and poetically – of a lilting walking song and a series of sinister glimpses into the thoughts and jagged emotions of an anonymous wanderer. Between Halffter and Revueltas, we hear the first of **Samuel Barber's** *10 Hermit Songs*, 'At Saint Patrick's Purgatory.' Bells toll and clang in the piano as our weary traveller bemoans his own hard heart – 'not a tear can I squeeze from my eyes!'

**Libby Larsen's** *Raspberry Island Dreaming* is a set of three songs about the Mississippi River: Raspberry Island is in the middle of St Paul, the state capital of Minnesota. 'Where the river bent' is the second of the three songs in this set, and is a rich reminiscence of a past family visit to the river, sunny and shimmering. (Similarly, Argento was a professor in Minneapolis and *Casa Guidi* was premièred by the Minnesota Orchestra.) And we close with **Thomson's** 'Let's take a walk' from his 1959 collection *Mostly About Love*. 'Let's take a walk' is an invitation from one lover to another to walk at night, see the dawn, and perhaps share a kiss... Thomson leaves silences as if our speaker is waiting for a response, and this, combined with the final gentle call, 'come on!', is warmly touching.

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# Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

## Geheimnis D491 (1816)

*Johann Baptist Mayrhofer*

Sag an, wer lehrt dich Lieder,  
So schmeichelnd und so zart?  
Sie rufen einen Himmel  
Aus trüber Gegenwart.  
Erst lag das Land, verschleiert,  
Im Nebel vor uns da –  
Du singst – und Sonnen leuchten,  
Und Frühling ist uns nah.

Den schilfbekränzten  
Alten,  
Der seine Urne giesst,  
Erblickst du nicht, nur Wasser,  
Wie's durch die Wiesen fließt.  
So geht es auch dem Sänger,  
Er singt, er staunt in sich;  
Was still ein Gott bereitet,  
Befremdet ihn, wie dich.

## Erlafsee D586 (1817)

*Johann Baptist Mayrhofer*

Mir ist so wohl, so weh  
Am stillen Erlafsee.  
Heilig Schweigen  
In Fichtenzweigen.  
Regungslos  
Der blaue Schoss;  
Nur der Wolken Schatten flieh'n  
Überm glatten Spiegel hin.  
Frische Winde  
Kräuseln linde  
Das Gewässer;  
Und der Sonne  
Goldne Krone  
Flimmert blässer.  
Mir ist so wohl, so weh  
Am stillen Erlafsee.

## Heliopolis I D753 (1822)

*Johann Baptist Mayrhofer*

Im kalten, rauhen Norden  
Ist Kunde mir geworden  
Von einer Stadt, der Sonnenstadt.  
Wo weilt das Schiff, wo ist der Pfad,  
Die mich zu jenen Hallen tragen?  
Von Menschen konnt' ich nichts  
erfragen, –  
In Zwiespalt waren sie verloren.  
Zur Blume, die sich Helios erkoren,  
Die ewig in sein Antlitz  
blickt,  
Wandt' ich mich nun, – und ward  
entzückt:  
„Wende, so wie ich, zur Sonne

## A secret

Who teaches you, O say, to sing  
such tender, honeyed songs?  
They conjure up a heaven  
out of troubled times.  
Before, the land lay veiled  
in mist before our eyes –  
you sing – and suns gleam  
and spring draws near.

You have no eyes for the reed-  
crowned  
ancient who empties his urn,  
water flowing through the meadows  
is all you see.  
Thus it is with the singer,  
he sings, he marvels inwardly;  
that which God quietly creates  
astonishes both him and you.

## Lake Erlaf

I feel so happy, so sad  
by quiet Lake Erlaf.  
Sacred silence  
in the pine branches.  
Motionless  
the blue depths;  
only cloud shadows flit  
across the glassy surface.  
Fresh breezes  
gently ruffle  
the water  
and the sun's  
golden crown  
grows paler.  
I feel so happy, so sad  
by quiet Lake Erlaf.

## Heliopolis I

In the cold, raw north  
I heard tell  
of a city, the city of the sun.  
Where is the ship, where is the path  
that will take me to those halls?  
Men could tell me  
nothing,  
confused as they were in strife.  
To that flower, chosen by Helios  
for himself, which forever gazes at  
his face,  
I now turned – and was  
enchanted:  
"Turn, like I do, your eyes

Deine Augen! Dort ist Wonne,  
Dort ist Leben;  
Treu ergeben,  
Pilg're zu, und zweifle  
nicht:  
Ruhe findest du im Licht;  
Licht erzeugt alle Gluten, –  
Hoffnungspflanzen, Tatenfluten!"

## Der Sieg D805 (1824)

*Johann Baptist Mayrhofer*

O unbewölktes Leben!  
So rein und tief und klar.  
Uralte Träume schweben  
Auf Blumen wunderbar.

Der Geist zerbrach die Schranken,  
Des Körpers träges Blei;  
Er waltet gross und frei.  
Es laben die Gedanken  
An Edens Früchten sich;  
Der alte Fluch entwich.  
Was ich auch je gelitten,  
Die Palme ist erstritten,  
Gestillet mein Verlangen.  
Die Musen selber sangen  
Die Sphinx in Todesschlaf,  
Und meine Hand – sie traf.

O unbewölktes Leben!  
So rein und tief und klar.  
Uralte Träume schweben  
Auf Blumen wunderbar.

## Abendstern D806 (1824)

*Johann Baptist Mayrhofer*

Was weilst du einsam an dem  
Himmel,  
O schöner Stern? und bist so mild;  
Warum entfernt das funkelnde  
Gewimmel  
Der Brüder sich von deinem Bild?  
„Ich bin der Liebe treuer Stern,  
Sie halten sich von Liebe fern.“

So solltest du zu ihnen gehen,  
Bist du der Liebe, zaudre  
nicht!  
Wer möchte denn dir widerstehen?  
Du süßes eigensinnig Licht.  
„Ich säe, schaue keinen Keim,  
Und bleibe trauernd still daheim.“

## Auflösung D807 (1824)

*Johann Baptist Mayrhofer*

Verbirg dich, Sonne,  
Denn die Gluten der Wonne

to the sun! There is bliss,  
there is life;  
in true devotion  
pilgrimage on towards it, and do not  
doubt:  
you shall find peace in light;  
light engenders all ardour,  
flowers of hope, torrents of deeds!"

## The victory

O unclouded life!  
So pure and deep and clear.  
Age-old dreams hover  
wondrously over flowers.

The spirit broke through the bonds  
of the body's leaden weight;  
great and free, it now prevails.  
Thoughts are refreshed  
by the fruits of Paradise;  
the ancient curse is lifted.  
Whatever I may have suffered,  
the victor's palm is won,  
my longing stilled.

The Muses themselves sang  
the sphinx to sleep and death,  
and my hand – it struck the blow.

O unclouded life!  
So pure and deep and clear.  
Age-old dreams hover  
wondrously over flowers.

## Evening star

Why do you linger lonely in the  
sky,  
O lovely star? and are yet so gentle;  
why do all your glittering  
brothers  
shun your sight?  
'I am the faithful star of love,  
they keep aloof from love.'

If you are love's messenger,  
you should seek them out, do not  
delay!  
For who could resist you,  
O sweet and wayward light.  
'I sow no seed, I see no fruit,  
and in silent sorrow stay at home.'

## Dissolution

Conceal yourself, sun,  
for the fires of rapture

Versengen mein Gebein;  
Verstummet Töne,  
Frühlings Schöne  
Flüchte dich, und lass mich allein!

scorch my whole being;  
fall silent, sounds,  
spring beauty  
flee, and leave me to myself!

Quillen doch aus allen Falten  
Meiner Seele liebliche Gewalten;  
Die mich umschlingen,  
Himmlich singen –  
Geh' unter Welt, und störe  
Nimmer die süßen ätherischen  
Chöre!

For sweet powers well up  
from every recess of my soul,  
and envelop me  
with celestial song –  
dissolve, world, and never more  
disturb the sweet ethereal  
choirs!

### **Gondelfahrer D808** (1824)

*Johann Baptist Mayrhofer*

Es tanzen Mond und Sterne  
Den flücht'gen Geisterreih'n:  
Wer wird von Erdensorgen  
Befangen immer sein!  
Du kannst in Mondesstrahlen  
Nun, meine Barke, wallen;  
Und aller Schranken los,  
Wiegt dich des Meeres Schoss.  
Vom Markusturme tönte  
Der Spruch der Mitternacht:  
Sie schlummern friedlich Alle,  
Und nur der Schiffer wacht.

### **The gondolier**

Moon and stars are dancing  
the fleeting spirits' round:  
who would be forever fettered  
by earthly cares!  
Now, my boat, you can drift  
in the moonlight;  
and freed from all restraints,  
be rocked by the lapping sea.  
From the tower of St Mark's  
midnight's decree tolled forth:  
everyone sleeps in peace,  
and only the boatman's awake.

## **Dominick Argento** (1927-2019)

### **Casa Guidi** (1983)

*Elizabeth Barrett Browning*

#### **Casa Guidi**

We more and more like our new apartment.  
When I am tired of the sofa we go out on our terrace,  
Where there is just room for two to walk -  
Walk back and forward till the moon rises!  
And the moon rises beautif'ly, and drops  
Down the grey walls of San Felice.

We are getting on slowly in the furnishing department.  
Robert wants a ducal bed for my room - all gilding and carving.  
I persuaded him to get a piano instead.

We have had an illumination throughout the city -  
And you in England can't guess how beautiful  
A Florentine illumination is!  
The Pitti Palace opposite to us was drawn out in fire!  
You would have thought that all the stars  
Out of Heaven had fallen into the piazza.

Sometimes he says to me: "Now, Ba, wouldn't it have been wrong  
If we two had not married?"

I do love this house - there's the truth -  
"Like a room in a novel," this room has been called.

## **The Italian Cook and the English Maid**

From beef-steak pies up to fricassees Alessandro is a master.  
And from bread and butter puddings to boiled apple-dumplings,  
An artist. Only - he doesn't like Wilson to interfere.  
She declares that he repeats so many times a day:  
"I have been to Paris - I have been to London -  
I have been to Germany - I must Know."  
Also he offends her by being of opinion that:  
"London is by far the most immoral place in the world."  
(He was there for a month once.)  
And when she talks of the domestic happiness enjoyed in England.  
He shakes his head disputatiously, and bids her  
"Not to take her ideas of English domestic life from the  
Signor and the Signora - who were quite exceptions -  
He never saw anything like their way of  
Living together certainly, though  
"He had been to Paris, and been in London, and been in Germany -  
No, the Signor was an angel, and there was the truth of it -  
Yes the Signora was rather an angel too - she never spent  
Two thousand scudi on her dress, as he had seen women do -  
So the Signor might well be fond of the Signora -  
But still for a Signor to be always sitting with his  
Wife in that way, was most extraordinary and  
"He had been to Paris, and been to London" and so on 'da capo'-  
So poor Wilson's head goes round she declares, and she  
Leaves the field of battle from absolute exhaustion.

## **Robert Browning**

And now I begin to wonder naturally whether I may not be  
Some sort of a real angel after all.  
It is not so bad a thing, be sure, for a woman  
To be loved by a man of imagination. He loves her through a lustrous  
atmosphere  
Which not only keeps back the faults but produces  
Continual novelty through its own changes.  
If ever a being of a higher order lived among us  
Without a glory round his head...he is such a being.  
I feel to have the power of making him happy...  
I feel to have it in my hands.  
It is strange that anyone so brilliant should love me.  
But true and strange it is...it is impossible for me to doubt it anymore.  
Here am I, in the seventh year of marriage,  
Happier than on the seventh day!  
The love not only stays, but grows.  
He rises on me hour by hour and I am  
Bound to him indeed with all the cords of my heart.  
And Papa thinks I have sold my soul -  
For genius...mere genius!

## **The Death of Mr. Barrett**

It is true that first words must be said -  
But of the past I cannot speak. I believe  
Hope had died in me long ago  
Of reconciliation in this world...  
Occupation is the only thing to keep one  
On one's feet a little, that I know well.  
Only it is hard sometimes to force oneself  
Into occupation...there's - the hardness.

I take up books - but my heart goes walking up and down  
Constantly through that house of Wimpole Street.  
Till it is tired, tired, tired. The truth is,  
I am made of paper, and it tears me.

### Domesticity

We have fires now, though the weather is lovely for November  
And I take long walks every day.  
We have fires now, and as soon as the lamp comes  
Robert sits in his armchair, and I curl myself up on the sofa.  
Or perhaps on a cushion on the hearth,  
And we say to one another  
"Oh how delightful this is!  
I do hope no one will come tonight."  
So we read and talk and Robert can't keep from  
Letting out the end of David Copperfield.  
And I scold him and won't hear a word more.  
Then the door opens, and enter  
Baby holding by Wilson's finger.  
"I can't think what he wants,"  
Says Wilson, "but he would come."  
Upon which he walks straight up to me and puts up one foot.  
Pointing to it with his hand, pulling at my gown -  
Perhaps you don't know what this means, but I do.  
He wants to go to bed...  
So I get up and go away with him and Wilson  
And Robert calls after us: "Come back soon, Ba."  
And I go back soon...

## Rodolfo Halffter (1900-1987)

### 2 Sonetos Op. 15 (1946)

*Juana Inés de Asbaje y Ramírez de Santillana*

#### Miró celia una rosa

Miró Celia una rosa que en el prado Ostentaba feliz la pompa vana Y con afeites de carmín y grana Bañaba alegre el rostro delicado; Y dijo:--Goza, sin temor del Hado, El curso breve de tu edad lozana, Pues no podrá la muerte de mañana Quitarte lo que hubieras hoy gozado; Y aunque llega la muerte presurosa Y tu fragante vida se te aleja, No sientas el morir tan bella y moza: Mira que la experiencia te aconseja Que es fortuna morirte siendo hermosa Y no ver el ultraje de ser vieja.	Celia gazed at a rose in the meadow as it blithely flaunted its proud beauty and merrily bathed its delicate features in bright hues of crimson and scarlet; and she said, 'Without fear of destiny, enjoy your brief days of youthful vigour, for the death that strikes tomorrow cannot steal the pleasures of today; and though death rushes ever closer, and your fragrant life is on the wane, do not regret dying in the beauty of youth: for the counsel offered you by experience is that you are fortunate to die still lovely and not suffer the ravages of old age.'
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#### Feliciano me adora

Feliciano me adora y le aborrezco; Lisardo me aborrece y yo le adoro;	Feliciano loves me and I loathe him; Lisardo loathes me and I love him;
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Por quien no me apetece ingrato, lloro, Y al que me llora tierno, no apetezco. A quien más me desdora, el alma ofrezco; A quien me ofrece víctimas, desdoro Desprecio al que enriquece mi decoro, Y al que le hace desprecios, enriquezco. Si con mi ofensa al uno reconvengo, Me reconviene el otro a mí, ofendido; Y a padecer de todos modos vengo, Pues ambos atormentan mi sentido: Aquéste, con pedir lo que no tengo; Y aquél, con no tener lo que le pido.	I weep for a thankless man who craves me not, but crave not the one who weeps for me. To one who slanders me I offer my soul; he who offers me sacrifices I do slander; I scorn the man who defends my honour, and defend the man who scorns it. While I reproach the one for hurting me, the other reproaches me for hurting him; and I do suffer in either case, since both torment my feelings: one by pleading for that which I cannot give; the other by not giving me that for which I plead.
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## Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

### Hermit Songs Op. 29 (1952-3)

#### At Saint Patrick's Purgatory

*13th century*

Pity me on my pilgrimage to Loch Derg!  
O King of the churches and the bells  
Bewailing your sores and your wounds,  
But not a tear can I squeeze from my eyes!  
Not moisten an eye after so much sin!  
Pity me, O King!

What shall I do with a heart that seeks only its own ease?  
O only begotten Son by whom all men were made,  
Who shunned not the death by three wounds,  
Pity me on my pilgrimage to Loch Derg  
And I with a heart not softer than a stone!

## Silvestre Revueltas (1899-1940)

### Caminando from *2 Canciones* (1937)

*Unfortunately we are unable to reproduce the text for the above song on this occasion*

## Libby Larsen (b.1950)

### Raspberry Island Dreaming (2002)

#### Where the river bent

*Joyce Sutphen*

One Sunday we went down to the river,  
All of us in our forty-nine Chevy,  
Until we reached the gate and my father  
Said, "Come on, I'll lead the rest of the way."

There were horses in the fields where we walked,  
There were hawks circling where the river bent,  
We were blue-jeaned pilgrims who only talked  
Of northern pike, of carp and of pheasants.

I put my feet down where the river ran,  
And sat on a stone that nothing could move,  
And watched the gray ribbon slip through the land  
Light as the wind, like a hand in a glove.

Years later, when it was time to go home  
We walked single file, filled up to the brim.

## Virgil Thomson (1896-1989)

### Mostly About Love (1959)

#### Let's take a walk

*Kenneth Koch*

Let's take a walk  
In the city  
Till our shoes get wet  
(It's been raining  
All night) and when  
We see the traffic  
Lights and the moon  
Let's take a smile  
Off the ashcan, let's walk  
Into town (I mean  
A lemon peel)

Let's make music  
(I hear the cats  
Purple beautiful  
Like hallways in summer  
Made of snowing rubber  
Valence piccalilli and diamonds)  
Oh see the arch ruby  
Of this late March sky  
Are you less intelligent  
Than the pirate of lemons  
Let's take a walk

I know you tonight  
As I have never known  
A book of white stones  
Or a bookcase of orange groans  
Or symbolism  
I think I'm in love  
With those imaginary racetracks  
Of red traced grey in  
The sky and the gimcracks  
Of all you know and love  
Who once loathed firecrackers  
And license plates and  
Diamonds but now you love them all

And just for my sake  
Let's take a walk  
Into the river  
(I can even do that

Tonight) where  
If I kiss you please  
Remember you with your shoes off  
You're so beautiful like  
A lifted umbrella orange  
And white we may never  
Discover the blue over-  
Coat maybe never never O blind  
With this (love) let's walk  
Into the first  
Rivers of morning as you are seen  
To be bathed in a light white light  
Come on

*All Schubert translations by Richard Stokes from The Book of Lieder published by Faber & Faber, with thanks to George Bird, co-author of The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder, published by Victor Gollancz Ltd. Halffter's 2 Sonetos by Susannah Howe.*

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