WIGMORE HALL

Monday 4 March 2024 1.00pm

Lullabies

Versailles (1906)

Lucile Richardot mezzo-soprano Anne de Fornel piano

Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979)

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) Liza Lehmann (1862-1918)

Nadia Boulanger & Raoul Pugno (1852-1914) Lili Boulanger (1893-1918)

Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979) Nadia Boulanger Mon âme (1906) Le couteau (1922) Ilda (1906) Les berceaux Op. 23 No. 1 (1879) I dreamt my love was singing from Breton Folk-Songs (pub. 1909) Dusk in the valley Evensong (pub. 1916) When I am Dead, My Dearest (1918) Vous m'avez dit from Les heures claires (1909) Reflets (1911) Le retour (1912) Down by the Salley Gardens (1919) Doute (1922) Désespérance (1902) Soleils couchants (1907) Cantique (1909)



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Mon cœur (1906)

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Drawing together several leading women song composers, this recital focuses on the sister composers Lili (1893-1918) and Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979). Despite her tragically early death at the age of only 24, Lili Boulanger was one of the most significant French composers of the 20th Century. In 1913, she became the first woman to win France's prestigious composition competition, the Prix de Rome. Her sister Nadia became a conductor, organist and one of the century's foremost music teachers. This afternoon's concert also embraces the theme of the lullaby, as reflected in the works of French and British composers.

The recital opens and closes with a group of songs by **Nadia Boulanger**. Although Nadia composed steadily during her early career, she turned her efforts away from composition after Lili's death. Her last known surviving works – most of which are songs – date from the early 1920s. Marking one of her earliest important appearances as a composer-performer, Nadia premièred 'Versailles' with the famous mezzo-soprano Jane Bathori at the Grand Palais des Champs-Elysées on 30 October 1906. 'Le couteau', meanwhile, dates from the final year that Nadia was active as a composer, 1922. It sets a text by Camille Mauclair. Drawing inspiration from Mauclair's popular style, the song is marked 'populaire' and uses a colloquial vernacular which imitates everyday spoken French.

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) was an important influence on both Lili and Nadia Boulanger. He was Nadia's teacher and, as a conductor, she became known as one of the foremost interpreters of his *Requiem.* His lullaby 'Les Berceaux', after a poem by Sully Prudhomme, explores the sorrow of parting. The lyrics describe the mothers left behind rocking cradles in a port town as their sailor husbands depart.

Liza Lehmann (1862-1918) was an English composer and soprano, who is best known for her prolific song output. Her mother Amelia Lehmann (who published under the name 'A.L.') was also a composer. Liza made her performance debut at a 'Monday Pops' Concert at St James's Hall in November 1885. After almost a decade as a solo recitalist, she decided to retire from the stage in July 1894 when she married the composer and painter Herbert Bedford. Following her marriage, she refocused her efforts upon vocal composition, writing more than 350 songs. Lehman served as the first president of the Society of Women Musicians (1911-2). In 1913 she became a professor of singing at the Guildhall School of Music. Although many of Lehman's songs are in a light style appealing to contemporary audiences, 'Evensong' is one of her more poignant works, as it was composed following the premature death of her eldest son from pneumonia whilst he was training during World War I.

Nadia Boulanger's 'Vous m'avez dit' is drawn from Les heures claires, a collaborative song-cycle with her mentor **Raoul Pugno** (1852-1914). Pugno nurtured Nadia Boulanger's early career, guiding her compositions and arranging high-profile performances. *Les heures claires* (1909) consists of settings of eight poems by the Belgian poet Émile Verhaeren.

Despite her short career, Lili Boulanger explored a much greater range of musical genres than Nadia. Her output includes Les sirènes (1911), for soprano, chorus and orchestra; her cantata Faust et Hélène (1913), for which she won the Prix de Rome; and the song cycle Clairières dans le ciel (1914). Many of her works – such as her three large-scale orchestral psalm settings and her Pie Jesu for voice, string quartet, harp and organ explore her devout Roman Catholic faith. Like Nadia, her music shows the strong influence of Fauré and Debussy, but she also pushed French Modernism further through her innovative use of form, timbre, orchestration, modality and polytonality, which often seem to point forwards to later French composers such as Francis Poulenc and Olivier Messiaen. 'Reflets' (1911) is a setting of a poem by the Belgian Symbolist poet Maurice Maeterlinck. The rippling piano accompaniment evokes the 'reflections' of the song's title. 'Le retour' (1912) describes Greek hero Ulysses setting out on his return voyage to Ithaca.

The English composer Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979) was also a renowned viola player. She became one of the first women to join a professional London orchestra when she played in Henry Wood's New Queen's Hall Orchestra (1912-4). Her career as a chamber musician included performing in three all-women chamber ensembles: the Norah Clench Quartet; the English Ensemble; and a quartet with the violinist d'Arányi sisters and cellist Guilhermina Suggia. She also toured internationally with the cellist May Mukle. Clarke initially studied at the Royal Academy of Music, but left after her harmony teacher, Percy Miles, proposed to her. She later studied at the Royal College of Music instead, where she became Charles Villiers Stanford's first female composition student. As a composer, she has until recently been best known for her chamber music, including her Viola Sonata and her Rhapsody for cello and piano. 'Down by the Salley Gardens' - which sets a poem by the Irish poet WB Yeats and in which a modal folk influence is apparent - is one of Clarke's most well-known songs.

A final group of songs by Nadia Boulanger closes this recital. 'Doute' is another of her late songs, but the other four all date from her early career and include settings of some of her favourite Symbolist poets, Paul Verlaine, Maeterlinck, and Albert Samain. 'Soleils couchants' was premièred by Fernande Reboul at the prestigious Salle Pleyel in Paris in March 1907, marking another important early performance within her nascent compositional career.

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Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979)

Versailles (1906) Albert Samain

O Versailles, par cette aprèsmidi fanée, Pourquoi, pourquoi ton souvenir m'obsède-t-il ainsi?

Les ardeurs de l'été s'éloignent, et voici Que s'incline vers nous la saison surannée.

Je veux revoir au long d'une calme journée Tes eaux glauques que jonche un feuillage roussi,

Et respirer encore, un soir d'or adouci,

Ta beauté plus touchante au déclin de l'année.

Comme un grand lys tu meurs, noble et triste, sans bruit;

Et ton onde épuisée au bord moisi des vasques

S'écoule, douce ainsi qu'un sanglot dans la nuit.

Mon âme (1906) Albert Samain

Mon Ame est une infante en robe de parade, Dont l'exil se reflète, éternel et royal,

Aux grands miroirs déserts d'un vieil Escurial,

Ainsi qu'une galère oubliée en la rade.

Son page favori, qui s'appelle Naguère,

Lui lit d'ensorcelants poèmes à mi-voix,

Cependant qu'immobile, une tulipe aux doigts, Elle écoute mourir en elle leur mystère...

Elle est là résignée, et douce, et sans surprise, Sachant trop pour lutter comme tout est fatal,

Versailles

Oh Versailles, on this pale afternoon, why, why does the memory of you obsess me so? Summer's heat grows distant, and see

how the fading season bends towards us.

I want to see once more, for one untroubled day, your blue-green waters strewn with reddened leaves, and breathe again, on an evening softened with gold,

your beauty more poignant at the year's decline.

Like a great lily you die, noble and sad, soundless; and your weary water at the mildewed edge of the ponds drains away, soft as a sob in the night.

My soul

My Soul is an infanta all in finery, whose exile is reflected,

eternal and majestic, in the vast abandoned mirrors of an old Spanish palace, like a galley forgotten in

the harbour.

Her favourite page, whose name is Once Upon a Time, reads her enchanting

poems in a soft voice, while, motionless, a tulip

held between her fingers, she hears their wonder die within her...

There she is, resigned, and quiet, and unsurprised, knowing too much to fight since everything is fatal, Et se sentant, malgré quelque dédain natal, Sensible à la pitié comme l'onde à la brise.

Elle est là résignée, et douce en ses sanglots, Plus sombre seulement quand

elle évoque en songe Quelque Armada sombrée à l'éternel mensonge,

Et tant de beaux espoirs endormis sous les flots.

Des soirs trop lourds de pourpre où sa fierté soupire,

Les portraits de Van Dyck aux beaux doigts longs et purs,

Pâles en velours noir sur l'or vieilli des murs,

En leurs grands airs défunts la font rêver d'empire.

Les vieux mirages d'or ont dissipé son deuil,

Et, dans les visions où son ennui s'échappe,

Soudain - gloire ou soleil - un rayon qui la frappe

Allume en elle tous les rubis de l'orgueil.

Mais d'un sourire triste elle apaise ces fièvres; Et, redoutant la foule aux tumultes de fer,

Elle écoute la vie - au loin comme la mer...

Et le secret se fait plus profond sur ses lèvres.

L'eau vaine des jets d'eau là-bas tombe en cascade.

Et, pâle à la croisée, une tulipe aux doigts,

Elle est là, reflétée aux miroirs d'autrefois, Ainsi qu'une galère oubliée en la rade.

Mon Ame est une infante en robe de parade.

and feeling, despite an innate disdain, sensitive to pity like water to the wind.

There she is, resigned, and quiet in her weeping, more sombre only when she conjures in dreams some Armada sinking into eternal illusion, and all those beautiful

hopes asleep beneath the waves.

On evenings heavy with crimson where her pride aches, portraits by Van Dyck with lovely long perfect

fingers, pale figures in black

velvet on the antique gold of the walls,

with their grand air of mourning, make her dream of empire.

The old golden mirages have diffused her mourning,

and, in the visions to which her boredom escapes, suddenly - glory or sunlight a ray that strikes her

lights up within her all the ruby jewels of vainglory.

But with a sad smile she quells these fevers; and, fearing the mob with its frenzy of iron, she listens to life - far away - like the sea... and the secret becomes still more hidden on her lips.

The vain water of the fountains below falls in cascades,

and, pale at the window, a tulip held in her fingers,

she is there, reflected in the mirrors of a time gone by, like a galley forgotten in the harbour.

My soul is an infanta all in finery.

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

Le couteau (1922) Camille Mauclair

J'ai un couteau dans l' cœur - Une belle, une belle l'a planté -J'ai un couteau dans l' cœur Et ne peux pas l'ôter.

C' couteau, c'est l'amour d'elle - Une belle, une belle l'a planté -Tout mon cœur sortirait Avec tout mon regret.

Il y faut un baiser. - Une belle, une belle l'a planté -Un baiser sur le cœur Mais ell' ne veut l' donner.

Couteau, reste en mon cœur Si la plus belle t'y a planté! J' veux bien me mourir d'elle, Mais j' veux pas l'oublier!

Ilda (1906) Albert Samain

Pâle comme un matin de septembre en Norvège, Elle avait la douceur magnétique du nord; Tout s'apaisait près d'elle en un tacite accord, Comme le bruit des pas s'étouffe dans la neige.

Son visage, par un étrange sortilège, Avait pris dès l'enfance et

gardait sans efforts Un peu de la beauté sublime qu'ont les morts:

Et le rire près d'elle semblait sacrilège.

Triste avec passion, sur l'eau de ses grands yeux

Le songe errait comme un rameur silencieux.

Tout ce qui la touchait s'imprégnait de mystère.

The knife

I have a knife in my heart planted by her fair hand -I have a knife in my heart and cannot extract it.

This knife is her love planted by her fair hand my whole heart would fain escape with all my sorrow.

A kiss is needed. Her fair mouth planted it a kiss on my heart but she will not give it.

Knife - remain in my heart, since the fairest hand planted it there! I wish so much to die of her but do not wish to forget her!

llda

Pale as a September morning in Norway, she had the magnetic tenderness of the North; all became calm around her in silent accord, like the sound of footsteps muffled by snow.

Her face, by a strange sorcery, had since childhood taken on and effortlessly kept

a little of the sublime beauty of the dead; and laughter near her seemed like sacrilege.

Disconsolate with passion, on the waters of her wide eyes dream drifted like a silent oarsman.

All that touched her was charged with mystery.

Et si douce, enroulant ses boucles à ses doigts, Avec une pudeur farouche de sa voix, Elle vivait pour la volupté de se taire.

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Les berceaux Op. 23 No. 1 (1879) Sully Prudhomme

Le long du quai les grands vaisseaux, Que la houle incline en silence, Ne prennent pas garde aux berceaux Que la main des femmes balance.

Mais viendra le jour des adieux, Car il faut que les femmes pleurent, Et que les hommes

curieux Tentent les horizons qui leurrent.

Et ce jour-là les grands vaisseaux, Fuyant le port qui diminue, Sentent leur masse retenue Par l'âme des lointains berceaux.

The cradles

Along the quay the great ships, listing silently with the surge, pay no heed to the cradles rocked by women's hands.

But the day of parting will come, for it is decreed that women shall weep, and that men with questing spirits shall seek enticing horizons.

And on that day the great ships, leaving the dwindling harbour behind, shall feel their hulls held back by the soul of the distant cradles.

Liza Lehmann (1862-1918)

I dreamt my love was singing from Breton Folk-Songs (pub. 1909) Frances Marion Gostling

I dreamt my love singing down by the sea, His voice was sweeter far than the blackbird's on the tree; I wove a charm about him, but he came not at my spell, His voice died away in the moaning of the swell.

And all day have I waited by the desolate sea-foam, But the only voice I hear is the sea-gull's flying home, As his lonely wings flap o'er me in the pearl grey height, Till the waves sink to rest at the hushing of the night.

And so sweet, winding her curls around her fingers, with an unassailable reticence to her voice, she lived for the pleasure of staying silent.

Dusk in the valley

George Meredith

Lovely are the curves of the white owl sweeping Wavy in the dusk lit by one large star. Lone in the fir-branch, his rattle-note unvaried, Brooding o'er the gloom, spins the brown evejar. Darker grows the valley, more and more forgetting: So were it with me if forgetting could be will'd.

Evensong (pub. 1916) Constance Morgan

Fold your white wings, dear Angels, Fold your white wings; Dew falls and nightingale softly now sings. Across the lawn lie shadows, so still, so deep, Dear loving Angels, pass not by, Hush me to sleep. Night falls, and whisp'ring goes the wind Along the sea; Fold your white wings, dear Angels, Fold them, dear Angels, Fold them round me.

When I am Dead, My Dearest (1918) Christina Rossetti

Chilistina Rossetti

When I am dead, my dearest, Sing no sad songs for me; Plant thou no roses at my head, Nor shady cypress tree: Be the green grass above me With showers and dewdrops wet; And if thou wilt, remember, And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows, I shall not feel the rain; I shall not hear the nightingale Sing on, as if in pain: And dreaming through the twilight That doth not rise nor set, Haply I may remember, And haply may forget.

Nadia Boulanger & Raoul Pugno (1852-1914)

Vous m'avez dit from Les heures claires (1909)

Émile Verhaeren

Vous m'avez dit, tel soir, des paroles si belles You said to me, that night, words so le Que sans doute les fleurs, qui se penchaient vers nous, flowers, which in

Soudain nous ont aimés et que l'une d'entre elles, Pour nous toucher tous deux, tomba sur nos genoux.

Vous me parliez des temps prochains où nos années, Comme des fruits trop mûrs, se laisseraient cueillir;

Comment éclaterait le glas des destinées,

Et comme on s'aimerait, en se sentant vieillir.

Votre voix m'enlaçait comme une chère étreinte, Et votre cœur brûlait si

tranquillement beau

Qu'en ce moment, j'aurais pu voir s'ouvrir sans crainte

Les tortueux chemins qui vont vers le tombeau.

You said to me from The bright hours

You said to me, that night, words so lovely that doubtless the flowers, which inclined towards us, suddenly fell in love with us and one among them,

in order to touch us both, fell into our laps.

You spoke to me of the time to come when our years, like overripe fruit, would come to be gathered; how the tolling bell of the fates would crack, and how we would love one another, feeling ourselves grow old.

Your voice encircled me like a beloved embrace, and your heart blazed with such serene beauty that in that moment, I could have beheld unfolding without fear the winding paths that lead towards the tomb.

Lili Boulanger (1893-1918)

Reflets (1911)

Maurice Maeterlinck

Sous l'eau du songe qui s'élève Mon âme a peur, mon âme a peur. Et la lune luit dans mon cœur Plongé dans les sources du rêve! Sous l'ennui morne des roseaux, Seul le reflet profond des choses, Des lys, des palmes et des roses Pleurent encore au fond des eaux.

Les fleurs s'effeuillent une à une Sur le reflet du firmament. Pour descendre, éternellement Sous l'eau du songe et dans la lune.

Le retour (1912) Georges Delaquys

Ulysse part la voile au vent, Vers Ithaque aux ondes chéries, Avec des bercements la vague roule et plie. Au large de son coeur la mer aux vastes eaux Où son oeil suit les blancs oiseaux Egrène au loin des pierreries.

Ulysse part la voile au vent, Vers Ithaque aux ondes chéries!

Penché oeil grave et coeur battant Sur le bec d'or de sa galère Il se rit, quand le flot est noir, de sa colère Car là-bas son cher fils pieux et fier attend

Après les combats éclatants,

Reflections

Beneath the water of the dream that rises, my soul is afraid, my soul is afraid. And the moon shines into my heart that is bathed in the dream's source!

Beneath the sad tedium of the reeds, only the deep reflection of things, of lilies, palms and roses, still weep on the water's bed.

One by one the flowers shed their leaves upon the firmament's reflection to descend, eternally, beneath the dream's water and into the moon.

The return

Ulysses sets out, sails to the wind, towards Ithaca on beloved waves, which rise and fall and sway. Before the open sea of his heart, the vast ocean, where his eyes follow the white birds, scatters in the distance precious jewels. Ulysses sets out, sails to

towards Ithaca on beloved waves.

Leaning, with serious gaze and beating heart, on the golden prow of his boat,

he laughs at his anger, when black waves threaten,

for yonder his dear, devout and proud son awaits, after astounding victories, La victoire aux bras de son père. Il songe, oeil grave et coeur battant Sur le bec d'or de sa galère.

Ulysse part la voile au vent, Vers Ithaque aux ondes chéries.

Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979)

Down by the Salley Gardens (1919) WB Yeats

Down by the salley gardens my love and I did meet; She passed the salley gardens with little snow-white feet. She bid me take love easy as the leaves grow on the tree; But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree.

In a field by the river my love and I did stand, And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white hand. She bid me take life easy as the grass grows on the weirs; But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears.

Nadia Boulanger

Doute (1922) Séverin Faust

II y a si longtemps Que ton âme est en chemin, A ce que m'ont dit les anges, Vers moi qui l'attends En joignant les mains,

Il y a si longtemps Que peut-être elle perdit la route Puisque je ne vois rien Au lointain des quatre chemins Qui font croix au carrefour du doute.

Voici venir le souffle froid Qui chasse oiseaux, soleil et feuilles, Et ramène brouillard et deuil Sur mon espoir et sur ma foi: Faudra-t-il m'en aller comme un qui n'attend plus Et s'en retourne, en la nullité de la nuit,

Vers la maison et vers l'ennui?

Doubt

From what the angels tell me, your soul has been so long on its way to me – and I await it with joined hands.

So long that it has perhaps lost its way, since I see nothing far away at the four roads which meet at the crossroads of doubt.

The cold wind now blows, chasing birds, sun and leaves and bringing mist and mourning to my hope and my faith: must I depart like one who can no longer wait and who returns, in the nullity of night, to his home and his ennui?

his triumphant father. He dreams, with serious gaze and beating heart, By the golden prow of his boat.

Ulysses sets out, sails to the wind, towards Ithaca on beloved waves.

Désespérance (1902) Paul Verlaine

Un grand sommeil noir Tombe sur ma vie: Dormez, tout espoir, Dormez, toute envie!

Je ne vois plus rien, Je perds la mémoire Du mal et du bien... O la triste histoire!

Je suis un berceau Qu'une main balance Au creux d'un caveau: Silence, silence!

Soleils couchants (1907) Paul Verlaine

Une aube affaiblie Verse par les champs La mélancolie Des soleils couchants. La mélancolie Berce de doux chants Mon cœur qui s'oublie Aux soleils couchants. Et d'étranges rêves, Comme des soleils Couchants sur les grèves, Fantômes vermeils, Défilent sans trêves, Défilent, pareils A des grands soleils Couchants sur les grèves.

Cantique (1909) Maurice Maeterlinck

A toute âme qui pleure, A tout péché qui passe, J'ouvre au sein des étoiles Mes mains pleines de grâces.

Il n'est péché qui vive Quand l'amour a parlé; Il n'est âme qui meure Quand l'amour a pleuré...

Et si l'amour s'égare Aux sentiers d'ici-bas, Ses larmes me retrouvent Et ne s'égarent pas...

Despair

A vast dark sleep falls on my life; slumber, all hope, slumber, all desire!

I have lost my sight, all memories fail of good and evil... Oh dismal tale!

I am a cradle rocked by a hand in a hollow vault: silence, silence!

Setting suns

A fading dawn pours over the fields the gloom of setting suns. The gloom lulls with sweet songs my heart which abandons itself to the setting suns. And from strange dreams, like the suns setting on the banks, crimson phantoms file past unendingly, file past, just like the vast suns setting on the banks.

Hymn

To every weeping soul, to every passing sin, I open my hands full of grace, surrounded by stars.

Sins cannot abide when love has spoken; souls cannot die when love has wept...

And if love loses its way along terrestrial paths, its tears will find me and not go astray...

Mon cœur (1906) Albert Samain

Mon cœur, tremblant des lendemains, Est comme un oiseau dans tes mains Qui s'effarouche et qui frissonne.

Il est si timide qu'il faut Ne lui parler que pas trop haut Pour que sans crainte il s'abandonne.

Un mot suffit à le navrer, Un regard en lui fait vibrer Une inexprimable amertume.

Et ton haleine seulement, Quand tu lui parles doucement, Le fait trembler comme une plume.

Et quand tu le ferais souffrir Jusqu'à saigner, jusqu'à mourir, Tu pourrais en garder le doute,

Et de sa peine ne savoir Qu'une larme tombée un soir Sur ton gant taché d'une goutte.

My heart

My heart, fearing the future, is like a bird in your hands

that startles and shivers.

It is so skittish that you must only speak gently to it, so it may surrender without fear.

One word is enough to dispirit it, one look makes an inexpressible bitterness pulse within it.

And just your breath, when you speak softly to it, makes it tremble like a feather.

And should you wound it to the point of blood, to the point of death, you might still not be sure,

And know nothing of its pain but a tear that fell one evening onto your glove, stained with a single drop.

Translations of all Nadia Boulanger except where indicated by Jean du Monde. 'Le couteau', 'Doute', 'Désespérance', 'Cantique' and Lili Boulanger by Richard Stokes. Fauré by Richard Stokes from A French Song Companion (Johnson/Stokes) published by OUP.