

WIGMORE HALL

Monday 4 March 2024
1.00pm

Lullabies

Lucile Richardot mezzo-soprano
Anne de Fornel piano

Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979)

Versailles (1906)

Mon âme (1906)

Le couteau (1922)

Ilda (1906)

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Les berceaux Op. 23 No. 1 (1879)

Liza Lehmann (1862-1918)

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)

Nadia Boulanger

& Raoul Pugno (1852-1914)

Lili Boulanger (1893-1918)

Reflets (1911)

Le retour (1912)

Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979)

Down by the Salley Gardens (1919)

Nadia Boulanger

Doute (1922)

Désespérance (1902)

Soleils couchants (1907)

Cantique (1909)

Mon cœur (1906)



This concert is being broadcast on BBC Radio 3



Our Audience Fund provides essential unrestricted support for our artistic and learning programmes, connecting thousands of people with music locally, nationally, and internationally. We rely on the generosity of our audience to raise £150,000 each year to support this work. Your gifts are, and continue to be, indispensable.

To donate, please visit <https://wigmore-hall.org.uk/audiencefund>

Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management.

In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions.

Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141.

Wigmore Hall is equipped with a 'Loop' to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.



Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other electrical devices which can become audible are switched off. Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • Wigmore-hall.org.uk • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG
Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



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-Élysées 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.

© Dr Laura Hamer 2024

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.