

WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 5 May 2024
3.00pm

Royal College of Music Song Recital The Fragility of Life

Madeline Boreham soprano
Charlotte Jane Kennedy soprano
Eyra Norman soprano
Lexie Moon mezzo-soprano
Hugo Brady tenor
Sam Hird baritone
Archie Bonham piano
Francesca Lauri piano

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912)

6 Sorrow Songs Op. 57 (1904)

*Oh what comes over the sea • When I am dead,
my dearest • Oh roses for the flush of youth •
She sat and sang away • Unmindful of the roses •
Too late for love*

Helen Grime (b.1981)

Bright Travellers (2017)

*Soundings • Brew • Visitations • Milk Fever •
Council Offices*

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Nourmahal's Song

Joseph Horovitz (1926-2022)

Foie-gras (1974)

Malicious madrigal (1970)



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This afternoon, RCM singers give a recital featuring music by RCM alumni Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Joseph Horovitz and Helen Grime. At the heart of the recital is Coleridge-Taylor's 'Nourmahal's Song', a discovery made in the RCM Library in 2022.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor studied at the Royal College of Music between 1890 and 1897 and can be described as one of the College's earliest success stories. Mentored by Charles Villiers Stanford, he gained an important status as a prominent Black musician in late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain.

6 *Sorrow Songs*, published in 1906, was dedicated to Coleridge-Taylor's wife Jessie Walmisley, whom he met at the College as a student. Prior to writing the songs, Coleridge-Taylor read WEB Du Bois's (1868-1963) book *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and declared it 'about the finest book I have ever read by a coloured man, and one of the best by any author, white or Black'. This groundbreaking volume included a chapter devoted to slave songs called *Sorrow Songs*. It introduced the reader to the idea of 'double consciousness', describing how Black people see themselves through the eyes of white society. The text, addressing themes of love, death and spirituality, was taken from the melancholic poetry of one of the most esteemed English female writers of the Victorian era, Christina Rossetti (1830-1894).

The unique and important collections housed in the RCM Library were at the centre of a thrilling discovery in 2022 when Coleridge-Taylor's 'Nourmahal's Song', a previously unknown work, was found by Assistant Librarian Jonathan Frank. The work utilises text from the poem *Lalla Rookh* by Irish writer Thomas Moore (1779-1852). It tells the story of Lalla Rookh, who is engaged to a young king but falls in love with a poet called Feramorz. The annotations on the manuscript suggest this dramatic song was intended to have an orchestral accompaniment, but none exists today. Its world première took place in the RCM's Amaryllis Fleming Concert Hall in July 2023. Today's significant performance is the first outside College walls. 'Nourmahal's Song' is currently on display in the RCM Library.

Award-winning composer **Helen Grime** studied with Julian Anderson and Edwin Roxburgh at the

RCM, later becoming a Junior Fellow. *Bright Travellers* was inspired by the remarkable and emotive collection of poems of the same name by Fiona Benson. Following the birth of her son, Helen Grime happened upon this collection and was particularly moved by the poems concerning pregnancy and early motherhood, depicting moments from the first scan to registering the child's birth. Helen remarked of the texts that they are 'direct, sometimes funny and achingly beautiful and have a natural musicality about them'. The poems speak of personal experience, of joys and challenges weaving between a range of emotions.

Joseph Horovitz led a successful yet, in its early years, challenging life. He was one of a significant number of influential figures in post-war British musical life to be an émigré musician, forced to leave his Vienna homeland due to the rise of the Nazi regime in Europe. His connections with the RCM began after completing degrees at Oxford when he attended the College to study composition with Gordon Jacob; he went on to Paris to further his studies with Nadia Boulanger. In 1961 he returned to the RCM as a professor of composition, a post he held until 2017. He was a prolific and hugely admired composer and teacher, writing for a wide range of groups and occasions.

The concert ends with two of Horovitz's wittiest numbers. 'Foie-gras' was originally commissioned by the Cheltenham International Music Festival in 1974, where the King's Singers presented works based on the seven deadly sins. Each sin was allotted to a different composer, and Horovitz, at the prompting of his wife, chose gluttony. The original work had two sections, the first of which was 'Foie-gras'. It sets a text by Michael Flanders (1922-1975), a lyricist, actor and singer. The original version was written as a vocal sextet, but it was reset as the solo song with piano as heard today. The duet 'Malicious madrigal', subtitled 'Freddy and Jane', was written for unison or two-part voices and piano and was published as the music supplement to *The Musical Times* in 1970. The song is a commentary on the sad end of a relationship.

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Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912)

6 Sorrow Songs Op. 57 (1904)

Christina Rossetti

Oh what comes over the sea

Oh what comes over the sea,
Shoals and quicksands past;
And what comes home to me,
Sailing slow, sailing fast?

A wind comes over the sea
With a moan in its blast;
But nothing comes home to me,
Sailing slow, sailing fast.

Let me be, let me be,
For my lot is cast:
Land or sea all's one to me,
And sail it slow or fast.

Let me be, let me be, let me be.

When I am dead, my dearest

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.

Oh roses for the flush of youth

O roses for the flush of youth,
And laurel for the perfect prime;
But pluck an ivy branch for me
Grown old before my time.

O violets for the grave of youth,
And bay for those dead in their prime;
Give me the withered leaves I chose
Before in the old time.

She sat and sang away

She sat and sang away
By the green margin of a stream,
Watching the fishes leap and play
Beneath the glad sunbeam.

I sat and wept away
Beneath the moon's most shadowy beam,
Watching the blossoms of the May
Weep leaves into the stream.

I wept for memory;
She sang for hope that is so fair:
My tears were swallowed by the sea;
Her songs died on the air.

Unmindful of the roses

Unmindful of the roses,
Unmindful of the thorn,
A reaper tired reposes
Among his gathered corn:
So might I, till the morn!

Cold as the cold Decembers,
Past as the days that set,
While only one remembers
And all the rest forget, -
But one remembers yet.

Too late for love

Too late for love, too late for joy,
Too late, too late!
You loitered on the way too long,
You trifled at the gate:
The enchanted dove upon her branch
Died without a mate;
The enchanted princess in her tower
Slept, died, behind the grate;
Her heart was starving all this while
You made it wait.

Ten years ago, five years ago,
One year ago,
E'en then you had arrived in time,
Though somewhat slow;
Then you had known her living face
Which now you cannot know:
The frozen fountain would have leaped,
The buds gone on to blow,
The warm south wind would have awaked
To melt the snow.

Song continues overleaf. Please turn the page as quietly as possible.

You should have wept her yesterday,
Wasting upon her bed:
But wherefore should you weep today
That she is dead?
Lo, we who love weep not today,
But crown her royal head.
Let be these poppies that we strew,
Your roses are too red:
Let be these poppies, not for you
Cut down and spread.

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Helen Grime (b.1981)

Bright Travellers (2017)

Fiona Benson

Soundings

There's a leveret in the field.
I know it by its mother's haunt at dusk ...

Brew

Hunched genie in the lamp of my womb
taking on bone till your spine glows ...

Visitations

She stares
over my left shoulder
into blank corners ...

Milk Fever

When she screams
I can't help it ...

Council Offices

The registrar asks
If this is our *first*
live-born child ...

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Nourmahal's Song

Thomas Moore

Fly to the desert, fly with me,
Our Arab tents are rude for thee;
But, oh! the choice, what heart can doubt of tents
with love, and thrones without?
Our rocks are rough, but smiling there th'accacia
waves her yellow hair;
Lonely and sweet, nor loved the less
For flow'ring in a wilderness.

Then come, then come, thy Arab maid will be the
loved and lone acaccia tree,
The antelope, whose feet shall bless, shall bless with
their light sound thy loneliness.

Then fly to the desert, fly with me! if thou hast known
No other flame, nor falsely thrown away a gem that
thou hadst sworn should ever in thy heart be worn.

Come if the love thou hadst for me
Is pure and fresh as mine for thee;
Fresh as the fountain underground when first 'tis by
the lapwing found.

Then come, then come, thy Arab maid will be the
loved and lone acaccia tree,
The antelope, whose feet shall bless, shall bless with
their light sound thy loneliness.

Joseph Horowitz (1926-2022)

Foie-gras (1974)

Michael Flanders

At the Auberge 'Saint-Louis' the food is soigné, four
star! Four star!

The chef is renowned for his spécialités, ma foi! Ma
foi!

My Lord the Archbishop is coming to dine,
So lay out the linen, the silver, the wine,
Gigantic terrines of obscenely divine
Foie-gras! Foie-gras, foie-gras!

The maître d'hôtel has the eye of an eagle:
'Maladroit! Maladroit!'

He inspects every dish, before giving a regal 'Ça va,
ça va!'

The guests are assembled and greet with applause
Each mountain of food as it comes through the
doors,

Oh, the licking of chops and the champing of jaws
And foie-gras, pâté de foie-gras!

Foie-gras, foie-gras,
There are geese up in Strasbourg we all have to
thank, n'est pas? C'est ça,
Who stand with their feet firmly nailed to a plank;
hélas! Hélas!
While rosy cheeked village girls cram them with corn
At noon and at midnight, at sunset and dawn
Till they get the cirrhosis from which there is born
Foie-gras! Foie-gras! Foie-gras!

Foie-gras, foie-gras,
In the beechwoods of Périgord deep underground,
là-bas! Là-bas,
The truffles we add to these livers are found, ooh la
la! Yes, they are –
To enhance the pâté of the very first grade,
Rooted out and disgorged by some pig in a glade
And the swine who will eat it knows just how it's
made –
De Foie-gras! Foie-gras, foie-gras, pâté de foie-gras!

In the backstreets of Hell stands a brash brasserie:
'Belshazar! Belshazar!'
Where my Lord and his guests at all hours you may
see, by the bar, yes, there they are!
Stretched out on hot toast racks basted with grease,
While ganders make snacks of their livers obese,
And the more the geese gobble the more they
increase!
Ha, ha, ha! O ma foi! Ça ira!
Encore un fois! So it's 'bon appetit' and 'service
compris'
At the bar, ha, ha, ha, ha, foie-gras!

Malicious madrigal (1970)

Alistair Sampson

Freddy and Jane have called it quits,
Sing hey for the love that's dead.
Their little romance is smashed to bits,
Sing ho for the banns unread.
Sing hey for the ring that won't be worn,
Sing ho for the child that won't be born,
Sing hey, sing ho for a pair forlorn,
And the Bestman's speech unsaid!

Freddy and Jane have said goodbye,
How sad it was I know.
But here is an eye that stays quite dry as it watches
Freddy go.
Sing hey for the two young hearts that crack,
Sing ho for the veil they won't unpack,
Sing hey for the wedding gifts sent back,
Sing hey, deliciously ho-ly ho!

Freddy and Jane are such good friends whenever
they chance to meet.
Sing hey for the great affair that ends with a tearful
smile in the street.
Sing ho for the girl who won't have me,

Sing hey for the man she longs to see,
Sing hey, sing ho, and a tee hee hee!
Sing hey for revenge is sweet, is sweet,
Sing hey, sing ho, sing hey for revenge is sweet.