

# WIGMORE HALL

Monday 6 May 2024  
1.00pm

## A String through Time

Hugh Cutting countertenor  
Tara Viscardi harp  
Daniel Murphy guitar, lute  
Leo Appel viola

John Denver (1943-1997)

Thought of You (1983)

Reynaldo Hahn (1874-1947)

Le rossignol des lilas (1913)  
Tyndaris from *Etudes latines* (1900)

Ernest Chausson (1855-1899)

Hébé Op. 2 No. 6 (1882)

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Romance: Les cloches (1885)

John Dowland (1563-1626)

Time stands still (pub. 1603) *arranged by Tara Viscardi*

Piers Connor Kennedy (b.1991)

five flowers (2024) *world première*  
Co-commissioned by BBC Radio 3 and Wigmore Hall  
*Vertigo • Counting the Beats • six • Not Yet • Slowed-down Blackbird*

Nico Muhly (b.1981)

Old bones (2013)

Tara Viscardi

Midnight over Glanmore Lake (2023)

Trad/Irish

Siúil a Rúin *arranged by Tara Viscardi and Hugh Cutting*

Trad/English

The Lark in the Morning *arranged by Tara Viscardi and Hugh Cutting*

John Denver

Poems, Prayers and Promises (1971)



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Today, we're focused on time, and our experience of it. Song seems a good means of examining time; music exists in a present moment, but transports us effortlessly to distant eras, places, and memories – even to imagined time outside of our individual experience...

**John Denver's** 'Thought of You' introduces the central notion in our programme, namely that we can experience time as a continuum. Whilst we exist in the present, the past and the future exist within us as memories and potential – we project back and forth along that continuum. In this song, a thought brings the speaker back in time to an old relationship: 'the thought of you brings it all my way'. They're stuck in a cycle, unable to 'erase' their love. This cyclical nature is reinforced as the opening line is repeated as the final utterance: 'it's been almost a year since that beautiful weekend, it was more than a lifetime ago.'

**Hahn's** fondness for archaisms is well-documented and evident in his sound world. In 'Le rossignol des lilas', the speaker is brought back to 'Aprils past' by the nightingale's song. **Debussy's** 'Les cloches' tells a similar story, instead with the sound of church bells evoking 'happy years' which 'revive the forest's withered leaves'.

'Tyndaris' is one of the *Etudes latines*, its text depicting a classical idyll; the speaker is demonstrative in their temporal placing of this scene – 'the Gods love the Latin muses'. It's also an example of a text rooted in the present moment: 'Come...it is sweet to sleep to the sound of running springs.' In 'Hébé', **Chausson** evokes the young cupbearer pouring this mystical wine for a godly banquet in Olympus. Mortals long for this wine (a metaphor for youth), but time turns back for nobody.

**Dowland's** 'Time stands still', here arranged for solo harp, shows the same moment ebbing and flowing countless times as you look on at your lover's face; time is held by an emotional response.

**Piers Connor Kennedy** writes: '*five flowers* sets five poems from the 20th and 21st Centuries, each exploring different perspectives on time – or should that be Time? I think the poems' individual beauty is magnified by the dissonance created by their juxtaposition – as they jostle, the effect is that each movement appears as an isolated perspective, so sure of itself, and yet also so fragile by comparison. Time is presented as malleable, unpredictable, inevitable (and therefore terrifying), eternal (and therefore comforting), bewildering, prone to human fallibility, and such. In the end, it seems that Time is really about life and death. Or the other way around.'

**Nico Muhly** wrote 'Old bones' in response to the exhuming of Richard III in 2012. The discovery of Richard's body in a Leicester car park led to a re-examination of his life. The narrative includes a contemporaneous tale of Richard's death,

highlighting the brutality associated with his reign. Philippa Langley, a Richard enthusiast, feels an intimate connection to him as she prepares a screenplay about him. Archaeology affords us a physical connection to the past, allowing for a reconsideration of historical figures. The piece explores how histories are written, and challenges unequivocal interpretations of the past – and how we can apply that nuance today.

**Tara Viscardi** writes: '*Midnight over Glanmore Lake* is part of a suite inspired by the Beara Peninsula in the South-West of Ireland. Glanmore Lake is found in Lauragh, Co. Kerry, positioned down a sprawling valley and set between the imposing Cahahinch mountains. This piece imagines moonlight shimmering on the lake at midnight, where the reflection of the mountains is hazy on the surface. My compositions address universal themes of homecoming and place, as well as being influenced by local folklore.'

Folk music's tension of tradition and innovation is part of what gives it its flair; we workshopped these arrangements at length, so I'm grateful to the players for sticking with them! In 'Siúil a Rúin', the speaker is caught in a dichotomy; she wants to support her lover in his military career, but at the same time laments the day he leaves her to go abroad. Time is both precious, and an inevitable sentence. In 'The Lark in the Morning', the daily routine of the lark is contrasted with the growing relationship of Roger and Susan, following their meeting, sexual encounter and child's birth. The predictability of nature is a backdrop to the dramatic developments in a human life.

We close with John Denver's 'Poems, Prayers and Promises', the title song from his 1971 album. Ultimately, this text looks to the future: 'although my life's been good to me, there's still so much to do'. But I don't think this is a simple case of considering all the good the future holds for its own sake. The chorus goes: 'and talk of poems and prayers and promises, and things that we believe in; how sweet it is to love someone, how right it is to care'; this, really, is how we deal with time: our days are finite, but they give us the chance to express our humanity, especially the phrase 'how right it is to care'. Although time marches on, it's also the means by which we can articulate our lives – we can use our pasts, presents and futures, they're tools for us to discover who we are, and who we might be.

I guess the voice/viola/guitar/harp ensemble is an on-the-nose metaphor for the 'string' idea of the programme, alluding to this concept of the continuum: strings are present in each instrument, they're just used differently (plucked, bowed, vibrated via the breath etc). But, frankly, I just love these instruments and was curious to see how they combined.

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## John Denver (1943-1997)

### Thought of You (1983)

John Denver

It's been almost a year since that beautiful

It was more than a lifetime ago ...

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## Reynaldo Hahn (1874-1947)

### Le rossignol des lilas

(1913)

Léopold Dauphin

O premier rossignol qui  
viens  
Dans les lilas, sous ma  
fenêtre,  
Ta voix m'est douce à  
reconnaître!  
Nul accent n'est semblable  
au tien!

Fidèle aux amoureux  
liens,  
Trille encore, divin  
petit être!  
O premier rossignol qui  
viens  
Dans les lilas, sous  
ma fenêtre!

Nocturne ou matinal,  
combien  
Ton hymne à l'amour me  
pénètre!  
Tant d'ardeur fait en moi  
renaître  
L'écho de mes avrils  
anciens,  
O premier rossignol qui  
viens!

### The nightingale among the lilac

O first nightingale to  
appear  
among the lilac beneath  
my window,  
how sweet to recognise  
your voice!  
There is no song like  
yours!

Faithful to the bonds of  
love,  
trill away, divine little  
being!  
O first nightingale to  
appear  
among the lilac beneath  
my window!

Night or morning – O how  
your hymn to love strikes  
at my heart!  
Such ardour reawakens in  
me  
echoes of my Aprils past,  
O first nightingale to  
appear!

### Tyndaris from *Etudes latines* (1900)

Leconte de Lisle

O blanche Tyndaris, les  
Dieux me sont amis:  
Ils aiment les Muses  
Latines;  
Et l'aneth, et le myrte et le  
thym des collines  
Croissent aux prés qu'ils  
m'ont soumis.

O white Tyndaris, the  
Gods are friends to me:  
they love the Latin Muses;  
and dill and myrtle and  
thyme from the hills  
thrive in the meadows  
they gave me.

Viens! mes ramiers chéris,  
aux voluptés  
plaintives,  
Ici se plaisent à  
gémir;  
Et sous l'épais feuillage  
il est doux  
de dormir  
Au bruit des sources  
fugitives.

Come! My beloved ring-  
doves, delighting in  
grief,  
here are pleased to moan;  
and beneath dense  
leaves it is sweet to  
sleep  
to the sound of running  
springs.

## Ernest Chausson (1855-1899)

### Hébé Op. 2 No. 6 (1882)

Louise-Victorine Ackermann

Les yeux baissés,  
rougissante et candide,  
Vers leur banquet quand  
Hébé s'avavançait.  
Les Dieux charmés  
tendaient leur  
coupe vide,  
Et de nectar  
l'enfant la  
remplissait.

Nous tous aussi, quand  
passe la jeunesse,  
Nous lui tendons notre  
coupe à l'envi.  
Quel est le vin qu'y verse la  
déesse?  
Nous l'ignorons; il enivre  
et ravit.

Ayant souri dans sa grâce  
immortelle,  
Hébé s'éloigne; on la  
rappelle  
en vain.  
Longtemps encor sur la  
route éternelle,  
Notre œil en pleurs  
suit l'échanson  
divin.

When Hebe, guileless and  
with lowered gaze,  
blushingly drew near  
their feast,  
the delighted gods  
proffered empty  
goblets  
which the child  
replenished with  
nectar.

And we too, when youth  
fades,  
vie in proffering her our  
goblets.  
What is the wine she  
dispenses?  
We do not know; it elates  
and enraptures.

Having smiled with her  
immortal grace,  
Hebe goes on her way -  
you summon her in  
vain.  
For a long time still on the  
eternal path,  
we follow the gods' cup-  
bearer with weeping  
eyes.

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

## Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

### Romance: Les cloches (1885)

Paul Bourget

Les feuilles s'ouvraient sur  
le bord des  
branches,  
Délicatement.  
Les cloches tintaient,  
légères et franches,  
Dans le ciel clément.

### Romance: The bells

The leaves opened upon  
the edge of the  
branches,  
delicately.  
The bells rang,  
light and free,  
in the clear sky.

Rythmique et  
fervent comme  
une antienne,  
Ce lointain appel  
Me remémorait la  
blancheur chrétienne  
Des fleurs de l'autel.

Rhythmically and  
fervently, like  
an antiphon,  
this distant call  
reminded me of the  
Christian whiteness  
of altar flowers.

Ces cloches parlaient  
d'heureuses années,  
Et, dans le grand bois,  
Semblaient reverdir les  
feuilles fanées  
Des jours d'autrefois.

These bells told of  
happy years,  
and, in the great forest,  
seemed to revive the  
withered leaves  
of days gone by.

## John Dowland (1563-1626)

### Time stands still (pub. 1603)

arranged by Tara Viscardi

Anonymous

Time stands still with gazing on her face  
Stand still and gaze for minutes  
Hours and yeares, to give her place  
All other things shall change  
But she remains the same  
Till heavens changed have their course  
And time hath lost his name.  
Cupid doth hover up and downe  
Blinded with her faire eyes  
And fortune captive at her feete  
Contem'd and conquer'd lies.

When fortune, love and time attend on  
Her with my fortunes, love, and time  
I honour will alone  
If bloudlesse envie say  
Dutie hath no desert.  
Dutie replies that envie knows  
Her selfe his faithfull heart  
My setled vowes and spotlesse faith  
No fortune can remove  
Courage shall show my inward faith

And faith shall trie my love.

## Piers Connor Kennedy (b.1991)

### five flowers (2024) world première

### Vertigo

Alice Oswald

May I shuffle forward and tell you the two-minute  
life of rain  
starting right now lips open and lidless-cold all-  
seeing gaze

when something not yet anything changes its mind  
like me  
and begins to fall  
in the small hours

and the light is still a flying carpet  
only a little white between worlds like an eye  
opening  
after an operation

no turning back  
each drop is a snap decision  
a suicide from the tower-block of heaven

and for the next ten seconds  
the rain stares at the ground

sees me stirring here  
as if sculpted in porridge

sees the garden in the green of its mind already  
drinking  
and the grass lengthening

stalls

maybe a thousand feet above me  
a kind of yellowness or levity  
like those tiny alterations that brush the legs of  
swimmers  
lifts the rain a little to the left

no more than a flash of free-will  
until the clouds close their options and the whole

melancholy air  
surrenders to pure fear and  
falls

### Counting the Beats

Robert Graves

You, love, and I,

(He whispers) you and I,  
And if no more than only you and I  
What care you or I?

Counting the beats,  
Counting the slow heart beats,  
The bleeding to death of time in slow heart beats,  
Wakeful they lie.

Cloudless day,  
Night, and a cloudless day;  
Yet the huge storm will burst upon their heads one  
day  
From a bitter sky.

Where shall we be,  
(She whispers) where shall we be,  
When death strikes home, O where then shall we  
be  
Who were you and I?

Not there but here,  
(He whispers) only here,  
As we are, here, together, now and here,  
Always you and I.

Counting the beats,  
Counting the slow heart beats,  
The bleeding to death of time in slow heart beats,  
Wakeful they lie.

## **six** *EE Cummings*

six

are in a room's dark around)  
five

(are all dancesing singdance all are

three  
with faces made of cloud dancing and  
three  
singing with voices made of earth and

six are in a room's dark around)

five  
(six are in a room's)  
one

is red

and(six are in)  
four are

white

(three singdance six dancesing three  
all around around all  
clouds singing three and  
and three dancing earths

three menandwomen three

and all around all and  
all around five all  
around five around)

five flowers five

(six are in a room's dark)  
all five are one

flowers five flowers and all one is fire

## **Not Yet** *Stephen Romer*

Take this moment aside  
from the dailiness of the days

Run your finger on the dressing table glass  
to gather a smidgen of dust

A block of sheer granite fallen:  
The albums I cannot open  
The letters I cannot read

Not yet, I say, not yet,  
now is not the time but there will be time  
there will one day be time  
there will be  
presumably  
one day  
time

## **Slowed-down Blackbird** *Alice Oswald*

Three people in the snow  
getting rid of themselves  
breath by breath

and every six seconds a blackbird

three people in raincoats losing their tracks in the  
snow  
walking as far as the edge and back again  
with the trees exhausted  
tapping at the sky

and every six seconds a blackbird

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

first three then two  
passing one eye between them  
and the eye is a white eraser rubbing them away

and on the edge a blackbird  
trying over and over its broken line  
trying over and over its broken line

**Nico Muhly** (b.1981)

**Old bones** (2013)

It is the academic conclusion that beyond reasonable doubt, the individual exhumed at Greyfriars in September 2012 is indeed Richard III, the last Plantagenet king of England.

They dug in that spot, and the leg bones were revealed.

Yes, I was overcome with emotion.

Everyone else was looking at old bones,  
I was looking at the real man,  
And I was seeing the man.

Now a young man has come to protect us from violence,

The Saint is a roofbeam over the three counties,  
Over lands, of Elidir's lineage.

All his factions are flowers for us;

Sir Rhys himself is a rose.

He is a man too in war,

He was a fearless young man.

There was a battle, like that of Peredur,

The Ravens of Urien prepared it.

King Henry won the day through the strength of our master:

He killed Englishmen, capable hand,

He killed the boar, he chopped off his head.

Sir Rhys like the stars of a shield

With the spear in their midst on a great steed.

I have loved the dubbed knight of Carmarthen,

The hawk of the fortress of gold and wine is loved by all.

When you're writing a screenplay, you walk 1,000 miles in their shoes every day. I wasn't interested in Richard's death, but in his life; I thought, 'I should go to Leicester'. The first time I stood in that car park, the strangest feeling just washed over me. I thought: 'I am standing on Richard's grave.' Richard wanted to be found. We know that he was working through the pain barrier every day just to do his job. That tells me about his character. I think the time is right. With our science, with our knowledge, with the time of the Paralympics; I think he was saying, 'Now you can

understand me. I'm ready, I'm ready to be reburied, and I'm ready to be found.'

Everyone else was looking at old bones, and I was seeing the man.

**Tara Viscardi**

**Midnight over Glanmore Lake** (2023)

**Trad/Irish**

**Siúil a Rúin**

*arranged by Tara Viscardi and Hugh Cutting*  
*Traditional*

I wish I was on yonder hill

'Tis there I'd sit and cry my fill

Until every tear would turn a mill

Is go dté tu, mo mhuirnín slán

Siúil, siúil, siúil a rúin

Siúil go socar agus siúil go ciúin

Siúil go doras agus éalaigh liom

Is go dté tu, mo mhuirnín slán

I'll sell my rock, I'll sell my reel

I'll sell my only spinning wheel

To buy my love a sword of steel

Is go dté tu, mo mhuirnín slán

Siúil, siúil, siúil a rúin ...

I wish, I wish, I wish in vain

I wish I had my heart again

And vainly think I'd not complain

Is go dté tu, mo mhuirnín slán

Siúil, siúil, siúil a rúin ...

But now my love has gone to France

To try his fortune to advance

If he e'er comes back, it is but a chance

Is go dté tu, mo mhuirnín slán

Siúil, siúil, siúil a rúin ...

## Trad/English

### The Lark in the Morning

*arranged by Tara Viscardi and Hugh Cutting*

*Traditional*

The lark in the morning, she rises off her nest  
She goes home in the evening with the dew all on  
her breast

And like the jolly ploughboy she whistles and she  
sings

She goes home in the evening with the dew all on  
her wings

Oh, Roger the ploughboy, he is a dashing blade  
He goes whistling and singing over yonder green  
blade

He met with pretty Susan, she's handsome I  
declare

She is far more enticing than the birds all in the air

The lark in the morning ...

One evening coming home from the rakes of the  
town

The meadow's been all green and the grass had  
been cut down

If I should chance to tumble all in the new mown  
hay

'Oh, it's kiss me now or never love', this bonnie lass  
did say

The lark in the morning ...

When twenty long weeks they were over and were  
past

Her mommy chanced to notice how she thickened  
'round the waist

It was the handsome ploughboy, the maiden she  
did say

For he caused me for to tumble all in the new  
mown hay

The lark in the morning ...

Here's a health to y'all ploughboys wherever you  
may be

That likes to have a bonnie lass a sitting on his  
knee

With a jug of good strong porter you'll whistle and  
you'll sing

For a ploughboy is as happy as a prince or a king

The lark in the morning ...

## John Denver

### Poems, Prayers and Promises (1971)

*John Denver*

I've been lately thinking about my life's time,  
All the things I've done, and how it's been ...

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*Translations of Hahn by Richard Stokes from A French Song  
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Education, February 2013, Moliant i Syr Rhys ap Tomas o  
Abermarlais, and an interview with Philippa Langley, Guardian,  
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