

WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 6 October 2024
3.00pm

Huw Montague Rendall baritone
Hélio Vida piano

Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)

Let us garlands bring Op. 18 (1929-42)

*Come away, come away, death • Who is Sylvia? •
Fear no more the heat o' the sun • O mistress
mine • It was a lover and his lass*

Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)

4 Lieder Op. 2 (c.1899-1900)

*Erwartung • Schenk mir deinen goldenen
Kamm • Erhebung • Waldsonne*

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

Rückert Lieder (1901-2)

*Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder! • Ich atmet' einen
linden Duft • Um Mitternacht • Liebst du um
Schönheit • Ich bin der Welt abhanden
gekommen*

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Let us garlands bring, Gerald Finzi's sequence of five Shakespeare settings, was first performed by baritone Robert Irwin and pianist-composer Howard Ferguson in a lunchtime concert at the National Gallery on 12 October 1942. The choice of date was not accidental: this was the 70th birthday of Ralph Vaughan Williams, Britain's most illustrious living composer since Elgar's death eight years earlier. Finzi's dedication of his new work to Vaughan Williams commemorated a friendship that by then stretched back almost twenty years and was one of the most important of Finzi's life: Vaughan Williams and his wife were the only witnesses when Finzi married Joyce Black at Dorking Registry Office in 1933, and the 200 or so letters that survive between the couples show how much the two composers depended on each other's advice.

Finzi was not a prolific composer; he reworked pieces obsessively and often hesitated before allowing them to be unveiled to the public. 'Fear no more the heat o' the sun' was composed 13 years previously but only now took its place as the emotional heart of a collection that reveals Finzi as one of the finest and most distinctive composers of English song. Both this song and 'Come away, come away, death' respond sensitively to Shakespeare's meditations on the passing of time and the inevitability of death; in the latter, Finzi draws attention to crucial words with imaginative musical choices, such as the falling seventh on 'death' and the extended melisma on 'weep'. But the optimistic aspect of Shakespeare's genius is equally well represented, notably in the rollicking final song, 'It was a lover and his lass', and the charming 'Who is Sylvia?', whose last line provides a title that Finzi's publisher Leslie Boosey found wonderfully apposite for this birthday tribute.

Like Finzi, whose father was of Italian descent and whose mother was German, Arnold Schoenberg was born into a family of Jewish immigrants. Schoenberg's Hungarian father and Czech mother had come to Vienna via Pressburg, now known as Bratislava, capital of Slovakia. Despite his obvious musical aptitude, the death of his father when he was 15 forced Schoenberg to support the family by working in a bank, though he composed in the evenings and played the cello in an amateur orchestra. In 1893, Alexander Zemlinsky, three years Schoenberg's senior, became this orchestra's conductor and soon agreed to take on Schoenberg as a composition pupil. Two years later, to his family's consternation, Schoenberg abandoned his job to devote himself full-time to music: he earned his living by conducting choral societies organised by left-wing workers' groups and orchestrating operettas. In 1897, under Zemlinsky's guidance, he produced a well-received string quartet, but soon became dissatisfied with its Brahmsian idiom. His next chamber work, the string sextet *Verklärte Nacht*, outraged the jury of the Vienna Tonkünstlerverein with its adventurously chromatic harmony: one judge famously remarked that 'it sounds as if someone had smeared the score of [Wagner's] *Tristan* while it was still wet!'

The four songs performed this afternoon were composed in 1899, the same year as *Verklärte Nacht*, and the first three set texts by Richard Dehmel, whose poem about a woman who tells her lover she is bearing another man's child inspired the sextet. The Dehmel poems set in Op. 2 share that story's mood of feverish erotic intensity – 'Erwartung' depicts the anticipation of a romantic assignation; 'Schenk mir deinen goldenen Kamm' is a love song addressed to Mary Magdalene; 'Erhebung' rejoices in the transformative powers of desire – and the impassioned intensity of Schoenberg's music is only enhanced by its relative terseness. 'Waldsonne', the Johannes Schlaf setting with which the opus concludes, is much more relaxed by comparison, its nostalgic melody recalling the simpler idiom of Schoenberg's earliest compositional successes.

Gustav Mahler would eventually become one of the most significant figures in Schoenberg's life, but their first meeting, which took place after a performance of *Verklärte Nacht* in 1903, was inauspicious: Mahler apparently told Zemlinsky 'never to bring that conceited puppy to my house again'. Mahler's five songs to texts by Friedrich Rückert were composed shortly before that meeting, in 1901 and 1902. Four of them were first performed and published in 1905 ('Liebst du um Schönheit' was premièred two years later), but they were not published together until 1910, as part of a collection entitled *7 Lieder aus letzter Zeit*. Mahler's ten Rückert settings – these five and the *Kindertotenlieder* that he composed around the same time – mark a new departure in his songwriting. As Donald Mitchell writes, 'Gone are the fanfares, the military signals, the dance and march rhythms and the quasi-folk style of the Wunderhorn songs'; in place of those familiar elements, there is a new conciseness and refinement, and an intense focus on the lyrical vocal line of each song.

The songs' complex genesis, together with the fact that Mahler orchestrated four of them but not 'Liebst du um Schönheit' – perhaps Mahler's only true love song, which he concealed in a score of Wagner's *Siegfried* for his wife Alma to discover – suggests that he did not conceive them as a cycle. He never reached a settled decision on the order in which they should be heard: the orchestral and piano scores suggest different orders, both differing from that on the cover sheet of Mahler's manuscripts. The concerts that Mahler supervised presented the songs in orders that varied according to the singer, the accompaniment and the circumstances: where the orchestral versions were used, he generally finished with 'Um Mitternacht', whose loud major-key coda provides a conclusive ending, but in recitals with piano, the slowest and least showy but arguably most moving song, 'Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen', would often end the sequence, as it does today.

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Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)

Let us garlands bring Op. 18 (1929-42)

William Shakespeare

Come away, come away, death

Come away, come away, death
And in sad cypress let me be laid;
Fly away, fly away, breath;
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.

My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,
O prepare it!
My part of death, no one so true
Did share it.

Not a flower, not a flower sweet,
On my black coffin let there be strown;
Not a friend, not a friend greet
My poor corpse, where my bones shall be thrown:

A thousand, thousand sighs to save,
Lay me, O where
Sad true lover never find my grave,
To weep there!

Who is Sylvia?

Who is Silvia? what is she,
That all our swains commend her?
Holy, fair and wise is she;
The heavens such grace did lend her,
That she might admirèd be.

Is she kind as she is fair?
For beauty lives with kindness.
Love doth to her eyes repair,
To help him of his blindness,
And being helped, inhabits there.

Then to Silvia let us sing,
That Silvia is excelling;
She excels each mortal thing
Upon the dull earth dwelling;
To her let us garlands bring.

Fear no more the heat o' the sun

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages:
Golden lads and girls all must,

As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great;
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;
Care no more to clothe and eat;
To thee the reed is as the oak:
The sceptre, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning flash,
Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone;
Fear not slander, censure rash;
Thou hast finish'd joy and moan:
All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

No exorciser harm thee!
Nor no witchcraft charm thee!
Ghost unlaid forbear thee!
Nothing ill come near thee!
Quiet consummation have;
And renownèd be thy grave!

O mistress mine

O mistress mine, where are you roaming?
O stay and hear, your true love's coming
That can sing both high and low.

Trip no further, pretty sweeting;
Journeys end in lovers' meeting,
Ev'ry wise man's son doth know.

What is love? 'Tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter;
What's to come is still unsure:

In delay there lies no plenty;
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty;
Youth's a stuff will not endure.

It was a lover and his lass

It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino
That o'er the green corn-field did pass.
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding a ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

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

Between the acres of the rye,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
These pretty country folks would lie,
In the spring time ...

This carol they began that hour,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
How that a life was but a flower
In the spring time ...

And therefore take the present time
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
For love is crownèd with the prime
In the spring time ...

Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)

4 Lieder Op. 2 (c.1899-1900)

Erwartung

Richard Dehmel

Aus dem meergrünen Teiche
Neben der roten Villa
Unter der toten Eiche
Scheint der Mond.

Wo ihr dunkles Abbild
Durch das Wasser
greift,
Steht ein Mann und streift
Einen Ring von seiner Hand.

Drei Opale blinken;
Durch die bleichen Steine
Schwimmen rot und
grüne
Funken und versinken.

Und er küsst sie, und
Seine Augen leuchten
Wie der meergrüne
Grund:
Ein Fenster tut sich auf.

Aus der roten Villa
Neben der toten Eiche
Winkt ihm eine bleiche
Frauenhand...

Schenk mir deinen goldenen Kamm

Richard Dehmel

Expectation

From the sea-green
pond
near the red villa
beneath the dead oak
the moon is shining.

Where her dark image
gleams through the
water,
a man stands, and draws
a ring from his hand.

Three opals glimmer;
among the pale stones
float red and green
sparks
and sink.

And he kisses her,
and his eyes gleam
like the sea-green
depths:
a window opens.

From the red villa
near the dead oak,
a woman's pale hand
waves to him...

Give me your golden comb

Schenk mir deinen goldenen
Kamm;
Jeder Morgen soll dich
mahnen,
Dass du mir die Haare
küsstest.
Schenk mir deinen seidenen
Schwamm;
Jeden Abend will ich
ahnen,
Wem du dich im Bade
rüstest,
O Maria!

Schenk mir Alles, was du
hast;
Meine Seele ist nicht eitel,
Stolz empfang ich deinen
Segen.
Schenk mir deine schwerste
Last:
Willst du nicht auf meinen
Scheitel
Auch dein Herz, dein Herz
noch legen –
Magdalena?

Erhebung

Richard Dehmel

Gib mir nur die Hand,
Nur den Finger, dann
Seh ich diesen ganzen
Erdkreis
Als mein Eigen an!

O, wie blüht mein
Land!
Sieh dir's doch nur an,
Dass ich mit der über
die Wolken
In die Sonne kann!

Waldsonne

Johannes Schlaf

In die braunen, rauschenden
Nächte
Flittert ein Licht herein,
Grüngolden ein Schein.

Blumen blinken auf und
Gräser
Und die singenden,
springenden
Waldwässerlein,
Und Erinnerungen.

Give me your golden
comb;
every morning shall
remind you
that you kissed
my hair.
Give me your silken
sponge,
every evening I want to
sense
for whom you prepare
yourself in the bath –
oh, Maria!

Give me everything you
have;
my soul is not in vain,
proudly I receive your
blessing.
Give me your heavy
burden:
will you not lay on my
head
your heart too,
your heart –
Magdalena?

Exaltation

Give me your hand only,
only a finger, then
I shall see this whole
round earth
as my own!

Oh, how my country
blossoms!
Just look at it,
ah! to go with you above
the clouds
into the sun!

Forest sun

Into the brown rustling
nights
there flutters a light,
a green-golden gleam.

Glinting flowers gaze up
and the singing,
leaping forest
brooklets,
and memories.

Die längst verklungenen:
Golden erwachen sie
wieder,
All deine fröhlichen Lieder.

The long silent ones:
golden, they awaken
again,
all your joyous songs.

Und ich sehe deine goldenen
Haare glänzen,
Und ich sehe deine goldenen
Augen glänzen
Aus den grünen, raunenden
Nächten.

And I see your golden
hair glitter,
and I see your golden
eyes gleam
out of the green
murmuring nights.

Und mir ist, ich läge
neben dir auf
dem Rasen
Und hörte dich wieder auf
der glitzeblassen
Syrinx
In die blauen Himmelslüfte
blasen.

And I feel as though I
were lying on the lawn
by your side
and heard you once more
blow on your brightly
glinting pipes
into the blue air of
heaven.

In die braunen, wühlenden
Nächte
Flittert ein Licht,
Ein goldener Schein.

Into the brown, turbulent
nights
there flutters a light,
a golden gleam.

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

Rückert Lieder (1901-2)

Friedrich Rückert

Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder! Do not look into my songs!

Blicke mir nicht in die
Lieder!
Meine Augen schlag' ich
nieder,
Wie ertappt auf böser Tat;
Selber darf ich nicht
getrauen,
Ihrem Wachsen
zuzuschauen:
Deine Neugier ist Verrat!

Do not look into my
songs!
I lower my
gaze,
as if caught in the act;
I cannot even
dare
to watch them
growing:
your curiosity is treason!

Bienen, wenn sie Zellen
bauen,
Lassen auch nicht zu sich
schauen,
Schauen selbst auch
nicht zu.
Wenn die reichen
Honigwaben
Sie zu Tag befördert
haben,
Dann vor allen nasche
du!

Bees, when they build
cells,
let no one watch
either,
and do not even watch
themselves.
When the rich
honeycombs
have been brought to
daylight,
you shall be the first to
taste!

Ich atmet' einen linden Duft I breathed a gentle fragrance

Ich atmet' einen linden
Duft.
Im Zimmer stand
Ein Zweig der Linde,
Ein Angebinde
Von lieber Hand;
Wie lieblich war der
Lindenduft!

I breathed a gentle
fragrance.
In the room stood
a spray of lime,
a gift
from a dear hand;
how lovely the fragrance
of lime was!

Wie lieblich ist der
Lindenduft!
Das Lindenreis
Brachst du
gelinde;
Ich atme leis
Im Duft der Linde
Der Liebe linden
Duft.

How lovely the fragrance
of lime is!
The spray of lime
was gently plucked by
you;
softly I breathe
in the fragrance of lime
the gentle fragrance of
love.

Um Mitternacht At midnight

Um Mitternacht hab' ich
gewacht
Und aufgeblickt zum
Himmel;
Kein Stern vom
Sternengewimmel
Hat mir gelacht um
Mitternacht.

At midnight I kept
watch
and looked up to
heaven;
not a star in the
galaxy
smiled on me at midnight.

Um Mitternacht hab' ich
gedacht
Hinaus in dunkle
Schranken
Es hat kein Lichtgedanken
Mir Trost gebracht um
Mitternacht.

At midnight my thoughts
went out
to the dark reaches of
space;
no shining thought
brought me comfort at
midnight.

Um Mitternacht nahm ich in
acht
Die Schläge meines
Herzens
Ein einz'ger Puls des
Schmerzens
War angefacht um
Mitternacht.

At midnight I paid
heed
to the beating of my
heart;
a single pulse of
pain
was set alight at
midnight.

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

Um Mitternacht kämpft' ich
die Schlacht,
O Menschheit, deiner Leiden;
Nicht konnt' ich sie
entscheiden
Mit meiner Macht um
Mitternacht.

At midnight I fought the
fight,
O Mankind, of your
afflictions;
I could not gain
victory
by my own strength at
midnight.

Um Mitternacht hab' ich die
Macht
In deine Hand gegeben:
Herr über Tod und Leben,
Du hältst die Wacht um
Mitternacht.

At midnight I gave my
strength
into Thy hands:
Lord over life and death,
thou keepest watch at
midnight.

Liebst du um Schönheit

If you love for beauty

Liebst du um Schönheit,
O nicht mich liebe!
Liebe die Sonne,
Sie trägt ein goldnes Haar.

If you love for beauty,
O love not me!
Love the sun,
she has golden hair.

Liebst du um Jugend,
O nicht mich liebe!
Liebe den Frühling,
Der jung ist jedes Jahr.

If you love for youth,
O love not me!
Love the spring
which is young each year.

Liebst du um Schätze,
O nicht mich liebe!
Liebe die Meerfrau,
Sie hat viel Perlen klar.

If you love for riches,
O love not me!
Love the mermaid
who has many shining
pearls.

Liebst du um Liebe,
O ja mich liebe!
Liebe mich immer,
Dich lieb' ich immerdar.

If you love for love,
ah yes, love me!
Love me always,
I shall love you ever more.

Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen

I am lost to the world

Ich bin der Welt abhanden
gekommen,
Mit der ich sonst viele Zeit
verdorben.
Sie hat so lange nichts von
mir vernommen,
Sie mag wohl glauben, ich sei
gestorben.

I am lost to the world
with which I used to
waste much time;
it has for so long heard
nothing of me,
it may well believe that I
am dead.

Es ist mir auch gar nichts
daran gelegen,
Ob sie mich für gestorben
hält.

Nor am I at all
concerned
if it should think me
dead.

Ich kann auch gar nichts
sagen dagegen,
Denn wirklich bin ich
gestorben der Welt.

Nor can I deny
it,
for truly I am dead to the
world.

Ich bin gestorben dem
Weltgetümmel,
Und ruh' in einem stillen
Gebiet.

I am dead to the world's
tumult
and rest in a quiet
realm.

Ich leb' allein in meinem
Himmel,
In meinem Lieben, in
meinem Lied.

I live alone in my
heaven,
in my loving, in
my song.

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