

WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 7 November 2021 3.00pm

Don Quixote – Despite and Still

Mikhail Timoshenko baritone

Elitsa Desseva piano

Ned Rorem (b.1923)

To you from *Poems of Walt Whitman* (1957)

Code of Honour

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Don Quichotte à Dulcinée (1932-3)

Chanson romanesque • Chanson épique • Chanson à boire

à Dulcinée

Sergey Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

She is as lovely as the noon Op. 14 No. 9 (1896)

Sing not to me, beautiful maiden Op. 4 No. 4 (?1892-3)

In the silence of the secret night Op. 4 No. 3 (?1892)

Never to Meet

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

Solitary Hotel from *Despite and Still* Op. 41 (1968-9)

Ned Rorem

O you whom I often and silently come from *Poems of Walt Whitman*

Samuel Barber

My Lizard from *Despite and Still* Op. 41

Ned Rorem

The Holy Fool

As Adam early in the morning from *Poems of Walt Whitman*

Samuel Barber

In the Wilderness from *Despite and Still* Op. 41

Ned Rorem

Gliding o'er all from *Poems of Walt Whitman*

The Impossible Dream

Sergey Rachmaninov

Oh thou, my field Op. 4 No. 5 (1893)

The Dream Op. 8 No. 5 (1893)

Fragment from Musset Op. 21 No. 6 (1902)

Between Madness and Sanity

Samuel Barber

From *Despite and Still* Op. 41

A Last Song: A last song, and a very last • Despite and Still

Ned Rorem

Look down, fair moon from *Poems of Walt Whitman*

Legacy

Jacques Ibert (1890-1962)

4 Chansons de Don Quichotte (1932)

Chanson du départ • Chanson à Dulcinée •

Chanson du duc • Chanson de la mort

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During his very long creative life, Ned Rorem has composed in most genres, but his output is notable for over five hundred songs for voice and piano. The relationship of poetry to music is one that he has explored by setting numerous British and American poets, particularly Walt Whitman (1819–1892) to whose work he has turned on several occasions. Rorem's 5 *Poems of Walt Whitman* were composed during the summer of 1957 in the Provençal town of Hyères, towards the end of Rorem's years living in France (memorably documented in his *Paris Diary*). Rorem's language is tonal and distinctive, producing musical responses that seem to emerge naturally from the emotional trajectory of the poems themselves. As an example, 'Look down, fair moon' begins with gently oscillating chords supporting the voice, reaches an anguished climax as the poet describes 'faces ghastly, swollen, purple' and finds repose in the final line, the harmonies becoming sweet and still on the words 'sacred moon'. Rorem has often been described as one of America's finest song composers; the sensitivity and imagination of his settings is particularly apparent in these Whitman songs.

Barber was another of the great American art song composers of the 20th Century. His aunt was the opera singer Louise Homer and Barber himself studied singing alongside piano and composition at the Curtis Institute. The song cycle *Despite and Still* was composed in 1968 at a difficult time: Barber's opera *Antony and Cleopatra* had been a failure when it opened the new Metropolitan Opera in 1966, and the following year his mother died. Fighting depression and alcoholism, Barber turned to song-writing and the result was this cycle on poems by Robert Graves, James Joyce and Theodore Roethke. It explores themes close to Barber's heart at the time, notably solitude and reconciliation. The first performance of *Despite and Still* was given by Leontyne Price in April 1969 and the music shows Barber using a more adventurous language than in some of his earlier songs.

Ravel's *Don Quichotte à Dulcinée* was his last completed composition. In the spring of 1932, the ailing Ravel had been asked to provide songs for a film of *Don Quixote* directed by the Austrian director Georg Pabst, starring Fyodor Chaliapin as Quixote. Progress was painfully slow, and since nothing was forthcoming from Ravel by the deadline in August 1932, Pabst turned to Jacques Ibert to compose the songs he needed. This programme provides a chance to hear both Ravel's and Ibert's responses to Cervantes's epic novel. Ravel's three songs, originally written for voice and piano, were a struggle for him and in September 1932 he wrote to Jane Bathori that he had been 'deep in a work that I should never have taken on and

which has lost me three months.' Since he was interested in cinema and knew Chaliapin, it is easy to see why he was attracted to the project but it ended unhappily, with the film company cancelling Ravel's contract. Even so, his three songs – on poems by Paul Morand – were finished in April 1933 and arranged for orchestra the following year. Depicting three aspects of Don Quixote – as lover, warrior and drinker – Ravel set each poem to a different dance rhythm. At the centre is the 'Chanson épique', using a haunting *zortzico* rhythm in 5/4 time (something Ravel had already used memorably in the first movement of the Piano Trio). The closing 'Chanson à boire' is an emphatic *jota*, bringing Ravel's composing career to a vigorous close that was completely at odds with his private suffering at the time as his neurological illness became increasingly severe. It is intriguing that the *Don Quichotte* songs by Ibert are on completely different poems, by Pierre de Ronsard and Alexandre Arnoux. These were used in Pabst's film and they were recorded by Chaliapin. In the first, Ronsard's 'Chanson du départ', Ibert evokes an archaic, pseudo-medieval world while also using some quite astringent harmonies. The other songs conjure a Spanish mood very effectively, nobly so in the final song, Don Quixote's dying farewell to Sancho Panza.

The earliest songs by Rachmaninov were the 6 Romances Op. 4, published in 1893. 'Sing not to me, beautiful maiden' sets a famous poem by Pushkin (addressed to his beloved friend Anna Alekseevna Olenina). It recalls 'songs of sad Georgia' and its melancholic nostalgia is well captured by Rachmaninov's music. 'In the silence of the secret night' is a poem by Afanasy Afanasyevich Fet, hailed as one of the finest poets of the generation after Pushkin. Fet was described by Tchaikovsky as 'an exceptional phenomenon' whose best work 'leaves the boundaries of poetry altogether and boldly ventures into our field [of music].' 'O thou, my field' sets a poem by Aleksei Tolstoy (a friend of Pushkin's) with an aptly folklike melody. The Romances Op. 8 were composed in 1893 and the fifth of them, 'The Dream', is one of Rachmaninov's shortest and most attractive songs, on a Russian translation of a poem by Heinrich Heine. 'She is as lovely as the noon', published in 1896, sets a poem by Nikolay Minsky with the voice tracing a wistful melody over implacable piano chords. 'Fragment from Musset' is a passionate, brooding song on a Russian paraphrase of a poem by Alfred de Musset. Composed around the same time as the Cello Sonata and Second Piano Concerto, its sweeping lyricism has much in common with those great works.

Ned Rorem (b.1923)

Poems of Walt Whitman (1957)

Walt Whitman

To you

Stranger, if you passing, meet me,
And desire to speak to me,
Why should you not speak to me?
And why should I not speak to you?

Code of Honour

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Don Quichotte à Dulcinée (1932-3)

Paul Morand

Chanson romanesque

Si vous me disiez que la terre
À tant tourner vous
offensa,
Je lui dépêcherais Pança:
Vous la verriez fixe, et se taire.

Si vous me disiez que
l'ennui
Vous vient du ciel trop fleuri
d'astres,
Déchirant les divins cadastres,
Je faucherais d'un coup la
nuit.

Si vous me disiez que
l'espace
Ainsi vidé ne vous plaît
point,
Chevalier dieu, la lance au
poing,
J'étoilerais le vent qui
passe.

Mais si vous disiez que mon
sang
Est plus à moi qu'à vous, ma
Dame,
Je blémirais dessous le blâme,
Et je mourrais, vous bénissant.

O Dulcinée.

Romantic song

Were you to tell me that the
earth offended you with so
much turning,
I'd dispatch Panza to deal with it:
you'd see it still and silenced.

Were you to tell me that you are
wearied
by a sky too with
stars –
tearing the divine order asunder,
I'd scythe the night with a single
blow.

Were you to tell me that space
itself,
thus denuded was not to your
taste –
as a god-like knight, with lance
in hand,
I'd sow the fleeting wind with
stars.

But were you to tell me that my
blood
is more mine, my Lady, than
your own,
I'd pale at the admonishment
and, blessing you, would die.

O Dulcinea.

Chanson épique

Bon Saint Michel qui me donnez
loisir
De voir ma Dame et de l'entendre,
Bon Saint Michel qui me daignez
choisir
Pour lui complaire et la défendre,
Bon Saint Michel, veuillez
descendre
Avec Saint Georges sur l'autel
De la Madone au bleu mantel.

D'un rayon du ciel bénissez ma
lame
Et son égale en pureté,
Et son égale en piété
Comme en pudeur et chasteté:
Ma Dame.

(Ô grands Saint Georges et
Saint Michel)
L'ange qui veille sur ma
veille,
Ma douce Dame si pareille
A Vous, Madone au bleu mantel!
Amen.

Chanson à boire

Foin du bâtard, illustre
Dame,
Qui pour me perdre à vos doux
yeux
Dit que l'amour et le vin vieux
Mettent en deuil mon cœur, mon
âme!

Je bois à la joie!
La joie est le seul but
Où je vais droit... lorsque j'ai...
bu!
Ah! Ah! Ah! la joie!
Je bois à la joie!

Foin du jaloux, brune
maîtresse,
Qui geind, qui pleure et fait
serment
D'être toujours ce pâle amant
Qui met de l'eau dans son ivresse!

Je bois à la joie!
La joie est le seul but

Epic song

Good St Michael who gives me
leave
to behold and hear my Lady,
good St Michael who deigns to
elect me
to please her and defend her,
good St Michael, descend, I
pray,
with St George onto the altar
of the Madonna robed in blue.

With a heavenly beam bless my
blade
and its equal in purity,
and its equal in piety
as in modesty and chastity:
my Lady.

(O great St George and great St
Michael)
Bless the angel watching over
my vigil,
my sweet Lady, so like unto Thee,
O Madonna robed in blue!
Amen.

Drinking song

A pox on the bastard, illustrious
Lady,
who to discredit me in your
sweet eyes,
says that love and old wine
are saddening my heart and
soul!

I drink to joy!
Joy is the only goal
to which I go straight... when
I'm... drunk!
Ha! Joy!
I drink to joy!

A pox on the jealous wretch, O
dusky mistress,
who whines and weeps and
vows
always to be this lily-livered lover
who dilutes his drunkenness!

I drink to joy!
Joy is the only goal

Où je vais droit... lorsque j'ai... bu!	to which I go straight... when I'm... drunk!
Ah! Ah! Ah! la joie!	Ha! Joy!
Je bois à la joie!	I drink to joy!

à Dulcinée

Sergey Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

She is as lovely as the noon Op. 14 No. 9 (1896)

Nikolay Minsky

Ona, kak polden', khorosha, Ona zagadochnei polnochi. U nei neplakavshie ochi I ne stradavshaya dusha.	She is as beautiful as midday, more enigmatic than midnight. Her eyes have no known weeping nor her soul suffering.
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A mne, ch'ya zhizn' bor'ba i gore, Po nei tomit'sya suzhdeno. Tak vechno plachushchee more V bezmolvnyi bereg vlyubleno.	And I, who know but strife and grief, am destined to long for her. Thus eternally the weeping sea is drawn by love to the silent shore.
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Sing not to me, beautiful maiden Op. 4 No. 4

(?1892-3)

Aleksandr Sergeyevich Pushkin

Ne poi, krasavitsa, pri mne Ty pesen Gruzii pechal'noi: Napominayut mne one Druguyu zhizn' i bereg dal'nii.	Sing not to me, beautiful maiden, your songs of sad Georgia: they remind me of another life and distant shore.
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Uvy, napominayut mne Tvoi zhestokie napevy I step', i noch', i pri lune Cherty dalyokoi, bednoi devy!...	Alas, they bring back memories, your cruel melodies, of the steppe at night, and, in the moonlight, the features of a poor maiden far away!...
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Ya prizrak milyi, rokovoi, Tebya uvidev, zabyvayu; No ty poyosh' i predo mnoi Ego ya vnov' voobrazhayu.	Seeing you, I forget that dear, fateful vision; but when you sing, again I imagine it before me.
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Ne poi, krasavitsa, pri mne Ty pesen Gruzii pechal'noi: Napominayut mne one Druguyu zhizn' i bereg dal'nii.	Sing not to me, beautiful maiden, your songs of sad Georgia: they remind me of another life and distant shore.
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In the silence of the secret night Op. 4 No. 3 (?1892)

Afanasy Afanasyevich Fet

O, dolga budu ya, v molchan'i nochi tainoi, Kovarnyi lepet tvoi, ulybku, vzor, vzor sluchajnyi, Perstam poslushnuyu volos, volos tvoikh gustuyu pryad' Iz myslei izgonjat' i snova prizyvati'; Sheptat' i popravlyat' bylye vyrazhen'ya Rechei moikh s toboi, ispolnennykh smushchen'ya, I v op'yanen'i, naperekor umu, Zavetnym imenem budit' nochnuyu t'mu. O, dolgo budu ya, v molchan'i nochi tainoi, Zavetnym imenem budit' nochnuyu t'mu.	O, long will I, in the silence of the mysterious night, your sly chatter, smile, glance, casual glance, hair pliant to my fingers, your thick shock of hair, banish from my thoughts and summon back again, whisper and improve past words I spoke to you, so full of shy confusion, and in rapture against all reason, awake night's darkness with your cherished name. O, long will I, in the silence of the mysterious night, awake night's darkness with your cherished name.
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Never to Meet

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

Despite and Still Op. 41 (1968-9)

Solitary Hotel

James Joyce

Solitary hotel in mountain pass.
Autumn. Twilight. Fire lit.
In dark corner young man seated.
Young woman enters.
Restless. Solitary. She sits.
She goes to window. She stands.
She sits. Twilight. She thinks.
On solitary hotel paper she writes.
She thinks. She writes. She sighs.
Wheels and hoofs. She hurries out.
He comes from his dark corner.
He seizes solitary paper.
He holds it towards fire. Twilight.
He reads. Solitary. What?
In sloping, upright and backhands:
Queen's hotel, Queen's hotel, Queen's ho ...

Ned Rorem

Poems of Walt Whitman

Walt Whitman

O you whom I often and silently come

O you whom I often and silently come
where you are that I may be with you,
As I walk by your side or sit near,
or remain in the same room with you,
Little you know the subtle electric fire
that for your sake is playing within me.

Samuel Barber

Despite and Still Op. 41

My Lizard

Theodore Roethke

My lizard, my lively writher,
May your limbs never wither,
May the eyes in your face
Survive the green ice
Of envy's mean gaze;
May you live out your life
Without hate, without grief,
And your hair ever blaze,
In the sun, in the sun,
When I am undone,
When I am no one.

The Holy Fool

Ned Rorem

Poems of Walt Whitman

Walt Whitman

As Adam early in the morning

As Adam, early in the morning,
Walking forth from the bower, refresh'd with sleep;
Behold me where I pass - hear my voice - approach,
Touch me - touch the palm of your hand to my body as I pass;
Be not afraid of my body.

Samuel Barber

Despite and Still Op. 41

In the Wilderness

Robert Graves

He, of his gentleness
Thirsting and hungering
Walked in the wilderness;
Soft words of grace He spoke
Unto lost desert-folk
That listened wondering.
He heard the bitterns call
From the ruined palace-wall,
Answered them brotherly.
He held communion
With the she-pelican
Of lonely piety.
Basilisk, cockatrice,
Flocked to his homilies,
With mail of dread device,
With monstrous barbed slings,
With eager dragon-eyes;
Great rats on leather wings,
And poor blind broken things,
Foul in their miseries.
And ever with Him went,
Of all His wanderings
Comrade, with ragged coat,
Gaunt ribs - poor innocent -
Bleeding foot, burning throat,
The guileless old scape-goat;
For forty nights and days
Followed in Jesus' ways,
Sure guard behind Him kept,
Tears like a lover wept.

Ned Rorem

Poems of Walt Whitman

Walt Whitman

Gliding o'er all

Gliding o'er all, through all,
Through Nature, Time, and Space,
As a ship on the waters advancing,
The voyage of the soul - not life alone,
Death, many deaths I'll sing.

The Impossible Dream

Sergey Rachmaninov

Oh thou, my field Op. 4 No. 5 (1893)

Aleksei Tolstoy

Ush ty, niva moya, nivushka,	Oh thou, my field, dear field of mine,
Ne skosit' tebya s makhu edinogo,	you can't be mowed down at one stroke,
Ne svyazat' tebya vysu vo edinyi snop!	you can't be bound up in one sheaf!
Ush vy dumy moi, dumushki,	Oh you, my thoughts, dear thoughts of mine,
Ne stryakhnut' vas razom s plech doloi,	you can't be shaken off with a single shrug,
Odnou rech'yu-to vas ne vyskazat'!	you can't be told in a single tale!
Po tebe l', niva, veter razgulival,	Have you not been battered by the wind, field,
Gnul kolos'ya tvoji do zemli,	your ears of grain bent down to the ground,
Zrely zyorna vse razmyotyval!	your ripe grain scattered here and yonder!
Shyroko vy dumy porassypalis'.	You've been scattered, thoughts, far and wide,
Kuda pala kakaya dumushka, Tam vskhodila lyuta pechal' – trava,	and wherever a thought fell, the bitter grass of sorrow sprouted up
Vyrastalo gore goryuhee. A! A!	and grew into burning misery. Ah! Ah!

The Dream Op. 8 No. 5 (1893)

Aleksey Pleshcheyev

I u menya byl kraj rodnoi; Prekrasen on! Tam el' kachalas' nado mnoi... No to byl son!	I too had a native land; so beautiful! A fir tree swayed above me there ... but it was a dream!
Sem'ya družei zhiva byla So vsekh storon Zvuchali mne lyubvi slova ... No to byl son!	My family were living friends and all around me words of love were spoken ... but it was a dream!

Fragment from Musset Op. 21 No. 6 (1902)

Aleksey Apukhtin

Chto tak usilenno serdtse bol'noe B'yotsya, i prosit, i zhazhdet pokoya?	Why does my sick heart so violently beat, and beg, and thirst for peace?
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Chem ya vzvolnovan, ispugan v nochi? Stuknula dver', zastonav i zanoya... Gasnushchei lampy blesnuli luchi... Boze moyu! Dukh mne v grudi zakhvatilo! Kto-to zovyot menya, shepchet unylo... Kto-to voshyol...Moya kel'ya pusta, Net nikogo, eto polnoch' probilo... O, odinochestvo, o, nishcheta!	Why am I troubled, afraid in the night? A door slammed, groaning and whining... rays of the spluttering lamp glittered... my God! It takes my breath away! Someone calls me, in a pitiful whisper... someone entered...my cell is empty, I'm alone, that was midnight striking... O loneliness, O poverty!
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Between Madness and Sanity

Samuel Barber

Despite and Still Op. 41

A Last Song: A last song, and a very last

Robert Graves

A last song, and a very last, and yet another
O, when can I give over?
Must I drive the pen until blood bursts from my nails
And my breath fails and I shake with fever,
Or sit well wrapped in a many coloured cloak
Where the moon shines new through Castle Crystal?
Shall I never hear her whisper softly:
'But this is truth written by you only,
And for me only;
Therefore, love, have done?'

Despite and Still

Robert Graves

Have you not read
The words in my head,
And I made part
Of your own heart?
We have been such as draw
The losing straw –
You of your gentleness,
I of my rashness,
Both of despair –
Yet still might share
This happy will:
To love despite and still.
Never let us deny
The thing's necessity,
But, O, refuse

To choose,
Where chance may seem to give
Love in alternative.

Ned Rorem

Poems of Walt Whitman

Walt Whitman

Look down, fair moon

Look down, fair moon and bathe this scene,
Pour softly down night's nimbus floods, on faces ghastly, swollen,
purple;
On the dead, on their backs, with arms tossed wide,
Pour down your unstinted nimbus, sacred moon.

Legacy

Jacques Ibert (1890-1962)

4 Chansons de Don Quichotte (1932)

Chanson du départ

Pierre de Ronsard

Ce Chateau-neuf, ce nouvel
edifice
Tout enrichy de marbre et de
porphyre,
Qu'Amour bastit chateau de
son empire,
Où tout le Ciel a mis son
artifice,
Est un rempart, un fort contre le
vice,
Où la Vertu maistresse se
retire,
Que l'œil regarde, et que l'esprit
admire,
Forçant les cœurs à luy faire
service.
C'est un Chateau fait de telle
sorte,
Que nul ne peut approcher de la
porte,
Si des grands Rois il n'a sauvé
sa race,
Victorieux, vaillant et amoureux.
Nul Chevalier, tant soit
aventureux,
Sans estre tel, ne peut gagner
la place.

Song of parting

This new castle, this new
edifice,
enriched with marble and
porphyry
that Love built to guard his
empire,
to which all heaven has lent its
skill,
Is a rampart, a stronghold
against evil,
where Mistress Virtue can take
refuge,
whom the eye observes and the
spirit admires,
compelling hearts to pay her
homage.
This castle is fashioned in such
a way
that no one can approach its
gate,
unless he is descended from
great kings,
with victory, valour, and love.
No knight, however bold,
without such merit, can enter
here.

Chanson à Dulcinée

Alexandre Arnoux

Un an me dure la journée
Si je ne vois ma Dulcinée.

Mais, amour a peint son visage,
Afin d'adoucir ma langueur,
Dans la fontaine et le nuage,
Dans chaque aurore et chaque
fleur.

Un an me dure la journée
Si je ne vois ma Dulcinée.

Toujours proche et toujours
lointaine,
Etoile de mes longs chemins.
Le vent m'apporte son
haleine
Quand il passe sur les
jasmins.

Un an me dure la journée
Si je ne vois ma Dulcinée.

Chanson du duc

Alexandre Arnoux

Je veux chanter ici la dame de
mes songes
Qui m'exalte au-dessus de ce
siècle de boue.
Son cœur de diamant est vierge
de mensonges,
La rose s'obscurcit au regard de
sa joue.
Pour elle j'ai tenté les hautes
aventures:
Mon bras a délivré la princesse
en servage,
J'ai vaincu l'enchanteur,
confundu les parjures
Et ployé l'univers à lui rendre
l'hommage.
Dame par qui je vais, seul
dessus cette terre,
Qui ne soit prisonnier de la
fausse apparence,
Je soutiens contre tout
chevalier téméraire
Votre éclat non pareil et votre
précellence.

Song to Dulcinea

A day seems like a year
if I do not see my Dulcinea.

But to sweeten my languishing,
Love has painted her face
in fountains and clouds,
in every dawn and every
flower.

A day seems like a year
if I do not see my Dulcinea.

Ever near and ever
far,
star of my weary journeying,
her breath is brought me on the
breeze,
as it passes over jasmine
flowers.

A day seems like a year
if I do not see my Dulcinea.

The Duke's song

I wish now to praise the lady of
my dreams,
who lifts me above this squalid
age.
Her diamond heart is devoid of
deceit,
the rose grows dim beside her
cheeks.
For her I've embarked on great
adventures:
princesses in thrall I've freed
with my arm,
I've vanquished sorcerers,
confounded perjurers,
and compelled the universe to
pay her homage.
Lady, for whom I travel this
earth alone,
who is not deceived by false
pretences,
against any rash knight I shall
uphold
your peerless beauty and
perfection.

Chanson de la mort

Alexandre Arnoux

Ne pleure pas, Sancho,
Ne pleure pas, mon bon,
Ton maître n'est pas mort,
Il n'est pas loin de toi,
Il vit dans une île heureuse
Où tout est pur et sans mensonge,
Dans l'île enfin
trouvée
Où tu viendras un
jour,
Dans l'île désirée,
O mon ami Sancho.

Les livres sont brûlés
Et font un tas de cendres,
Si tous les livres m'ont
tué,
Il suffit d'un pour que je
vive;
Fantôme dans la vie
Et réel dans la mort –
Tel est l'étrange sort
Du pauvre Don Quichotte.
Ah!

Song of death

Weep not, Sancho,
weep not, good fellow,
your master is not dead,
he is not far from you,
he lives on a happy isle,
where all is pure and truthful,
on this isle that he has finally
found,
where you shall also come one
day,
on this longed-for isle,
O Sancho, my friend.

Books have been burnt
to a heap of ashes.
If all those books have caused
my death,
it will take but one to make me
live;
a phantom in life
and real in death.
Such is the strange fate
of poor Don Quixote.
Ah!

Translations of Ravel and Ibert by Richard Stokes from A French Song Companion (Johnson/Stokes) published by OUP. Rachmaninov by Richard D Sylvester from Rachmaninoff's Complete Songs: A Companion with Texts and Translations published by Indiana University Press.

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