

WIGMORE HALL

Tuesday 8 April 2025
7.30pm

A touch of exotic

Roderick Williams baritone
Andrew West piano

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)	Mignons Gesang 'Kennst du das Land?' D321 (1815)
William Denis Browne (1888-1915)	Arabia (1914)
Arthur Bliss (1891-1975)	Siege (1940-2)
Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979)	A Dream (1928)
Amy Woodforde-Finden (1860-1919)	Kashmiri Song (1902)
Henri Duparc (1848-1933)	L'invitation au voyage (1870)
	La vie antérieure (1884)
Sally Beamish (b.1956)	Four Songs from Hafez (2007) <i>Nightingale • Peacock • Fish • Hoopoe</i>
Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)	From <i>Goethe Lieder</i> (1888-90) <i>Coptisches Lied I • Erschaffen und Beleben</i>

Interval

Eleanor Alberga (b.1949)	The Soul's Expression (2017) <i>I. George Eliot: Blue Wings • II. Emily Brontë: The Sun Has Set • III. George Eliot: Roses • IV. Elizabeth Barrett Browning: The Soul's Expression</i>
Harry T Burleigh (1866-1949)	Five Songs of Laurence Hope (1915) <i>Worth While • The Jungle Flower • Kashmiri Song • Among the Fuchsias • Till I Wake</i>



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The allure of distant places and the fascination of different cultures has enthralled and excited people for centuries, and poets have often liked to tickle their readers' fancies with evocations of far-off lands where things are unfamiliar, exciting, perhaps decadent or illicit – in a word, 'exotic'.

Mignon, a mysterious character in Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, is from just such an 'exotic' place, unknown at first, but later in the novel we learn that she grew up in an idyllic home by an Italian lakeside, as she describes in 'Kennst du das Land'. This ended abruptly as she was kidnapped by a circus troupe and taken over the Alps to Germany, where Wilhelm Meister rescued her after witnessing the cruelty with which she was treated. After this, she viewed Wilhelm as a protector and father-figure.

Just as the memory of her distant Italian homeland stayed with Mignon, so the exoticism and the music of Arabia remains with and haunts the mind of Walter de la Mare's character in **William Denis Browne's** song *Arabia*. Browne wrote this song in 1914, shortly before leaving England to fight in the Great War – he died in 1915 fighting in the Gallipoli Campaign. Many of the poets and composers featured in this programme travelled to distant, 'exotic' countries to live, or to die.

Arthur Bliss wrote *Siege* in California in 1940 – he'd been on holiday there when the Second World War broke out. The poem, by Edna St Vincent Millay, speaks of souvenirs from foreign travels providing comfort at a time of death and madness. **Rebecca Clarke's** *A Dream* speaks of death in a distant land. She was a Londoner but lived much of her life in America and died there in 1979. The poem is by WB Yeats, who also died in a foreign land, in this case Menton in southern France. **Amy Woodforde-Finden's** *Kashmiri Song* sets a poem by 'Laurence Hope' (actually Adela Florence Nicolson, née Cory) that tells an allegedly true story of the son of a Kashmiri rajah who fell in love with a married English lady. *Kashmiri Song* became one of the big 'hits' of its time, and this story of illicit love in the 'exotic' setting of India doubtless set many hearts a-flutter in Edwardian drawing rooms. Amy and Adela both married Indian Army officers; they knew each other in India and may have briefly been lovers after Adela's husband died in 1902. The Shalimar Gardens in Lahore are now listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site as they embody the peak of Mughal garden design.

Two **Duparc** settings of Baudelaire follow. *L'invitation au voyage* invites a loved one on a journey to the Dutch East Indies to enjoy a winning combination of *luxe, calme et volupté*. *La vie antérieure*, like 'Kennst du das Land', tells of the luxuries of a previous life – both songs speak of a house with columns. Baudelaire himself was no stranger to the 'exotic'; dismayed by his dissolute

habits (involving drink, drugs, and visiting prostitutes), his father sent him on a voyage to Calcutta in an attempt to get him back on the straight and narrow. That this attempt failed is evident in the poems that make up *Les Fleurs du Mal* ('The Flowers of Evil'), the volume that supplied the texts for both these Duparc songs.

The 14th-century Persian poet Hafez has provided the texts for songs by Brahms, Richard Strauss, Weber, Rimsky-Korsakov and many others, including **Sally Beamish**, another composer who moved from her birthplace (London) to a new land (Scotland). Her *Four Songs from Hafez*, written in 2007, set translations by Jila Peacock, born in Iran and now living in Suffolk. Each song uses a bird or animal to describe separation from, and longing for, the 'Beloved'. 'The Hoopoe' (final song) is a magical bird in Middle Eastern mythology and the messenger between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.

We return to Goethe for two **Wolf** songs; 'Cophtisches Lied I' continues the Middle Eastern vibe with its message that fools will always be fools, whether on the heights of India or in the depths of Egyptian tombs. 'Erschaffen und Beleben' ('Creation and Animation') references Hafez again, and extols the virtues of wine, a beverage that Hafez often used as a symbol for love (both having similar powers of intoxication).

Eleanor Alberga is another composer who travelled to a distant land, in her case from her birthplace Jamaica to London. Her song cycle *The Soul's Expression*, originally for baritone and string orchestra, was written in 2017. In these four songs, the 'exotic' is brought closer to home and becomes embodied in the fleeting beauties of Nature. The poems are by three female poets. George Eliot (real name Mary Ann Evans) caused a scandal by living with a married man, George Henry Lewes, from 1854 to 1878, as if they were man and wife. Emily Brontë lived, like Emily Dickinson, as a virtual recluse, rarely leaving her family home, the parsonage at Haworth in Yorkshire. Elizabeth Barrett's courtship by her fellow poet Robert Browning took place in secret because of her father's disapproval, and after their wedding in 1846 in Marylebone Parish Church, they moved to Italy, settling in Florence. Her poem, *The Soul's Expression*, tells of her struggles to 'find herself' and express 'the music of my nature'. We return to India with **Harry T Burleigh's** *5 Songs of Laurence Hope*, written in 1915. His setting of 'Kashmiri Song' includes the second verse, now set by Amy Woodforde-Finden, which heightens the sexual tension of the song. The other four songs, with their champa flowers and lotus lakes, further extol the sensual and other delights of the 'exotic' and the allure of distant lands.

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Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Mignons Gesang 'Kennst du das Land?'

D321 (1815)

*Johann Wolfgang von
Goethe*

Kennst du das Land, wo die
Zitronen blühen,
Im dunkeln Laub
die Goldorangen
glühen,
Ein sanfter Wind vom blauen
Himmel weht,
Die Myrte still und hoch der
Lorbeer steht,
Kennst du es wohl?
Dahin! Dahin
Möcht ich mit dir, o mein
Geliebter, ziehn.

Kennst du das Haus? Auf
Säulen ruht sein Dach,
Es glänzt der Saal, es
schimmert das Gemach,
Und Marmorbilder stehn
und sehn mich an:
Was hat man dir, du armes
Kind, getan?
Kennst du es wohl?
Dahin! Dahin
Möcht ich mit dir, o mein
Beschützer, ziehn.

Kennst du den Berg und
seinen Wolkensteg?
Das Maultier sucht im Nebel
seinen Weg;
In Höhlen wohnt der
Drachen alte Brut;
Es stürzt der Fels und über
ihn die Flut,
Kennst du ihn wohl?
Dahin! Dahin
Geht unser Weg! o Vater,
lass uns ziehn!

Mignon's Song 'Do you know the land?'

Do you know the land
where lemons blossom,
where oranges grow
golden among dark
leaves,
a gentle wind drifts
across blue skies,
the myrtle stands silent,
the laurel tall,
do you know it?
It's there, it's there
I long to go with you, my
love.

Do you know the house?
Columns support its roof,
its hall gleams, its
apartment shimmers,
and marble statues stand
and stare at me:
what have they done to
you, poor child?
Do you know it?
It's there, it's there
I long to go with you, my
protector.

Do you know the mountain
and its cloudy path?
The mule seeks its way
through the mist,
in caverns dwell the
dragons' ancient brood,
the cliff falls sheer, the
torrent over it,
do you know it?
It's there, it's there
our pathway lies! O father,
let us go!

William Denis Browne (1888-1915)

Arabia (1914)

Far are the shades of Arabia,
Where the Princes ride at noon,
'Mid the verdurous vales and thickets,
Under the ghost of the moon;
And so dark is that vaulted purple
Flowers in the forest rise
And toss into blossom 'gainst the phantom stars
Pale in the noonday skies.

Sweet is the music of Arabia
In my heart, when out of dreams
I still in the thin clear mirk of dawn
Descry her gliding streams;
Hear her strange lutes on the green banks
Ring loud with the grief and delight
Of the dim-silked, dark-haired Musicians
In the brooding silence of night.

They haunt me - her lutes and her forests:
No beauty on earth I see
But shadowed with that dream recalls
Her loveliness to me:
Still eyes look coldly upon me,
Cold voices whisper and say -
'He is crazed with the spell of far Arabia,
They have stolen his wits away.'

Arthur Bliss (1891-1975)

Siege (1940-2)

Edna St. Vincent Millay

This I do being mad,
Gather baubles about me.
Sit in a circle of toys,
And all this time
Death beating the door in.

White jade ... and an orange pitcher,
Hindu idol, Chinese god,
May-be next year when I am richer
Carved beads ... and a lotus pod.
And all this time
Death beating the door in.

Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979)

A Dream (1928)

William Butler Yeats

I dreamed that one had died in a strange place
Near no accustomed hand;
And they had nailed the boards above her face,
The peasants of that land,
And, wond'ring, planted by her solitude
A cypress and a yew:
I came, and wrote upon a cross of wood,
Man had no more to do:
"She was more beautiful than thy first love
This lady by the trees."
And gazed upon the mournful stars above,
And heard the mournful breeze.

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

Amy Woodforde-Finden (1860-1919)

Kashmiri Song (1902)

Laurence Hope

Pale hands I loved beside the Shalimar,
Where are you now? Who lies beneath your spell?
Whom do you lead on Rapture's roadway, far,
Before you agonise them in farewell?

Oh, pale dispensers of my Joys and Pains,
Holding the doors of Heaven and of Hell,
How the hot blood rushed wildly through the veins
Beneath your touch, until you waved farewell.

Pale hands, pink tipped, like Lotus buds that float
On those cool waters where we used to dwell,
I would have rather felt you round my throat,
Crushing out life, than waving me farewell!

Henri Duparc (1848-1933)

L'invitation au voyage Invitation to journey

(1870)

Charles Baudelaire

Mon enfant, ma sœur, Songe à la douceur D'aller là-bas vivre ensemble!	My child, my sister, think how sweet to journey there and live together!
Aimer à loisir, Aimer et mourir Au pays qui te ressemble! Les soleils mouillés De ces ciels brouillés Pour mon esprit ont les charmes Si mystérieux	To love as we please, to love and die in the land that is like you! The watery suns of those hazy skies hold for my spirit the same mysterious charms
De tes traîtres yeux, Brillant à travers leurs larmes.	as your treacherous eyes shining through their tears.

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté, Luxe, calme et volupté.	There – nothing but order and beauty dwell, abundance, calm and sensuous delight.
---	--

Vois sur ces canaux Dormir ces vaisseaux Dont l'humeur est vagabonde; C'est pour assouvir Ton moindre désir Qu'ils viennent du bout du monde. – Les soleils couchants Revêtent les champs, Les canaux, la ville entière, D'hyacinthe et d'or; Le monde s'endort Dans une chaude lumière.	See on those canals those vessels sleeping, vessels with a restless soul; to satisfy your slightest desire they come from the ends of the earth. The setting suns clothe the fields, canals and all the town with hyacinth and gold; the world falls asleep in a warm light.
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Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté, Luxe, calme et volupté.	There – nothing but order and beauty dwell, abundance, calm and sensuous delight.
---	--

La vie antérieure (1884)

Charles Baudelaire

J'ai longtemps habité sous de vastes portiques Que les soleils marins teignaient de mille feux, Et que leurs grands piliers, droits et majestueux, Rendaient pareils, le soir, aux grottes basaltiques.	For long I lived beneath vast colonnades tinged with a thousand fires by ocean suns, whose giant pillars, straight and majestic, made them look, at evening, like basalt caves.
Les houles, en roulant les images des cieux, Mêlaient d'une façon solennelle et mystique Les tout-puissants accords de leur riche musique Aux couleurs du couchant reflété par mes yeux.	The sea-swells, mingling the mirrored skies, solemnly and mystically interwove the mighty chords of their mellow music with the colours of sunset reflected in my eyes.
C'est là que j'ai vécu dans les voluptés calmes, Au milieu de l'azur, des vagues, des splendeurs Et des esclaves nus, tout imprégnés d'odeurs,	It is there that I have lived in sensuous repose, with blue sky about me and brightness and waves and naked slaves all drenched in perfume,
Qui me rafraîchissaient le front avec des palmes, Et dont l'unique soin était d'approfondir Le secret douloureux qui me faisait languir.	Who fanned my brow with fronds of palm, and whose only care was to fathom the secret grief which made me languish.

Sally Beamish (b.1956)

Four Songs from Hafez (2007)

Hafez, trans. Jila Peacock

Nightingale

Roaming the dawn garden
I heard the call of a nightingale

Forlorn like me he loved the rose
And in that cry surged all his warbling grief

I drifted in that garden's timeless moment
Balancing the plight of rose and bird

For endless roses flower each day
Yet no man plucks a single bloom
Without the risk of thorn

O Hafez, seek no gain from the orbit of this wheel
It has a thousand failings and no concern for you

Peacock

Until your hair falls through the fingers of the breeze
My yearning heart lies torn apart with grief.

The dusty mole encircled by your curls,
Is like the ink-drop falling in the curve of J.

And wafting tresses in the perfect garden of your face,
Drop like a peacock falling into paradise.

My soul searches for the comfort of a glance,
Light as the dust arising from your path,

Your shadow falls across my frame,
Like the breath of Jesus over melting bones.

And those who turned to Mecca as their only haven,
Now at the knowledge of your lips tumble at the tavern
door.

O precious love, the suffering of your absence and lost
Hafez
Fell and fused together with the ancient pact.

Fish

When my beloved offers the cup
Graven idols are crushed,

And those who gaze into that intoxicating eye
Call ecstatically for rescue.

I plunge into the ocean like a fish
Craving the beloved's hook,

I fall pleading at those feet
In hope of a helping hand.

O happy the heart who like Hafez
Has tasted the wine of creation.

Hoopoe

O Hoopoe of the east wind,

To Sheba I shall send you.
Take heed from where to where
I shall send you

Pity a bird like you

Lodged in a well of sorrow.

From here, to the nest of devotion
I shall send you
In quest of love

There is no near or far but only now.
I see you whole, and my fealty

I shall send you

Whispering in the winds
Each dawn and dusk,
Convoys of sweet invocations

I shall send you

Love's face
Reveals the joy of all Creation
In the God-reflecting mirror
I shall send you

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

Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)

From *Goethe Lieder* (1888-90)

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Cophtisches Lied I

Lasset Gelehrte sich zanken
und streiten,
Streng und bedächtigt die
Lehrer auch sein!
Alle die Weisesten aller der
Zeiten
Lächeln und winken und
stimmen mit ein:
"Töricht, auf Bessrung der
Toren zu harren!
Kinder der Klugheit, o habet
die Narren
Eben zum Narren auch, wie
sich's gehört!"

Merlin der Alte, im
leuchtenden Grabe,
Wo ich als Jüngling
gesprochen ihn habe,
Hat mich mit ähnlicher
Antwort belehrt:
"Töricht, auf Bessrung der
Toren zu harren!
Kinder der Klugheit, o habet
die Narren
Eben zum Narren auch, wie
sich's gehört!"

Und auf den Höhen der
indischen Lüfte
Und in den Tiefen
ägyptischer Gräfte
Hab ich das heilige Wort nur
gehört:
"Töricht, auf Bessrung der
Toren zu harren!
Kinder der Klugheit, o habet
die Narren
Eben zum Narren auch, wie
sich's gehört!"

Erschaffen und Beleben

Hans Adam war ein
Erdenkloss
Den Gott zum Menschen
machte,
Doch bracht er aus der
Mutter Schoss
Noch vieles
Ungeschlachte.

Cophtic Song I

Let scholars quarrel and
squabble,
Let teachers too be
prudent and strict!
All the wisest men in all
the ages
Nod and smile in
agreement with me:
'Foolish to wait till fools
grow wiser!
Children of wisdom,
simply make fools
Of the fools, as is
fit!

Old Merlin from his
shining grave,
Where I consulted him in
my youth,
Gave me a similar answer
too:
'Foolish to wait till fools
grow wiser!
Children of wisdom
simply make fools
Of the fools, as is
fit!

And on India's airy
heights,
And in the depths of
Egyptian tombs,
I have only heard those
sacred words:
'Foolish to wait till fools
grow wiser!
Children of wisdom,
simply make fools
Of the fools, as is
fit!

Creation and Animation

Hans Adam was a lump of
clay
That God made into man,
But he produced from
Mother Earth
Much else that was
uncouth.

Die Elohim zur Nas' hinein
Den besten Geist ihm bliesen,
Nun schien er schon was
mehr zu sein,
Denn er fing an zu niesen.
Jehovah, via his nose,
Blew the best spirit in,
Now he seemed to make
progress,
He began to sneeze.

Doch mit Gebien und Glied
und Kopf
Blieb er ein halber
Klumpen,
Bis endlich Noah für den
Tropf
Das Wahre fand, den
Humpen.
Despite his head and
bones and limbs,
He still remained half a
lump,
Till Noah for the clot at
last
Found the very thing – a
tankard.

Der Klumpe fühlt sogleich
den Schwung,
Sobald er sich benetzt,
So wie der Teig durch
Säuerung
Sich in Bewegung setzt.
That brought life into the
lump
As soon as he partook,
Just as dough, through
leavening,
Is quickened into life.

So, Hafis, mag dein holder
Sang,
Dein heiliges Exempel,
Uns führen, bei der Gläser
Klang,
Zu unsres Schöpfers Tempel.
So, Hafiz, may your sweet
song
And your sacred example
Conduct us, as the
glasses clink,
To our Creator's temple.

Interval

Eleanor Alberga (b.1949)

The Soul's Expression (2017)

I. George Eliot: Blue Wings

Eleanor Alberga & George Eliot

Warm whisp'ring through the slender olive leaves
Came to me a gentle sound,
Whis'pring of a secret found
In the clear sunshine 'mid the golden sheaves:

Said it was sleeping for me in the morn,
Called it gladness, called it joy,
Drew me on 'Come hither, boy.'
To where the blue wings rested on the corn.

I thought the gentle sound had whispered true
Thought the little heaven mine,
Leaned to clutch the thing divine,
And saw the blue wings melt within the blue!

Let evil words die as soon as they are spoken.

II. Emily Brontë: The Sun Has Set

Eleanor Alberga & Emily Brontë

The sun has set, and the long grass now
Waves dreamily in the evening wind;
And the wild bird has flown from that old gray stone
In some warm nook a couch to find.

In all the lonely landscape round
I see no light and hear no sound,
Except the wind that far away
Come sighing o'er the healthy sea.

Let evil die soon

III. George Eliot: Roses

Eleanor Alberga & George Eliot

You love the roses - so do I. I wish
The sky would rain down roses, as they rain
From off the shaken bush. Why will it not?
Then all the valley would be pink and white
And soft to tread on. They would fall as light
As feathers, smelling sweet; and it would be
Like sleeping and like waking, all at once!

Die evil Die

IV. Elizabeth Barrett Browning: The Soul's Expression

Eleanor Alberga & Elizabeth Barrett Browning

With stammering lips and insufficient sound
I strive and struggle to deliver right
With dream and thought and feeling interwound
And inly answering all the senses round
With octaves of a mystic depth and height
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual ground.

This song of soul I struggle to outbear
Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,
And utter all myself into the air:
But if I did it,--as the thunder-roll
Breaks its own cloud, my flesh would perish there,
Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

There! They're spoken!

Harry T Burleigh (1866-1949)

Five Songs of Laurence Hope (1915)

Laurence Hope

Worth While

I asked my desolate shipwrecked soul
'Wouldst thou rather never have met
The one whom thou lovedst beyond control
And whom thou adorest yet?'
Back from the senses, the heart, the brain,
Came the answer swiftly thrown,
'What matter the price? We would pay it again,
We have had, we have loved, we have known!'

The Jungle Flower

Thou art one of the jungle flowers, strange and fierce and
fair,
Palest amber, perfect lines, and scented with champa
flower.
Lie back and frame thy face in the gloom of thy loosened
hair;
Sweet thou art and loved - ay, loved - for an hour.

But thought flies far, ah, far, to another breast,
Whose whiteness breaks to the rose of a twin pink flower,
Where wind the azure veins that my lips caressed
When Fate was gentle to me for a too-brief hour.

Kashmiri Song

Pale hands I loved beside the Shalimar,
Where are you now? Who lies beneath your spell?
Whom do you lead on Rapture's roadway, far,
Before you agonise them in farewell?

Oh, pale dispensers of my Joys and Pains,
Holding the doors of Heaven and of Hell,
How the hot blood rushed wildly through the veins - oh
pale soft hands!
Beneath your touch, until you waved farewell.

Pale hands, pink tipped, like Lotus buds that float
On those cool waters where we used to dwell,
I would have rather felt you round my throat,
Crushing out life, than waving me farewell!

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

Among the Fuchsias

Call me not to a secret place
When daylight dies away,
Tempt me not with thine eager face
And words thou shouldst not say.

Entice me not with a child of thine,
Ah, God, if such might be,
For surely a man is half divine
Who adds another link to the line
Whose last link none may see.

Call me not to the Lotus lake
That drooping fuchsias hide,
What if my latent youth awake
And will not be denied?
Ah, tempt me not for I am not strong
(Thy mouth is a budded kiss) -

My days are empty, my nights are long;
Ah, why is a thing so sweet so wrong,
Why is a thing so sweet so wrong
As thy temptation is?

Till I Wake

When I am dying, lean over me tenderly, softly,
Stoop as the yellow roses droop in the wind from the
South,
So I may when I wake, if there be an awakening,
Keep what lulled me to sleep; the touch of your lips on my
mouth.

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