

# WIGMORE HALL

Tuesday 8 February 2022 7.30pm Sounds of the Solstice - Tenebrae 20th Anniversary

**Olivia Jageurs** harp

## Tenebrae

**Rachel Haworth** soprano

**Victoria Meteyard** soprano

**Hannah King** soprano

**Emma Walshe** soprano

**Katie Trethewey** soprano

**Rosanna Wicks** soprano

**Hannah Cooke** alto

**Elisabeth Paul** alto

**Martha McLorinan** alto

**Eleanor Minney** alto

**Ben Alden** tenor

**Jeremy Budd** tenor

**Nicholas Madden** tenor

**Toby Ward** tenor

**Joseph Edwards** bass

**Simon Whiteley** bass

**Owain Park** bass

**Jimmy Holliday** bass

**Tom Herring** bass

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**Richard Rodney Bennett** (1936-2012) The seasons of his mercies from *Sermons and Devotions* (1992)

**Bob Chilcott** (b.1955) Before the ice (O magnum mysterium) (2012)

**Joanna Marsh** (b.1970) In Winter's House (2019)

**Peter Maxwell Davies** (1934-2016) O Magnum Mysterium Op. 13a (1960)

*O magnum mysterium • Haylle, comly and clene •*

*Alleluia, pro virgine Maria • The Fader of Heaven*

**Jeffrey Mumford** (b.1955) Caprice (Homage to Poulenc) (2016)

**Francis Poulenc** (1899-1963) Un soir de neige (1944)

*De grandes cuillers de neige • La bonne neige •*

*Bois meurtri • La nuit le froid la solitude*

## Interval

**Ēriks Ešņvalds** (b.1977) Stars (2011)

**Gustav Holst** (1874-1934) Venus, the Bringer of Peace from *The Planets* Op. 32 (1914-6) arranged by Olivia Jageurs

From *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda* Op. 26

Hymn to the Dawn (1910) • Hymn to the Waters (1910) • Hymn to Vena (1910)

**Edward Elgar** (1857-1934) O wild west wind Op. 53 No. 3 (1907-8)

**Healey Willan** (1880-1968) Rise up, my love (1929)

**James MacMillan** (b.1959) O Radiant Dawn from *The Strathclyde Motets* (2007)

**Jonathan Harvey** (1939-2012) Song of June (1960 rev. 2010)

**John Rutter** (b.1945) Hymn to the Creator of Light (1992)

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Having just passed the midway point between the winter solstice (shortest day of the year) and the start of spring (the spring equinox on 20 March), tonight's programme with leading UK chamber choir Tenebrae focuses on the shifting seasons, the alternation of light and dark, and the planets and the stars.

For his *Sermons and Devotions*, written for the King's Singers, **Richard Rodney Bennett** turned not to John Donne's metaphysical poems but to his sermons. 'The Seasons of His Mercies', the fourth of Bennett's five settings, comes from Donne's sermon for Christmas Day 1624 and highlights the constancy of God's mercy in contrast to the changing seasons. The gently clashing harmonies are radiant, recalling Britten, with whom Bennett struck up a friendship after writing to the elder composer as a student.

**Bob Chilcott's** influence on choral music making up and down the country is as pervasive as that of John Rutter, who closes tonight's concert. In *Before the Ice (O magnum mysterium)* he chose to set a poem by Emily Dickinson that anticipates the arrival in winter of a 'wonder of wonder' – perhaps casting death as the ultimate enlightenment. On its second hearing, the poem is combined with the text 'O magnum mysterium', which reflects on the miracle of the nativity. The piece concludes with an 'Alleluia' of luminous serenity.

We stay in winter for **Joanna Marsh's** *In Winter's House*, for male voices, which Tenebrae premièred here at Wigmore Hall in December 2019. British-born but based in Dubai since 2007, Marsh was drawn to a poem by Jane Draycott, in which the harshest of winters is lit up and transformed by a child's dream. 'What I enjoyed most in the poem's language,' says Marsh, 'was its dappled feel; the intermingling of light and dark.'

*O magnum mysterium* is an early work by **Peter Maxwell Davies**, comprising a sequence of carols, beginning with 'O magnum mysterium' (but in English), interspersed by two instrumental sonatas and concluding with an organ fantasia. For Maxwell Davies, the opening carol conveyed 'the wonder and promise of the nativity'. His career underwent its own cycle of transformation, beginning as radical modernist and ending as Master of the Queen's Music.

American composer **Jeffrey Mumford** has often been inspired 'by cloud imagery, light and the unique aspects of the energy that characterise the various times of the day'. His *Caprice (Homage to Poulenc)* for solo harp pays tribute to the French composer, whose music Mumford first encountered as a student. 'Listeners will definitely hear the influence of [Poulenc's] *Mouvements perpétuels*. I'm captivated by his harmonic sense that – as a member of Les Six – was more immediate, in reaction to Debussy and Ravel.'

**Francis Poulenc** wrote his four Paul Eluard settings *Un soir de neige* between 24 and 26 December 1944, before travelling to London early in the New Year (he gave a performance at Wigmore Hall on 7 January with his friend and recital partner the baritone Pierre Bernac). Part of Poulenc's attraction to Eluard was that 'all his poetry is musical vibration'. The poems here speak of the sometimes merciless grip of

winter, but there's a lyrical warmth in Poulenc's settings and a quasi-religious flavour.

**Ēriks Ešēnvalds** follows Arvo Pärt, Veljo Tormis and Pēteris Vasks in the line of Baltic composers who have won international fame for their choral works. Composed originally for mixed choir in 2011 to a text by Sara Teasdale (1884–1933), *Stars* includes parts for Tibetan singing bowls and for tuned wine glasses, creating a celestial aura. Ešēnvalds was inspired to write the piece after being struck by the brightness of the stars in the sky while out walking on a cold night during Christmas.

Along with *Neptune*, *Venus* is the most diaphanous and otherworldly of the seven orchestral portraits that make up **Gustav Holst's** *The Planets*. It is performed by harpist **Olivia Jageurs** in her own arrangement – one of the many she made for her innovative weekly 'Harpy Hour' series of Zoom request concerts.

Holst's *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda* were one of the fruits of his fascination with the ancient language of Sanskrit. He made his own translations from the *Rig Veda*, the collection of over 1,000 hymns to the Hindu gods. Tonight we hear three of the four hymns from the third group. They honour firstly the Dawn, then the Waters and finally the deity Vena, who, 'born of light ... drives the many-colour'd clouds onwards'. There are clear hallmarks of the composer of *The Planets* here, not least his ingenuity in writing for the harp.

Like Holst, **Edward Elgar** was a great writer of the English part-song. The third of his *4 Choral Songs* Op. 53 is a setting of the final section of Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*. Though carrying the marking *nobilmente*, it is also directed to be sung 'with the greatest animation but without hurry'. In the hope of renewal, the last line asks, 'If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?'

'Rise up, my love' is the most popular choral work by composer and organist **Healey Willan**, who was born in England but moved to Canada aged 13. Taking words from the biblical Song of Songs that speak of the passing of winter and the arrival of spring, it is beloved of church choirs across English-speaking Canada.

The Catholic faith has been a pervasive inspiration for **James MacMillan**. His 'O Radiant Dawn' is a setting of one of the seven 'O Antiphons' that are recited before the Magnificat during Vespers in Advent. It is an impassioned plea for eternal light to shine on 'those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death'.

**Jonathan Harvey's** setting of Wilfred Owen was written in 1960 and revised 50 years later for a concert marking the 70th birthday of Martin Neary, Director of Music at Winchester Cathedral in the 1970s while Harvey's son Dominic was a chorister there. It captures the dual awakenings of summer and of romantic love.

*Hymn to the Creator of Light* was composed by **John Rutter** in memory of the composer Herbert Howells, whom Rutter had known. It was first performed at Gloucester Cathedral in 1992 at the dedication of a window to Howells. The celebration here is of light visible ('the sun's ray, the flame of fire') as well as of 'the light invisible and intellectual'.

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## Richard Rodney Bennett (1936-2012)

### The seasons of his mercies from *Sermons and Devotions* (1992)

*John Donne*

God made Sun and Moon to distinguish seasons, and day, and night,  
and we cannot have the fruits of the earth but in their seasons;  
But God hath made no decree to distinguish the seasons of his  
mercies;

In Paradise the fruits were ripe the first minute, and in heaven it is  
always Autumne, his mercies are ever in their maturity.

If some King of the earth have so large an extent of dominion, in  
North, and South, as that he hath Winter and Summer together in  
his Dominions, so large an extent East and West as that he hath  
day and night together in his Dominions, much more hath God  
mercy and judgement together.

He brought light out of darknesse, not out of a lesser light; he can  
bring thy summer out of winter, though thou have no spring;  
Though in the ways of fortune or understanding or conscience,  
thou have been benighted till now, wintered and frozen, clouded  
and eclipsed, damped and numbed, smothered and stupefied till  
now, now, God comes to thee. Not as in the dawning of the day,  
not as in the bud of the spring, but as the sun at noon to illustrate  
all shadowes, as the sheaves in harvest, to fill all penuries, all  
occasions invite his mercies, and all times are his seasons.

## Bob Chilcott (b.1955)

### Before the ice (O magnum mysterium) (2012)

*Emily Dickinson/Liturgical text*

Before the ice is in the pools,  
Before the skaters go,  
Or any cheek at nightfall  
Is tarnished by the snow.

Before the fields have finished,  
Before the Christmas tree,  
Wonder upon wonder  
Will arrive to me!

What we touch the hems of  
On a summer's day;  
What is only walking  
Just a bridge away.

That which sings so, speaks so,  
When there's no-one here,  
Will the frock I wept in  
Answer me to wear?

O magnum mysterium et  
admirabile sacramentum,  
Ut animalia viderent Dominum  
natum, jacentem in praesepio.  
Beata virgo, cujus viscera  
meruerunt portare Dominum  
Christum.  
Alleluia, alleluia!

O great mystery, and wonderful  
sacrament,  
that animals should see the  
newborn Lord, lying in a manger.  
Blessed is the virgin whose  
womb was worthy to bear the  
Lord, Jesus Christ.  
Alleluia, alleluia!

## Joanna Marsh (b.1970)

### In Winter's House (2019)

*Jane Draycott*

In winter's house there's a room  
That's pale and still as mist in a field  
While outside in the street every gate's shut firm,  
Every face as cold as steel.

In winter's house there's a bed  
That is spread with frost and feathers, that gleams  
In the half-light like rain in a disused yard  
Or a pearl in a choked-up stream.

In winter's house there's a child  
Asleep in a dream of light that grows out  
Of the dark, a flame you can hold in your hand  
Like a flower or a torch on the street.

In winter's house there's a tale  
That's told of a great chandelier in a garden,  
Of fire that catches and travels for miles,  
Of all gates and windows wide open.

*In winter's house there's a flame*

*Being dreamt by a child in the night,*

*In the small quiet house at the turn in the lane*

*Where the darkness gives way to light.*

## Peter Maxwell Davies (1934-2016)

### O Magnum Mysterium Op. 13a (1960)

#### O magnum mysterium

*Liturgical text*

O magnum mysterium,  
Et admirabile sacramentum,  
Ut animalia viderent Dominum  
natum,  
lacentem in praesepio.

Oh great mystery,  
and marvellous sacrament,  
that the beasts should have  
seen our Lord,  
lying in a manger.

## Haylle, comly and clene

*Anonymous*

Haylle, comly and clene: haylle,  
yong child!

Haylle maker, as I meyne of a  
madyne so mylde.

Thou was waryd, I weyne, the  
warlo so wylde,

The fals gyler of teyn, now goys  
he begylde.

Lo! he merys!

Lo! he laghys, my swetyng.

A welfare metyng,

I have holden my hetyng,

Have a bob of cherys.

Haylle, sufferan savyoure, for  
thou hast us soght:

Haylle, freely foyde and floure,  
that alle thyng has wroght.

Haylle, fulle of favoure, that  
made alle of noght!

Haylle! I kneylle and I cowre. A  
byrd have

I broght to my barne.

Haylle! lyttylle tyne mop.

Of oure crede thou art crop:

I wold drynk on thy cop,

Lyttylle daystarne.

Haylle, derlyng dere, fulle of  
godhede,

I pray the be nere when I have  
nede.

Haylle! swete is thy chere: my  
hart would blede

To se the sytt here in so poore  
wede

With no pennys.

Haylle! put furthe thy dalle,

I bryng the bot a balle:

Have and play the with alle.

And go to the tenys.

Hail, comely and pure; hail,  
young child!

Hail, creator, as I believe, of a  
maiden so mild!

Thou hast, I believe, warded off  
the fiend so wild;

the false worker of evil, now he  
is defeated.

Lo, he is merry!

Lo, he laughs, my sweetheart,

a welcome meeting,

I have given my greeting.

Have a bunch of cherries!

Hail, sovereign saviour, for thou  
hast sought us!

All hail, leaf and flower, who  
has created all things.

Hail, full of grace, who createdst  
everything out of nothing!

Hail! I kneel and I cower. A bird  
have I broght

to my bairn!

Hail, little tiny pate,

of our creed thou art the crop!

I would drink of thy cup,

little day-star.

Hail, darling dear, full of  
divinity!

I pray thee, be near when I have  
need.

Hail! Sweet is thy air: my heart  
would bleed

to see thee sit here in such poor  
clothes,

with no pennies.

Hail! put forth thy hand!

I bring thee only a ball:

take it and play with it,

and have a game of tennis.

## Alleluia, pro virgine Maria

*Anonymous*

Alleluia, alleluia, pro virgine  
Maria.

Diva natalicia Nostra purgat vicia,  
Nedemur supplicia.

Alleluia, alleluia for the Virgin  
Mary.

The holy birth purges our sins  
lest we be given to torment.

Nato sacrificia Reges dant  
triplicia,  
Herodis post convicia.

Mortis vincula trucia Solvit die  
tercia,  
Resurgentis potencia.

## The Fader of Heaven

*Anonymous*

The Fader of Heven, God  
omnipotent,  
That sett alle on seven, his son  
has he sent:  
My name couthe he neven, and  
lyght or he went.

I conceyvd hym full even through  
myght as he ment.  
And now he is borne.

He kepe you fro wo:  
I shalle pray him so;  
Telle furth as ye go,  
And myn on this morne.

The kings give triple offerings to  
the babe  
after the reproaches of Herod.

On the third day the power of  
the risen Christ  
loosed the grim bonds of death.

The Father of Heaven, God  
omnipotent,  
who set all things in order, His  
son has He sent.  
My name he could tell, and he  
laughed as if he knew all about it.

I conceived him, through God's  
power, just as He intended.  
And he is just new-born.

May he keep you from woe:  
I shall pray him so;  
make his birth known  
and remember this morning.

## Jeffrey Mumford (b.1955)

### Caprice (Homage to Poulenc) (2016)

## Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

### Un soir de neige (1944)

*Paul Éluard*

### De grandes cuillers de neige

De grandes cuillers de neige  
Ramassent nos pieds glacés  
Et d'une dure parole  
Nous heurtont l'hiver tête  
Chaque arbre a sa place en l'air  
Chaque roc son poids sur terre  
Chaque ruisseau son eau vive  
Nous nous n'avons pas de feu

### La bonne neige

La bonne neige le ciel noir  
Les branches mortes la détresse  
De la forêt pleine de pièges

### A night of snow

### Great clods of snow

Great clods of snow  
our frozen feet collect  
and with a harsh word  
we collide with stubborn winter  
each tree has its place in the air  
each rock its place on the earth  
each stream its white water  
but as for us we have no fire

### New snow

New snow black sky  
dead branches the torment  
of the forest full of traps

Honte à la bête pourchassée  
La fuite en flèche dans le cœur

shame on the hunted beast  
flight swift as an arrow to the heart

Les traces d'une proie atroce  
Hardi au loup et c'est  
toujours  
Le plus beau loup et c'est  
toujours

The tracks of a terrible quarry  
on the hunt for the wolf and it is  
always  
the most beautiful wolf and it is  
always

Le dernier vivant que menace  
La masse absolue de la mort

the last one alive which faces  
the full weight of death

## Bois meurtri

## Ravaged woods

Bois meurtri bois perdu d'un  
voyage en hiver  
Navire où la neige prend pied  
Bois d'asile bois mort où sans  
espoir je rêve  
De la mer aux miroirs crevés  
Un grand moment d'eau froide a  
saisi les noyés  
La foule de mon corps en souffre  
Je m'affaiblis je me disperse  
J'avoue ma vie j'avoue ma mort  
j'avoue autrui

Ravaged woods lost woods of a  
winter journey  
ship where the snow takes hold  
woods of sanctuary dead woods  
where without hope I dream  
of the sea of broken mirrors  
a great wave of cold water took  
hold of the drowners  
my whole body suffering  
I grow weak I drift  
I confess my life I confess my  
death I confess all the rest

## La nuit le froid la solitude

## The night the cold the solitude

La nuit le froid la solitude  
On m'enferma soigneusement  
Mais les branches cherchaient  
leur voie dans la prison  
Autour de moi l'herbe trouva le  
ciel  
On verrouilla le ciel  
Ma prison s'écroula  
Le froid vivant le froid brûlant  
m'eut bien en main

The night the cold the solitude  
they shut me away completely  
but the branches found their  
way into the prison  
all around me the grass met the  
sky  
they closed off the sky  
my prison came tumbling down  
the living cold the burning cold  
took hold of me

## Interval

## Ēriks Ešvalds (b.1977)

### Stars (2011)

*Sara Teasdale*

Alone in the night  
On a dark hill  
With pines around me  
Spicy and still

And a heaven full of stars  
Over my head  
White and topaz  
And misty red;

Myriads with beating  
Hearts of fire  
The aeons  
Cannot vex or tire;

Up the dome of heaven  
Like a great hill  
I watch them marching  
Stately and still

And I know that I  
Am honored to be  
Witness  
Of so much majesty

## Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

### Venus, the Bringer of Peace from

### *The Planets Op. 32* (1914-6)

arranged by Olivia Jageurs

### From *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda Op. 26*

*Gustav Holst, translated from the Sanskrit*

### Hymn to the Dawn (1910)

Hear our hymn, O Goddess,  
Rich in wealth and wisdom,  
Ever young yet ancient,  
True to Law Eternal.

Wak'ner of the songbirds,  
Ensign of the Eternal,  
Draw thou near, O Fair One  
In thy radiant Chariot.

Bring to her your off'ring;  
Humbly bow before her:  
Raise your songs of welcome  
As she comes in splendour.

### Hymn to the Waters (1910)

Flowing from the firmament, forth to the ocean,  
Healing all in earth and air, never halting,  
Indra, Lord of Heav'n, formed their courses.  
Indra's mighty laws can never be broken.  
Cleansing waters flow ye on; hasten and help us.

Lo, in the waters, dwelleth One,  
Knower of all on earth and sea,  
Whose dread command no man may shun.  
Varuna, sov'reign Lord is He.  
Onward ye waters, onward hie.  
Dance in the bright beams of the sun;  
Obey the ruler of the sky  
Who dug the path for you to run.

### Hymn to Vena (1910)

Vena comes, born of light;  
He drives the many-colour'd clouds onward.  
Here, where the sunlight and the waters mingle,  
Our songs float up and caress the new-born infant.

The child of cloud and mist appeareth on the ridge of the sky.  
He shines on the summit of creation.  
The hosts proclaim the glory of our common Father.

He hath come to the bosom of his beloved.  
Smiling on him  
She beareth him to highest heav'n.  
With yearning heart  
On thee we gaze, O gold-wing'd messenger of mighty gods.

Wise men see him in their libations  
As the sacrifice mounts to the eternal heights, mingling with our  
solemn chant;

He stands erect in highest heav'n.  
Clad in noble raiment, arm'd with shining weapons,  
Hurling light to the farthest region,  
Rejoicing in his radiant splendour.

### Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

#### O wild west wind Op. 53 No. 3 (1907-8)

*Percy Bysshe Shelley*

O wild West Wind, make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:  
What if my leaves are falling like its own!  
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,  
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,  
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe  
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!  
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth  
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!  
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,  
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

### Healey Willan (1880-1968)

#### Rise up, my love (1929)

*Liturgical text*

Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away;  
For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;  
The flowers appear upon the earth;  
The time of the singing of birds is come;  
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

### James MacMillan (b.1959)

#### O Radiant Dawn from *The Strathclyde Motets* (2007)

*Liturgical text*

O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal Light, Sun of Justice. Come,  
shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.  
Isaiah had prophesied, 'The people who walked in darkness have  
seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a  
light has shone.' Amen.

### Jonathan Harvey (1939-2012)

#### Song of June (1960 rev. 2010)

*Wilfred Owen*

Leaves  
Murmuring by myriads in the shimmering trees.

Lives  
Wakening with wonder in the Pyrenees.

Birds  
Cheerily chirping in the early day.

Bards  
Singing of summer, scything through the hay.

Bees  
Shaking the heavy dews from bloom and frond.

Boys  
Bursting the surface of the ebony pond.

Flashes  
Of swimmers carving through the sparkling cold.

Fleashes  
Gleaming with wetness to the morning gold.

A mead

Bordered about with warbling waterbrooks.

A maid

Laughing the love-laugh with me; proud of looks.

The heat

Throbbing between the upland and the peak.

Her heart

Quivering with passion to my pressed cheek.

Braiding

Of floating flames across the mountain brow.

Brooding

Of stillness; and a sighing of the bough.

Stirs

Of leaflets in the gloom; soft petal-showers

Stars

Expanding with the starr'd nocturnal flowers.

## John Rutter (b.1945)

### Hymn to the Creator of Light (1992)

*Lancelot Andrewes trans. Alexander Whyte*

*Johann Franck trans. Catherine Winkworth*

Glory be to thee, O lord, glory be to thee,  
Creator of the visible light,  
The sun's ray, the flame of fire;  
Creator also of the light invisible and intellectual:  
That which is known of God, the light invisible.  
Glory be to thee, O Lord, glory be to thee,  
Creator of the Light.  
For writings of the law, glory be to thee:  
For oracles of prophets, glory be to thee:  
For melody of psalms, glory be to thee:  
For wisdom of proverbs, glory be to thee:  
Experience of histories, glory be to thee:  
A light which never sets.  
God is the Lord, who hath shewed us light.

Light, who dost my soul enlighten;  
Sun, who all my life dost brighten;  
Joy, the sweetest man e'er knoweth;  
Fount, whence all my being floweth.  
From thy banquet let me measure,  
Lord, how vast and deep its treasure;  
Through the gifts thou here dost give us,  
As thy guest in heaven receive us.

*'In Winter's House' text by Jane Draycott ('The Winter House', The Occupant, 2016),  
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