

# WIGMORE HALL

Wednesday 8 March 2023  
7.30pm

## The Hermes Experiment

Héloïse Werner soprano  
Anne Denholm harp  
Oliver Pashley clarinet  
Marianne Schofield double bass

Josephine Stephenson (b.1990)	tanka (2015)
Clara Schumann (1819-1896)	Liebst du um Schönheit Op. 12 No. 2 (1841) <i>arranged by Oliver Pashley</i>
Lili Boulanger (1893-1918)	Attente (1912) <i>arranged by Marianne Schofield</i>
Nicola LeFanu (b.1947)	The Bourne (2008) <i>arranged by Anne Denholm</i>
Imogen Holst (1907-1984)	From <i>Suite for unaccompanied viola</i> (1930) <i>arranged by Oliver Pashley</i> Cinquepace • Gigue
Lynne Plowman (b.1969)	Pedalling Man from <i>A Field Guide to Pebbles</i> (2017) <i>arranged by Oliver Pashley</i>
Sylvia Lim (b.1992)	Kite (Dymchurch) (2021) <i>world première</i> Co-commissioned by Wigmore Hall
Errollyn Wallen (b.1958)	Tree (2009) <i>arranged by Héloïse Werner</i>  Interval
Freya Waley-Cohen (b.1989)	Oyster from <i>We Phoenician Sailors</i> (2015)
Errollyn Wallen	gun gun gun (2018)
Caroline Shaw (b.1982)	The Ellipse from <i>Plan &amp; Elevation</i> (2015) <i>arranged by Anne Denholm</i>
Ayanna Witter-Johnson	Draw the Line (2020)
Laura Moody	Rilke Songs (2021) <i>An die Musik • Sonnet to Orpheus 1,3 • Rose</i>
Hannah Peel (b.1985)	The Almond Tree (2011) <i>arranged by Oliver Pashley</i>
Emily Hall (b.1978)	Befalling from <i>Befalling</i> (2006) <i>arranged by Oliver Pashley</i>

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All-women concert programmes are not a new invention. They have been used in the UK for at least a century to showcase a wealth of women's compositions, breaking through programmes that standardly include only men. In an ideal world a composer's gender would be unremarkable, but when only 7.7% of orchestral music performed worldwide is written by women, all-women concerts still offer a powerful corrective to programmes where they are excluded.

Incorporating works from the 19th Century to the present day, today's concert follows in this tradition by demonstrating the sheer breadth of music written by women. The Hermes Experiment is known for its innovative programming, and all the pieces on today's programme were either commissioned by the ensemble or arranged by its members. We are going on an expansive journey, through pieces encompassing everything from folk music to Søren Kierkegaard and pandemic lockdowns. Threading through the concert, though, is an exploration of human relationships — both with one another, and with nature.

Both **Josephine Stephenson's** 'tanka' and **Freya Waley-Cohen's** 'Oyster' from *We Phoenician Sailors* are responses to photographs by Thurstan Redding. Stephenson says that the photograph behind 'tanka' 'shows two lovers embracing against an industrial backdrop.' The resulting song 'is slow, dreamlike and mysterious, and also somewhat bittersweet... The piece strives to be - like the photograph - a fixed moment in time, which expands as the words become confused.'

A different image from Redding's same *Lovescapes* series provided Waley-Cohen's prompt; she describes the photo as 'an intimate moment brought to a public space', showing 'hands grasping a lover's back superimposed against the rough texture of an east London brick wall.' The song deals with an 'embodied experience of desire', she says, exploring how memories of relationships can be evoked by 'sensations and impressions of particular moments of heightened intimacy and pleasure or disappointment.' 'Oyster' opens the song cycle, which tracks the development of a relationship.

**Clara Schumann's** 'Liebst du um Schönheit' takes a less physical approach to love. Written in the early years of her marriage to Robert Schumann, this song is one of the few instances of the two composers collaborating together on a joint publication: the *Rückert Lieder* (1841). Comprising 12 songs in total, Robert composed nine of the songs and Clara three. 'Liebst du' was one of Clara's contributions and its gentle lyricism expresses a plea for true love - to love for love itself, not for beauty, wealth or youth. The transience of these earthly qualities is also a preoccupation of the Christina Rossetti poem used for **Nicola LeFanu's** 'The Bourne'. LeFanu repeats the first verse at the end to return the singer 'underneath the growing grass' after an intense, soaring central section.

Death lingers over both 'The Bourne' and 'Attente' by **Lili Boulanger**, famous for being the first woman to win the prestigious Prix de Rome in 1913. 'Attente' is set to a poem by one of her favourite authors, Maurice Maeterlinck. Her simple rocking piano accompaniment creates a meditative and gently sensual mood, exploring a much more ethereal form of desire than that in *We Phoenician Sailors*.

There are two instrumental works that the ensemble has arranged for tonight's programme; **Lynne Plowman's** *Pedalling Man* from *A Field Guide to Pebbles*, originally for percussion duo, and two movements from **Imogen Holst's** *Suite for unaccompanied viola*. Holst has been best known for being Gustav's daughter and Benjamin Britten's assistant, but she is now being recognised as a significant composer in her own right. Her *Suite* fuses baroque and folk influences, doing for the viola what Bach's solo suites did for the cello.

German poet Rainer Maria Rilke provides the texts for **Laura Moody's** *Rilke Songs*. Moody transforms Rilke's mystical poems about the nature of art, reimagining them for the modern era. The first song 'takes Rilke's ode to the ephemeral wonders of music to a place of wildness and abandonment', while Moody's setting of 'Sonnet to Orpheus 1.3' is inspired by 'antique automatons, orchestrions...and the sci-fi mainstay the GlitchBot, a humanoid robot whose imperfections and glitches serve to highlight particular aspects of human-ness.' The third song returns us to nature, partly inspired by Neil Bromhall's time lapse videos 'of roses opening and fading.'

The natural world also motivates **Sylvia Lim's** 'Kite', **Errollyn Wallen's** 'Tree' and **Caroline Shaw's** 'The Ellipse'. 'Kite' tries to capture the movement of a kite 'floating in the cloudy sky at Dymchurch beach...static and delicately suspended but subtly moving in the breeze.' Shaw's hypnotic, powerful piece 'considers the notion of infinite repetition', prompted by walking 'around and around the stone path, beneath the trimmed hornbeams' at Dumbarton Oaks. **Hannah Peel's** 'The Almond Tree' takes a more macabre and sinister path — the composer calls it a 'tale of dark absurdity and murder, combined with the beauty of self-realisation.' Revenge leads to death, and the titular almond tree becomes the site of the singer's final resting place.

Wallen's 'gun gun gun' and **Ayanna Witter-Johnson's** 'Draw the Line' step away from nature to the all-too-human, dealing with violence and division. Wallen conceived her song as a 'gritty and intense depiction' of the 2016 shooting that killed 49 people at a gay nightclub in Florida. Timbre is central to Wallen's piece, using the extremes of the instruments' capabilities to 'evoke the terrifying scene of the tragedy'. Witter-Johnson similarly uses timbre as a structuring element, setting the singer against the grinding, pulsing double bass line that repeats relentlessly. The song 'reflects and explores the depth of sadness and frustration that arose between two friends, from different backgrounds, unified by the series of lockdowns in London 2020, yet divided as a result of the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement.' Witter-Johnson gives no answers or consolations - the singer's final note is delivered alone, unsupported, leading into emptiness. 'Ultimately', she concludes, 'we have to just "Draw the Line".'

Our concert closes on a transcendent note with **Emily Hall's** 'Befalling'. Her setting of Toby Litt's poem is subtle and understated, and the song stops but does not seem to finish. The singer will never be 'body-bound again', as they step out into a final moment of release.

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## Josephine Stephenson (b.1990)

**tanka** (2015)

*Ben Osborn*

there are moments when  
shadows bridge the distance  
between distinct forms;  
the light increases  
before watching itself disappear

## Clara Schumann (1819-1896)

**Liebst du um  
Schönheit Op. 12 No. 2**  
(1841)

arranged by **Oliver Pashley**  
*Friedrich Rückert*

Liebst du um Schönheit,  
O nicht mich liebe!  
Liebe die Sonne,  
Sie trägt ein goldnes Haar.  
Liebst du um Jugend,  
O nicht mich liebe!  
Liebe den Frühling,  
Der jung ist jedes Jahr.

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

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

**If you love for  
beauty**

If you love for beauty,  
O love not me!  
Love the sun,  
she has golden hair.  
If you love for youth,  
O love not me!  
Love the spring  
which is young each year.

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

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

## Lili Boulanger (1893-1918)

**Attente** (1912)  
arranged by **Marianne  
Schofield**  
*Maurice Maeterlinck*

Mon âme a joint ses mains  
étranges  
A l'horizon de mes regards;  
Exaucez mes rêves  
épars  
Entre les lèvres de vos  
anges!

En attendant sous mes yeux  
las,  
Et sa bouche ouverte aux  
prières

**Expectation**

My soul has folded its  
strange hands  
on the horizon of my gaze;  
satisfy my scattered  
dreams  
between the lips of your  
angels!

Waiting beneath my  
weary eyes,  
mouth open in  
prayers

Eteintes entre mes  
paupières  
Et dont les lys n'éclosent pas;

Elle apaise au fond de mes  
songes,  
Ses seins effeuillés sous mes  
cils,  
Et ses yeux clignent aux  
périls  
Eveillés au fil des  
mensonges.

extinguished behind my  
eyelids  
whose lilies never open;

My soul brings peace to the  
depths of my dreams,  
its breasts bared beneath  
my lashes,  
and its eyes blink at the  
perils  
awoken through the  
thread of lies.

## Nicola LeFanu (b.1947)

**The Bourne** (2008)  
arranged by **Anne Denholm**  
*Christina Rossetti*

Underneath the growing grass,  
Underneath the living flowers,  
Deeper than the sound of showers:  
There we shall not count the hours  
By the shadows as they pass.

Youth and health will be but vain,  
Beauty reckoned of no worth:  
There a very little girth  
Can hold round what once the earth  
Seemed too narrow to contain.

## Imogen Holst (1907-1984)

**From Suite for unaccompanied viola** (1930)  
arranged by **Oliver Pashley**

*Cinquepace*  
*Gigue*

## Lynne Plowman (b.1969)

**Pedalling Man from A Field Guide to Pebbles**  
(2017)  
arranged by **Oliver Pashley**

## Sylvia Lim (b.1992)

**Kite (Dymchurch)** (2021)  
*Adapted from Worthington Hooker*

It does not drop  
If the air is stirring.

## Errollyn Wallen (b.1958)

### Tree (2009)

arranged by Héloïse Werner

Errollyn Wallen

Does the tree own me?  
Does the tree own the moon,  
The impassive moon?  
Do the leaves seem to sing in the dark?

Does the tree own my heart?  
Do I lie,  
Do I lie in the arms of his art,  
Confounding art?

I'm perplexed by the rune  
I'm perplexed by rooted trees,

By rooted trees.

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## Interval

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## Freya Waley-Cohen (b.1989)

### Oyster from *We Phoenician Sailors* (2015)

Octavia Bright

Watching you drink me, feeling you think me, I drown in the  
threads of your thoughts as they struggle to sink me.

Alchemy.

Notes trill through my teeth like krill through a reef and I  
atrophy.

Barnacled bricks stuck limpet slick,

Knuckles are shredded, my blood runs thick,

Breathing the depths of your full fathom eyes, my  
oyster flesh pinking in sympathy.

## Errollyn Wallen

### gun gun gun (2018)

Terese Svoboda

It's like this: gun gun gun  
you're dancing in the back no  
front no on the table no  
in the Gents sounds like a pop  
track sounds like back fire  
firing then he shoots at

no one the crowd into it  
please please not you crawl  
skitter skitter off your heels  
floor slick already hit  
you closet yourself  
mop-first two other guys

mop wounds it's dark sirens  
call out shout back you sink  
to your knees almost a dance  
one guy breathes loud one guy  
pees fear crouches outside gun-

ready what if they hit dark in  
that closet you can only outside  
touch bullhorns music plays  
on music enters time  
enters you tick tick you're  
losing it tick to the floor tick

a bomb blast lights  
a vehicle groans sheetrock smoke  
a single no shots loud a man  
at the closet a fireman  
hatchet help you cry  
you fall into his arms

## Caroline Shaw (b.1982)

### The Ellipse from *Plan & Elevation* (2015)

arranged by Anne Denholm

## Ayanna Witter-Johnson

### Draw the Line (2020)

## Laura Moody

### Rilke Songs (2021)

Rainer Maria Rilke

#### An die Musik

Musik: Atem der Statuen.  
Vielleicht:  
Stille der Bilder.  
Du Sprache wo  
Sprachen  
enden. Du Zeit,  
die senkrecht steht auf der  
Richtung vergehender  
Herzen.

Music: breathing of  
statues. Perhaps:  
silence of paintings.  
You language where all  
language  
ends. You time  
standing vertically on the  
motion of mortal  
hearts.

Gefühle zu wem? O du der  
Gefühle  
Wandlung in was? -: in  
hörbare Landschaft.  
Du Fremde: Musik. Du uns  
entwachsener  
Herzraum. Innigstes  
unser,  
das, uns übersteigend,  
hinausdrängt, -  
heiliger Abschied:  
da uns das Innre  
umsteht  
als geübteste  
Ferne, als  
andre  
Seite der Luft:  
rein,  
riesig,  
nicht mehr bewohnbar.

Feelings for whom? O you  
the transformation  
of feelings into what?--:  
into audible landscape.  
You stranger: music. You  
heart-space  
grown out of us. The  
deepest space in us,  
which, rising above us,  
forces its way out,--  
holy departure:  
when the innermost point  
in us stands  
outside, as the most  
practiced distance, as  
the other  
side of the air:  
pure,  
boundless,  
no longer habitable.

#### Sonnet to Orpheus 1,3

Ein Gott vermags. Wie aber,  
sag mir, soll  
ein Mann ihm folgen durch  
die schmale Leier?  
Sein Sinn ist Zwiespalt. An  
der Kreuzung zweier  
Herzwege steht kein Tempel  
für Apoll.

A god can do it. But will  
you tell me how  
a man can penetrate  
through the lyre's strings?  
Our mind is split. And at  
the shadowed crossing  
of heart-roads there is no  
temple for Apollo.

Gesang, wie du ihn lehrst, ist  
nicht Begehrt,  
nicht Werbung um ein  
endlich noch Erreichtes;  
Gesang ist Dasein. Für den  
Gott ein Leichtes.  
Wann aber sind wir? Und  
wann wendet er

Song, as you have taught  
it, is not desire,  
not wooing any grace  
that can be achieved;  
song is reality. Simple, for  
a god.  
But when can we be real?  
When does he pour

an unser Sein die Erde und  
die Sterne?  
Dies ist nicht, Jüngling,  
Dass du liebst, wenn auch  
die Stimme dann den Mund  
dir aufstößt, - lerne

the earth, the stars, into  
us? Young man,  
it is not your loving, even  
if your mouth  
was forced wide open by  
your own voice – learn

vergessen, dass du  
aufsangst. Das verrinnt.  
In Wahrheit singen, ist ein  
andrer Hauch.  
Ein Hauch um nichts. Ein  
Wehn im Gott. Ein Wind.

to forget that passionate  
music. It will end.  
True singing is a different  
breath, about  
nothing. A gust inside the  
god. A wind.

#### Rose

Rose, o reiner Widerspruch,  
Lust,  
Niemandes Schlaf zu sein  
unter soviel  
Lidern.

Rose, oh pure  
contradiction, joy  
of being No-one's sleep  
under so many  
lids.

#### Hannah Peel (b.1985)

##### The Almond Tree (2011)

arranged by Oliver Pashley  
*Hannah Peel*

Temperance the dear old deer  
Did not dare to bother anyone's ear  
With her uptight jaw and hair tightly pinned  
Who'd have thought the sin to be within?

Bury me under the almond tree  
If anything should happen to me  
Late last June I heard a cry  
I ran to see my younger sister die

The poisoned meat had cut deep inside  
I cast my revenge on temperance tonight  
Bury me under the almond tree  
If anything should happen to me

Bury me under the almond tree  
If anything should happen to me

I walked for months through the rain and pour  
No sign of temperance and her deathly paw  
I start to think did I dream it all up  
What revenge is this, its my life now that's been caught

Bury me under the almond tree  
If anything should happen to me

Emily Hall (b.1978)

**Befalling from *Befalling*** (2006)

Toby Litt

arranged by Oliver Pashley

Finally  
I see  
    why they're always  
    calling it  
    falling.

For before  
I saw  
    it something more  
    like flying,  
    trying –

never to touch ground again  
never to reach down again  
    never to be found again  
    never body-bound again

Everything  
takes wing  
    apart from me –  
    watch it rise,  
    it flies

as I slip,  
lose grip  
    upon the world.  
    I'm dying,  
    trying –

to touch ground again  
to reach down again  
to be found again  
    body-bound again

*O watch me while I go  
down to what lies below  
This is the worst of all,  
my first and final fall –*

never to touch ground again  
never to reach down again  
never to be found again  
    never body-bound again

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