

WIGMORE HALL 125

Saturday 8 November 2025
2.00pm

Rebecca Clarke Day Concert II: Songs and chamber works

Kitty Whately mezzo-soprano
Nicholas Phan tenor
Max Baillie violin, viola
Anna Tilbrook piano

Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979) The Cloths of Heaven (c.1912)
The Folly of Being Comforted (c.1911)
Down by the Salley Gardens for voice and violin (1919, arr. 1955)

Tiger, Tiger (1929, rev. 1931)
Cradle Song (1929)
Infant Joy (c.1913)

Midsummer Moon (1924)

Wandrer's Nachtlied (c.1903)
Klage (c.1904)
Manche Nacht (1907)

Passacaglia on an Old English Tune for viola and piano (1941)
Weep you no more, sad fountains (c.1912)
It was a lover and his lass from *3 Old English Songs* (1924)
Come, O come, my life's delight (1923)

Binnorie for voice, viola and piano (?1941) *arranged by Myra Lin, Max Baillie & Anna Tilbrook – world première*



UNDER 35S

Supported by the AKO Foundation
Media partner Classic FM



Help us raise £125,000
for 125 years of music

To find out more visit wigmore-hall.org.uk/donate



Join & Support
Donations

Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management. In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions. Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141. Wigmore Hall is equipped with a loop to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.



Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other electrical devices which can become audible are switched off. Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • [Wigmore-hall.org.uk](https://wigmore-hall.org.uk) • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG
Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan

When she was composing well, Rebecca Clarke 'was flooded with a wonderful feeling of potential power – a miracle that made anything seem possible.' It was a 'glorious' sensation, she wrote. 'I know of almost nothing to equal it.' Clarke's passion for her craft courses through every piece on this afternoon's programme, which covers almost the full range of her compositional career. She is now best-known as a viola composer, and we hear her in this mode in the *Passacaglia on an Old English Tune* from 1941. But we are also hearing her as a composer of songs, which occupy a substantial part of her output.

Clarke began her life as a musician as a reluctant violin player, forced into a family string quartet by her domineering father. It was only as a teenager that she began to love music, and to turn to composition. She started out with songs. *Wandrer's Nachtlied* (c.1903) and *Klage* (c.1904) are among her earliest known pieces, written when she was in her late teens. Steeped in the Austro-German classics and half German herself (Clarke's father was American, her mother German), she selected German poems for her first attempts.

These early songs are far more romantic in sound than those she wrote after studying composition at the Royal College of Music. Here, taught by Charles Villiers Stanford, she seemed to find her compositional voice. The songs she was writing by 1911 are far more self-confident than her previous offerings, and have many of the hallmarks of her later work. Perhaps Stanford was right when he said that composers needed to find their feet as instrumental composers before they could succeed as songwriters – Clarke's two violin sonatas of 1908 marked a turning point in her compositional development.

WB Yeats and William Blake were poets Clarke frequently returned to, together providing the texts for the first half of our programme. *The Cloths of Heaven* (c.1912), *The Folly of Being Comforted* (c.1911) and *Down by the Salley Gardens* (1919) are all set to Yeats poems. In comparison to her rhapsodic response to Blake, Yeats seems to have inspired Clarke to a more enigmatic and sparse mode of expression. *Cloths* is an atmospheric work that places her within the same milieu as Vaughan Williams, who she knew well. *Salley Gardens*, however, is in quite a different mould. Written while Clarke was performing in Hawaii, it moves away from Vaughan Williams and follows more along the lines of her earlier settings of Chinese texts.

Infant Joy (c.1913), *Tiger, Tiger* (1929) and *Cradle Song* (1929) are Blake poems. The earliest, *Infant Joy*, is a short, charming song. The later two pieces are far more unsettling offerings. Through the 1920s Clarke established herself as one of the leading British modernists, writing pieces that were harmonically, timbrally and rhythmically exploratory. Both *Tiger, Tiger* and *Cradle Song* are from this period. *Cradle Song* has a creeping piano part giving a decidedly

sinister edge to the setting, bringing out Blake's 'cunning wiles' and 'dreadful night'. *Tiger, Tiger*, meanwhile, is one of the most violent pieces that Clarke ever wrote.

Clarke had a joint career as both performer and composer, and she always wrote with the performer in mind. In some cases she wrote for a particular performer, as many of her friends were sought after chamber musicians. *Midsummer Moon* (1924) was written for Clarke's friend and performance partner, violinist Adila Fachiri. It was performed by Fachiri here at Wigmore Hall in Clarke's 1925 showcase concert of her works, with Myra Hess at the piano. This is Clarke at her most evocative, the violin gliding over the piano like summer moonlight over water on a clear night.

As for many British composers of Clarke's generation, Renaissance and Tudor music provided a constant source of inspiration and fascination throughout her career. At the Royal College of Music she set up a Palestrina choir with a fellow student, Beryl Reeves, which was conducted by Vaughan Williams. By the 1920s, the influence of the 16th and 17th centuries was part of Clarke's cutting-edge modern sound. *Come, O come, my life's delight* (1923) and *Weep you no more, sad fountains* (c.1912) are Clarke's interpretation of Elizabeth lute songs, and the modal harmonies she uses in these make their way into her modern songs and instrumental works. 'It was lover and his lass' (1924) is Clarke's arrangement of Thomas Morley's setting of Shakespeare's words from *As You Like It*. The violin accompaniment brings the song into the 20th Century, playfully toying with the vocal part, violinist and singer constantly jostling for attention.

Clarke came back to the Renaissance during World War II, setting a tune by Thomas Tallis for her *Passacaglia on an Old English Tune* (1941). It starts simply, a melancholy viola melody in a minor key. Over the course of the variations Clarke changes Tallis's theme into something wholly new, the theme slowly fragmented and driven, eventually, to a triumphant conclusion. Perhaps, in the midst of war, this was Clarke's hope for Britain – that it would emerge from the conflict transformed, renewed, but not destroyed.

We close the concert with *Binnorie* (?1941), another wartime work that gives us a glimpse of what Clarke might have been like as an opera composer. 15 minutes long, it tells a story about a jealous woman drowning her younger sister because a suitor prefers her. When the drowned sister's body is discovered, her body is fashioned into a harp, and she sings a curse on her older sibling. Brutal and uncompromising, Clarke's setting bursts into violence when the curse is uttered, but she chooses to close in disturbing near-silence, pianist and singer fading quietly away.

© Dr Leah Broad 2025

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.

Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979)

The Cloths of Heaven (c.1912)

William Butler Yeats

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light,

I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

The Folly of Being Comforted (c.1911)

William Butler Yeats

One that is ever kind said yesterday:
'Your well-beloved's hair has threads of grey,
And little shadows come about her eyes;
Time can but make it easier to be wise,
Though now it's hard, till trouble is at an end;
And so be patient, be wise and patient, friend.'
But, heart, there is no comfort, not a grain;
Time can but make her beauty over again,
Because of that great nobleness of hers;
The fire that stirs about her, when she stirs,
Burns but more clearly. [Ah] she had not these ways,
When all the wild summer was in her gaze.
O heart! O heart! If she'd but turn her head,
You'd know the folly of being comforted.

Down by the Salley Gardens for voice and violin

(1919, arr. 1955)

William Butler Yeats

Down by the salley gardens my love and I did meet;
She passed the salley gardens with little snow-white feet.
She bid me take love easy as the leaves grow on the tree;
But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree.

In a field by the river my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white
hand.
She bid me take life easy as the grass grows on the weirs;
But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears.

Tiger, Tiger (1929, rev. 1931)

William Blake

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

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

Cradle Song (1929)

William Blake

Sleep, sleep, beauty bright,
Dreaming in the joys of night;
Sleep, sleep, in thy sleep
Little sorrows sit and weep.

Sweet babe, in thy face
Soft desires I can trace,
Secret joys and secret smiles,
Little pretty infant wiles.

As thy softest limbs I feel,
Smiles as of the morning steal
O'er thy cheek, and o'er thy breast
Where thy little heart doth rest.

O! the cunning wiles that creep
In thy little heart asleep.
When thy little heart doth wake
Then the dreadful light shall break.

Infant Joy (c.1913)

William Blake

'I have no name:
I am but two days old.'
What shall I call thee?
'I happy am,
Joy is my name.'
Sweet joy befall thee!

Pretty Joy!
Sweet Joy, but two days old.
Sweet Joy I call thee:
Thou dost smile,
I sing the while,
Sweet joy befall thee!

Midsummer Moon (1924)

Wandrer's Nachtlied

(c.1903)

Johann Wolfgang von
Goethe

Über allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh,
In allen Wipfeln
Spürest du
Kaum einen Hauch;
Die Vögelein schweigen im
Walde.
Warte nur! Balde
Ruhest du auch.

Klage (c.1904)

Richard Dehmel

In diesen welken
Tagen,
Wo Alles bald zu Ende
ist,
Sturmzerfetzte
Sonnenblumen
Über dunkle Zäune
ragen,
Wolken jagen

Und den Boden
flammenfarbne
Blätterstürze
schlagen:
Da müssen wir nun
tragen,
Was wir uns mussten
sagen
In diesen welken
Tagen.

Vagabond's Lullaby

Over every mountain-top
Lies peace,
In every tree-top
You scarcely feel
A breath of wind;
The little birds are hushed
in the wood.
Wait, soon you too
Will be at peace.

Lament

In these days of wilting
weather,
When everything is
coming to an end,
When, ravaged by the
storm, sunflowers
Nod their heads above
the dark enclosures,
When clouds pursue each
other through the sky,
and drifts of leaves, the
color of flame,
crash abruptly to the
ground:
now we must bear the
things
we had no choice but to
confide in one another
in these days of wilting
weather.

Manche Nacht (1907)
Richard Dehmel

Wenn die Felder sich
verdunkeln,
Fühl' ich wird mein Auge
heller;
Schon versucht ein Stern zu
funkeln,
Und die Grillen wispern
schneller.

Jeder Laut wird
bilderreicher,
Das Gewohnte
sonderbarer,
Hinterm Wald der Himmel
bleicher,
Jeder Wipfel hebt sich klarer;

Und du merkst es nicht im
Schreiten
Wie das Licht
verhundertfältigt
Sich entringt den
Dunkelheiten.

Plötzlich stehst du
überwältigt.

Many a night

When the fields grow
somber
I can feel my eyes grow
brighter;
A star is trying even now
to sparkle,
and the crickets' whispers
mount in tempo.

Every sound evokes a
fuller image,
What was familiar grows
more strange,
beyond the forest there's
a paler heaven,
every treetop rises
starker overhead.

And you fail to notice as
you wander through it
How the light a
hundredfold now
Wrests itself from out of
all the darknesses
around you.
Suddenly you stand
stock-still, amazed.

**Passacaglia on an Old English Tune for viola
and piano** (1941)

Weep you no more, sad fountains (c.1912)
John Dowland

Weep you no more, sad fountains;
What need you flow so fast?
Look how the snowy mountains
Heaven's sun doth gently waste!
But my sun's heavenly eyes
View not your weeping,
That now lies sleeping,
Softly now, softly lies
Sleeping.

Sleep is a reconciling,
A rest that peace begets;
Doth not the sun rise smiling
When fair at e'en he sets?
Rest you, then, rest, sad eyes!
Melt not in weeping,
While she lies sleeping,
Softly now, softly lies
Sleeping.

**It was a lover and his lass from 3 Old English
Songs** (1924)
William Shakespeare

It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey, with a ho, with a hey nonny no,
And a hey nonnny nonny no;
That o'er the green corn-field did pass
In springtime, in springtime, in springtime,
The only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing,
Hey ding a ding a ding;
Hey ding a ding a ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring!

This carol they began that hour, ...
How that life was but a flower ...

Then pretty lovers, take the time, ...
For love is crownéd with the prime ...

Come, O come, my life's delight (1923)
Thomas Campion

Come, O come, my life's delight!
Let me not in languor pine:
Love loves no delay, thy sight
The more enjoyed, the more divine.
O come, and take from me
The pain of being deprived of thee.

Thou all sweetness dost enclose,
Like a little world of bliss:
Beauty guards thy looks: the rose
In them pure and eternal is.
Come then! and make thy flight
As swift to me as heavenly light!

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

Binnorie for voice, viola and piano (?1941)

Traditional

arranged by Myra Lin, Max Baillie & Anna Tilbrook

There were twa sisters sat in a bower;

Binnorie, O Binnorie!

There came a knight to be their wooer,

By the bonnie milldams o' Binnorie.

He courted the eldest with glove and ring,

But he loved the youngest above all thing.

The eldest she was vexed sair,

And sair envied her sister fair.

Upon a morning fair and clear,

She cried upon her sister dear,

'O sister, sister, take my hand,

And let's go down to the river strand.'

She's ta'en her by the lily hand,

And led her down to the river-strand.'

The youngest stood upon a stone,

The eldest came and pushed her in.

'O sister, sister, reach your hand!

And ye shall be heir o' half my land.

O sister, reach me but your glove!

And sweet William shall be your love.'

Sometimes she sank, sometimes she swam,

Until she cam to the miller's dam.

Out then came the miller's son,

And saw the fair maid swimming in.

'O father, father, draw your dam!

There's either a mermaid or a milkwhite swan.'

The miller hasted and drew his dam,

And there he found a drowned woman.

You couldna see her middle sma',

Her gowden girdle was so braw.

You couldna see her lily feet,

Her gowden fringes were so deep.

All among her yellow hair

A string o' pearls was twisted rare.

You couldna see her fingers sma',

Wi' diamond rings they were cover'd a'.

And by there came a harper fine

That harpit to the king at dine.

And when he looked that lady on,

He sigh'd and made a heavy moan.

He's made a harp of her breastbone,

Whose sound would melt a heart of stone.

He's ta'en three locks o' her yellow hair,

And wi' them strung his harp sae rare.

He went into her father's hall,

And there was the court assembled all.

He laid his harp upon a stone,

And straight it began to play alone.

'O yonder sits my father, the King,

And yonder sits my mother, the Queen;

And yonder stands my brother Hugh,

And by him my William, sweet and true.'

But the last tune that the harp played then—

Binnorie, O Binnorie!

Was 'Woe, woe to my sister, false Helèn!'

By the bonnie milldams, the milldams o' Binnorie.

Translation of Wandrers Nachtlied by © Richard Stokes from The Book of Lieder (Faber & Faber, 2005), with thanks to George Bird, co-author of The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder (Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1977). Klage and Manche Nacht by © Rafaël Newman. Printed with kind permission.

Kitty Whately and Anna Tilbrook are delighted to announce that in January 2026, they will be working with the charity SWAP'ra to launch **The Rebecca Clarke Song Competition**, a new national competition celebrating Clarke and other British women composers of the past century. Singers and pianists are warmly encouraged to apply, and audiences will be invited to attend the public semi-final and final in central London. Applications close on 28 November. For more information please see swap-ra.org/rebecca-clarke-song-competition

For full information about Rebecca Clarke and her works, please see rebeccaclarkecomposer.com