

**BENJAMIN APPL**  
**baritone**  
**JAMES BAILLIEU**  
**piano**

**Franz Schubert (1797-1828)**

Nachtstück (Mayerhofer) D 672

Auf dem Wasser zu singen (Stolberg) D 774

**Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)**

At the Ball (Tolstoy) Op. 38 No. 3

**Richard Strauss (1864-1949)**

Ständchen (Schack) Op. 17 No. 2

**Reynaldo Hahn (1874-1947)**

L'Heure exquise (Verlaine) Op. 17 No. 5

**Arthur Somervell (1863-1957)**

White in the moon the long road lies (Housman)

**Franz Schubert (1797-1828)**

Der Wanderer an den Mond (Seidl) D 870

**Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)**

The Infinite Shining Heavens (Stevenson)

**Robert Schumann (1810-1856)**

Mein schöner Stern (Rückert) Op. 101 No. 4

**Robert Schumann (1810-1856)**

Belsazar (Heine) Op. 57

Zwielicht (Eichendorff) Op. 39 No. 10

**Franz Schubert (1797-1828)**

Erkönig (Goethe) D 328

(approx. 45 minutes)

**- INTERMISSION -**

**William Bolcom (b. 1938)**

Song of the Black Max (Weinstein)

**Roger Quilter (1877-1953)**

Now sleeps the crimson petal (Tennyson) Op. 3 No. 2

**Ivor Gurney (1890-1937)**

Sleep (Fletcher)

**Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)**

Wie rafft' ich mich auf in der Nacht (von Platen) Op. 32 No. 1

**Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)**

Warum bist du aufgewacht (Pfau)

**Hugo Wolf (1813-1883)**

An die Geliebte (Mörike)

**Edvard Grieg (1842-1907)**

Ein Traum (Bodenstedt) Op. 48 No. 6

**Franz Schubert (1796-1828)**

Der blinde Knabe (Criagher) D 833

**Robert Schumann (1810-1856)**

Wer nie sein Brot mit Tränen aß (Goethe) Op. 98 No. 4

**Ilse Weber (1903-1944)**

Ich wandere durch Theresienstadt (Weber)

Wiegala (Weber)

**James Macmillan (b. 1959)**

The Children (Soutar)

**Richard Strauss (1864-1949)**

Morgen (Mackay) Op. 27 No. 4

(approx. 40 minutes)

## Franz Schubert

### Nachtstück (Mayrhofer)

Schubert is credited with single-handedly transforming the German Lied from its status as a form of home entertainment mostly cultivated by amateurs, and largely ignored by serious composers, into a worthy vehicle for artistic expression at the highest level. What distinguished Schubert's contributions to the genre was the way in which he brought the full range of musical resources – harmony, texture and declamatory style – to bear on the expression of the poetic text.

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Schubert composed 47 lieder to poetic texts by his close friend and sometime room-mate, the hypochondriacal, chronically depressive poet Johann Mayrhofer (1787-1836), who some years after Schubert's death committed suicide by jumping out of an office building. Mayrhofer's inclination towards dark thoughts is on full display in his poem *Nachtstück* (Night Piece) in which an aged minstrel is depicted wearily trudging with his harp into a misty forest to commune with nature, knowing that his death is near.

Schubert creates four separate styles of piano accompaniment in painting this scene. An introduction of slow, chromatically descending chords, inflected with a dotted rhythm, evokes the inescapable descent into death that the old man faces.

Then a walking pace in even quarter notes arrives in the bass to signal the old man's entry into the forest as he "takes his harp and sings while heading into the forest" (*so nimmt der Alte seine Harfe, und schreitet and singt waldeinwärts*).

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Nachtstück' by Franz Schubert. It consists of two systems of music. The first system shows the vocal line and the piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics: 'kämpft; so nimmt der Al-te sei-ne Har-fe, und schrei-tet und singt wald-'. The piano accompaniment features a slow, chromatically descending chord progression in the right hand and a walking pace in even quarter notes in the left hand. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics: 'ein - wärts und ge - dämpft: „Du heil' ge'. The piano accompaniment continues with the same walking pace in the left hand and a more active, arpeggiated figure in the right hand, marked 'pp mit gehobener Dämpfung'.

Rolling arpeggios then imitate the strumming of his harp as he sighs out his last thoughts to the flora and fauna of the forest. A buoyant triplet figure accompanies the reply of the trees, grasses and birds as they reveal that they have kept a quiet resting place reserved for him in their midst. This final section takes the song through a wondrous series of harmonies to its final restful major chord.

## Franz Schubert

### **Auf dem Wasser zu singen** (Stolberg)

*Auf dem Wasser zu singen* (Singing upon the water) is a setting of a poem by the twice-named pre-Romantic German poet Friedrich Leopold Graf zu Stolberg-Stolberg (1750-1819), and it is one of Schubert's most delicious creations.

This is 'water music' of the most imaginative kind. The setting is a shimmering lake at sunset where a philosophical narrator meditates on the passage of time as the waves gently lap at the sides of his boat. Schubert's musical image of the flickering light of the evening sun glinting off the rolling waters comes in the form of a series of two-note figures that 'flicker' musically between minor and major.



This frequent alternation between major and minor not only represents the visual scene depicted by the poet but also re-creates in tonal colours the 'tick-tock' of the poet's mental clock as he measures time passing by, reinforced by the classic 6/8 rocking rhythm of the barcarolle.

This is understandably a very popular work. Liszt's transcription for solo piano is a popular encore featured on recitals by Yuja Wang and its evocative qualities have seen it used in the soundtracks of several contemporary films, as well. Barbra Streisand even featured the work on her 1973 album *Barbra Streisand...and Other Musical Instruments*.

## Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

### **At the Ball** (Tolstoy)

While Tchaikovsky is best known for his symphonies, concertos and ballet scores, he also wrote scores of songs, dating from before his entry into the St. Petersburg Conservatory and right up to the year of his death in 1893. His *Six Romances* Op. 38 were written in 1878 and the third in the set, *Средь шумного бала* (In the din of the ball) sets a poem by Aleksey Konstantinovich Tolstoy (1817-1875), second cousin to the writer Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910).

The poem describes a classic scene of late-19th-century aristocratic life in Russia – the ball. Or rather, it describes the aftermath of such an event as a young man, having returned home in the wee hours of the morning, collapses into bed recalling the shapely form, sad eyes and strangely engaging laugh of the young woman he caught sight of, but didn't meet, at the evening's courtly dance event.

Tired, drowsy and inexplicably sad, he drifts off to sleep wondering whether he has actually fallen in love, and in the climactic (but softly whispered) final lines of the song he rather thinks that he has.

Люблю ли тебя, я не знаю,  
Но кажется мне, что люблю!

Do I love you, I don't know,  
But it seems to me that I do!

Tchaikovsky slyly conveys the young man's memory of the ball by structuring his song in a lilting triple meter, like a waltz.



The chromatically descending bass line implies the young man's weakening will to resist while the melodic line above provides many a falling 5th that evoke his sighs.

## Richard Strauss

### Ständchen (Schack)

**Ständchen** (Serenade) from Richard Strauss' *Sechs Lieder* Op. 17 is an early work, written in 1886 when the composer was in his early twenties. Its text, taken from the poem of the same name by the German poet Adolf Friedrich von Schack (1815-1894), brings to life the urgent pleas of a seducer beseeching his intended young seducee to join him in the seductive moonlit surroundings of a conveniently located nearby woodland – replete with a burbling brook and dreaming nightingales – for a full and frank exploration of their mutual needs.

Strauss is as seductive as the poem's seducer in his use of an engaging and ear-tickling piano accompaniment that at one and the same time evokes the rustling of leaves in the gentle night breeze and the heart-pounding anticipation of the young man imagining the amorous encounter to come should his rhetorical efforts prove persuasive.

Op. 17, No. 2  
(von Schack)



The intensity of the young man's pleas is conveyed by numerous octave leaps in the melodic line while a mixture of short and long phrases in rapid succession conveys the breathlessness of his ardent entreaties.

## Reynaldo Hahn

### L'Heure exquise (Verlaine)

The Venezuelan-born French composer Reynaldo Hahn is best known for his contribution to the French song repertoire with his more than 100 *mélodies* published between 1890 and his death in 1947. He is equally well known as the sometime romantic partner of writer Marcel Proust, whose epic novel *À la recherche du temps perdu* paints in perfumed prose the social rituals and creeping decadence of a society ripe with elegance but rapidly approaching its best-before date.

Hahn was a perfect fit for this Proustian Parisian world of the *Belle Époque* (1871-1914). His musical aesthetic was refined, but conservative and essentially backward-looking, especially in matters of harmony.

*L'Heure Exquise* is another night song, with a text by French Symbolist poet Paul Verlaine (1844-1896). It formed part of the collection entitled *Chansons grises* composed by Hahn between 1887 and 1890. The poem paints a still point in the night when all has become quiet, a time when *Un vaste et tendre apaisement semble descendre du firmament* (A vast and tender moment of peace seems to descend from the sky).

The dynamic markings in the score range from *p* to *ppp* in keeping with the hushed atmosphere of the scene and the repeated simple arpeggiations of the piano accompaniment have a quasi-hypnotic effect on the listener. Against this delicate background of rippling harmonic colours the vocal line is largely confined to a small range, as in the opening line *The white moon shines in the woods*:

The musical score for the opening of 'L'Heure exquise' is shown. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) and the lyrics 'La lune blanche Luit dans les bois;'. The piano accompaniment consists of simple arpeggiations. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

Moments of startling contrast emerge, however, when the melody line breaks from its reticence to embrace a large leap at several points in the text, such on the word *Bien-aimée* (beloved).

The musical score for the phrase 'O bien-aimée' is shown. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) and the lyrics 'O bien-aimée'. The piano accompaniment consists of simple arpeggiations. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The word 'délicatement.' is written above the first measure of the vocal line.

## Arthur Somervell

### **White in the moon the long road lies** (Housman)

Arthur Somervell was the first English composer to take up the song-cycle as a musical genre and among his pioneering efforts were his settings of 10 poems from the collection entitled *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Houseman (1859-1936), published in 1904. These songs convey in a musical rhetoric devoid of fanciful pictorialisms the straightforward language of Housman's verse with its idealization of pastoral life in the English countryside juxtaposed with implications of the harsh realities of war and death.

In *White in the moon the long road lies* we witness with dispassionate clarity the fateful path of a young man leaving the home of his beloved under the chill pale light of the moon to do his duty as a soldier. Somervell's sweeping arpeggiated accompaniment sympathizes with the feelings of the dutiful recruit as he tries to cheer himself with the idea that it won't be as bad as all that.



But the reader of Housman's poem and the listener of Somervell's setting knows what the young man doesn't, making the sweetly consoling piano postlude to this song especially bittersweet.

## Franz Schubert

### **Der Wanderer an den Mond** (Seidl)

Schubert's *Der Wanderer an den Mond* (The Wanderer to the moon) is a setting of a poem by the Austrian archeologist, storyteller and poet Johann Gabriel Seidl (1804-1875), author of the words to the Austrian Imperial Anthem *Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser* with music by Haydn.

In the poem a lonely traveller compares his rootless wanderings to the carefree solitary existence of the moon that, while distant from the earth, is always "at home" wherever it is. And there is a jaunty folksong feel to the way the wanderer sets out on his journey, accompanied by guitar-like strumming in the piano accompaniment.





The wanderer seems forlorn when thinking of his endless trudging.

Bergauf, bergab, Wald ein, Wald aus, Up and down mountains, in and out of forests  
Doch bin ich nirgend, ach! zu Haus. Nowhere, alas, am I at home!

But midway through the mood changing with a change in harmonic colouring from minor to major and the song ends in the serene mood of happy coexistence of the traveller and his constant companion, the moon.

### Ralph Vaughan Williams *The Infinite Shining Heavens* (Stevenson)

Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Songs of Travel* (1904) is a collection of art songs based on the poems of the much-travelled Scottish poet and novelist Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894). Often labelled "an English *Winterreise*" for its theme of the solitary wanderer confronting life's difficulties while on the road, it stands in the Romantic tradition of the questing song cycle.

In *The Infinite Shining Heavens*, the fourth song in the set, the world-weary vagabond pauses to marvel at the night sky and find consolation in the wondrous beauty of Nature. Vaughan Williams establishes a slow even pace for the melody's unfolding with a series of arpeggiated chords, widening in range to reflect the increasingly wide-eyed stare of the traveller, amazed at what he is taking in.



The constant half-note rhythm of the accompaniment evokes the timeless quality of the scene and suggests a magic stillness in the air as a backdrop to the singer's thoughts and feelings.



## Robert Schumann

### Mein schöner Stern (Rückert)

Schumann had set a number of poems by the German linguist and Oriental scholar Friedrich Rückert in his so-called “year of song” (1840) and returned to this poet for texts to his song collection *Minnespiel* (Play of Love) in 1849. **Mein schöner Stern** (My lovely star) is from Rückert’s very successful collection of love poems entitled *Liebesfrühling* (Love’s Spring) written in the run-up to the poet’s marriage in 1821.

The sentiments expressed are those of a lover to his beloved, personified as a star in the night sky, whom the poet begs not to dim in sympathy with his own dark thoughts, but rather to bring him light, and not to descend to earth but rather elevate him to the heavens. In composing this poem Rückert obviously had his own fiancée in mind while Schumann would be addressing his wife Clara.

The tone colour of this song is unusually dark for a setting of a poem about bringing light and exaltation to a downcast mortal. Its timbre is dominated by deep bass resonances and minor-mode harmonies that only in the final bars resolve to a more optimistic major-mode colouring.



As this work dates from 1849, just a few scant years before the composer’s suicide attempt and his being committed to a mental hospital, some have seen in this work symptoms of his declining mental health.

## Robert Schumann

### Belsazar (Heine)

Schumann’s **Belsazar** (1840) is based on the retelling by the German poet Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) of the Biblical tale of Belshazzar, the dissolute son of Nebuchadnezzar, who is justly struck down by the vengeful hand of God after a night of blasphemous revels in celebration of his conquest of Jerusalem. Heine’s poem is structured as a ballad that unfolds at a breathless pace in rhyming couplets, each giving us a single image in the rapid-fire slide-show of the narrative.

The scene opens with a cinematic ‘establishing shot’ of the city at rest before the feast begins.

Die Mitternacht zog näher schon;  
In stummer Ruh’ lag Babylon.

Midnight drew near  
In mute repose lay Babylon

The atmosphere of the feast is created largely by the exceptionally dense swirl of piano figuration that dominates the piano part, more reminiscent of the composer’s solo piano works than of a typical song accompaniment.



Schumann's score follows the narrated events of the tale with picturesque evocations of the flickering torches, the martial menace of the warriors in attendance, the sounds of riotous banqueting and the shock and awe of the story's dramatic conclusion when a mysterious hand appears that writes a fiery message on the wall. All the more dramatic, then, is the manner in which the work ends, with the hushed piano, on a dominant chord, in the role of a frightened onlooker to the stunned horror of the voice's recitative.

## Robert Schumann

### **Zwielicht** (Eichendorff)

Schumann's *Liederkreis* (song cycle) Op. 39 is a collection of twelve nature poems by the German Romantic poet Joseph von Eichendorff (1788-1857), each of which is set outdoors. But the emotional significance of this natural setting varies widely between songs in the collection.

In **Zwielicht** (Twilight) we encounter the forest as not just a place of mystery but also of menace. If you have a favourite fawn, says the poet, don't let it graze alone because hunters will take it as prey. And likewise watch out for treacherous friends because smiling eyes and grinning lips can deceive and betray you if you're not on your guard.

Charming sentiments, to be sure, and tinged with paranoia – a paranoia that Schumann encodes in an 'insidious' piano accompaniment full of 'sneaky' and 'snake-y' counterpoint.



This chromatic accompaniment is the very embodiment of evil, an evil that coils like a boa constrictor around the melodic line, bent on malevolence and treachery.

Schumann was very proud of the songs in this collection, which he considered "my most Romantic music ever."

## Franz Schubert

### Erlkönig (Goethe)

*Erlkönig* (The Elf King) was composed when Schubert was only 17 and published as his Op. 1. Along with *Gretchen am Spinnrade* (Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel) it counts as one of the founding works in the development of the German art song. This macabre story, cast in the popular and sensationalist genre of the strophic *ballad*, derives from a terrifying night ride actually undertaken by Goethe in 1779 with a seven-year-old boy, the son of a close friend, in the saddle in front of him.

In the storyline of the folk ballad the young boy hears the voice of the Erlkönig, the malevolent spirit who rules the woodland, but his father does not and keeps dismissing as nonsense the boy's increasingly urgent pleas to be saved from the clutches of this evil force. The story ends tragically at the end of this desperate ride *durch Nacht und Wind* (through night and wind) when the father discovers the child dead in his arms.

The demonic energy of the ride is conveyed in the pianist's (incredibly difficult) battery of octaves that pulse throughout.



This throbbing, pounding ostinato accompaniment acts as a dramatic foil to the four distinct voices heard within the poem: the narrator, the boy, the father, and the lurid, luring voice of the Elf King himself, whose 'desire' for the young boy is fraught with a menacing hint of pedophilic lust.

## William Bolcom

### Song of the Black Max (Weinstein)

Pulitzer Prize recipient and multiple Grammy-Award-winning composer William Bolcom is one of the most whimsical voices in contemporary American classical music. His collection of cabaret songs with texts by his long-time collaborator Arnold Weinstein (1927-2005) tell stories about the darker side of life with a stylish combination of wry humour and learned parody, much in the manner of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill.

The *Song of Black Max* is based on a story told to Bolcom and Weinstein by their friend, the Dutch-American painter Willem de Kooning (1904-1997). In his childhood growing up in Rotterdam de Kooning would often hear of a mysterious shadowy figure called Black Max whose arrival in his "long black jacket and broad black hat" always foretold a nasty end for those unlucky enough to meet him.

Bolcom gives this story a jaunty minor-key piano accompaniment with an unrelenting one-two pulse that encapsulates the graceful but menacing presence of this figure of Death.

## Roger Quilter

### **Now sleeps the crimson petal** (Tennyson)

Roger Quilter is best known for his light orchestral music, theatre works, incidental music, and his more than 100 English art songs. While many of his songs fit within the genre of the Edwardian salon ballad, the elegance and richness of his settings have won him a permanent place in the repertoire of English art song.

*Now sleeps the crimson petal* is a drawing-room ballad based on a poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson that uses botanical metaphors as a stand-in for the urgings of love. The song was published in 1904 but dates from 1897 when the composer was only 20.



Unusual is its and harmonically rich and independent piano accompaniment, as well its alternation of 5/4 and 3/4 measures that map the poem's metrical rhythms with exquisite sensitivity.

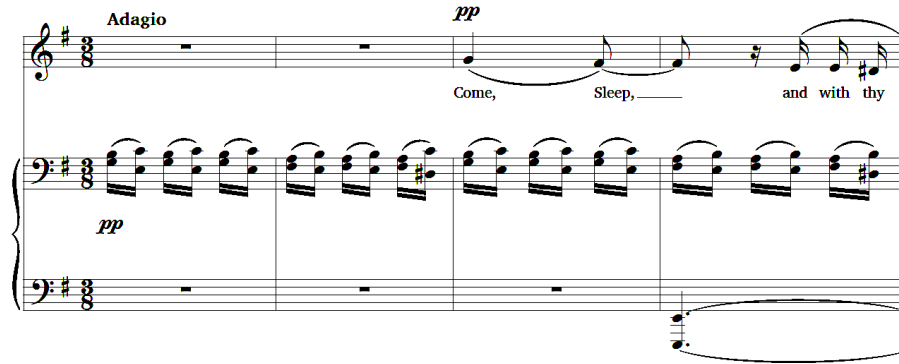
## Ivor Gurney

### **Sleep** (Fletcher)

Mental incapacity is very much at issue, as well, in the creative life of the brilliantly gifted British poet and composer Ivor Gurney, who spent the last 15 years of his life in mental hospitals following traumatic experiences – including being gassed – in the Great War of 1914-1918.

*Sleep* is one of Gurney's *Five Elizabethan Songs* composed just before the War while he was still a student at the Royal College of Music in London. The text is by poet and playwright John Fletcher (1579-1625), Shakespeare's successor as house playwright for the King's Men theatre troupe.

Gurney's setting of Fletcher's insomnia poem features a dull nagging ostinato of two-note phrases that accompany a listless melody of indeterminate key allegiance to evoke the involuntary wakefulness of the singer.



Only in the final bar does a resolution of these gnawing dissonances appear in the form of a pure, restful major chord.

### Johannes Brahms

#### Wie rafft' ich mich auf in der Nacht (von Platen)

Brahms' musical ideal in vocal music remained the simple German folk song with one general mood, subtly varied in response to the meaning of the text. The songs of his *Lieder und Gesänge* Op. 32 are dark, each portraying a kind of inner emotional turmoil that his musical setting illuminates.

The first song of the set, *Wie rafft' ich mich auf in der Nacht*, is based on a poem by the German poet and dramatist August von Platen (1796-1835), who became the model for the anguished writer of Thomas Mann's novella *Death in Venice*.

The poem relates how the narrator awakens and while strolling outside at night witnesses how the waters flow beneath a bridge, how the stars look down from an immense distance, and reflects with remorse on how he has spent his life.

The opening introduces both the major motive of the work, a falling 3rd, and the march-like dotted rhythm that represents the drive of desire moving the narrator to explore the night scenes he experiences, symbols of his inner world.



These assertive motives alternate with more reflective episodes in the course of the work but the piano maintains a kind of aloofness throughout that epitomizes the narrator's alienation from himself. The emotional desperation of this alienation is often starkly represented by passages in which the harmonic fabric thins out dramatically, with the bass line in octave unisons with the vocal line.



Dark as it is, this song is a masterpiece of concentrated musical thought.

### Arnold Schoenberg

#### Warum bist du aufgewacht (Pfau)

Schoenberg's setting of the poem *Warum bist du aufgewacht* (Why have you awoken) by Ludwig Pfau (1821-1894) dates from 1894 when the young composer was just acquiring the skills of his craft.

Its simplicity matches the simplicity of the text, which asks of a night-blooming flower why it shies away from the sun and only awakes *im Sternenscheine* (in starlight).

A Brahmsian serenity pervades this setting, although light touches of chromatic harmony foretell the composer's later musical interests.

### Hugo Wolf

#### An die Geliebte (Mörike)

Hugo Wolf was a fervent Wagnerian and arch-enemy of Brahmsian conservatism. And while he packaged his terse, intensely expressive poetic settings within the framework of the traditional lied, his boldly chromatic treatment of the texts provided a glimpse into developments to come in the 12-tone techniques of the Second Viennese School of Schoenberg and company. Wandering with unprecedented freedom from key to key, he followed the words of each poem with feverish concentration, tracing its psychological tension with finely etched musical details.

One of Wolf's favourite poets was the wildly eclectic, utterly unclassifiable Eduard Mörike (1804-1875), a Lutheran minister with a taste for fantasy fiction and erotic poetry. Mörike's *An die Geliebte* (To the beloved) dates from 1824, when the 19-year-old poet fell head over heels for a beautiful young Swiss girl of unsettled character for whom he wrote this love sonnet.

In it he describes the experience of being deeply calmed just at the sight of her (*von deinem Anschauen tief gestillt*) and asks whether he is dreaming. Diving deep within his soul he hears the voice of Fate, then gazing up at the "laughing stars" he experiences transcendence while kneeling at her feet – from which prayerful pose he is undoubtedly well-positioned to discover wondrous delights of a more earthly kind framed within his gaze.

Wolf's setting begins traditionally enough in the realm of traditional harmony, but soon begins to slither its way chromatically with Wagnerian abandon between the degrees of the major scale at the mere thought of "the gentle breath of an angel concealed within her."





Melodramatic tremolos accompany the narrator's exploration of the depths of his soul, but then at the end comes the most picturesque moment of the work, when gazing upwards (*zum Himmel auf*) he sees the stars laughing (*da lächeln die Sterne*), evoked by pulsing chords in the highest register.

## Edvard Grieg

### Ein Traum (Bodenstedt)

*Ein Traum* (A Dream), composed to a text by the German poet and literary scholar Friedrich Martin von Bodenstedt (1819-1892), is the last in the collection of Grieg's *Seks Sange* (Six Songs) Op. 48 of 1889. It tells of a wondrous night-dream about falling in love, its dreamlike atmosphere conveyed by slow undulating triplets in the piano accompaniment and frequent ecstatic leaps in the melody line.

By any measure this is a 10-out-of-10 little bit of shut-eye our dreaming hero is having: his beloved is *eine blonde Maid*, the setting is a green woodland glade in the warmth of spring (*am*

grünen Waldesraum zur warmen Frühlingszeit), and to top it off a chorus of blooming flowers, swelling streams and distant village bells is cheering him on from the bleachers. What could be better?

Except that it's true! as both singer and pianist begin to believe in stanza three of this five-stanza ode to the health and mood-brightening benefits of R.E.M. sleep. At this point the accompaniment's undulating arpeggios change into chordal pulsations of growing excitement and the vocal line's joyous leaps come closer together.



The result is a continuous crescendo to the final cadence as the soaring, yearning vocal line heads for its climactic high note and the piano swells to thunderous volume in pursuit.

## Franz Schubert

### Der blinde Knabe (Cibber/Criagher)

The original English text of *Der blinde Knabe* (The Blind Boy) was by the English actor, playwright and poet Colley Cibber (1671-1757), chiefly remembered as the central satirical target of Alexander Pope's *The Dunciad* (1728-1743), a scathing takedown of the bad poets of his time.

The simplicity of Cibber's verse – a quality that so enraged Pope – seems actually to have inspired Schubert, who engaged the Austrian poet and translator Jacob Nicolaus Craigher de Jachelutta (1797-1855) to translate Cibber's *The Blind Boy* into German so that he could set it to music.

Naïve as the text is, it tells an uplifting story of a boy, blind since birth, who wonders what the world of light is like. In Cibber's verse the opening line is *O say! What is that thing call'd light*. This lad's a real trooper, a glass-half-full kind of guy, who doesn't let his blindness affect him, because after all, he reasons, he can't really miss what he has never known.



Schubert's piano accompaniment to the chipper melody he gives to the text tells you everything you need to know about this tyke's ever-buoyant mood. The piano churns in constant 16th-note motion, like an organ-grinder, in the simplest folksong-like harmonies, to represent the boy's eternal optimism and the evenness of affect in his mood.

31  
duld. Ich bin so glücklich, bin so reich mit dem, was Gott mir gab, bin

Over top of this cheerful ostinato of 16ths is a melody that often leaps with joy in sympathy with the boy's bright outlook: *Ich bin so glücklich, bin so reich mit dem, was Gott mir gab* (I am so happy, so rich with what God gave me).

## Robert Schumann

### Wer nie sein Brot mit Tränen aß (Goethe)

The nine songs of Schumann's *Lieder und Gesänge aus Goethes Wilhelm Meister* all derive from Book II of Goethe's *bildungsroman* (character development novel) *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795-1796). The 4th in the set, *Wer nie sein Brot mit Tränen aß* (Who never ate his bread with tears), features a harp-playing minstrel consoling the novel's eponymous hero Wilhelm for all his misfortunes.

But the minstrel's 'consolation' is curiously dark. It consists of putting the young man's troubles in the context of universal human suffering at the hands of the uncaring gods. These immortal powers, the minstrel tells us, leave men to weep all night sitting upright on their beds (*Auf seinem Bette weinend saß*). They make men guilty for their actions and then abandon them to face the revenge that life on earth inevitably inflicts (*Denn alle Schuld rächt sich auf Erden*).

The eerie mood of the text is captured by Schumann right away in the strangely chromatic, harmonically ambiguous piano introduction, full of tritone intervals that will characterize the vocal line, as well.



As the harp-player sings, his instrument is evoked in rapid arpeggio flourishes throughout the song and it is these flourishes on the harp that convey the emotional impact of the last words of this grim text.



## Ilse Weber

### **Ich wandere durch Theresienstadt** (Weber)

#### **Wiegala** (Weber)

Benjamin Appl's recital takes a darker turn with the songs of Ilse Weber, a name worth remembering. Confined to the Theresienstadt ghetto-camp in German-occupied Czechoslovakia in 1942, she worked as a night nurse in the children's infirmary, writing poems in her off-hours and setting many of them to music.

In *Ich wandere durch Theresienstadt* she describes her feelings as she wanders through the camp, her heart heavy as lead (*das Herz so schwer wie Blei*). Arriving at the camp's boundary fence she looks down into the valley and thinks of the home that has been taken from her. When, she asks, will this suffering end (*wann wohl das Leid ein Ende hat*) and when will we be free again (*wann sind wir wieder frei*). Remarkable in her setting is the carefree folksong-like quality of the melody and the complete absence of bitterness in its emotional colouring.

Ilse Weber sang many of her songs to console the children in her care. *Wiegala* is a lullaby, its title being a baby word meaning something like "Beddy-bye". In simple rhymes she paints a world of childlike innocence, with images of a lyre humming in the wind, a nightingale singing, the moon as a lantern in the night sky – a world where no sound disturbs your sweet rest (*Es stört kein Laut die süsse Ruh'*) and the whole world lies in stillness (*wie ist die Welt so stille*).

When Ilse Weber's husband was sent to Auschwitz from Theresienstadt in 1944 she insisted on following him there to keep the family together. Immediately upon her arrival she was sent to the

gas chamber. Camp survivors testify that she sang this lullaby to console her young son and the other children walking with her as they went to their deaths.

Ilse Weber. Remember her name.

## **James Macmillan**

### **The Children** (Soutar)

Scottish composer Sir James MacMillan CBE creates music that is direct and accessible. He is both a socialist and a devout Roman Catholic, and his music reflects his deeply-held political and religious commitments. To quote *The Guardian*, he is “a composer so confident in his own musical language that he makes it instantly communicative to his listeners.”

William Soutar (1898-1943) was a leading figure in the Scottish Literary Renaissance of the mid-20th century. His poem *Children* was inspired by his anguish at the atrocities of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the toll it took on the children of Spain – a theme uncommonly relevant to the headlines we are all reading in our news sources today.

MacMillan’s setting of is bare-bones stark, in keeping with the nature of its theme: the blood of children staining the street after the indiscriminate bombing of civilian homes.

The haunting interval of a minor 3rd recurs over and over at the beginning of each verse, like the distant wail of an ambulance siren. The piano sits patiently by, biding its time until every once in a while it explodes with a sonic outburst of blood splatter, or the deafening thunder of an exploding bomb.

Most memorable in this song are the many silences that separate each verse – at times each line – in illustration of the poem’s final image.

*Silence is in the air:*

*The stars move to their places:*

*Silent and serene the stars move to their places.*

## **Richard Strauss**

### **Morgen** (Mackay)

*Morgen* was a wedding present from Richard Strauss to his wife Pauline in 1894. Its German text was written by John Henry Mackay (1864-1933), a multi-faceted literary figure who was born in Scotland but raised in Germany.

The poem expresses the quiet confidence of two lovers whose love for each other is as certain and intuitively true as the way the sun rises each morning (*Und morgen wird die Sonne weider scheinen*). Phrased in repeated thoughts in the future tense, the lover in the poem quietly contemplates how he will walk with his beloved down to the wide blue-waved shore (*dem Strand, dem weiten, wogenblauen*) and they will gaze into each other’s eyes in silence.

The uniformly soft dynamics and luxuriantly unhurried pace of Strauss' setting is striking. It begins with a long piano introduction in simple arpeggiated chords that send clouds of languorous, achingly bittersweet overtones of pedalled piano tone wafting to the listener's ear before the voice enters – casually, on an off-beat, as if time has been suspended.



Indeed, the most astonishing quality of this lied is the ravishing atmosphere of stillness that Strauss creates. It should be no wonder that *Morgen* is among the composer's best-known and most recorded songs.

Program notes by  
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