



Louise Alder *soprano*
Benson Wilson *baritone*
Joseph Middleton *piano*

Friday 30 October 2020

6.00pm

Leeds Town Hall

Programme

Howells King David

Finzi Who is Sylvia?
Fear no more the heat o' the sun
It was a lover and his lass

Trad Samoan Folk song

Grieg **Sechs Lieder (op. 48)**
Gruß
Dereinst, Gedanke mein
Lauf der Welt
Die verschwiegene Nachtigall
Zur Rosenzeit
Ein Traum

Rachmaninov **6 songs (op. 38)**
Noch'yu v sadu u menya (In my garden at night)
K ney (To her)
Margaritki (Daisies)
Krisolov (Pied Piper)
Son (A Dream)
A-u! (Your tender laughter)

Strauss **Vier letzte Lieder**
Frühling
September
Beim Schlafengehen
Im Abendrot

Herbert Howells (1892-1983)

King David

King David was a sorrowful man:
No cause for his sorrow had he;
And he called for the music of a hundred
harps,
To ease his melancholy.

They played till they all fell silent:
Played and play sweet did they;
But the sorrow that haunted the heart of
King David
They could not charm away.

He rose; and in his garden
Walked by the moon alone,
A nightingale hidden in a cypress tree,
Jargoned on and on.

King David lifted his sad eyes
Into the dark-boughed tree --
"Tell me, thou little bird that singest,
Who taught my grief to thee?"

But the bird in no-wise heeded;
And the king in the cool of the moon
Hearkened to the nightingale's
sorrowfulness,
Till all his own was gone.

Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)

Who is Sylvia?

Who is Silvia? what is she,
That all our swains commend her?
Holy, fair, and wise is she;
The heaven such grace did lend her,
That she might admirèd be.

Is she kind as she is fair?
For beauty lives with kindness.
Love doth to her eyes repair,
To help him of his blindness;
And, being helped, inhabits there.

Then to Silvia let us sing,
That Silvia is excelling;
She excels each mortal thing
Upon the dull earth dwelling:
To her let us garlands bring.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

Fear no more the heat o' the sun

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages;
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great;
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke:
Care no more to clothe and eat;
To thee the reed is as the oak:
The sceptre, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning-flash,
Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone;
Fear not slander, censure rash;
Thou hast finished joy and moan;
All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

No exorciser harm thee!
Nor no witchcraft charm thee!
Ghost unlaid forbear thee!
Nothing ill come near thee!
Quiet consummation have;
And renownèd be thy grave!

William Shakespeare

It was a lover and his lass

It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
That o'er the green cornfield did pass.
In spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding a ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

Between the acres of the rye,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
These pretty country folks would lie,
In spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding a ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

This carol they began that hour
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
How that life was but a flower
In spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding a ding
Sweet lovers love the spring.

And therefore take the present time,
With a hey, and a ho, and hey nonino,
For love is crowned with the prime
In spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding a ding,
Sweet lovers love the spring.

William Shakespeare

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)

Sechs Lieder (op. 48)

Gruß

Leise zieht durch mein Gemüt
Liebliches Geläute,
Klinge, kleines Frühlingslied,
Kling hinaus ins Weite.

Kling hinaus bis an das Haus,
Wo die Rosen sprießen,
Wenn du eine Rose schaust,
Sag, ich laß sie grüßen.

Heinrich Heine (1797-1856)

Greeting

Sweet chimes are gently
Enveloping my soul;
Ring out, little Spring song,
Ring out far and wide.

Ring out till you reach the house,
Where the roses are blooming,
And if you see a rose,
Tell her I send my greeting.

Dereinst, dereinst, Gedanke mein

Dereinst, dereinst, Gedanke mein,
Wirst ruhig sein.

Läßt Liebesglut
Dich still nicht werden,
In kühler Erden,
Da schläfst du gut,
Dort ohne Lieb'
Und ohne Pein
Wirst ruhig sein.

Was du im Leben
Nicht hast gefunden,
Wenn es entschwunden,
Wird's dir gegeben,
Dann ohne Wunden
Und ohne Pein
Wirst ruhig sein.

Emmanuel von Geibel (1815-1884)

Some day, some day, my spirit

Some day, some day, my spirit,
You will be at peace.

If love's passion
Will not leave you in peace,
In the cool earth
You will sleep well,
There, without love
And without pain
You will be at peace.

What in your life
You have not found,
When it has disappeared,
It will be given to you,
Then without wounds
And without pain
You will be at peace.

Lauf der Welt

An jedem Abend geh' ich aus
Hinauf den Wiesensteg.
Sie schaut aus ihrem Gartenhaus,
Es stehet hart am Weg.
Wir haben uns noch nie bestellt,
Es ist nur so der Lauf der Welt.

Ich weiß nicht, wie es so geschah,
Seit lange küß' ich sie,
Ich bitte nicht, sie sagt nicht: ja!
Doch sagt sie: nein! auch nie.
Wenn Lippe gern auf Lippe ruht,
Wir hindern's nicht, uns dünkt es
gut.

The way of the world

Every evening I go out
And cross the path over the meadow.
She looks out from her summer-house,
Which stands close to the path.
We have never made an arrangement,
it is just the way of the world.

I don't know how it turned out like this,
I started kissing her long ago,
I don't ask, she doesn't say 'yes',
But she never says 'no' either!
If lips like to meet other lips,
We won't stop them, we like the idea.

Das Lüftchen mit der Rose spielt,
Es fragt nicht: hast mich lieb?
Das Röschen sich am Taue kühlt,
Es sagt nicht lange: gib!
Ich liebe sie, sie liebet mich,
Doch keines sagt: ich liebe dich!

Johann Ludwig Uhland (1787-1862)

The little breeze plays with the rose,
It doesn't ask: 'do you love me?'
The little rose is cooled by the dew,
It doesn't say stop! for long,
I love her, she loves me,
But neither of us says 'I love you'!

Die verschwiegene Nachtigall

Unter der Linden, an der Haide,
Wie ich mit meinem Trauten saß,
Da mögt ihr finden,
Wie wir beide
Die Blumen brachen und das Gras.
Vor dem Wald mit süßem Schall,
Tandaradei!
Sang im Tal die Nachtigall.

Ich kam gegangen zu der Aue,
Mein Liebster kam vor mir dahin.
Ich ward empfangen
Als hehre Fraue,
Daß ich noch immer selig bin.
Ob er mir auch Küsse bot?
Tandaradei!
Seht, wie ist mein Mund so rot!

Wie ich da ruhte, wüßt' es einer,

Behüte Gott, ich schämte mich.
Wie mich der Gute herzte, keiner
Erfahre das als er und ich -
Und ein kleines Vögelein,
Tandaradei!
Das wird wohl verschwiegen sein.

Walther von der Vogelweide (1170-1230)

The discreet nightingale

Under the linden trees, on the heath
Where I sat with my lover
You might find
Where he and I
Crushed the flowers and the grass.
From the woods came a sweet sound -
"Tandaradei!"
The nightingale sang in the valley.

I came to the meadow;
My sweetheart was there before me.
I was received
So like a noble lady
That I'm still ecstatic about it.
Did he also offer me kisses?
"Tandaradei!"
Just look at how red my mouth is!

If anyone should find out what happened
as I lay there,
God forbid, I would be ashamed.
May how my lover embraced me
Remain known only to him and me -
And a little bird -
"Tandaradei!"
Who will keep our secret well!

Zur Rosenzeit

Ihr verblühet, süße Rosen,
Meine Liebe trug euch nicht;
Blühtet, ach! dem Hoffnungslosen,
Dem der Gram die Seele bricht!

Jener Tage denk' ich trauernd,
Als ich, Engel, an dir hing,
Auf das erste Knöspchen lauernd
Früh zu meinem Garten ging;

Alle Blüten, alle Früchte
Noch zu deinen Füßen trug,
Und vor deinem Angesichte
Hoffnung in dem Herzen schlug.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)

When the roses were in bloom

You are wilting, sweet roses,
My love could not sustain you.
So bloom for the one without hope
For him whose heart is breaking from sorrow!

I think sadly about those days,
When, my angel, I was devoted to you,
When, waiting for the first bud to appear,
I went early into my garden;

Every blossom, every fruit
I laid at your feet;
And in your presence,
Hope stirred in my heart.

Ein Traum

Mir träumte einst ein schöner Traum:
Mich liebte eine blonde Maid;
Es war am grünen Waldesraum,
Es war zur warmen Frühlingszeit:

Die Knospe sprang, der Waldbach schwoll,
Fern aus dem Dorfe scholl Geläut -
Wir waren ganzer Wonne voll,
Versunken ganz in Seligkeit.

Und schöner noch als einst der Traum
Begab es sich in Wirklichkeit -
Es war am grünen Waldesraum,
Es war zur warmen Frühlingszeit:

Der Waldbach schwoll, die Knospe sprang,
Geläut erscholl vom Dorfe her -
Ich hielt dich fest, ich hielt dich lang
Und lasse dich nun nimmermehr!

O frühlingsgrüner Waldesraum!
Du lebst in mir durch alle Zeit -
Dort ward die Wirklichkeit zum Traum,
Dort ward der Traum zur Wirklichkeit!

Friedrich Martin von Bodenstedt (1819-1892)

A Dream

I once had a beautiful dream:
A blonde maiden was in love with me;
It was in a green forest glade,
It was in warm Spring weather.

Buds were opening, the water in the brook was rising,
Distant sounds could be heard from the village,
We were full of joy,
Immersed in bliss.

And even more beautiful than the dream
Was what happened in reality:
It was in a green forest glade
It was warm Spring weather,

The water in the brook was rising, buds were opening,
Sounds came to us from the village,
I held you tight, I held you for a long time,
And now will never let you go again!

Oh Spring-green glade!
You will live in my heart for ever!
That's where reality became a dream,
That's where the dream became reality!

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

6 Songs (op. 38)

Noch'yu v sadu u menya

Noch'yu v sadu u menya
Plachet plakuchaya iva,
I bezuteshna ona Ivushka,
Grustnaya iva.

Ranneye utro blesnet,
Nezhnaya devushka Zor'ka
Ivushke, plachushchey gor'ko,
Slyozī kudryami sotret.

Alexander Blok (1880-1921) based on an Armenian text by Avetik Isahakyan (1875-1957)

In my garden at night

In my garden at night
Mournfully weeps a willow,
Singing disconsolately: O willow,
Sorrowful willow!

But when in the early morning
Appears the virginal dawn,
She dries, with her tresses,
The bitter tears that the willow has shed.

K ney

Travi odetĭ perlami.
Gde-to privetĭ
Grustniye slĭshu,
Privetĭ miliye ...
Milaya, gde ti,
Milaya!

Vechera svetĭ yasniye,
Vechera svetĭ krasniye
Ruki vozdetĭ:
Zhdu tebya,
Milaya, gde ti,
Milaya?

Ruki vozdetĭ:
Zhdu tebya,
V struyakh
Letĭ smĭtuyu
Bledniimi Letĭ
Struyami ...
Milaya, gde ti,
Milaya!

Andrei Bely (1880-1934)

To her

Pearls adorn the grass.
From somewhere
I hear mournful greetings,
Cherished greetings ...
Dear one, where are you?
Dear one!

The lights of evening are clear,
The lights of evening are red,
My arms raised,
I await you,
Dear one, where are you?
Dear one?

My arms raised,
I await you,
In the streams,
Lethe washes the years away,
Pale Lethe,
In the streams ...
Dear one, where are you?
Dear one!

Translation: Emily Ezust

Margaritki

O, posmotri! kak mnogo margaritok—
I tam, i tut ...
Oni tsvetut; ikh mnogo; ikh izbitok;
Oni tsvetut.
Ikh lepestki tryokhgranniye—kak kril'ya,
Kak beliy shyolk ...
V nikh leta moshch! V nikh radost' izobil'ya!
V nikh svetliy polk
Gotov', zemlya, tsvetam iz ros napitok,
Day sok steblyu ...
O, devushki! o, zvezdi margaritok!
Ya vas lyublyu!

Igor Severyanin (1887-1941)

Daisies

Oh, see how many daisies,
Here and there ...
They blossom; they are plentiful; they are abundant.
They blossom. Their petals are three-edged, like
wings,
Like white silk ...
In them the summer's might! In them abundant joy!
In them radiant multitude!
Earth prepares to flower with the dew's draught,
Giving sap to the stalks ...
O maidens, O daisy stars!
I love you

Translation: Elizabeth Wiles

Krisolov

Ya na dudochke igrayu,
Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya,
I na dudochke igrayu,
Ch'i-to dushi veselya.

Ya idu vdol' tikhoy rechki,
Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya,
Dremlyut tikhiya ovechki,
Krotko ziblyutsya polya.

Spite, ovtsi i barashki,
Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya,
Za lugami krasnoy kashki
Stroyno vstali topolya.

Maliy domik tam taitnya,
Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya,
Miloy devushke prisnitsya,
Chto yey dushu otdal ya.

I na nezhniiy zov svireli,
Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya,
Viynet slovno k svetloy tseli,
Cherez sad, cherez polya.

I v lesu pod dubom tyomnim,
Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya,
Budet zhdat' v bredu istomnom,
V chas, kogda usnyot zemlya.

Vstrechu gost'yu doroguyu,
Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya,
Vplot' do utra zatseluyu,
Serditse laskoy utolya.

I, smenivshis' s ney kolechkom,
Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya,
Otpushchu yeyo k ovechkam,
V sad, gde stroyni topolya.
Tra-lya-lya-lya!

Valery Bryusov (1873-1924)

Pied Piper

I play a reed-pipe,
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
I play a reed-pipe,
Cheering up someone's soul.

I walk along a quiet river,
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
Timid sheep are asleep,
The fields are gently rocking.

Sleep, sheep and lambs,
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
Beyond the fields of red clover
Stand slender poplars.

A little house is hidden there,
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
A pretty maiden will have a dream,
That I gave her my soul.

And to the tender call of the reed-pipe,
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
She will come, as if towards a bright dream,
Through the garden, through the fields.

And in the forest under the dark oak,
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
She will wait in a languorous fever
At the hour when the earth falls asleep.

I will greet the dear guest,
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
And will kiss her away till dawn,
Satisfying my heart with tenderness.

And, after we've exchanged rings,
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la,
I'll let her go to the sheep,
Into the garden, where slender poplars stand!
Tra-la-la-la!

Translation: Sergey Rybin

Son

V mire net nichego
Dozhdelenneye sna,
Chary yest' u nego,
U nego tishina,
U nego na ustakh
Ni pechal' i ni smekh,
I v bezdonnikh ochakh
Mnogo taynikh utekh.

U nego shiroki,
Shiroki dva krila,
I legki, tak lyogki,
Kak polnochnaya mgla.
Ne ponyat', kak nesyot,
I kuda i na chem
On krilom ne vzmakhnet
I ne dvinet plechom.

Fyodor Sologub (1863-1927)

A Dream

There is nothing
More desirable
In the world than the dream,
It has magic stillness,
It has on its lips
No sadness, no laughter,
And fathomless eyes,
And many hidden pleasures.

It has two immense wings,
As light as
The shadow of midnight.
It's unfathomable
How it carries them,
And where and on what;
It will not beat its wings,
And it will not move its shoulder.

Translation: Laura Claycomb

A-u!

Tvoy nezhnıy smekh bil skazkoyu izmenchivoyu,
On zval kak v son zovyot svirel'niy zvon.
I vot venkom, stikhom tebya uvenchivayu.
Udydom, bezhim vdvoyem na gorniy sklon.

No gde zhe ti?
Lish' zvon vershin pozvanivayet.
Tsvetku tsvetok sred' dnya zazheg svechu.

I chey-to smekh vse v glub' menya
zamanivayet.
Poyu, ishchu,
,A-u!'
Krichu.

Konstantin Bal'mont (1867-1942)

Your tender laughter

Your tender laughter was a fickle fairytale,
It calls me out of the dream on pipe chimes.
Now my garland of poetry crowns you.
Let's go, let's run, both of us, to the
mountainside!

But where are you?
Only the pipes from the top chime.
One flower to another flower lights the candle
of midday.
And someone's laughter calls to me from the
depths.
I sing, I search,
'A-oo!'
I cry.

Translation: Laura Claycomb

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Vier letzte Lieder / Four last songs

Frühling

In dämmrigen Grüften
Träumte ich lang
Von deinen Bäumen und blauen Lüften,
Von deinem Duft und Vogelsang.

Nun liegst du erschlossen
In Gleich und Zier
Von Licht übergossen
Wie ein Wunder vor mir.

Du kennst mich wieder,
Du lockst mich zart,
Es zittert durch all meine Glieder
Deine selige Gegenwart!

Hermann Hesse (1927-1962)

September

Der Garten trauert,
Kühl sinkt in die Blumen der Regen.
Der Sommer schauert
Still seinem Ende entgegen.

Golden tropft Blatt um Blatt
Nieder vom hohen Akazienbaum.
Sommer lächelt erstaunt und matt
In den sterbenden Gartentraum.

Lange noch bei den Rosen
Bleibt er stehn, sehnt sich nach Ruh.
Langsam tut er
Die müdgeword'nen Augen zu.

Hermann Hesse

Spring

In sombre caverns
I have dreamt for a long time
Of your trees and blue skies,
Of your fragrance and birdsong.

Now you lie revealed
Gleaming and bright,
Bathed in light
Like a miracle before me.

You recognize me once more,
You beckon gently;
All my limbs tremble
At your blessed presence!

September

The garden is in mourning;
The cool rain seeps into the flowers.
The Summer shudders,
Quietly awaiting its end.

Golden leaves fall one after the other
From the tall acacia tree.
Summer smiles, astonished and faint,
In the dying garden's dream.

For a long time beside the roses
It lingers, longing for rest.
Slowly it closes
Its weary eyes.

Beim Schlafengehen

Nun der Tag mich müd' gemacht,
Soll mein sehnliches Verlangen
Freundlich die gestirnte Nacht
Wie ein müdes Kind empfangen.

Hände, laßt von allem Tun,
Stirn, vergiß du alles Denken,
Alle meine Sinne nun
Wollen sich in Schlummer senken.

Und die Seele unbewacht,
Will in freien Flügen schweben,
Um im Zauberkreis der Nacht
Tief und tausendfach zu leben.

Hermann Hesse

Im Abendrot

Wir sind durch Not und Freude
Gegangen Hand in Hand;
Vom Wandern ruhen wir
Nun überm stillen Land.

Rings sich die Täler neigen,
Es dunkelt schon die Luft,
Zwei Lerchen nur noch steigen
Nachträumend in den Duft.

Tritt her und laß sie schwirren,
Bald ist es Schlafenszeit,
Daß wir uns nicht verirren
In dieser Einsamkeit.

O weiter, stiller Friede!
So tief im Abendrot.
Wie sind wir wandermüde--
Ist dies etwa der Tod?

Joseph von Eichendorff (1788-1857)

Going to Sleep

Now the day has wearied me.
My ardent desires shall be
Greeted warmly by the starry night
Like a sleepy child.

Hands, stop all your work;
Brow, forget all your thoughts;
All my senses now
Yearn to sink into sleep.

And my unguarded spirit
Wants to soar freely
To live in night's magic circle
Deeply and a thousand fold.

At Sunset

We have gone through sorrow and joy
Together hand in hand;
Now we rest from our journey
Above the silent land.

The valleys slope down around us;
The sky is growing darker;
Only two larks soar up still
Dreaming in the haze.

Come close to me and let them flutter;
Soon it will be time to sleep;
Let us not lose our way
In this solitude.

O vast, tranquil peace!
So deep in the glow of sunset.
How weary we are of journeying -
Is this perhaps death

Programme Notes

Edvard Grieg 1843-1907



Ellen Nordgren in 1888, the dedicatee of Grieg's op. 48



Grieg and his wife Nina

Sechs Lieder op. 48

Gruß
Dereinst, Gedanke mein
Lauf der Welt
Die verschwiegene Nachtigall
Zur Rosenzeit
Ein Traum

In 1900 Grieg wrote to his American biographer Henry Finck:

'How does it happen that my songs play such an important part in my production? Quite simply owing to the circumstances that even I, like other mortals, was for once in my life endowed with genius (to quote Goethe). The flash of genius was: love. I loved a young girl who had a wonderful voice and an equally wonderful gift of interpretation. That girl became my wife and my lifelong companion to this very day. For me, she has been – I dare admit it - the only genuine interpreter of my songs.'

This set of songs, and the op. 49 set, were the only works that Grieg composed in the period between autumn of 1887 and the spring of 1890, a time when he was giving many piano recitals and composing very little. The op. 48 songs were the first settings of German poetry that Grieg had undertaken since his early op. 2 and op. 4 from over twenty years earlier.

They were published in both German and Norwegian, and dedicated to the singer Ellen Nordgren whom Grieg often accompanied in recitals in the later years of his life.

The first two songs were written in two days in September 1884, and the others in August 1889. 'Gruß' strikes a cheerful atmosphere from the outset with a series of upward arpeggio figures which then serve as an accompaniment to the vocal line. The slower-moving syncopations change the mood for the second stanza but the cheerful figure in the piano returns.

'Dereinst' is quite different. Grieg sets this poem strophically, with a slow-moving chordal accompaniment. The harmonies constantly shift between major and minor, with the nominal key of G sharp minor finally resolving in D sharp major.

'Lauf der Welt' has a strong folk music element in the jolly bass line, so that the harmonic sideslip at 'Wenn Lippe gern auf Lippe ruht' is all the more surprising.

'Die verschwiegene Nachtigall' is also folk influenced, with a strophic setting, embellished vocal line, and the imitation of the nightingale's song.

'Zur Rosenzeit', in the extreme key of B flat minor, is quite a contrast, with a dissonant piano part, and a vocal line rising and falling over harmonic suspensions suggesting the wilting roses.

'Ein Traum' is happier, and in D flat, the relative major of B flat minor. The dropping sevenths of the wilting roses only appear once – here, the song constantly rises up in joy.

Sergei Rachmaninov 1873-1943



4 Symbolist poets: Sologub 2nd from L, Blok 2nd from R



Rachmaninov drawn by Leonid Pasternak (1916)

6 Songs Op 38

Noch'yu v sadu u menya (In my garden at night)

K ney (To her)

Margaritki (Daisies)

Krisolov (Pied Piper)

Son (A dream)

A-u! (Your tender laughter)

German speaking countries have *Lieder*; the French have *mélodie*; and Russia has the *романс* ('romance') – Glinka is usually credited with the adoption of this term. This genre is more wide-ranging in style, embracing sentimental popular song as well as art-song, rather like a combination of *mélodie* and *chanson*. Rachmaninov is writing at the more elevated end of the spectrum, setting texts by well-known poets, and using ambiguous rhythms, highly chromatic harmonies, long melodies moving by intervals of a third, and frequent turbulent undercurrents. He tended to set poems by leading Russian poets, whether romantics like Pushkin or Tyutchev, or as in this collection, symbolists like Blok or Belïy; Bal'mont is in both categories. His *Six Songs for Soprano* were completed between September and November of 1916. It was his last song publication – he wrote around 80 – and it was one of the last works he composed before leaving Russia in 1917.

'Noch'yu v sadu u menya', a poem by Blok based on an Armenian original, describes dawn wiping away the tears of the willow tree. Rachmaninov's harmonically complex setting avoids the picturesque, but highlights 'gorko', 'bitterly' with a slow chromatic descent over a sudden arpeggiated outburst in the piano part.

'K ney' is rhythmically highly ambiguous, with very varied bar-lengths, many of which are not given time-signatures. The futurist-symbolist (the Russian *avangardisti* are complicated) Severyanin's poetry has been called 'vacuous, occasionally melodious', and his 'Daisies', a 'naive little poem.' But it begins full of wonderment and magic, and the piano writing is extremely delicate. This song was arranged for solo piano and also for violin and piano by Kreisler.

'Krisolov' is the longest song of the set. It feels like a folk scherzo, but with more thoughtful undertones.

Sologub, the author of 'Son', was not a popular poet in Russia and only one collection was published, posthumously. Rachmaninov's setting approaches impressionism with its rhythmically and harmonically ambiguous opening. The piano postlude ends the song in a wash of delicate sound. Konstantin Bal'mont's poetry is fluid, exotic, and uses alliteration often (look out for 'Tsvyetu tsvyetok').

Rachmaninov's rippling and unsettled accompaniment to 'A-u!' is almost all built on unresolved seventh chords which begin and end the song – the only momentary stability comes with the clear F major when the flowers light the candle.

Richard Strauss 1864-1949



Strauss (L) with Furtwängler



Flagstad, c.1950

Vier letzte Lieder

Frühling
September
Beim Schlafengehen
Im Abendrot

The *Four Last Songs* for soprano and orchestra were composed in 1948 when the composer was 84. With the exception of his 'Malven' composed later the same year, they were his last completed works. He died the following year, and the title *Vier letzte Lieder* was provided posthumously by Strauss's friend Ernst Roth, editor at Boosey & Hawkes, who published the four songs as a single group in 1950. The première was given at the Albert Hall the same year by Strauss's chosen performer Kirsten Flagstad and the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler. Strauss had chanced upon Eichendorff's 'Im Abendrot' and felt that it had a special meaning for him, setting it to music in May 1948. He had also recently been given a copy of the complete poems of Hermann Hesse, and set 'Frühling', 'September', and 'Beim schlafengehen' for soprano and orchestra. He considered setting two more, *Nacht* and *Hohe des Sommers*, and began a choral setting of Hesse's *Besinnung*, but laid it aside after it became 'too complicated'. All of the songs but 'Frühling' deal with death and are suffused with a sense of calm acceptance. The soprano voice is given soaring melodies and all four songs have prominent horn parts in their orchestral version (not only was Strauss's wife a soprano, but his father was a horn player and composer). Towards the end of 'Im Abendrot', after the soprano's question 'Ist dies etwa der Tod?' (Is this perhaps death?), Strauss quotes his own tone poem *Tod und Verklärung* (*Death and Transfiguration*), written 60 years earlier. As in that piece, the quoted seven note phrase (known as the 'transfiguration theme') has been seen as the fulfilment of the soul through death. The following year, as he lay fatally ill from a series of heart attacks, he calmly claimed, "Dying is just like I composed it in *Tod und Verklärung*."

Artists' Biographies

LOUISE ALDER

Louise Alder studied at the Royal College of Music International Opera School where she was the inaugural Kiri Te Kanawa Scholar.

In the 2020/21 season Louise makes her début at the Wiener Staatsoper as Susanna *Le nozze di Figaro*, singing also Sophie *Der Rosenkavalier* and the title role in Massenet's *Manon*. She also returns to the Bayerische Staatsoper as Susanna and to Madrid's Teatro Real as Zerlina *Don Giovanni*.

Recent highlights on the concert platform have included Schumann's *Szenen aus Goethes Faust* with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra/Sir John Eliot Gardiner, *Messiah* with the New York Philharmonic/Harry Bicket, the title role in *Semele* on tour with the the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique/Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* with the Tokyo Philharmonic/Jonathan Nott, Mozart Arias at the Salzburg Mozartwoche with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra/Daniel Harding and the title role in *Theodora* at the BBC Proms and in the Wiener Konzerthaus with Arcangelo/Jonathan Cohen.

Recital appearances include the BBC Proms, Graz Musikverein and the Oper Frankfurt with Gary Matthewman, Wigmore Hall with both Joseph Middleton and James Baillieu and the Oxford Lieder Festival and Fundación Privada Victoria de los Ángeles in Barcelona with Sholto Kynoch.

JOSEPH MIDDLETON

Highly acclaimed pianist Joseph Middleton specialises in the art of song accompaniment and chamber music. He is Director of Leeds Lieder, Musician in Residence at Pembroke College Cambridge and a Professor at his alma mater, the Royal Academy of Music. Joseph works with many of the world's finest singers in major venues worldwide and has an award-winning and fast-growing discography.

He is a regular guest at New York's Alice Tully Hall, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Vienna Konzerthaus, Zürich Tonhalle, Köln Philharmonie, Luxembourg Philharmonie, Musée d'Orsay in Paris and London's Wigmore Hall. Recent seasons have also taken him to the Aldeburgh, Aix-en-Provence, Edinburgh, Ravinia, and Stuttgart Festivals. Joseph collaborates with internationally established singers including Sir Thomas Allen, Ian Bostridge, Sarah Connolly, Lucy Crowe, Iestyn Davies, Wolfgang Holzmair, Christiane Karg, Katarina Karnéus, Simon Keenlyside, Dame Felicity Lott, Christopher Maltman, John Mark Ainsley, Kate Royal, Carolyn Sampson and Roderick Williams.

His critically acclaimed discography includes discs with Carolyn Sampson (Radio France's Disc of the Month & nominated for a Gramophone Award), Ruby Hughes (BBC Music Magazine's Recording of the Month), Dame Felicity Lott, Amanda Roocroft, Clara Mouriz, Matthew Rose and Allan Clayton. Joseph made his BBC Proms debut in 2016 with Iestyn Davies and Carolyn Sampson.

BENSON WILSON

New Zealand-born Sāmoan baritone Benson Wilson is the winner of the prestigious 64th Kathleen Ferrier Award. That same year he was awarded the Most Outstanding Overseas Performer of the Royal Overseas League Competition, the Worshipful Company of Musicians Award, and was the 2018 winner of the Joan Sutherland & Richard Bonyngé Foundation Award and the People's Choice Award. In 20/21 Benson joins English National Opera as a Harewood Artist, opening the season as *Schaunard La bohème* for their Drive & Live production at Alexandra Palace.

On the concert platform he begins the season with a recital tour of New Zealand including for Auckland Chamber Concert Hall, Hawkes Bay Opera House and Auckland Opera Studio, and later gives UK recitals for Oxford Lieder and King's Lynn Festivals with pianists Sholto Kynoch and Lucy Colquhoun. Future engagements include house débuts for New Zealand Opera and Queensland Opera, as well as further roles for ENO. Previous operatic roles include Marullo *Rigoletto* for Glyndebourne on Tour, John Shears *Paul Bunyan* (ENO), Mirza *Der Gesang Der Zauberinsel* at the Salzburger Festspiele as a 2019 Salzburg Young Singer, cover John Sorel *The Consul* (Welsh National Opera), Guglielmo *Così fan tutte* and Count Almaviva *Le nozze di Figaro* (Bloomsbury Opera), Schabernack *Le Grand Macabre* with London Symphony Orchestra, Schaunard *La bohème* (Festival Opera Napier), and Guglielmo *Così fan tutte*, Demetrius *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Assan *The Consul* as a scholar on the Guildhall School of Music & Drama Opera Course. Benson regularly appears in concert in repertoire including Handel *Messiah*, Mozart *Requiem*, Fauré *Requiem*, Duruflé *Requiem* and Brahms *Ein deutsches Requiem*, and in 2016 he joined the BBC Symphony Orchestra for a Total Immersion Concert featuring works by Richard Rodney Bennett. Prior to relocating to the UK, he won New Zealand's premier singing competition, the Lexus Song Quest, and graduated with a BMus from the University of Auckland. Benson is a former young artist of the Georg Solti Accademia di Bel Canto, the Samling Young Artist Programme, the International Vocal Arts Institute, New Zealand Opera School and the National Opera Studio in London.