



Weekend of Song – ‘Rediscovering Lieder’
Sunday 23 October, 3.00pm

The Venue, Leeds Conservatoire

Ashley Riches bass-baritone

Joseph Middleton piano



BIOGRAPHIES

Ashley Riches bass-baritone

Bass-baritone Ashley Riches studied at King's College, Cambridge and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and was later a Jette Parker Young Artist at The Royal Opera House and a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist.

On the operatic stage he has sung Figaro and Count Almaviva *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Don Giovanni, Escamillo *Carmen*, Schaunard *La bohème* and the Pirate King *The Pirates of Penzance* at houses including The Royal Opera House, English National Opera, Glyndebourne, Garsington, the Grange Festival and Opera Holland Park. Highlights in the 2022/23 season include Schumann's *Das Paradies und die Peri* with the Czech Philharmonic under Daniel Harding, Handel's *Israel in Egypt* with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Richard Egarr, Handel's *Messiah* with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Laurence Cummings, and concerts with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Ryan Wigglesworth, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra/Sir Andrew Davis, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment/Stephen Layton, The English Concert/Harry Bicket, Gabrieli Consort & Players/Paul McCreesh and The Hallé/Sir Mark Elder.

In recital, he has collaborated with pianists including Graham Johnson, Iain Burnside, Julius Drake, Joseph Middleton, Anna Tilbrook, James Baillieu, Simon Lepper, Gary Matthewman, and Sholto Kynoch.

He released his debut solo recital disc, *A Musical Zoo*, in 2021. His discography includes Purcell's *King Arthur* with the Gabrieli Consort & Players under Paul McCreesh (BBC Music Magazine 2020 Recording of the Year), *Wonderful Town* with the London Symphony Orchestra under Rattle recorded for LSO Live and, most recently, Handel's *La Resurrezione* with The English Concert under Harry Bicket.

Joseph Middleton piano

Pianist Joseph Middleton specializes in the art of song accompaniment and chamber music and has been highly acclaimed in this field. Described in Opera Magazine as 'the rightful heir to legendary accompanist Gerald Moore', by BBC Music Magazine as 'one of the brightest stars in the world of song and Lieder', he has also been labeled 'the cream of the new generation' by The Times. He is Director of Leeds Lieder, Musician in Residence and a Bye-Fellow at Pembroke College, Cambridge and a Fellow of his alma mater, the Royal Academy of Music, where he is also a Professor. He was the first accompanist to win the Royal Philharmonic Society's Young Artist Award.

Joseph is a frequent guest at major music centres including London's Wigmore Hall (where he has been a featured artist), Royal Opera House and Royal Festival Hall, New York's Alice Tully Hall and Park Avenue Armory, Het Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Konzerthaus and Musikverein Vienna, Zürich Tonhalle, Hamburg Elbphilharmonie, Berlin BoulezSaal, Kölner Philharmonie, Strasbourg, Frankfurt, Lille and Gothenburg Opera Houses, Baden-Baden, Philharmonie Luxembourg, Musée d'Orsay Paris, Oji Hall Tokyo and Festivals in Aix-en-Provence, Aldeburgh, Barcelona, Schloss Elmau, Edinburgh, Munich, Ravinia, San Francisco, Schubertiade Hohenems and Schwarzenberg, deSingel, Soeul, Stuttgart, Toronto and Vancouver. He made his BBC Proms debut in 2016 alongside Iestyn Davies and Carolyn Sampson and returned in 2018 alongside Dame Sarah Connolly where they premièred recently discovered songs by Benjamin Britten.

Joseph enjoys recitals with internationally established singers including Sir Thomas Allen, Louise Alder, Mary Bevan, Ian Bostridge, Allan Clayton, Dame Sarah Connolly, Marianne Crebassa, Iestyn Davies, Fatma Said, Samuel Hasselhorn, Christiane Karg, Katarina Karnéus, Angelika Kirchschrager, Dame Felicity Lott, Christopher Maltman, John Mark Ainsley, Ann Murray DBE, James Newby, Mark Padmore, Mauro Peter, Miah Persson, Sophie Rennert, Ashley Riches, Dorothea Röschmann, Kate Royal, Carolyn Sampson, Nicky Spence and Roderick Williams.

He has a special relationship with BBC Radio 3, frequently curating his own series and performing alongside the BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists. His critically acclaimed and fast-growing discography has seen him awarded a Diapason D'or, Edison Award and Priz Caecilia as well as receiving numerous nominations for Gramophone, BBC Music Magazines and International Classical Music Awards. His interest in the furthering of the song repertoire has led Gramophone Magazine to describe him as 'the absolute king of programming'.

www.josephmiddleton.com

PROGRAMME

'A Musical Zoo'

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Die Forelle

Die Vögel

Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)

Der Rattenfänger

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Die Drossel

Johannes Brahms (1833-97)

An die Nachtigall

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Le papillon et la fleur

Jules Massenet (1842-1912)

Le mort de la cigale

Déodat de Séverac (1872-1921)

Les hiboux

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Histoires naturelles

Le paon

Le grillon

Le cygnet

Le martin-pêcheur

La pintade

INTERVAL

Modest Mussorgsky (1805-1937)

Mephistopheles' song of the flea in Auerbach's tavern

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-75)

The Cockroach

John Ireland (1879-1962)

The three ravens

Herbert Howells (1892-1983)

King David

Samuel Barber (1910-81)

The monk and his cat

Vernon Duke (1903-69)

Ogden Nash's Musical Zoo

The duck

The cow

The ant

Our dog

The frog

The mouse

The turkey

The kitten

The pig

The centipede

The calf

The rooster

The jelly fish

The germ

The sea gull

The fly

The firefly

The termite

The pigeon

PROGRAMME NOTES

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Die Forelle

Die Vögel

'Die Forelle' was composed in early 1817, to a text published in 1783 by the poet confusingly named Schubart. The last stanza of the poem made the meaning clear – the trout is caught by fishermen, as young women should beware of young men. Schubert removed this stanza, so that it could be sung equally by male or female singers. 'Die Vögel' is a charmingly naive song with a running line of semiquavers in the piano part that partly reminds of Mahler's song about St Anthony preaching to the fishes. A subtle dissonance marks the word 'jammern'.

Hugo Wolf 1860-1903 Der Rattenfänger

This swaggering rat-catcher is introduced by a short high-pitched prelude that returns between the verses before disappearing. He is altogether more worldly than Browning's pied piper.

Richard Strauss 1864-1949 Die Drossel

This is Strauss in folk-like mode, but with an opening piano cadenza representing the song of the thrush.

Johannes Brahms 1833-97 An die Nachtigall

This song comes from Brahms's op. 46 group of four songs, composed in 1868, not very long after the *Deutsches Requiem*. The poem of 'An die Nachtigall' is a fragment, with Ludwig Höltz's text completed by his editor Johann Voss. The song expressively depicts the nightingale's flight, culminating in the exquisite setting of the last word 'entfleuch.'

Gabriel Fauré 1845-1924 Le papillon et la fleur

This song is Fauré's opus 1 number 1. Immediately he announces his pianistic skill in waltz mode. Fauré's teacher Saint-Saëns drew a sketch of a flower looking up a butterfly on the cover of Fauré's manuscript of the song. The waltz continues, unconcerned by the story of young love.

Jules Massenet (1842–1912)

Le mort de la cigale

Jules Massenet wrote in a wide variety of genres, although now he is chiefly known for his operas *Werther* and *Manon*. He also wrote over 30 operas, eight oratorios, ballet music and other orchestral pieces, and about 200 songs (including his surprisingly experimental *Expressions lyriques* that used spoken as well as sung text). 'Le mort de la cigale' was written in 1911. Maurice Faure's curious poem links the wheat about to be mown with short-lived song of the cicada, but its darker elements are smoothed over by Massenet's simple lyricism, only slightly interrupted at 'Voici les moissonneurs!'

Déodat de Séverac (1872-1921)

Les hiboux

Marie-Joseph-Alexandre Déodat de Séverac was born in the Occitan region of southern France, and studied first at the Toulouse conservatoire and then in Paris at the Schola Cantorum with Vincent d'Indy and others. He later became Isaac Albeniz's assistant in Paris. Baudelaire's poem, from his 1857 collection *Les fleurs du mal*, expresses impossibility of human contentment. The static owls are contradicted by the incessant short-long rhythm in the piano part.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Histoires naturelles

Le paon
Le grillon
Le cygnet
Le martin-pêcheur
La pintade

Histoires naturelles was composed in 1906. Ravel said that 'the direct, clear language and the profound, hidden poetry of Jules Renard's works tempted me for a long time.' Renard wrote that

M. Ravel ... dark, rich, and elegant, urges me to go and hear his songs tonight. I told him I knew nothing about music, and asked him what he had been able to add to *Histoires naturelles*. He replied, 'I did not intend to add anything, only to interpret them.' 'But in what way?' 'I have tried to say in music what you say with words, when you are in front of a tree, for example. I think and feel in music, and should like to think I feel the same things as you.'

Some aspects of the songs were controversial, particularly Ravel's use of informal French speech patterns rather than those used in French art song – sounds like final 'e' are normally sung but not spoken, but Ravel removes some of these, bringing an air of informality to the song recital. Some of the audience shouted out loud at the ending of 'Le grillon'. Debussy complained of the 'Americanism' of the more light-hearted passages in the cycle, but even he had to admit 'Le cygne' was beautiful music. 'Le pintade' makes an entertaining and uncomplicated finale to the set, but also displays Ravel's aggressive side. Here, and in the slow chords of 'Le martin-pêcheur' we hear piano writing that resembles Messiaen.

Modest Mussorgsky (1805-1937)

Mephistopheles' song of the flea in Auerbach's tavern

This is Moussorgky's best-known song (he wrote 65), describing a flea promoted to being a state minister by the king. Moussorgsky wrote it while on a tour of Russia in 1879, taking the text from a Russian translation of Goethe's *Faust*. Mephistofeles and Faust have gone into a cellar when men are drinking, and Mephistofeles tells this story. Although the score was lost at Moussorgsky's death, a copy was found and it was then printed.

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-75)

The Cockroach

This song comes from Shostakovich's *Four Verses of Captain Lebyadkin*, using texts by Dostoyevskii, a group written near the end of his life. Here he almost returned to the bitter satire of his operas *The Nose* and *Lady Macbeth* that created such problems for him. Dostoyevskii's Lebyadkin is a grotesque figure with delusions of being a poet. Had Shostakovich written this song in the 1930s, it could have gone badly for him; for comparing Stalin to a cockroach Mandelstam was sent to Siberia.

John Ireland (1879-1962)

The three ravens

This is an arrangement of a traditional poem related to the Scots ballad 'The Twa Corbies [crows]'. Its earliest setting was by Thomas Ravenscroft in 1611, and several 20th-century composers arranged it such as Gurney, Bax, and Grainger. Ireland sometimes uses the piano sonority to underline the words, as at 'black'.

Herbert Howells (1892–1983)

King David

Herbert Howells had published forty songs by 1934, but after the death of his young son in 1935 he mainly wrote sacred music. 'King David' was composed in 1923 along with a group of songs to poems by Walter de la Mare who became his friend. When de la Mare died in 1956, Howells re-drafted some earlier songs (not including 'King David', for which he did not own the rights), and after a length series of revisions the cycle was eventually published posthumously with 'King David' as the final song. The composer said that he was 'prouder to have written King David than almost anything mine'; the poet, that the song was 'so perfect that he did not want anyone else to set it'.

Samuel Barber (1910-81)

The monk and his cat

'The Monk and his Cat' comes from Barber's song cycle *Hermit Songs*, composed in 1953 and published in 1954. The premiere was sung by soprano Leontyne Price. The poem is a translation by W. H. Auden of a text by an anonymous Irish monk who lived sometime between the 8th and 13th centuries. In the song, the monk talks to his cat, Pangur, about their daily lives. The cat chases mice; the monk chases ideas.

Vernon Duke (1903-69)
Ogden Nash's Musical Zoo

Vernon Duke was an American composer born in Russia (at George Gershwin's suggestion he changed his name from Vladimir Dukelsky). Diaghilev commissioned him to write ballet music, and Koussevitsky conducted some of his orchestral works. He wrote for the London stage in the later 1920s, and then returned to New York and settled there. His Broadway musical *Cabin in the Sky* was particularly successful. Duke and Ogden Nash published the *Musical Zoo* in 1947. These extremely short songs contain all the typical Nash rhymes ('placid'/'formic acid', 'pigeon'/'religion'), and they are in a surprising range of musical styles.

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SAVE THE DATES

We are pleased to announce the following forthcoming Leeds Lieder concerts and events:

Recital: Jane Burnell (soprano), Morgana Warren-Jones (mezzo-soprano) and Christopher Pulleyn (piano)

Wednesday 16 November 2022, 1.05pm

The Venue, Leeds Conservatoire

Recital: Jennifer Johnston (mezzo-soprano) and Joseph Middleton (piano)

Friday 10 February 2023, 7.30pm

Clothworkers Centenary Concert Hall, University of Leeds

Recital: Mary Bevan (soprano), Nicky Spence (tenor) and Joseph Middleton (piano)

Saturday 4 March 2023, 7.30pm

The Venue, Leeds Conservatoire

Leeds Lieder Festival 2023

Friday 9 June to Saturday 17 June 2023

Howard Assembly Room