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# Huw Montague Rendall / Joseph Middleton review – Leeds Lieder impresses with Schumann, Mahler and Vaughan Williams

29 November 2024

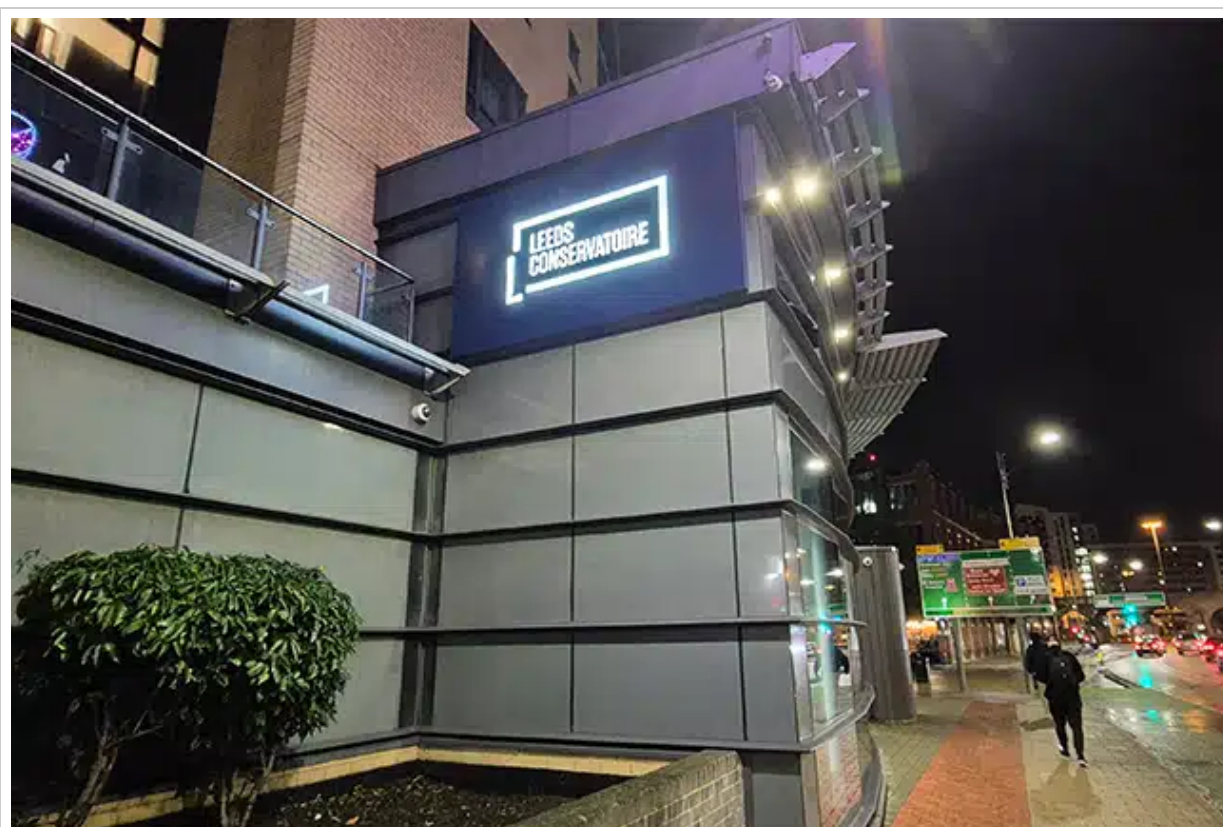


by [Melanie Eskenazi](#)

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**Huw Montague Rendall did not disappoint after stepping in for an ailing Ian Bostridge.**



Leeds Conservatoire (Photo: Marc Eskenazi)

You arrange to hear a tenor you've heard maybe 25 times, and then you find that tenor replaced by a baritone who creates just as much excitement as you felt all those 25 times ago. [Ian Bostridge](#)'s indisposition for this concert in the ever more impressive Leeds Lieder Festival, meant that we were able to experience one of the most promising young singers around today – [Huw Montague Rendall](#) has already [generated much praise from colleagues](#) who know their stuff and that he

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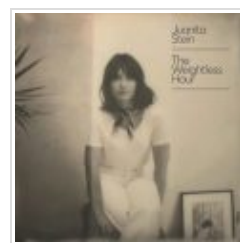
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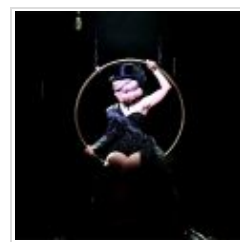
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was accompanied by [Joseph Middleton](#), whose playing reminds one more of Gerald Moore every time, made for an evening of sheer delight.

—From the very first bars of Schumann's *Liederkreis* (Op. 24) we were conscious that we were in the presence of something very special indeed, namely the partnership of an exceptional pianist and a singer possessed of a richly nuanced and beautifully cultivated baritone. Those slightly hesitant notes which herald the deceptive hope of the first two lines were played with intense expressiveness, superbly foreshadowing the poet's disappointment. 'Ich wandelte unter den Bäumen' revealed the singer's ability to present a dreamlike vision without undue sentimentality, aided by brilliantly pointed accompanying.

'Warte, warte, wilder Schiffman' was positively gripping, from the thundering piano to the bitterness of 'Du brachst'st beides, Flamm' und Tod' (You brought both, flames and death). 'Mit Myrten und Rosen' concluded with an exceptionally nuanced 'Und flüstern mit Wehmut und Liebshauch'. We haven't been as impressed with a performance of this work since first hearing [Matthias Goerne](#) sing it in 2006.

***"...Huw Montague Rendall... accompanied by Joseph Middleton... made for an evening of sheer delight"***

Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* presents many challenges to both singer and pianist, all of which this pair surmounted with apparent ease. From the deceiving jollity of the first part of 'Ging heut morgen übers Feld' to the bitterness of 'Ich hab' ein glühend Messer' and the hushed trancelike state of the final lines, they captured it all.

Vaughan Williams' *Songs of Travel* begins with a poem subtitled 'To an Air of Schubert', and that typical Schubertian *gehende bewegung* is finely suggested in the determined beat of the vorspiel and the sense of a lone wanderer in the lines 'Not to autumn will I yield, / Not to winter even!' The work is not so much a song cycle as a set of reflections on the direction of the speaker's life, concluding on the stoical observation that he has '...lived and loved, and closed the door'. Montague Rendall and Middleton captured both the steady tread of the introductory song and the sense of exhilaration of 'Bright is the ring of words', in an extremely nuanced performance throughout.

This recital proved yet again that you don't have to go to the Wigmore Hall in order to hear today's finest singers and pianists – Leeds Lieder is flourishing, and the [April Festival](#), featuring such vocal luminaries as [Florian Boesch](#), [Louise Alder](#), [Christoph Prégardien](#) and [Alice Coote](#), is one to be eagerly anticipated.

• *Details of performances at the Leeds Lieder Festival can be found [here](#).*

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[🎧 Huw Montague Rendall MP3s or CDs](#)

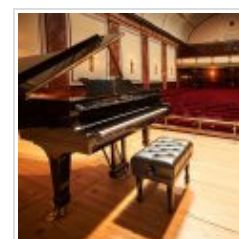
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