



ST JOHN'S SMITH SQUARE

Thursday 1st October 2020, 1.05pm

Siân Dicker (Soprano)
Krystal Tunncliffe (Piano)

Foi d'animal – Oaths and Fables from the Animal Kingdom



PROGRAMME

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)

- Es war einmal ein König - Aus Goethes Faust (Op. 75 no.3)

Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel (1805 - 1847)

- Bergeslust (Op. 10 no. 5)

- Schwanenlied (Op. 1 no. 1)

- Nach Süden (Op. 10 no. 1)

Johannes Brahms (1833 - 1897)

- An die Nachtigall (Op. 46 no.4)

Hugo Wolf (1860 - 1903)

- Der Knabe und das Immlin (no. 2) from Mörike-Lieder

André Caplet (1878 - 1925) - Trois Fables de Jean de la Fontaine

1. Le corbeau et le renard

2. La Cigale et la Fourmi

3. Le loup et l'agneau

Peter Warlock (1894 - 1930)

- The Fox

Samuel Barber (1910 - 1981)

- The Monk and his Cat (Op. 29) from Hermit Songs

Florence Price (1887 - 1953)

- A Flea and a Fly from Four Encore Songs

Richard Rodney Bennett (1936 - 2012)

- Sonnet on a Monkey from A Garland for Marjory Fleming

- A Melancholy Lay from A Garland for Marjory Fleming

- The Mouse and the Bumblebee from Songs Before Sleep

Cole Porter (1891 - 1964)

- The Tale of the Oyster from Fifty Million Frenchmen

Beethoven, **Aus Goethes Faust**

Beethoven was one of many composers drawn to this particular scene of Goethe's tragic play, 'Faust', in which Mephistopheles (a.k.a. the devil in disguise) charms dwellers of the Auerbach's Tavern with a satirical song. It tells of a king who bestows extravagant honour upon a flea in his court, dressing him in the finest silks and velvets and declaring him Minister. All is well until the 'Minister' is joined in court by his brothers and sisters, following which the Queen and her ladies are "plagued", "bitten" and "stung." Beethoven gives a foreboding sense of the chaos that is to ensue by interspersing playful, grace-noted punctuations between verses, and the piece ends in toppling, frenzied jollity.

Fanny Mendelssohn:

Bergeslust

Fanny Mendelssohn wrote over 460 pieces of music throughout her life, over 250 of which were lieder, and which for the most part went unpublished during her lifetime.

'Bergeslust' was in fact the last piece that Fanny Mendelssohn composed before her untimely death in 1847; the piece was found on her piano, having been written the previous day. The final line of the poem, "Gedanken geh'n und Lieder bis in das Himmelreich", is inscribed on her tombstone in Berlin.

Given that Fanny Mendelssohn's gender and class heavily limited her chance for a professionally acknowledged musical output, it is perhaps unsurprising that her music often draws inspiration from birds; a species of wildlife that undoubtedly encapsulates life, hope and freedom. Eichendorff's poem and Mendelssohn's song emulate liberty and spirit, and the piece ends in a joyous ascent, as indeed "Thoughts and songs soar onward unto the heavenly kingdom".

Schwanenlied

Despite the majority of Fanny Mendelssohn's work remaining unpublished throughout her lifetime (or indeed much of it was instead published under her brother's name), she took the decision to publish her first collection of lieder under her own name the year before her death. Fanny Mendelssohn's Opus 1. was published in 1846 and she chose 'Schwanenlied' to head this collection. Heine's poem and Mendelssohn's gentle, melancholy arpeggios paint the picture of the swan's inevitable watery grave, yet whilst Heine's text ends with the sorrowful fading of the swan song, Mendelssohn provides a more restful, hopeful finish to the piece. The piano's ascending postlude could be the swan's soul ascending to the heavens.

Nach Süden

Mendelssohn took a trip to Italy in 1839/40 and returned refreshed, revitalised and with a greater sense of confidence in her creative skills. This is evident in her composition of 'Nach Süden', in which the imagery of migratory birds is a metaphor wholly representative of her new found freedom, energy and escapism. The palpable excitement of the music is propelled by the ceaseless driving off-beat quavers in the piano accompaniment. We hear the birds embark upon their journey south, the vocal line

soaring as they take flight. Mendelssohn occasionally pulls the reins back, as though allowing the birds time to take in the heady scents of the lands of “eternal blossom” for which they are heading, before launching into the excitement of their journey once again.

Brahms, *An die Nachtigall*

Brahms, like Schubert before him, set a revised version of Ludwig Höltz's original poem, with significant alterations to the second verse made by Johann Heinrich Voss. Voss gave light to Höltz's original dark, disturbed writings and offered a more elegant, melancholy response to the nightingale's stirring song. Brahms, in contrast to Schubert's setting of this poem, writes in fluid, passionate phrases. The piece builds gradually towards an outpouring of lament, before subsiding as the beauty of the nightingale's song eventually becomes too much to bear.

Wolf (from Mörike Lieder):

Der Knabe und Das Immlin

'Der Knabe und das Immlin' was one of the first poems Wolf decided to set to music for his collection of Mörike Lieder. There is a fresh, fairytale-like playfulness in this piece that is made evident in the two different musical voicings of the boy and the bee. Wolf captures the buzzing and jollity of the latter in fluttering right hand triplets and trills. The piece ends in a passionate surge of sentimentality and feeling as the boy shares his feelings for his unrequited love.

Caplet, Trois Fables de Jean de la Fontaine:

Le corbeau et le renard

La Cigale et la Fourmi

Le loup et l'agneau

Jean de La Fontaine was one of the most widely read French fabulists of the 17th century. Caplet sets just three of these fables, starting with 'The Raven and the Fox'; a moral tale in which the fox declares that all flatterers are out to get what they can, a lesson hard learnt by Monsieur Corbeau. The second of the set tells the story of a busking Grasshopper trying to scrape together enough food to last the season. The grasshopper asks her neighbour, Mistress Ant, for a loan. Alas, sadly for the grasshopper, Mistress Ant is not a lender. Finally, there is the tale of the Wolf and the Lamb. La Fontaine sets out to prove that “the mightiest are always right”, and this is sensed in the immediate ferocity given to the music by Caplet. The contrast in voicing between the wolf and the lamb is palpable and the piece builds to an action-driven climax, before both singer and pianist deliver the final line of proof in the simplest, most matter of fact of terms.

Warlock, *The Fox*

Peter Warlock is often considered amongst Britain's most eccentric composers, however this particular piece was one of his last and was composed at a time of great depression for Warlock. He had escaped London, travelling to Hampshire to visit his friend, the

British poet Bruce Blunt. The pair spent an evening enjoying drinks at a local tavern, “The Fox Inn”, where a fox’s mask had been hanging above the bar. The pair walked home, talking about the mask, after which Warlock went straight to bed. Blunt on the other hand, assisted by a bottle of Chablis, stayed up and wrote ‘The Fox’, leaving the poem on the table before heading to bed himself. Warlock found the poem the next morning and immediately set it to music – both the poem and the song, from conception to completion, took under 18 hours.

Barber, **The Monk and his Cat** (from Hermit Songs)

Taken from a collection of medieval Gaelic or Latin writings attributed to Irish saints and holy persons, Barber’s ‘Hermit Songs’ are settings of ten individual poems, musings or observations written between the 8th-13th centuries. Some are profoundly reverent, serious, or loving, whilst others are more playful, as we find with ‘The Monk and his Cat’. A recurring piano pattern invites us to imagine the Monk’s white cat, ‘Pangur’ (famed in cat literature), walking up and down the keyboard.

Florence Price, **A Fly and a Flea** (from Four Encore Songs)

Florence Price (1887 – 1953), born in Little Rock, Arkansas, is considered the first recognized African-American female composer. In her lifetime, she composed more than 300 works and was the first black female composer to have a symphony performed by a major American orchestra. Price’s song output was prolific throughout her lifetime, however much of her work went unpublished and would have remained as such had it not been for the renovation of her home after her death, during which piles of unpublished manuscripts were discovered. ‘A Fly and a Flea’ is the third song of Price’s set, ‘Four Encore Songs’, with text by Ogden Nash. Nash was well known for his witty, pun-like rhymes and Price’s own comedic talents are brought to fruition in this fleeting, frivolous song.

Richard Rodney Bennett:

Sonnet On A Monkey (from A Garland For Marjory Fleming)

A Melancholy Lay (from A Garland For Marjory Fleming)

Richard Rodney Bennett’s cycle ‘A Garland for Marjory Fleming’ is a setting of the poems of a young Scottish child, Marjory Fleming (1803–11), who died at the age of eight but left three volumes of journals and a handful of poems. Misspellings in these poems have been kept by the composer and give the pieces an innocent charm, left uncorrected except, as the composer says, when it would affect correct pronunciation. ‘Sonnet on a Monkey’ is about a charming creature that Marjory calls “woeman”, whilst ‘A Melancholy Lay’ is a sorry tale about a turkey funeral.

The Mouse and the Bumblebee (from Songs Before Sleep)

‘The Mouse and the Bumblebee’ is the first song in Rodney Bennett’s song cycle, ‘Songs Before Sleep’, the texts of which are all taken from the Oxford Dictionary of Nursery

Rhymes. Rodney-Bennett's playful setting of this nursery rhyme incites immediate pace and excitement; we hear an almost hoedown-esque driving in the piano accompaniment as the cat comes fiddling out of the barn, celebrating the upcoming nuptials of the mouse and the bumblebee.

Cole Porter, *Tale of the Oyster*

'The Tale of the Oyster' features in Cole Porter's 1929 hit musical comedy 50 Million Frenchmen, in which the worldly and sophisticated fur-buyer Violet Hildegarde tells the story of a "bivalve social climber" hoping to scale new heights of society; a "proud little oyster" indeed.

All Programme Notes © Siân Dicker 2020

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Oxford Lieder exists to champion song – that extraordinary coming together of words and music in performance that can be so powerful. Thousands of people annually are inspired by our exceptional concerts, enlightening study events and wide-ranging opportunities for participation. The October Festival is at the heart of what we do: an immersion in song that won a prestigious Royal Philharmonic Society Award in 2015 for its 'breadth, depth and audacity of programming.'

We are committed to finding and nurturing outstanding new talent and to this end, the Oxford Lieder Young Artist Platform was introduced in 2011. Each year, we seek two outstanding singer-pianist duos who we believe will be exemplary ambassadors for song. Applicants either currently attend or are recent graduates of a UK conservatoire. Each winning duo is offered at least one showcase concert at the following October's Oxford Lieder Festival, as well as a series of professional song recitals at music clubs, societies and festivals around the UK which are sponsored by Oxford Lieder. This offers the chosen young artists invaluable professional experience, as well as encouraging a revived interest in song from concert promoters.

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Wiltshire born soprano **Siân Dicker** has recently completed her studies on the opera course at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama with Marie Vassiliou and Janice Chapman. Siân is thrilled to have won the Singers Prize in the 68th Royal Over-Seas League Annual Music Competition, and is currently looking forward to competing for the 2020 ROSL Gold Medal in November 2020. She is also delighted to have won the 2020 Oxford Lieder Young Artist Platform with duo partner, Krystal Tunnicliffe, and is excited to return to the Oxford Lieder Festival for a recital in October. She was recently awarded the runner up prize at the 2020 Clonter Opera Prize.

Siân won the International Voice of the Future competition at the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in July 2017,

and the Dunraven Welsh Young Singer of the Year competition in March 2017. She was also a finalist in the inaugural By Voice Alone competition in May 2019.

Recent operatic roles have included: Amaranta/Diana (*La fedeltà premiata*) and Venus (Venus and Adonis) for Guildhall Opera, and Erste Dame (*Die Zauberflöte*) for Hurn Court Opera. In February 2020 Siân premiered the role of Observer 1 in a brand new commission, *The Angel Esmeralda*, written by Lliam Paterson for Guildhall Opera in partnership with Scottish Opera. She was due to be joining the Garsington Opera chorus as an Alvarez Young Artist for their 2020 summer season, covering the role of The Foreign Princess in *Rusalka*, but has instead been delighted to join Garsington for a semi-staged production of *Fidelio* in September. Siân is also a Live Music Now musician and has worked with the charity to create online concerts for care homes throughout this time.

<https://www.siandicker.com/>



Australian pianist **Krystal Tunnickliffe** works at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and is a Britten-Pears Young Artist. With duo partner Siân Dicker, she won the Oxford Lieder Young Artist Platform 2020, and together they will perform at the Oxford Lieder Festival in October, as well as in London, Wales, and Frankfurt. In 2019, she won the prize for the best accompanist in the heats at Melbourne National Liederfest, and with Harriet Burns she was a finalist at the Maureen Lehane Awards.

Krystal completed Bachelor and Masters degrees (with distinction) from the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music and the Guildhall School respectively, before undertaking a Junior Fellowship at the Guildhall School. She is also a graduate of the Franz-Schubert-Institut in Baden bei Wien.

Krystal's recent and upcoming engagements include performances in London, Cornwall, Ireland, Wales, Belgium and France (Notre Dame de Paris, Disneyland Paris, La Madeleine), including recitals at Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, St-Martin-in-the-Fields, and LSO St Luke's. In 2018 she performed Bernstein's Arias and Barcarolles as a part of the BBC Total Immersion Day, later broadcast on BBC Radio 3. She was the concerto soloist for Gershwin's Rhapsody In Blue and Rachmaninoff's 2nd Piano Concert for the Chorus of Dissent. In 2019/2020, she was the repetiteur/orchestral pianist for NI Opera/Lyric Theatre Belfast's Sweeney Todd, and Kiss Me Kate. She has been a staff pianist at Arts Educational Schools, Guildford School of Acting, Millennium Performing Arts, the Victorian College of the Arts and Opera Scholars Australia.

Krystal is also passionate about music education and outreach, and maintains an active private studio of pupils aged eight-adulthood. She was a Wigmore Hall Chamber Tots Artist 2017-18, and has worked on education workshops for Glyndebourne Education Department, the Royal Academy of Music, the London Bach Choir, the Prison Choir Project, and Kingston Music Service. She is the accompanist for the award-winning Bromley Boy Singers, is the staff pianist for the BAY Choral and Musical Theatre courses, and in Australia has worked with the Gondwana Voices.

<https://www.krystaltunnickliffe.com/>