

THE

Aldelburgh

C O N N E C T I O N

The Enchanted Garden

Walter Hall, Sunday, October 26, 2008, 2:30 pm



Krisztina Szabo has had to withdraw from today's performance.

However, we are very fortunate and happy that
ALLYSON McHARDY has been able to take her place.

We wish to thank the following:

Patsy and Jamie Anderson
for sponsoring Nathalie Paulin

Françoise Sutton
for sponsoring Allyson McHardy

Lorraine Kaake
for sponsoring Philip Carmichael

We also thank James and Connie MacDougall
for providing the floral arrangement for the stage.

We are performing on the Edith McConica Steinway.

The Enchanted Garden

Songs of Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Nathalie Paulin, soprano

Allyson McHardy, mezzo

Philip Carmichael, baritone

Stephen Ralls and Bruce Ubukata, piano

Musical history, from time to time, comes up with pairs of composers, over whom we seem to be expected to cast our votes: Bach and Handel, Haydn and Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert, Verdi and Wagner . . . One such pair was Debussy and Ravel. Their most ardent partisans have tended to make opponents of these two, especially in their own time. Fauré (Ravel's teacher) was no admirer of Debussy; Poulenc, as a young man, made light of Ravel's achievements while extolling those of Debussy. We are fortunate, at a century's distance, to be able to appreciate the merits of both masters, while observing the differences as clearly as we may.

Unlike Debussy, Ravel had no early romantic effusion in his music, vocal or otherwise; for him, beauty of sonority was always a prime consideration, an indication of what might be called his classical pre-occupation. There is, certainly, passion in his music - but Graham Johnson (describing the song *D'Anne qui me jecta de la neige*) has pointed to "a grave and courtly beauty . . . as cool as snow, yet somehow aflame . . . We encounter for the first time the white heat of Ravel, quite different from Debussy's fiery glow".

Ravel's song output was more modest in number than that of Debussy, particularly in the earlier days. Debussy had a green-eyed amateur singer, infatuated with him, for whom he composed more than twenty songs in the early 1880s. Ravel, without a performing muse, moved into songwriting more gradually until his first undeniable vocal masterpiece, the orchestral song cycle *Shéhérazade*. After this, four more song cycles (two with instrumental groups), as well as a number of separate songs, followed at fairly regular intervals, except for a long hiatus through the Great War, when Ravel's preoccupations included driving a truck on the front. In 1934, shortly after the completion of

Don Quichotte à Dulcinée, came the onset of the debilitating disease which shortened Ravel's career and, all too soon, his life.

In today's programme, we provide a representative selection of Ravel's oeuvre for voice and piano (ignoring only his arrangements of folksongs). Biographical extracts and personal reminiscences are taken from several sources, but particularly from the excellent collection, edited by Roger Nichols, *Ravel Remembered* (Faber & Faber 1987).

You may like to know that our survey will expand in the new year with the unveiling of the Opera School's production of a double-bill, consisting of Ravel's *L'Heure espagnole* and, especially, *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*. Performances are in the MacMillan Theatre on March 5, 6, 7 and 8. The second opera dramatises several themes which appear throughout today's concert - a love of nature (and, in particular, small animals), fondness for the antique and curious, remembrance of childhood and the child's love for the mother. In the course of all these events, it is hoped to clarify and celebrate the unique and life-enhancing achievements of a great master, Maurice Ravel.

THE CHILD, GROWING UP

Sainte (1896) (*Stéphane Mallarmé*)
(baritone)

The title of the poem, written in 1865, translates as 'Saint Cecilia playing on the wing of a cherub'. Ravel's setting was dedicated to the poet's daughter at the time of her marriage.

*Saint: At the window, which harbours the old sandalwood of flaking
gilt of the viol that sparkled once to flute or mandola, stands the
pale saint, displaying the ancient unfolded book of the Magnificat
that glistened once to vespers and compline - at this monstern-glass,
brushed by a harp that the Angel forms in his evening flight for the
delicate fingertip which, lacking the old sandalwood and the ancient
book, she poises on the instrumental plumage, musician of silence.*

Deux Epigrammes de Clément Marot (1896-99)
(soprano)

These two songs wonderfully evoke the epoch of the 16th century Marot - particularly the second, the accompaniment of which fits within the compass of a keyboard instrument of that period.

(Two epigrams of Clément Marot)

D'Anne qui me jecta de la neige

On Anne who threw snow at me: Anne in play threw snow at me, which I certainly thought cold: but what I felt from it was fire, for suddenly I was all aflame. Since fire dwells secretly in the snow, where shall I find a place where I'll not burn? Anne, your favour alone can quench the flame I so keenly feel, not water nor snow nor ice, but by feeling a fire which matches mine.

D'Anne jouant de l'espinette

On Anne playing the spinet: When I see my neat and dark-haired lady, young, comely, of divine lineage, and when her voice, her fingers and the spinet make a sweet melodious sound, my ears and eyes know greater pleasure than the saints in their immortal glory: and I become as glorious as they, the moment I feel she loves me a little.

LE GRAND SIÈCLE

Le Paon (Histoires naturelles) (1906) (Jules Renard)

(mezzo)

Dating back, again, at least to the sixteenth century is the French enthusiasm for animal music. This introduction to Ravel's song cycle, with the grandeur of its dotted rhythms, evokes the style of a baroque overture.

The peacock: He will surely get married today. It was to have been yesterday. In full regalia he was ready. It was only his bride he was waiting for. She has not come. She cannot be long.

Proudly, he processes with the air of an Indian prince, bearing about his person the customary lavish gifts. Love burnishes the brilliance of his colours, and his crest quivers like a lyre.

His bride does not appear. He ascends to the top of the roof and looks towards the sun. He utters his devilish cry: Léon, Léon! It is thus that he summons his bride. He can see nothing drawing near, and no one replies. The fowls are used to all this and do not even raise their heads. They are tired of admiring him. He descends once more to the yard, so sure of his beauty that he is incapable of resentment.

His marriage will take place tomorrow. And, not knowing what to do for the rest of the day, he heads for the flight of steps. He ascends them, as though they were the steps of a temple. He lifts his train, heavy with eyes that have been unable to detach themselves. Once more he repeats the ceremony.

Pavane pour une infante défunte (1899)
(piano duet)

Another evocation of the past comes in this piano piece, whose title Ravel insisted was chosen solely for the beauty of its sound - it was dedicated to the Princesse de Polignac, who was very much alive at the time.

SELF-PORTRAITS?

Rêves (1927) (Léon-Paul Fargue)
(baritone)

One of Ravel's closest friends, back in 1900, in a group of artists calling themselves 'Apaches' was the poet Léon-Paul Fargue. This, his only setting of Fargue, is an evocation of the world of memory - disjointed visions, a voice calling, faces gentle with love and the noise of departing trains.

Dreams: A child runs round marble statues . . . A voice issues from high places . . . The oh so tender eyes of those who love you dream and flit by between the trees . . . In the mighty blue of some station roars the wave of great departures. . All this in an old dream in the indistinct land of ephemeral things that die discreetly. . .

Le Grillon (Histoires naturelles)
(baritone)

The cricket: It is the hour when, weary of wandering, the black insect returns from his outing, and carefully restores order to his estate. First he rakes his narrow sandy paths. He makes sawdust which he scatters on the threshold of his retreat. He files the root of this tall grass likely to annoy him. He rests.

Then he winds up his tiny watch. Has he finished? Is it broken? He rests again for a while. He goes inside and shuts the door. For an age he turns his key in the delicate lock. And he listens: nothing untoward outside. But he does not feel safe. And as if by a tiny chain on a creaking pulley, he lowers himself into the bowels of the earth. Nothing more is heard.

In the silent countryside, the poplars rise like fingers in the air, pointing to the moon.

L'Indifférent (Shéhérazade) (1903) (Tristan Klingsor)
(mezzo)

This song of hopeless longing for fulfilment forms the third part of Ravel's wonderful triptych for voice and orchestra.

The indifferent one: Your eyes are soft like a girl's, young stranger, and the delicate curve of your handsome down-shaded face is still more attractively shaped. Your lips sing at my door an unknown charming tongue, like music off-pitch; enter! and let my wine refresh you . . . But no, you pass by and I see you leaving my threshold, gracefully waving farewell, your hips lightly swaying in your languid, feminine way.

Les Entretiens de la Belle et de la Bête (Ma Mère l'Oye) (1908-10)
(piano duet)

'Beauty and the Beast' is one of the French fairy tales which Ravel evoked in his 'Mother Goose'. Beauty finally agrees to marry the Beast, who is magically transformed into a handsome prince. The suite for piano duet was written for Mimi and Jean, children of Ravel's friends, the Godebskis.

IN FOREIGN LANDS

Laideronnette, impératrice des pagodes (Ma Mère l'Oye)
(piano duet)

This scene describes an oriental empress taking her bath, accompanied by singing and the playing of viols and lutes.

Asie (Shéhérazade) (soprano)

Asia, ancient wonderland of fairy tales, where fantasy sleeps like an empress in her mystery-filled forest, Asia, I long to set sail with the schooner which rocks this evening in the harbour, mysterious and solitary and which spreads at last its violet sails like a huge night-bird in the golden sky.

I long to set sail for isles of flowers as I listen to the song of the wayward sea with its old bewitching rhythm; I long to see Damascus and the cities of Persia with their airy minarets; I long to see beautiful silken turbans above black faces with white teeth; I long to see eyes dark with love and pupils sparkling with joy sunk in skins as yellow as oranges; I long to see velvet raiments and long-fringed robes.

I long to see calumets in mouths fringed about with white beards; I long to see grasping merchants with shifty looks, and cadis and viziers who, with a single crook of the finger, dispense life or death on a whim; I long to see Persia, and India, and then China, portly mandarins beneath their sunshades, and princesses with delicate hands, and learned men disputing about poetry and beauty.

I long to linger in enchanted palaces, and like a foreign traveller gaze at leisure on landscapes painted on fabrics in pinewood frames, with a figure in the midst of an orchard.

I long to see assassins smiling, as the executioner cuts off an innocent head with his great curved Oriental scimitar; I long to see beggars and queens; I long to see roses and blood; I long to see death for love or else for hate.

And then to return later and recount my adventures to those intrigued by dreams, while raising like Sinbad my old Arabian cup from time to time to my lips, artfully to interrupt the tale . . .

Five o'clock, Foxtrot (L'Enfant et les sortilèges) (1925) (piano duet)

In this scene from Ravel's operatic masterpiece, a black Wedgwood teapot performs a ragtime dance with a Chinese teacup.

INTERMISSION

during which tea will be served in the Torel Room,
with the kind assistance of students of the
Opera Division, Faculty of Music.

OISEAUX EXOTIQUES

La Pintade (Histoires naturelles)

(baritone)

The guinea-fowl: She is the hunchback of my barnyard. She dreams only of wounding, because of her hump. The hens say nothing to her: suddenly she swoops and harries them. Then she lowers her head, leans forward, and, with all the speed of her skinny legs, runs and strikes with her hard beak at the very centre of a turkey's tail. The show-off was provoking her.

Thus, with her bluish head and raw wattles, pugnaciously she rages from morn to night. She fights for no reason, perhaps because she always thinks that they are making fun of her figure, of her bald head and drooping tail, and she never stops screaming her discordant cry, which pierces the air like a needle.

Sometimes she leaves the yard and vanishes. She gives the peace-loving poultry a moment's respite. But she returns more rowdy and shrill. And in a frenzy, she wallows in the earth. Whatever's wrong with her? The cunning creature is playing a trick. She went to lay her egg in the open country. I can look for it if I like. And she rolls in the dust, like a hunchback.

Le Cygne (Histoires naturelles)

(mezzo)

The swan: He glides on the pond like a white sleigh, from cloud to cloud. For he is hungry only for the fleecy clouds that he sees forming, moving, dissolving in the water. It is one of these that he wants. He takes aim with his beak and suddenly immerses his snow-clad neck. Then, like a woman's arm emerging from a sleeve, he draws it back up. He has caught nothing. He looks about: the startled clouds have vanished. Only for a second is he disappointed, for the clouds are not slow to return, and, over there, where the ripples fade, there is one reappearing. Gently, on his soft cushion of feathers, the swan paddles and approaches . . . He exhausts himself fishing for empty reflections, and perhaps he will die, a victim of that illusion, before catching a single shred of cloud.

But what am I saying? Each time he dives, he burrows with his beak in the nourishing mud and brings up a worm. He is getting as fat as a goose.

Le Martin-Pêcheur (Histoires naturelles)

(mezzo)

The kingfisher: Not a bite, this evening, but I had a rare experience. As I was holding out my fishing-rod, a kingfisher came and perched on it. No bird is more dazzling. He was like a great blue flower at the tip of a long stem. The rod bent beneath the weight. I held my breath, so proud to have been taken for a tree by the kingfisher. And I'm sure he did not fly off from fear, but thought he was simply flitting from one branch to another.

Les Grands vents venus d'outre-mer (1907) (Henri de Régnier)
(soprano)

This rare expression of Ravel's depressive side is his only setting of another poet-friend.

The great winds from beyond the sea pass through the city in winter, like bitter strangers. Solemn and pale, they scheme together in the squares, and their sandals strew with sand the marble flagstones. As though holding crooks in their strong hands, they ram the porch-roof and the door, behind which the clock has died; and the bitter adolescents make off with them toward the sea.

Sur l'herbe (1907) (Paul Verlaine)
(soprano)

On the lawn: The abbot rambles on. - "And you, Marquis, you've got your wig on all askew." "This old Cyprus wine's exquisite, but less so, Camargo, than the nape of your neck." "My love. . ." - "Do, mi, so, la, ti. Abbot, you're baring your base soul!" "May I die, ladies, if I don't detach a spangle from your hair!" "I'd like to be a little dog!" "Let's kiss our shepherdesses, one by one." "Well, gentlemen?" "Do, mi, sol." "Hey! Good evening, Moon!"

L'ÂME D'UN POÈTE

Ronsard à son âme (1924) (Pierre de Ronsard)
(mezzo)

This song was written in celebration of the four hundredth anniversary of the poet's birth. Ravel expressed delight that he could play the accompaniment with his left hand, while smoking a cigarette with his right.

Ronsard to his soul: Dear little Ronsardian soul, little sweet one, little soft one, my body's dearest denizen, you go so weakly down to the depths, so pale, so meagre, so lonely, to the cold kingdom of the dead: simple withal, burdened neither by remorse for murder, poison, nor bitterness, scorning both favours and riches, so greatly envied by the common man. Passer-by, I have done: follow your fortune, do not disturb my rest, I sleep.

Don Quichotte à Dulcinée (1932-33) (*Paul Morand*)
(baritone)

These three songs, intended for Chaliapin's use in a projected film, were Ravel's last completed compositions.

(Don Quixote to Dulcinea)

Chanson romanesque

Romantic song: Were you to tell me that the earth offended you with so much turning, I'd dispatch Panza to deal with it: you'd see it still and silenced. Were you to tell me that you are wearied by a sky too studded with stars - tearing the divine order asunder, I'd scythe the night with a single blow. Were you to tell me that space itself, thus denuded, was not to your taste - a god-like knight, with lance in hand, I'd sow the fleeting wind with stars. But were you to tell me that my blood is more mine, my Lady, than your own, I'd pale at the admonishment and, blessing you, would die.

O Dulcinea.

Chanson épique

Epic song: Good Saint Michael who gives me leave to behold and hear my Lady, Good Saint Michael who deigns to elect me to please her and defend her, Good Saint Michael, descend, I pray, with Saint George on to the altar of the Madonna robed in blue. With a heavenly beam bless my sword and its equal in purity and its equal in piety as in modesty and chastity: My Lady.

(O great Saint George and Saint Michael) Bless the angel watching over my vigil, my sweet Lady, so like unto Thee, O Madonna robed in blue!

Amen.

Chanson à boire

Drinking song: A pox on the bastard, illustrious Lady, who, to discredit me in your sweet eyes, says that love and old wine are saddening my heart and soul! I drink to joy! Joy is the only goal to which I go straight . . . when I'm . . . drunk! A pox on the jealous wretch, O dusky mistress, who whines and weeps and vows always to be this lily-livered lover who dilutes his drunkenness! I drink to joy!

Le Jardin féerique (Ma Mère l'Oye)
(piano duet)

In 'The Enchanted Garden', the adult composer looks back with nostalgia to the poetry of childhood.



(Le piano de
Maurice Ravel)

Luc - Gilbert Moreau -

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The next event in our season opens our *Discovery Series* on Tuesday, November 11 at 7:30 pm, here in Walter Hall. Three dazzling young singers from the vocal programmes at the University of Toronto will perform English songs and *Lieder* - AVIVA WILKS, FRANK MUTYA and JEREMY LUDWIG. Catch these rising stars at the beginning of their careers! Tickets are \$18 (\$12 seniors/students) from the Edward Johnson Building, 416-978-3744.

Then, don't forget to join us at the next concert in our Sunday Series, on November 30 at 2:30 pm in Walter Hall; it is entitled *Parnassus on Elm Street* and will celebrate the centenary of Toronto's Arts & Letters Club. Singers include MONICA WHICHER, LAUREN SEGAL, COLIN AINSWORTH and GILES TOMKINS. Single tickets at \$50 may be ordered from our box office, 416.735.7982.

Copies of our very successful CDs, the Juno-nominated *Schubert among friends* and our latest, *Our own songs* - as well as our *20th Anniversary Collection* (double album) - are available during the intermission or through our website: **www.aldeburghconnection.org**

Box office revenues cover only a portion of our operating budget; grants, corporate funding and individual donations are needed for the balance. We ask you to consider joining one of our supporting categories: Benefactor (\$1,000 or more), Champion (\$500 or more), Patron (\$100 or more) and Friend (\$50 or more). Donations may be made by cheque or VISA, and may be made in instalments, if you prefer. You will receive information on our activities, and all donations will be acknowledged with a receipt for income tax purposes. Private donors may also act as sponsors for an entire concert, an artist, a special commission, or the intermission tea; however, other donations and suggestions for corporate sponsorship are also very welcome. Your support is vital in helping to ensure the continuation of these concerts!

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the following in presenting today's concert:

- The Ontario Arts Council
- The City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council
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- Patsy and Jamie Anderson
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Aldeburgh is the small town on the east coast of England where Benjamin Britten, Peter Pears and Eric Crozier founded the Festival of Music which flourishes to this day. Artistic directors **Stephen Ralls** and **Bruce Ubukata** have visited and worked there for many summers, as has a large number of the singers appearing with The Aldeburgh Connection.

Nathalie Paulin has established herself in the United States, Canada, Europe and the far east as an interpretative artist of the first rank. Winner of the 2005 Dora Mavor Award for Outstanding Opera Performance, she has collaborated with internationally renowned conductors, including Jane Glover, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Andrew Parrott, Jonathan Darlington, Hervé Niquet, David Agler, Richard Bradshaw, Bernard Labadie, Mario Bernardi, Graeme Jenkins, Andrew Litton and Noav Talmi on both the concert platform and in opera. As well, critics have been lavish in their praise. Reviewing from Chicago, John van Rhein noted that “Ms Paulin in particular is a real find; her rich, agile voice possesses great depth and allure, her manner radiates sensuous charm.” Ms Paulin debuted for L’Opéra de Montréal as Mélisande and for Chicago Opera Theatre as Galatea. She was re-engaged by Chicago Opera Theatre for the title role in *Semele* and for Mary in *La resurrezione*, both by Handel. She has been heard as Constance in *Dialogues des Carmélites* for Calgary Opera, Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* for L’Opéra de Québec and Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* for Cincinnati Opera. The Dallas Opera featured her in *Carmen* and *Cunning Little Vixen*.

The 2008-09 season is notable for her Atlanta Symphony debut in Mozart’s *Requiem* and return engagements with Boston’s Handel and Haydn Society, conducted by Roger Norrington and Washington Concert Opera, appearing with Stephanie Blythe, conducted by Antony Walker. Also on her schedule are engagements for the title role in *Semele* for Pacific Opera Victoria, Handel’s *Hercules* with Chicago’s Music for the Baroque and Mahler’s Symphony #4 with the Hamilton Philharmonic.

Allyson McHardy, “a singer of enormous imagination and versatility, sang a lustrous and energetic Rosina (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*)”, according to the San Francisco Chronicle’s Joshua Kosman, who continued his praise, noting that “the inventive twists and turns in her highly ornamented account of the opening *Una voce poco fa* were superb.” Her triumph as Rosina (conducted by Maurizio Barbacini) was followed by Olga in San Francisco Opera’s *Eugene Onegin*, conducted by Ilan Volkov. The striking mezzo-soprano made her debut with New York City Opera as Marchesa Melibea in Rossini’s *Il viaggio a Reims* under George Manahan; recent concert engagements have included *Messiah* for the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa, *Elijah* in Montreal, *Nuits d’été* in Bielefeld, Germany and *Alexander Nevsky* for Orchestra London.

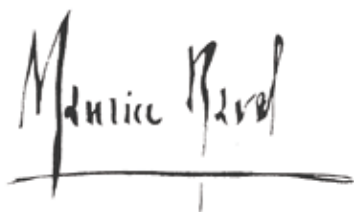
Ms McHardy’s 2008-09 season includes *Messiah* with the Toronto Symphony and, in Toulouse, Phèdre in a staging of *Hippolyte et Aricie*, conducted by Emmanuelle Haïm. Minnesota Opera hears her in May as Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and she returns to Vancouver Opera for a reprise of Olga in *Eugene Onegin*.

Some highlights of earlier seasons include Solange in *The Maids* and The Drummer Girl in *The Emperor of Atlantis* for Cincinnati Opera, a solo concert for San Francisco’s Schwabacher Recital Series and Hermia in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* for Chicago Opera Theatre,

Philip Carmichael began his voice studies at the University of Toronto, where he studied with Patricia Kern and Mary Morrison. His roles there included Ford in Nicolai’s *Die lustige Weiber von Windsor* and the Count in *Le nozze di Figaro*. In 2006, he moved to Mannheim, Germany, to study with world-renowned teacher Rudolf Piernay. Philip has appeared with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Bach Akademie Stuttgart, the Stuttgart Philharmonic, at the Oregon Bach Festival and in Madrid with Spanish Television and Radio Orchestra (RTVE), singing the role of Jesus in the St Matthew Passion with Helmut Rilling. He has worked extensively with the Aldeburgh Festival in England, singing for Masaaki Susuki in Bach’s *Mass in B minor*, for Harry Bicket in Haydn’s *Jahreszeiten* and in a recital of Britten’s *Songs and Proverbs of William Blake* at the Jubilee Hall. He also recently performed a Young Artist Recital at the Aix-en-Provence Festival. He has won prizes at the 2006 Canadian Music Competition and the 2008 *La voce* competition in Bayreuth. This fall, he moves to Augsburg to study with Edith Wiens.

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maurice Ravel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature is a single horizontal line that spans the width of the text, with a small vertical tick mark at the bottom center.

Drawings by Luc-Albert Moreau:
front cover: Ravel's garden at Montfort-l'Amaury, near Paris
page 11: Ravel's piano and a portrait of his mother