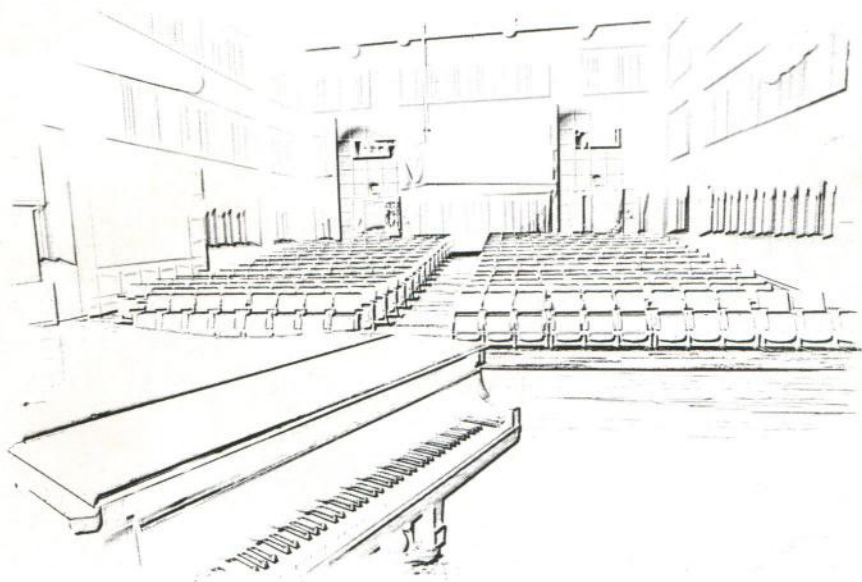


Glenn Gould

Glenn Gould Studio



February 7 - 11, 2000

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Monday, February 7, 2000
8:00 p.m.

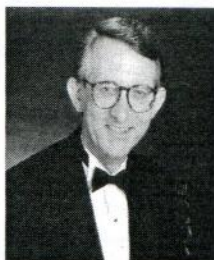
The Aldeburgh Connection presents

Monica Whicher, soprano

Susan Platts, mezzo-soprano

with

Stephen Ralls and Bruce Ubukata, piano



We would like to thank
James and Connie MacDougall
for their generous sponsorship of tonight's recital.

Ernest Chausson
(1855-1899)

Two duets Op. 11
La nuit (Théodore de Banville)
Réveil (Honoré de Balzac)

Gabriel Fauré
(1845-1924)

Five songs
Arpège (Albert Samain) (Op. 76/2)
Soir (Albert Samain) (Op. 83/2)
Les berceaux (Sully-Prudhomme)
(Op. 23/1)
Spleen (Paul Verlaine) (Op. 51/3)
Mandoline (Verlaine) (Op. 58/1)

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Five songs
Wie Melodien zieht es mir
(Klaus Groth) (Op. 105/1)
Dämmerung senkte sich von oben
(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe)
(Op. 59/1)
Auf dem See (Karl Simrock) (Op. 59/2)
Regenlied (Klaus Groth) (Op. 59/3)
Ständchen (Franz Kugler) (Op. 106/1)

Johannes Brahms

Four duets Op. 61
Die Schwestern (Eduard Mörike)
Klosterfräulein (Justinus Kerner)
Phänomen (Goethe)
Die Boten der Liebe
(Josef Wenzig, from the Czech)

Intermission

Benjamin Britten
(1913-1976)

On This Island (W.H. Auden)
Let the florid music praise
Now the leaves are falling fast
Seascape
Nocturne
As it is, plenty

Benjamin Britten

A Charm of Lullabies
A Cradle Song (William Blake)
The Highland Balou (Robert Burns)
Sephestia's Lullaby (Robert Greene)
A Charm (Thomas Randolph)
The Nurse's Song (John Philip)

Benjamin Britten

Two duets
Mother Comfort (Montagu Slater)
Underneath the abject willow (W.H. Auden)

The Performers

Monica Whicher, soprano

Monica Whicher is welcomed on all the major concert stages across Canada in a wide range of repertoire, and has premièred many new Canadian works, including songs cycles by John Beckwith and John Greer commissioned by The Aldeburgh Connection. She has appeared as soloist with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the National Arts Centre Orchestra, the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony and the National Ballet of Canada. She has sung at the Winnipeg New Music Festival, the Guelph Spring Festival, Festival Lanaudière in Quebec, the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival, and Music in Blair Athol, Scotland, and as a recital partner with guitarist Rachel Gauk, harpist Judy Loman, and the Penderecki Quartet. This season's engagements include Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Berlioz's *Les Nuits d'été* in Thunder Bay, Rossini's *Stabat Mater* with Chorus Niagara, Willan's *Requiem* in Kitchener-Waterloo, *Pygmalion* with Opera Atelier, and other concerts in Toronto, Ottawa and for the CBC. She has recorded with the Bach Consort, and is featured in several recordings on the Marquis Label, including works by Schubert and Christos Hatzis.

Susan Platts, mezzo-soprano

Susan Platts is much sought after for her compelling performances in major mezzo-soprano works in the concert repertoire. Notable among her appearances have been Dvorak's *Stabat Mater* and Victor Davies's *Revelation* with the National Arts Centre Orchestra, Mahler's *Rückert Lieder* and Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* with the Victoria Symphony Orchestra, Mozart's *Mass in C minor* and Brahms's *Alto Rhapsody* with both the Toronto Mendelssohn and the Kitchener-Waterloo Philharmonic

Choirs. She has performed two years in succession at the Oregon Bach Festival, appearing in the Bach *B minor Mass*, Mahler's *Symphony No. 2* and Mendelssohn's *Die erste Walpurgisnacht*. She recently made her debut with the Houston Symphony alongside Peter Schreier. Upcoming engagements include the *B minor Mass* at the Casals Festival in Puerto Rico, and with the Los Angeles Chamber Music Orchestra, Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* in Winnipeg, and her Toronto Symphony debut in Holman's *Invisible Reality*. Ms. Platts lives in Victoria, British Columbia, and is becoming known to audiences across Canada through her regular appearances on CBC Radio.

Stephen Ralls, piano

Pianist Stephen Ralls began his musical career in England, performing in recitals and in broadcasts for the BBC. He was chief répétiteur with the English Opera Group for Britten's last opera, *Death in Venice*, made recital appearances with Sir Peters Pears at the Aldeburgh Festival and on the BBC, and taught for many summers at the Britten-Pears School in Aldeburgh. He is Musical Director of the Opera Division at the University of Toronto, and has accompanied Canada's finest singers in concerts, festivals and broadcasts. He has also worked for the Canadian Opera Company, the Banff Centre and the National Arts Centre.

Bruce Ubukata, piano

Bruce Ubukata has established a reputation as one of Canada's leading accompanists, appearing with many singers in recital and with Mary Lou Fallis in her successful one-woman shows, *Primadonna*, *Mrs. Bach* and *Fräulein Mozart*, as well as with the Canadian Children's Opera Chorus and in guest appearances with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Mendelssohn Choir and the Elmer Iseler Singers. In addition, he has a long-time association as a teacher with the Britten-Pears

School in Aldeburgh. Mr. Ubukata is also an accomplished organist and harpsichordist.

About The Aldeburgh Connection

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 have a number of the singers appearing with The Aldeburgh Connection.

We are presenting two more concerts in this Recital Series at Glenn Gould Studio: Friday, February 25 at 8:00 p.m., the fine Western-Canadian baritone Nathan Berg appears in a recital of works by Brahms, Schoeck and Vaughan Williams (Tickets

\$23/\$17). Our *2nd Annual Greta Kraus Schubertiad* takes place on Wednesday, May 24, at 7:30 p.m. We continue the tradition, begun last season, of this musical party with intermission refreshments. Join Catherine Robbin, mezzo-soprano, and friends, including Mark Fewer, violin, and Peter Longworth, piano, for this sparkling musical evening (tickets \$33/\$27). Please call the Glenn Gould Box Office at (416) 205-5555.

There are also two concerts remaining in our Walter Hall Sunday Series: *Madame Bizet* on March 12, with Nathalie Paulin, Brett Polegato, Diana Leblanc and Diego Matamoros, and *Toronto: a musical century* on April 30, with Monica Whicher, Norine Burgess and Michael Colvin. Concerts take place at 2:30 p.m., and tickets are \$24/\$18 seniors and students. Telephone (416) 686-5795.

We would also like to thank:

The Ontario Arts Council
The City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts
Council
The Julie-Jiggs Foundation
The Charles H. Ivey Foundation
Many individual donors and supporters

Britten and the voice

December 4, 2001, will mark a quarter-century since the death of Benjamin Britten; November 22, 2003, would have been his ninetieth birthday. To mark these two anniversaries and to celebrate The Aldeburgh Connection's approaching twentieth season (2000/2001), we are commencing a survey of the songwriting of our signature composer. Almost all his songs were written for the tenor, Peter Pears, our founding Patron. Tonight, however, since we welcome a distinguished soprano and mezzo-soprano to our Recital Series, we have seized the opportunity of inaugurating our survey with two of his greatest cycles which were written for female voice and piano; we also include two early and little-known duets for the same voices. Over the next few seasons, we shall set out to perform all of Britten's major vocal chamber works.



Please reserve applause for the end of each group of songs ♦

Two duets (Op. 11)

Ernest Chausson (1855-99)

These settings date from fairly early in Chausson's creative output (1883). In the fall of 1879, he had enrolled at the Paris Conservatoire as a pupil of Massenet and Franck. On the evidence of these duets, he was chiefly under the influence of the former; but adventurous key-changes and a subtle pattern of arabesques in the piano indicate a growing admiration of Franck and, through him, of Wagner. (Chausson had attended *Tristan* in Munich in 1879.) Dawn, in the second duet, is accompanied by a radiant pattern of bell sounds and the general serene quality of these pieces makes them, in the words of Jean Gallois, "a veritable oasis in the *oeuvre* of a musician who has scarcely led us to expect much in the way of good humour from him."

La nuit (*Théodore de Banville*)

Nous bénissons la douce Nuit,
Dont le frais baiser nous délivre.
Sous ses voiles on se sent vivre
Sans inquiétude et sans bruit.

Le souci dévorant s'enfuit,
Le parfum de l'air nous enivre;
Nous bénissons la douce Nuit,
Dont le frais baiser nous délivre.

Pâle songeur qu'un Dieu poursuit,
Repose-toi, ferme ton livre.
Dans les cieux blancs comme du givre
Un flot d'astres frissonne et luit,
Nous bénissons la douce Nuit.

Réveil (*Honoré de Balzac*)

Mon coeur, lève-toi! Déjà l'alouette
Secoue en chantant son
aile au soleil.
Ne dors plus, mon coeur, car la
violette
Élève à Dieu l'encens de
son réveil.

Chaque fleur vivante et bien reposée
Ouvrant tour à tour les yeux pour
se voir
A dans son calice un peu de rosée,
Perle d'un jour, qui lui sert de
miroir.

On sent dans l'air pur que l'ange
des roses
A passé la nuit à bénir
les fleurs.
On voit que pour lui toutes sont
écloses,
Il vient d'en haut raviver
leurs couleurs.

Ainsi, lève-toi. Puisque l'alouette
Secoue en chantant son aile
au soleil
Rien ne dort plus,
mon coeur, car la violette
Élève à Dieu l'encens de
son réveil.

Night

We bless the soft night,
whose cool kiss sets us free.
Beneath its veils we feel we live
without noise or anxiety.

Devouring care slips away,
the fragrant air enraptures us;
we bless the sweet night
whose cool kiss sets us free.

Pale dreamer whom a god pursues,
rest, and close your book.
In the heavens as white as rime
a stream of stars quivers and shines,
We bless the sweet night.

Awakening

My heart, arise! Already the skylark
shakes, singing, his
wing in the sunlight.
Sleep no more, my heart, for the
violet
raises up to God the incense of
its awakening.

Each flower lively and well-rested
opening each in turn its eyes to
see itself
has in its chalice a drop of dew
pearl of a day, which serves it for
a mirror.

There is a feeling in the pure air
that the angel of the roses
has spent the night blessing
the flowers.
It seems that all are blossoming
for him,
he comes down from on high to
revive their colours.

Therefore, arise! Since the skylark
shakes, singing, his wing
in the sunlight,
nothing sleeps any longer,
my heart, for the violet
raises up to God the incense
of its awakening.

Fauré was one of the composers whose music Pears and Britten loved to perform in their recitals — a recording of a wonderful live performance of *La Bonne chanson* has just been released on a CD from the BBC. Brahms, on the other hand, did not appeal. The story goes that Britten would take the scores of the symphonies off the shelf once a year and read them through — just to remind himself how bad they were! We (the Artistic Directors) remember, however, an occasion when Pears unexpectedly encountered a performance of *Wie Melodien* in a master-class at Aldeburgh and spontaneously admitted what a beautiful song it was. The groups we have chosen by these two composers are linked by similar subject matter in the poems — often a merely superficial connection, indeed; but it is interesting to compare Fauré's voluptuous evening with Brahms's threatening twilight, Brahms's life-giving showers with Fauré's dreary rain and Fauré's courtly serenaders with Brahms's boisterous students.

Five songs

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Arpège (Albert Samain) (Op. 76/2)

Arpeggio

L'âme d'une flûte soupire
Au fond du parc mélodieux;
Limpide est l'ombre
où l'on respire
Ton poème silencieux,

The soul of a flute is sighing
from the depths of a melodious park;
limpid in the shadow
where one breathes
your silent poem,

Nuit de langueur, nuit de mensonge,
Qui poses, d'un geste ondoyant,
Dans ta chevelure de songe
La lune, bijou d'Orient.

Night of languor, night of delusion,
placing, with a flowing motion,
into your tresses of dreams
the moon, jewel of the Orient.

Sylva, Sylvie et Sylvanire,
Belles au regard bleu changeant,
L'étoile aux fontaines se mire,
Allez par les sentiers d'argent!

Sylva, Sylvie, Sylvanire,
beauties with the fickle blue eyes,
the star is reflected in the fountains,
walk along the silver paths!

Allez vite — l'heure est si brève!
Cueillir au jardin des aveux
Les cœurs qui se meurent
du rêve
De mourir parmi vos cheveux!

Walk quickly, time is so short,
to gather in the garden of vows
the hearts which are dying
of the dream
of dying amid your tresses!

Soir (*Samain*) (Op. 83/2)

Voici que les jardins de la nuit
vont fleurir
Les lignes, les couleurs, les sons
deviennent vagues;
Vois! le dernier rayon agonise
à tes bagues,
Ma soeur, entends-tu pas
quelque chose mourir?

Mets sur mon front tes mains
fraîches comme une eau pure,
Mets sur mes yeux tes mains
douces comme des fleurs,
Et que mon âme où vit le goût
secret des pleurs,
Soit comme un lys fidèle et pâle
à ta ceinture!

C'est la pitié qui pose ainsi son
doigt sur nous,
Et tout ce que la terre a de
soupleurs qui montent,
Il semble qu'à mon coeur enivré,
le racontent
Tes yeux levés au ciel,
si tristes et si doux!

Les berceaux (*Sully-Prudhomme*)(Op. 23/1)

Le long du Quai les grands vaisseaux,
Que la houle incline en silence,
Ne prennent pas garde aux berceaux,
Que la main des femmes balance.

Mais viendra le jour des adieux,
Car il faut que les femmes pleurent,
Et que les hommes curieux
Tentent les horizons qui leurrent!

Et ce jour-là les grands vaisseaux,
Fuyant le port qui diminue,
Sentent leur masse retenue
Par l'âme des lointains berceaux.

Evening

Now the gardens of the night begin
to flower,
lines, colours, sounds
become indistinct;
See! on your rings the last rays are
fading,
my sister, do you not hear
something dying?

Place upon my brow your hands
fresh as pure water,
place upon my eyes your hands
sweet as flowers,
and let my soul wherein dwells
the secret of tears,
be like a faithful, pale lily
at your waist!

It is compassion which thus
places its finger upon us,
and all the sighs that rise from
the earth,
it seems to my impassioned heart,
are expressed
by your eyes raised to heaven, so
sadly and so sweetly.

The cradles

Along the quay the great ships,
rocked silently by the swell,
take no notice of the cradles
rocked by the hands of women.

But the day of parting will come,
for women must weep
and men of adventurous spirit
must attempt the luring horizons!

And on that day the great ships,
leaving the receding harbour,
feel their bulk held back
by the spirit of those distant cradles.

Spleen (*Paul Verlaine*) (Op. 51/3)

Il pleure dans mon coeur
Comme il pleut sur la ville.
Quelle est cette langueur
Qui pénètre mon coeur?

O bruit doux de la pluie,
Par terre et sur les toits!
Pour un coeur qui s'ennuie,
O le chant de la pluie!

Il pleure sans raison
Dans mon coeur qui s'écoeure.
Quoi! nulle trahison?
Mon deuil est sans raison.

C'est bien la pire peine,
De ne savoir pourquoi,
Sans amour et sans haine,
Mon coeur a tant de peine!

Tears fall in my heart
like rain upon the town.
What is this languor
that pervades my heart?

O gentle sound of the rain
on the ground and on the roofs!
For a listless heart,
O the sound of the rain!

Tears fall without reason
in this sickened heart.
What! no treachery?
My sorrow has no cause.

Indeed it is the worst pain
not to know why,
without love and without hate, my
heart feels so much pain!

Mandoline (*Verlaine*) (Op. 58/1)

Les donneurs de sérénades
Et les belles écouteuses
Echangent des propos fades
Sous les ramures chanteuses.

C'est Tircis et c'est Aminte,
Et c'est l'éternel Clitandre,
Et c'est Damis qui pour mainte
Cruelle fait maint vers tendre.

Leurs courtes vestes de soie,
Leurs longues robes à queues,
Leur élégance, leur joie
Et leurs molles ombres bleues,

Tourbillonnent dans l'extase
D'une lune rose et grise,
Et la mandoline jase
Parmi les frissons de brise.

The givers of serenades
and the lovely women who listen
exchange insipid words
under the singing branches.

There is Thyrsis and Amyntas
and there's the eternal Clytander,
and there's Damis who, for many a
heartless woman, wrote many a
tender verse.

Their short silk coats,
their long dresses with trains,
their elegance, their joy
and their soft blue shadows,

Whirl around in the ecstasy
of a pink and grey moon,
and the mandolin prattles
among the shivers from the breeze.



Five songs

Johannes Brahms (1833-97)

Wie Melodien zieht es mir (*Klaus Groth*) Op. 105/1

Wie Melodien zieht es
 Mir leise durch den Sinn,
 Wie Frühlingsblumen blüht es,
 Und schwebt wie Duft dahin.

It pulls at me, like a melody,
 quietly through my mind;
 it blossoms like spring flowers
 and wafts away like fragrance.

Doch kommt das Wort und faßt es
 Und führt es vor das Aug',
 Wie Nebelgrau erblaßt es
 Und schwindet wie ein Hauch.

But when it is captured in words,
 and placed before my eyes,
 it turns pale like a gray mist
 and disappears like a breath.

Und dennoch ruht im Reime
 Verborgен wohl ein Duft,
 Den mild aus stillem Keime
 Ein feuchtes Auge ruft.

And yet, remaining in my rhymes
 there hides still a fragrance,
 which mildly from the quiet bud
 my moist eyes call forth.

Dämmerung senkte sich von oben (*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*) (Op. 59/1)

Dämmerung senkte sich von oben,
 Schon ist alle Nähe fern,
 Doch zuerst emporgehoben
 Holden Lichts der Abendstern.

Twilight sank from high above;
 all that was near already is far,
 yet first is raised high
 the fair light of the evening star.

Alles schwankt ins Ungewisse,
 Nebel schleichen in die Höh',
 Schwarzvertiefte Finsternisse
 Widerspiegelnd ruht der See.

Everything shakes with uncertainty,
 a mist creeps slowly upward;
 darkness steeped in black
 is reflected calmly in the lake.

Nun am östlichen Bereiche
 Ahn' ich Mondenglanz und
 Glut,

Now in eastern areas
 I feel the moon's brightness and
 glow,

Schlanker Weiden Haargezweige
 Scherzen auf der nächsten Flut.

hair-like branches of slender willows
 play on the nearest tide.

Durch bewegter Schatten Spiele
 Zittert Lunas Zauberschein,
 Und durchs Auge schleicht
 die Kühle
 Sänftigend ins Herz hinein.

Through the play of moving shadows
 trembles Luna's magical shine,
 and through my eyes creeps
 the cool air,
 gently in toward my heart.

Auf dem See (*Karl Simrock*) (Op. 59/2)

Blauer Himmel, blaue Wogen,
 Rebenhügel um den See,
 Drüber blauer Berge
 Bogen
 Schimmernd weiß im reinen Schnee.

Wie der Kahn uns hebt und wieget,
 Leichter Nebel steigt und fällt,
 Süßer Himmelsfriede liegt
 Über der beglänzten Welt.

Stürmend Herz, tu auf die Augen,
 Sieh umher und werde mild:
 Glück und Friede magst du saugen
 Aus des Doppelhimmels
 Bild.

Spiegelnd sieh die Flut erwidern
 Turm und Hügel, Busch und Stadt,
 Also spiegle du in Liedern,
 Was die Erde Schönstes hat.

On the lake

Blue sky, blue waves;
 hills of vines around the lake;
 over there, the blue mountain's
 arches
 shimmer white in the pure snow.

As the boat lifts and rocks us,
 a light mist rises and falls;
 the sweet peace of Heaven lies
 over the radiant world.

Stormy heart, open your eyes,
 look around and become mild:
 draw happiness and peace
 from the doubled image
 of Heaven.

Look how the reflecting water answers
 every tower and hill, bush and town;
 thus you reflect in song,
 that which the earth holds
 most beautiful.

Regenlied (Groth) (Op. 59/3)

Walle, Regen, walle nieder,
 Wecke mir die Träume wieder,
 Die ich in der Kindheit träumte,
 Wenn das Naß im Sande
 schäumte!

Wenn die matte Sommerschwüle
 Lässig stritt mit frischer
 Kühle,
 Und die blanken Blätter tauten,
 Und die Saaten dunkler blauten.

Welche Wonne, in dem Fließen
 Dann zu stehn mit nackten Füßen,
 An dem Grase hin zu streifen
 Und den Schaum mit Händen
 greifen.

Oder mit den heißen Wangen
 Kalte Tropfen aufzufangen,
 Und den neuerwachten
 Düften
 Seine Kinderbrust zu lüften!

Wie die Kelche, die da
 troffen,
 Stand die Seele atmend offen,
 Wie die Blumen, düftertrunken,
 In dem Himmelstau versunken.

Schauernd kühlte jeder Tropfen
 Tief bis an des Herzens
 Klopfen,
 Und der Schöpfung heilig Weben
 Drang bis ins verborgne Leben.

Walle, Regen, walle nieder,
 Wecke meine alten Lieder,
 Die wir in der Türe sangen,
 Wenn die Tropfen draußen
 klangen!

Möchte ihnen wieder lauschen,
 Ihrem süßen, feuchten Rauschen,
 Meine Seele sanft betauen
 Mit dem frommen Kindergrauen.

Rain Song

Pour, rain, pour down,
 awaken again in me those dreams
 that I dreamt in childhood,
 when the wetness foamed
 in the sand!

When the dull summer sultriness
 struggled casually against the fresh
 coolness,
 and the pale leaves dripped with dew,
 and the crops were dyed a deeper blue.

What bliss to stand in the downpour
 with naked feet,
 to reach into the grass
 and touch the foam with one's
 hands!

Or upon hot cheeks,
 to catch the cold drops;
 and with the newly awakened
 fragrances
 to air one's childish breast!

Like the flowers' chalices, which
 trickle there,
 the soul breathes openly,
 like the flowers, drunk with fragrance,
 drowning in the dew of the Heavens.

Every trembling drop cooled
 deep down to the heart's very
 beating,
 and creation's holy web
 pierced into my hidden life.

Pour, rain, pour down,
 awaken the old songs,
 that we used to sing in the doorway
 when the raindrops pattered
 outside!

I would like to listen to it again,
 that sweet, moist rushing,
 my soul gently bedewed
 with holy, childlike awe.

Ständchen (*Franz Kugler*) (Op. 106/1) Serenade

Der Mond steht über dem Berge,
 So recht für verliebte Leut';
 Im Garten rieselt ein Brunnen,
 Sonst Stille weit und breit.

Neben der Mauer im Schatten,
 Da stehn der Studenten drei,
 Mit Flöt' und Geig' und Zither,
 Und singen und spielen dabei.

Die Klänge schleichen der
 Schönsten
 Sacht in den Traum hinein,
 Sie schaut den blonden Geliebten
 Und lispelt: »Vergiß nicht mein!«

The moon hangs over the mountain,
 so fitting for love-struck people.
 In the garden trickles a fountain;
 otherwise, it is calm far and wide.

Near the wall, in shadows,
 there stand the students three:
 with flute and fiddle and zither,
 they sing and play there.

The sounds waft up to the loveliest
 of women,
 gently entering her dreams.
 She sees her blond beloved
 and whispers: "Forget me not!"



Four duets

Brahms

When a composer writes duets, one should always ask, "Why has he decided to use two voices for this text?" Brahms's sisters are an obvious duetting pair. His young nun is, one imagines, soliloquising alone; but the poem makes reference to pairs of lambs and of birds. The opening lines of *Phänomen* speak of Phoebus (the sun) "wedding" himself to the rain — a concept depicted appropriately by two voices; indeed, the very image of the rainbow and its translucence is well conjured by the voices in thirds and sixths, particularly when doubled at the octave by the piano. With *Die Boten der Liebe*, however, a setting of an extrovert but personal love poem, all we can hold on to as justification for duetting is the multiplicity of love's messengers: birds, breezes, even ears of corn. This duet is in a common tradition with many other examples — both by Brahms (*Weg der Liebe*, Op. 20/1) and by other composers, such as Mendelssohn (*Ich wollt' meine Lieb'*, Op. 63/1).

Die Schwestern (Eduard Mörike) (Op. 61/1)

The sisters

Wir Schwestern zwei, wir schönen,
So gleich von Angesicht,
So gleich kein Ei dem andern,
Kein Stern dem andern nicht.

We two sisters, we beauties
our faces so similar,
identical as two eggs,
identical as two stars.

Wir Schwestern zwei, wir schönen,
Wir haben nußbraun Haar;
Und flichtst du sie in einen Zopf,
Man kennt sie nicht fürwahr.

We two sisters, we beauties,
we have nut brown tresses,
if you plait them together,
you can't tell them apart.

Wir Schwestern zwei, wir schönen,
Wir tragen gleich Gewand,
Spazieren auf dem Wiesenplan
Und singen Hand in Hand.

We two sisters, we beauties
we dress the same,
walking in the meadow,
and singing hand in hand.

Wir Schwestern zwei, wir schönen,
Wir spinnen in die Wett,
Wir sitzen an einer Kunkel,
Und schlafen in einem Bett.

We two sisters, we beauties,
we race each other at spinning,
we sit together in an alcove,
and sleep in the same bed.

O Schwestern zwei, ihr schönen,
Wie hat sich das Blättchen gewandt!
Ihr liebet einerlei Liebchen;
Jetzt hat das Liedel ein End!

O sisters two, you beauties,
how the tables have turned!
You love the same sweetheart;
and now the song is over!

Klosterfräulein (*Justinus Kerner*) (Op. 61/2)

Ach, ach, ich armes Klosterfräulein!
 O Mutter was hast du gemacht!
 Lenz ging am Gitter vorüber
 Und hat mir kein Blümlein
 gebracht!

Ach, ach, wie weit, wie weit hier unten
 Zwei Schäflein gehen im Tal.
 Viel Glück ihr Schäflein, ihr sahet
 Den Frühling zum ersten
 Mal.

Ach, ach, wie weit, wie weit
 hier oben,
 Zwei Vöglein fliegen in Ruh!
 Viel Glück ihr Vöglein, ihr flieget
 Der besseren Heimat zu.

Phänomen (*Goethe*) (Op. 61/3)

Wenn zu der Regenwand
 Phöbus sich gattet,
 Gleich steht ein Bogenrand
 Farb'ig beschattet.

Im Nebel gleichen Kreis
 Seh ich gezogen;
 Zwar ist der Bogen weiß,
 Doch Himmelsbogen.

So sollst du, munt'rer Greis,
 Dich nicht betrüben:
 Sind gleich die Haare weiß,
 Doch wirst du lieben.

The young nun
 Ah, what a poor nun am I!
 O mother what have you done!
 Spring passed by the bars-
 and brought me no
 flowers!

Ah, how far, how far below
 two lambs walk in the valley.
 Good luck you lambs,
 you've seen spring for the
 first time.

Ah, how far, how far
 above
 two birds fly in peace!
 Good luck little birds,
 you're flying to a better home.

Phenomenon

When Phoebus is joined
 with the wall of rain,
 instantly a bow appears
 colourfully shaded.

In the clouds I see
 an identical circle drawn,
 though the bow is white:
 yes, heaven's bow.

Do not worry,
 cheerful old man;
 though your hair is white,
 you will still love.

Die Boten der Liebe (Josef Wenzig) (Op. 61/4)

Wie viel schon der Boten
Flogen die Pfade
Vom Walde her unter,
Boten der Treu,
Trugen mir Briefchen
Dort aus der Ferne,
Trugen mir Briefchen
Vom Liebsten herbei!

Wie viel schon der Lüfte
Wehten vom Morgen
Wehten bis abends
So schnell ohne Ruh,
Trugen mir Küßchen
Vom kühlen Wasser,
Trugen mir Küßchen
Vom Liebsten herzu!

Wie wiegten die Halme
Auf grünen Bergen,
Wie wiegten die Ähren
Auf Feldern sich leis,
Mein goldenes Liebchen,
Lispelten alle,
Mein goldenes Liebchen,
Ich lieb dich so heiß.

The messengers of love
How many messengers
have already flown
down the path,
from the forest,
messengers of fidelity
that bring me
little letters from afar,
from my sweetheart!

How many breezes
have already blown
from morn till evening
so quickly without rest,
carrying little kisses
from the cool water,
carrying little kisses
from my sweetheart!

How the grass waved
on the green mountain,
how the ears of corn
waved gently in the fields,
my golden sweetheart,
they all whispered,
my golden sweetheart,
I love you so passionately.

Intermission



On This Island (W.H. Auden) (Op. 11)

Benjamin Britten (1913-76)

W.H. Auden was one of Britten's closest friends in the 1930s and had a tremendous influence on him, both artistically and emotionally. This, the first of the composer's song-cycles, was issued (according to Pears) as a challenge to the prevailing, pastoral school of English song and as a call to a change of direction — the first song, *Let the florid music praise*, in particular, whose highly baroque style with its melismatic vocal line had not been heard since the days of Handel. From Britten's diary, 25 September, 1937: "Up by mistake rather late, so I don't do all the work I want to. However — I have time to do about 6 versions of the beginning of 'Florid Music' one of W.H.A.'s songs, and all of them N.B.G. — I have never had such a devil as this song."

The cycle was written for Sophie Wyss, a Swiss soprano living in England, who gave the first performance with the composer at the BBC in November 1937. It seems very likely, although we cannot be certain, that Pears and Britten gave a performance for the CBC in Toronto in June 1939. When the collection was published, it was described as 'Volume I'; but a further volume of Auden settings never materialised. This set of fine songs is disparate in mood and even in musical style, yet gives a coherent view of Britten's preoccupations in the 1930s.

Let the florid music praise

Let the florid music praise,
The flute and the trumpet,
Beauty's conquest of your face:
In that land of flesh and bone,
Where from citadels on high
Her imperial standards fly,
Let the hot sun
Shine on, shine on.

O but the unloved have had power,
The weeping and striking,
Always; time will bring their hour:
Their secretive children walk
Through your vigilance of breath
To unpardonable death,
And my vows break
Before his look.

Now the leaves are falling fast

Now the leaves are falling fast,
Nurse's flowers will not last;
Nurses to the graves are gone,
And the prams go rolling on.
Whispering neighbours, left and right,
Pluck us from the real delight;
And the active hands must freeze
Lonely on the separate knees.
Dead in hundreds at the back
Follow wooden in our track,
Arms raised stiffly to reprove
In false attitudes of love.

Starving through the leafless wood
Trolls run scolding for their food;
And the nightingale is dumb,
And the angel will not come.
Cold, impossible, ahead
Lifts the mountain's lovely head
Whose white waterfall could bless
Travellers in their last distress.

Seascape

Look, stranger, at this island now
 The leaping light for your delight discovers,
 Stand stable here
 And silent be,
 That through the channels of the ear
 May wander like a river
 The swaying sound of the sea.

Here at the small field's ending pause
 Where the chalk wall falls to the foam, and its tall ledges
 Oppose the pluck
 And knock of the tide,
 And the shingle scrambles after the suck-
 ing surf, and the gull lodges
 A moment on its sheer side.

Far off like floating seeds the ships
 Diverge on urgent voluntary errands;
 And the full view
 Indeed may enter
 And move in memory as now these clouds do,
 That pass the harbour mirror
 And all the summer through the water saunter.

Nocturne

Now through night's caressing grip
 Earth and all her oceans slip,
 Capes of China slide away
 From her fingers into day
 And the Americas incline
 Coasts towards her shadow line.
 Now the ragged vagrants creep
 Into crooked holes to sleep;
 Just and unjust, worst and best,
 Change their places as they rest:
 Awkward lovers lie in fields
 Where disdainful beauty yields:

While the splendid and the proud
 Naked stand before the crowd
 And the losing gambler gains
 And the beggar entertains:
 May sleep's healing power extend
 Through these hours to our friend.
 Unpursued by hostile force
 Traction engine, bull or horse
 Or revolting succubus;
 Calmly till the morning break
 Let him lie, then gently wake.

As it is, plenty

As it is, plenty;
 As it's admitted
 The children happy
 And the car, the car
 That goes so far
 And the wife devoted;
 To this as it is,
 To the work and the banks
 Let his thinning hair
 And his hauteur
 Give thanks, give thanks.

All that was thought
 As like as not, is not;
 When nothing was enough
 But love, but love
 And the rough future
 Of an intransigent nature
 And the betraying smile,
 Betraying, but a smile,
 That that is not, is not;
 Forget, forget.

Let him not cease to praise
 Then his spacious days;
 Yes, and the success
 Let him bless, let him bless;
 Let him see in this
 The profits larger
 And the sins venal,
 Lest he see as it is
 The loss as major
 And final, final.



A Charm of Lullabies (Op. 41)

Britten

After the end of the politicized '30s and his self-exile in America from 1939 to 1942, Britten took a different turn in his search for song-texts. *A Charm of Lullabies* is typical of the new trend in its use of poems from a number of different pre-twentieth century sources. It was written for the distinguished mezzo-soprano, Nancy Evans, who gave the first performance in Holland in January 1948. She had been one of the first Lucretias in 1946 and the role of Nancy in *Albert Herring* (1947) was created for her. She lives in retirement near Aldeburgh, and we have been fortunate to receive from her valuable indications of the composer's musical intentions.

Cradle Song (*William Blake*)

Sleep! sleep! beauty bright,
Dreaming o'er the joys of night,
Sleep! sleep! in thy sleep
Little sorrows sit and weep.

Sweet Babe, in thy face
Soft desires I can trace,
Secret joys and secret smiles,
Little pretty infant wiles.

O! the cunning wiles that creep
In thy little heart asleep.
When thy little heart does wake
Then the dreadful lightnings break,
From thy cheek and from thy eye,
O'er the youthful harvests nigh.
Infant wiles and infant smiles
Heaven and Earth of peace

The Highland Balou (*Robert Burns*)

Hee balou¹, my sweet wee Donald,
Picture o' the great Clanronald!
Brawlie kens our wanton Chief
Wha gat my young Highland thief.

Leeze me on² thy bonie craigie³!
An thou live, thou'll steal a naigie⁴,
Travel the country thro' and thro',
And bring hame a Carlisle cow!

Thro' the Lawlands, o'er the Border,
Weel, my babie, may thou furdur⁵!
Herry the louns⁶ o' the laigh⁷ Countrie,
Syne⁷ to the Highlands hame to me!

1. lullaby 2. blessings on
3. pretty throat 4. nag
5. succeed 6. harry the rogues
7. low 8. then

Sephestia's Lullaby (*Robert Greene, from Menaphon*)

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee;
 When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.

Mother's wag, pretty boy,
 Father's sorrow, father's joy;
 When thy father first did see
 Such a boy by him and me,
 He was glad, I was woe;
 Fortune changed made him so,
 When he left his pretty boy,
 Last his sorrow, first his joy.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee;
 When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.

The wanton smiled, father wept,
 Mother cried, baby leapt;
 More he crowed, more we cried,
 Nature could not sorrow hide:
 He must go, he must kiss
 Child and mother, baby bliss,
 For he left his pretty boy,
 Father's sorrow, father's joy.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee;
 When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.

A Charm (*Thomas Randolph, from The Jealous Lovers*)

Quiet, sleep! or I will make
 Erinnys whip thee with a snake,
 And cruel Rhadamanthus take
 Thy body to the boiling lake,
 Where fire and brimstone never slake;
 Thy heart shall burn, thy head shall ache,
 And every joint about thee quake;
 And therefore dare not yet to wake!

Quiet, sleep! or thou shalt see
 The horrid hags of Tartary,
 Whose tresses ugly serpents be,
 And Cerberus shall bark at thee,
 And all the Furies that are three —
 The worst is call'd Tisiphone, —
 Shall lash thee to eternity;
 And therefore sleep thou peacefully.

The Nurse's Song (*John Phillip, from The Play of Patient Grissell*)

Lullaby baby, lullaby baby,

Thy nurse will tend thee as duly as may be.

Be still, my sweet sweetening, no longer do cry;

Sing lullaby baby, lullaby baby.

Let dolours be fleeting, I fancy thee, I,

To rock and to lull thee I will not delay me.

Lullaby baby, lullaby baby,

Thy nurse will tend thee as duly as may be.

The gods be thy shield and comfort in need!

Sing lullaby, lullaby, lullaby baby.

They give thee good fortune and well for to speed,

And this to desire I will not delay me.

Lullaby baby, lullaby baby,

Thy nurse will tend thee as duly as may be.



Two Ballads

Britten

Britten's title implies a great deal, evoking an image of evenings at home around the piano — indeed, he referred to his setting of Auden's text as "very light & Victorian in mood." However, there must be a strong autobiographical element in these duets. Auden, according to Donald Mitchell, was writing "for — and about — Britten . . . quite specifically critical of his reluctance or inability to enter into that 'satisfaction' which only physical consummation can bring." If that is so, Britten seems to have accepted the reproach, at least intellectually. *Mother Comfort* (by the librettist of *Peter Grimes*) is a schizophrenic dialogue between two halves of a personality eaten up by indecision; the quandary is resolved by the positiveness of *Underneath the abject willow*, in which the two voices are of one mind. The Ballads were composed for Sophie Wyss and her sister, Colette, in 1936. Colette Wyss, being scared of singing in English, the mezzo part in the first performance (Wigmore Hall, 15 December) was taken by Betty Bannerman.

Mother Comfort (*Montagu Slater*)

Dear, shall we talk or will that cloud the sky?
 Will you be Mother Comfort or shall I?
 If I should love him where would our lives be?
 And if you turn him out at last then friendship pity me!

My longing, like my heart, beats to and fro,
 Oh that a single life could be both Yes and No,
 Ashamed to grant and frightened to refuse —
 Pity has chosen: Power has still to choose.

But darling, when that stretched-out will is tired
 Surely your timid prettiness longs to be overpower'd?
 Sure gossips have this sweet facility
 To tell transparent lies and, without pain, to cry.

Underneath the abject willow (*W.H. Auden*)

Underneath the abject willow,	All that lives may love; why longer
Lover sulk no more;	Bow to loss
Act from thought should quickly follow;	With arms across?
What is thinking for?	Strike and you shall conquer.
Your unique and moping station	Geese in flocks above you flying
Proves you cold;	Their direction know;
Stand up and fold	Brooks beneath the thin ice flowing
Your map of desolation.	To their oceans go;
Bells that toll across the meadows	Coldest love will warm to action,
From the sombre spire,	Walk then come,
Toll for those unloving shadows	No longer numb,
Love does not require.	Into your satisfaction.



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