



May Day Revels



WALTER HALL
Sunday, May 1, 1994
2:30 p.m.

MAY DAY REVELS

KATHLEEN BRETT, soprano LINDA MAGUIRE, mezzo

ERIK OLAND, baritone

STEPHEN RALLS and BRUCE UBUKATA, piano

German folklore provided poets and composers with rich resources for the evocation in song of Spring's awakening, with all its supernatural connotations. Goethe's *Faust* includes a Walpurgisnacht scene, using the legend of the witches' sabbath taking place on the eve of May Day, on the Brocken in the Harz Mountains. Our programme today takes a look at these traditions, before moving on to the English-speaking world with the première of Timothy Sullivan's *A Magic Casement*. Songs in English from the nineteenth century will bring our concert, and our Series, to a light-hearted conclusion.

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Neue Liebe (Heine) Op. 19a/4

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-47)

New love: In the moonlight in the forest I saw the elves riding, I heard their horns resounding, I heard their bells ringing.

Their white horses bore golden antlers, and quickly flew by; like wild swans they came flying through the air.

The queen nodded at me, laughing as she rode by. Was this a sign of my new love? Or should it signify death?

Walpurgisnacht (Alexis) Op. 75/4

Johannes Brahms (1833-97)

At the end of this conversation between mother and daughter, the mother is revealed as a witch (and a soprano in disguise!)

Walpurgisnacht: 'Dear mother, last night was rainy and windy.' 'Today is the first of May, dear child.' 'There was thunder on the Brocken.' 'Dear child, there were witches up there.' 'I don't want to see witches.' 'Dear child, they are quite common.' 'Are there witches in the village?' 'Even closer, dear child.' 'How do they fly up to the mountain?' 'On mist, on smoke, on flaming flax.' 'What do they ride at their revels?' 'They ride broomsticks.' 'How the chimney crackled!' 'Maybe someone flew out in the night.' 'Oh mother, your broom was not there last night.' 'Dear child, it had gone to the Brocken.' 'Your bed was empty last night.' 'Your mother was keeping guard up on the mountain.'

Elversh h (trans. from the Danish by Herder) Op. 3/2

Carl Loewe (1796-1869)

Elves' Hill: I laid down my head on Elves' Hill, my eyes began to close. Two lovely maidens came by and waved prettily. The one stroked my white chin; the other whispered in my ear: "Arise, merry young man, and let there be dancing; my maidens shall sing for you, the fairest songs you will hear."

The one began to sing; the fairest of fair was she. The noisy torrent stopped flowing, and stood still, and listened to the melody. Little fishes sported in the flood, and little birds in the green wood chirruped songs and hopped around.

"Listen, you merry young man, will you not stay with us? We will teach you the Book of Runes, the art of writing spells; we will teach you how to bind the wild bear with word and sign, the dragon that rests upon red gold shall turn and flee before you."

They danced here and there, their hearts yearning for dalliance. The merry young man remained seated there, leaning on his sword. "Listen, you merry young man, if you will not speak with us, with knife and sword we will rip your heart out in revenge."

And then, to my good fortune the cock began to crow; else I would have remained on Elves' Hill with the fair elf maidens. So I advise all young men who make their way to court, not to sit upon Elves' Hill, nor to fall asleep there.

Walpurgisnacht Op. 68/3

Antonin Dvor k (1841-1904)

Dvor k had many central European fairy tales to draw on — think of his opera *Rusalka* and the symphonic poem *The Noon-day Witch*. This piece comes from a set of piano duets entitled *From the Bohemian Forest* (1884); the witches cavort to a very merry Czech dance!

Elfenlied (M rike)

Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)

Elf song: The village watch called out at night: "Eleven!" [in German, *Elfe*]. A little elf asleep in the woods, at eleven, thinks that from the valley the nightingale is calling him by name, or Silpelit is summoning him. The elf rubs his eyes, comes forth from his snail-shell house, and, like a drunken man, not having slept long enough, hobbles down through the hazels to the valley, and slips right up to the wall where the glow-worms sit, light by light.

"What bright windows are those? It must be a wedding going on there, with the little ones sitting at the table and having a fine time in the ballroom — I'll just take a peep!" — Shame, he bangs his head on hard stone! Elf, don't you think you've had enough? Cuckoo!

Die Lorelei (Heine)

Franz Liszt (1811-86)

The Lorelei: I know not what it means that I should feel so sad; a tale from olden times lingers in my mind.

The air is cool, day is fading, and quietly flows the Rhine, the mountain summit sparkles in the evening sunshine.

The most beautiful of maidens sits up there, wonderful, her golden jewelry flashes, she combs her golden hair with golden comb, and sings a song the while that has a wondrous, compelling melody.

The boatman in his little boat is seized with violent woe; he sees not the rocky reefs, he gazes only upward.

The waves, I believe, swallow boat and boatman in the end; and that, by her singing, the Lorelei has done.

Aus alten Märchen (Dichterliebe) (Heine) Op. 48/15

Robert Schumann (1810-56)

From ancient fairy tales a white hand beckons; there is singing and sounds of a magic land, where gay flowers bloom in golden evening light and, sweet-scented, glow with bride-like faces. And green trees sing ancient melodies, stealthy breezes murmur, and birds warble; and misty shapes spring up from the earth and dance airy dances in a strange throng; and blue sparks blaze on every twig and leaf, and red fire races in mad wild circles; and loud fountains burst from living marble, and strange reflections shine in the brooks.

Oh, could I but go there, and set my heart at ease, and be relieved of all pain, and know freedom and joy! Oh that land of delight, in dreams I see it often, but come the morning sun, it has disappeared like foam.

A Magic Casement

Timothy Sullivan (b.1954)

First performance: commissioned by The Aldeburgh Connection through the Ontario Arts Council and the CBC.

Composer's Note: The work is a 'song tableau', positioned between music theatre and the traditional song cycle. The Sydney Dobell poem *A Magic Casement* provides the centrepiece, or corridor, with casements onto the other poems or poetic fragments used in the work. The fabric of the text is strung together with quasi-narrative elements in the Dobell poem introducing an idea which is then taken over in another poem. This continuity circles back onto itself with the bugles of dreamland in the final section harking back to the bugle-laughters in the *Come Away* section at the beginning.

The music attempts to capture a variety of sensibilities which are lighter, more playful, more magical than human sensibilities. For example, although many of the poems have a sad quality, the music reflects 'fairy sadness', neither mournful or melancholy, but more plaintive and ethereal. Similarly, the sonority in the musical language uses consonances which are familiar, but the manner in which the work is developed places the

tonality always a little beyond our grasp, to lend a freshness and otherworldliness to the piece. TS

TEXT

1. Casement I

Ye floors, in whose black oak
The straitened hamadryad lives and
groans,
Ye creaking dark and antiquated
floors,
Who know so well in what sad note to
join ... *Sydney Dobell*

2. Come Away

Come away, O human child
To the waters and the wild,
With a faery, hand in hand
For the world's more full of weeping
than you can understand.
W.B. Yeats

Come away from the weary old world
of tears,
From the slow weary drip of the slow
weary years
To peace and deep rest where the
white dews are falling
And the blithe bugle-laughters
through Dreamland are calling.
Fiona Macleod

3. The Moon-Child

When the gloom is on the wave
A shell unto the shore I bring;
And then upon the rocks I sit
And plaintive sing.

Casement II

The weary lullaby what time she
rocks
Her babe, and murmurs music sad
and low,
So sad and low as if this tower did
keep
The murmur of the years as a
seashell
The sea ... *Dobell*

The Moon-Child (concl.)

O what is this wild song I sing,
With meanings strange and dim?
No soul am I, a wave am I,
And sing the Moon-child's hymn.
Fiona Macleod

4. A Fairy Funeral

Bear her along
Keep ye your song
Tender and sweet and low;
Faeries must die!
Ask ye not why,
Ye that have hurt her so.
Men upon earth
Bring us to birth
Gently at even and morn!
When as brother and brother
They greet one another
And smile — then a fairy is born!

Please turn page quietly

Casement III

In these legendary halls
 Whispering and sighing; ruined
 castle wall
 Whereby she groweth like some
 delicate flower
 In a deserted garden . . . *Dobell*

A Fairy Funeral (concl.)

Passing away — flower from the
 spray! colour and light from the
 leaf!

Soon, soon will the year shed its
 bloom on her bier, and the dust of
 its dreams on her grief.

Alfred Noyes

5. Casement IV

Wherein I set her as a wandering
 clown
 Who, in a fairy-ring, by night doth
 seize
 Some elfin taper, and would have it
 burn

In his gaunt lanthorn wrought by
 human hands...

Uncouth, yet art so passing bright
 with her —

So fragrant! little window in the wall,
 Eye-lashed with balmy sprays of
 honeysuckle,

Sweet jessamine, and ivy ever sad . . .

Dobell

6. To Pierrot in Love

What dost thou here, in Love's
 enchanted wood,

Pierrot, who once wert safe as clown
 and thief —

Held safe by love of fun and wine
 and food —

From her who follows love of
 Woman, Grief —

Her who, of old, stalked over Eden-
 grass

Behind Love's baby-feet whose
 shadow threw

On every brook, as on a magic glass,
 Prophetic shapes of what should
 come to pass

When tears got mixt with Paradisal
 dew?

T. Watts-Dunton

7. Under the Evening Star

The sounds and seas, with all their
 finny drove

Now to the moon in wavering
 morrice move;

Who in their nightly watchful
 spheres

Lead in swift round the months and
 years;

And on the tawny sands and shelves
 Trip the pert fairies and the dapper
 elves.

John Milton

8. Fairy Revels

Pinch him, pinch him, black and
blue,

Saucy mortals must not view
What the queen of stars is doing,
Nor pry into our fairy wooing.

Pinch him blue and pinch him
black—

Let him not lack

Sharp nails to pinch him blue and
red

Till sleep has rocked his addlehead.

For the trespass he hath done,

Spots o'er all his flesh shall run.

Kiss Endymion, kiss his eyes,

Then to our midnight heidegyes.

John Lyly

9. Casement V

All day she sits and looks forth on a
world

Less fair than she, and as a living
soul

Informs the rugged face of the old
tower

With beauty; when the soul hath left
the face

The sad eye looks no longer from the
lid,

The sweet light is put out in the long
rain ... *Dobell*

10. Bugles of Dreamland

O what are the bugles of Dreamland calling
There where the dews of the gloaming are
falling? ...

To peace and deep rest where the white
dews are falling

And the blithe bugle-laughters through
Dreamland are calling.

Fiona Macleod

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

INTERMISSION

during which tea will be served in the Torel Room

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A Midsummer Night's Dream (*Shakespeare*)

Mendelssohn

Overture (arr. L. Rebbeing and Louis Winkler)

Sunday afternoon parties at the Mendelssohns' in Berlin included reading from the classics, as well as music. Shakespeare was a particular favourite; during the summer of 1826, the seventeen year old Mendelssohn composed this overture and performed it (perhaps with his sister) as a piano duet. Perhaps we are stretching a point by including this music on May 1. However, a very similar piece of Mendelssohn's fairy music, the *Scherzo* from the Octet (Op.20), was directly inspired by the Walpurgisnacht section of *Faust*; and Oberon and Titania themselves appear in that scene of Goethe's play.

Song with Chorus: You spotted snakes

(with members of the Canadian Children's Opera Chorus)

The rest of the incidental music, including this song, followed much later, in 1842. After the first performance, a member of the audience remarked: 'What a pity that you have wasted your beautiful music on such a stupid play.'

The Leprehaun (*P.W. Joyce*) Irish folktune, arr. Herbert Hughes (1882-1937)

In his *Ancient Irish Music* (1901), Dr. Joyce remarked: 'It may be necessary to state, for the information of those who are not acquainted with Irish fairies, that the leprehaun is a very tricky little fellow, usually dressed in a green coat, red cap and knee breeches, and silver shoe buckles, whom you may sometimes see in the shades of evening, or by moonlight under a bush, and he is generally making or mending a shoe. If you catch him and hold him, he will, after a little threatening, shew you where treasure is hid, or give you a purse in which you will always find money. But if you once take your eyes off him, he is gone in an instant; and he is very ingenious in devising tricks to induce you to look round.'

The Enchantress (*Chorley*)

John Liptrott Hatton (1809-86)

This English singer, pianist and composer wrote many fine songs and comic ballads. He was also, for a period of time, the accompanist of Pauline Viardot on her British tours. She called him *le grospapa Hatton*: 'we laugh a great deal together, and I think I am becoming his particular favourite'.

A Fairy went a-marketing (*Rose Fyleman*)

Arthur M. Goodhart (fl. c.1918)

The words appeared in *Punch* January 2, 1918. The composer, amazingly, was a housemaster at Eton.

Finale (Iolanthe) (W.S. Gilbert)

Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900)

Morning brings a fine new day,
Winter's snows are flown away,
Roses bloom, the sun shines fair,
And summer, summer everywhere!*

*with apologies to Jeremy James Taylor, librettist of *The Snow Queen* (see below).

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The Canadian Children's Opera Chorus (conductor John Tuttle) will be performing *The Snow Queen* by John Greer and Jeremy James Taylor at the Guelph Spring Festival on May 7, and in Toronto at Harbourfront on June 4 and 5. Call 366-0467 for further details.

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Invaluable help has been given by David James in the preparation and presentation of today's concert.

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Today's concert is being recorded for future broadcast on CBC's *The Arts Tonight*.
(Producer: Bill Skolnick; Recording Engineer: Bruce Barnett)

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Although this is the final concert in our Sunday Series, there is one recital remaining in the Recital Series at the CBC Broadcasting Centre's Glenn Gould Studio: Tuesday, May 17, 8:00 p.m.: Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* with **Russell Braun** and **Stephen Ralls**. Tickets (\$17/\$12) may be purchased from the Glenn Gould Studio (telephone 205-5555).

Next season's Sunday Series will take place in Walter Hall on the following dates: November 20, January 15, March 5, and April 30. (Please note, the final concert is one week earlier than in previous publicity.) Subscription brochures will be mailed during the next three weeks. If you are not yet on our mailing list, or do not receive a brochure, please call 423-9318.

Box office revenues cover only a portion of our operating budget; the rest must be raised through donations, grants and corporate funding. You may become a **Patron** by donating \$100 or more; \$35 or more (\$50 or more for dual membership) will qualify you to become a **Friend**. You will receive information on our activities, and all donations will be acknowledged with a receipt for income tax purposes. Other donations and suggestions for corporate sponsorship will also be gratefully received. Your support is vital in helping to ensure the continuation of these concerts.

We gratefully acknowledge assistance from:

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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, together with many of the singers appearing with The Aldeburgh Connection.

Timothy Sullivan is best known to opera lovers for *Florence: The Lady with the Lamp*, presented by the Elora Festival two summers ago to sold-out audiences, and which will be performed again next season in London, England, and in Toronto by *Opera in Concert*. Two other operas *Dream Play* and *Tomorrow and Tomorrow* have been presented by the COC and by the Centre for Contemporary Opera in New York City, as well as for broadcast on CBC television. Mr Sullivan has written numerous commissions for concert performance, and also composes extensively for modern dance companies and videodance.

Kathleen Brett returns to Toronto from Winnipeg where she sang the role of Leila in *The Pearl Fishers* earlier this month. Other recent engagements have included *Falstaff* with L'Opéra de Montréal, Constance in Vancouver Opera's *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Adina in Calgary Opera's *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Le Nozze di Figaro* in Dallas, *The Makropoulos Case* in San Francisco, and Serpina in the Sharon Festival's *La Serva Padrona*. She has performed in concert and oratorio with every major Canadian orchestra and across the U.S. Released two seasons ago was the Cincinnati Pops CD of Meredith Willson's *The Music Man*, in which she sings the role of Marian the Librarian.

Linda Maguire's busy career includes regular appearances in opera, concert and recital. This season she made her New York City debut in recital with the *New York Festival of Song*, and sang the leading role of Sister Sharon Falconer in the premiere in Boston of *Elmer Gantry* by Robert Aldridge. Among many critically acclaimed operatic appearances was her lead role in Timothy Sullivan's *Florence: The Lady with the Lamp*, which she will repeat later this year, and in 1995 she will appear at Glyndebourne in the title role in Rossini's *Ermione*. To be released shortly is her solo recording for CBC of music by Berlioz, Wagner, Respighi and Jean Coulthard with the CBC Vancouver Orchestra under Mario Bernardi.

Erik Oland's performances this season have included *The Student Prince* with L'Opéra de Montréal, and numerous concert engagements in Eastern Canada, Montreal and Toronto, appearing in *Messiah* with the McGill Chamber Orchestra and the Newfoundland Symphony, Bach's *B Minor Mass* with the Camerata Singers in Halifax, *Alexander's Feast* with the Société de Musique Ancienne de Montréal, in works by Zelenka with Cantare, in Brahms' *A German Requiem* with the St Lambert Choir and Vaughan Williams *A Sea Symphony* in London, Ontario. He also performs regularly in opera, and has appeared in Toronto with both the COC and Toronto Operetta Theatre. Recordings include *Rameau Cantatas*, (McGill), released in 1992.

Kathleen Brett, Linda Maguire and Erik Oland, together with Benoit Boutet, participated in a concert tour of the U.K. with The Aldeburgh Connection in 1992.

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