

THE ALDEBURGH CONNECTION



The Old Wizard of Bayreuth

WALTER HALL

SUNDAY, MARCH 29th, 1987 2:30 p.m.

THE OLD WIZARD OF BAYREUTH

MARTHA COLLINS - soprano

MARK PEDROTTI - baritone

STEPHEN RALLS & BRUCE UBUKATA - piano

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The second and third concerts of our Sunday Series present the songs of two great composers who are famous for their work in much larger forms. Last month, we showed how Tchaikovsky, when not engaged in the composition of operas, ballets and symphonies, devoted time to the writing of Romances for solo voice and piano - songs conveying some of his most intimate thoughts. Today, Richard Wagner, the composer of masterpieces on a gigantic scale, brings us a collection of what, in comparison, are miniatures. None the less, these songs, in their various ways, reflect the musical world and spirit of his music-dramas.

Wagner visits Paris at least twice this afternoon. First of all, he is a composer in search of an identity, trying to establish himself (and make his fortune) as a follower of Meyerbeer and Spontini. This attempt was doomed to miserable failure. Paradoxically, it was only when he had finally returned to his homeland and had succeeded in establishing a truly German type of music-theatre that Wagner's presence became all-pervasive in Paris - and by that time he had no need of visiting the French capital in person. By the end of his life, the salons of the great ladies of French society were beginning to ring with the strains of La chevauchée des Walkyries and soon *le Wagnerisme* became *de rigueur*.

We hope we will be forgiven an occasional light-hearted tone in this afternoon's reminiscences. Wagner himself was no stranger to the humorous approach; and, for our own part, our sense of fun (like Chabrier's) gilds an underlying deep reverence and love for the music of the Master.

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PART I: MINNA, MATHILDE AND COSIMA

Polonaise in D, Op.2

Richard Wagner (1813-83)

A simple dance for piano-duet, published in Leipzig in 1832.

Gretchen am Spinnrade (Goethe) Op.5/6

Wagner

My peace is gone, my heart is heavy. My bosom yearns for him: if only I could die in his embrace!

Wagner produced a set of seven pieces inspired by Goethe's Faust, and this is one of them. We cannot say whether he was familiar at that time with the more elaborate setting by Schubert.

Songs to French texts

Wagner

The first, second and last of these songs were published in Paris in 1840 as Trois mélodies. Les deux grenadiers was published separately at Wagner's own expense, with an illustrated title page and a specially commissioned French translation of Heine's poem. The composer's gaucheries in setting the French language did not help the songs to find favour with the public.

L'Attente (Hugo)

Birds on the treetops and on the mountains, can you see my lover riding back to me?

Mignonne (Ronsard)

See, Mignonne, the rose which bloomed this morning is faded by evening. Make the most of your beauty now, before age tarnishes it.

Les deux grenadiers (after Heine)

On learning of Napoleon's defeat, one French soldier thinks of returning to his family, but the other dreams of rising again to fight for his Emperor.

Dors, mon enfant (anon.)

Sleep, my child, your mother's only hope.

Five poems of Mathilde Wesendonk

Wagner

During Wagner's exile in Switzerland, he received considerable financial help from a wealthy silk-merchant, Otto Wesendonk, who was repaid for his pains by the passionate affair which developed between his wife, Mathilde, and the composer. While he was working on

Act 1 of Tristan und Isolde, Wagner set five of Mathilde's poems - originally called Fünf Dilettanten-Gedichte. The third and fifth songs actually use music which was later incorporated into the opera - in the Act 2 duet and the Act 3 prelude respectively. The version for voice and piano is the composer's original - only the last song was orchestrated by Wagner himself, as a birthday present for Mathilde in 1857. We shall use it to illustrate Cosima Wagner's description of her own birthday in 1870.

Der Engel

An angel has heard my prayer and borne me away from my sorrow.

Stehe still

Rushing wheel of time, be still. Let me measure my happiness and understand eternity.

Im Treibhaus (study for Tristan und Isolde)

Exotic palm trees, I know your sorrow - our homeland is not here.

Schmerzen

Why should I despair? The sun must sink in order to rise again.

Träume (study for Tristan und Isolde)

What wonderful dreams are these that fill my senses, and bloom fairer each day?

INTERMISSION

during which tea will be served in the lobby

PART II: PARIS IN BAYREUTH

Souvenirs de Bayreuth - Fantaisie en forme de Quadrille
(based on themes from Der Ring)

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) & André Messager (1853-1929)

1. Valkyries' call and ride - Siegfried's horn call
2. Tarnhelm - death motif
3. Siegmund's song - Rhine - Nibelungs
4. Magic fire - Siegfried
5. Siegfried's horn call - Brunnhilde - Rhinemaidens

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Colette, in her Journal à Rebours, describes the famous Wednesday evenings at the salon of Mme de Saint-Marceaux: Fauré and Messenger "improvised piano-duets, rivalling each other in their sudden modulations and evasions of the tonic. They both loved these games during which they exchanged attacks like duellists: 'Pull up there! Why are you waiting? Go on, I will catch you up!' Fauré, like a dark-skinned emir, nodded his tuft of silvery hair when giving the signal to use leitmotifs from the Ring." Mme de Saint-Marceaux was a prototype of Proust's Mme Verdurin. In 1884, she organized a "weird and wonderful lottery" to help Fauré and Messenger attend Parsifal at Bayreuth. Fauré later wrote to his benefactress: "If one has not heard Wagner at Bayreuth, one *has heard nothing!* Take lots of handkerchiefs because you will cry a great deal! Also, take a sedative because you will be exalted to the point of delirium!"

Duet: Pleurs d'or (*Samain*) Op.72

Fauré

*Tears hanging in flowers; tears on starry nights;
tears of lovers, flowing as far as the beloved's soul
- fall from nights, from flowers, from eyes!*

Fauré, for all his Wagnerian enthusiasm, never speaks without his own individual voice.

Le manoir de Rosemonde (*Bonnières*)

Henri Duparc (1848-1933)

With sudden and voracious tooth, like a dog, love has bitten me! Follow the trail of my blood - you will find I have come to die, far away, without finding the blue mansion of Rosemonde.

This song dates from 1879, when Duparc and Chabrier together heard Wagner's operas in Munich. Duparc had met Wagner ten years earlier, and at one point showed himself decades ahead of his time by urging a more symbolic approach to the staging of Der Ring - there should be a simple circle of light surrounding Brünnhilde at the end of Die Walküre, not a ring of fire.

Souvenirs de Munich - Quadrille (based on themes from Tristan und Isolde)

Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-94)

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1. Pantalon: Sailors' greeting - Tristan's home
 3. Poule: Shepherd's happy tune - death song
 4. Pastourelle: Kurwenal's song
 5. Galop: Sailors' song - Kurwenal - longing for death
- In the late 1870s, Saint-Saëns, Massenet, Messager, Duparc and Chabrier comprised what was known as '*le petit Bayreuth*'. It was Duparc who took Chabrier to Munich to hear Tristan in 1879. This visit was a major factor in persuading Chabrier to resign his government post and devote himself wholly to composition.

PART III: DEATH IN VENICE

La lugubre gondola (II) Franz Liszt (1811-86)
 This piano piece dates from December, 1882, when Liszt spent time with the Wagners at Palazzo Vendramin in Venice.

Sur les lagunes - Lamento (Nuits d'été) (*Gautier*)
Hector Berlioz (1803-69)
My beloved is dead; I shall weep for ever. How bitter to sail away without love!

Like the Wesendonk-Lieder, the Nuits d'été were conceived as songs with piano, and were not orchestrated until fifteen years later. Judith Gautier, the daughter of the poet, visited Wagner frequently during the last years of his life, possibly becoming as important for the composition of Parsifal as was Mathilde Wesendonk for that of Tristan.

EPILOGUE: "SOEUR, IL FAUT VIVRE!"

Souvenirs de Munich Chabrier
 2. Été: Love duet themes

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The last concert of this series is Brush up your Shakespeare, with CATHERINE ROBBIN, TONY BOUTTÉ and DANIEL NEFF, on May 10. Tickets are available, at the usual price of \$10 (seniors/students \$8), from:

THE ALDEBURGH CONNECTION, 74 Follis Avenue,
 Toronto M6G 1S6 (or telephone 531-3330).

Please also consider making a donation to our funds. A gift of \$35 (or \$50 per couple) will qualify you to become a Friend of The Aldeburgh Connection Concert Society, and will help to ensure the continuation of our presentations. All donations will be acknowledged with a receipt for income tax purposes.

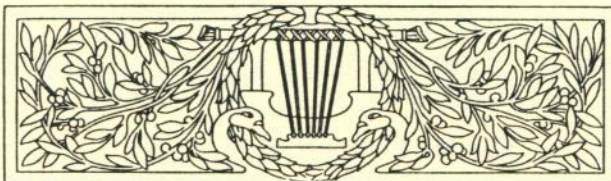
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Aldeburgh, on the east coast of England, is the small town where Benjamin Britten, Peter Pears and Eric Crozier founded the Festival of Music which flourishes to this day. STEPHEN RALLS and BRUCE UBUKATA have visited and worked there for many summers, together with most of the singers appearing with The Aldeburgh Connection. The group is their brain-child, and has been filling a major gap in the Canadian concert scene for the past five years.

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MARK PEDROTTI, one of Canada's most successful and versatile singers, is heard in recital, oratorio and opera throughout North America. He recently made highly successful appearances at Carnegie Hall, New York, as baritone soloist in Orff's Carmina Burana, a performance which was subsequently recorded. Further engagements include Eugene Onegin for Glimmerglass Opera, New York, and Nardo in Mozart's La finta giardiniera at the Guelph Spring Festival.

MARTHA COLLINS made her recital début at the National Arts Centre in 1981 and her Toronto Symphony début in July, 1986. She will be reappearing with the Symphony in December of this year, and other future engagements will be with Calgary Opera in Carmen, with Vancouver Opera in Britten's Turn of the Screw and in Chabrier's Le roi malgré lui for Opera in Concert.

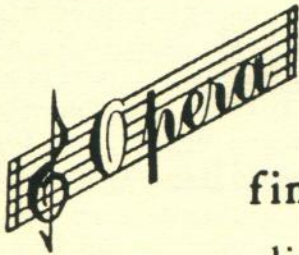


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DESIGNS) for the floral arrangements.

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