

**Monday 22 November 2021**  
**6pm Milton Court Concert Hall**



## **Songs at Six**

### **Schumann Kerner-Lieder Project**

Devised by **Eugene Asti**  
led by **Richard Jackson**

**Rebecca Savage, Elizabeth Thomson** soprano  
**Lyla Levy-Jordan, Katie Richardson McCrea** mezzo-soprano  
**Connor Smith** tenor  
**Owain Gwynfryn Evans, Jia Huang, Tom McGowan** baritone

**Rosane Lajoie, Luke Lally-Maguire, Bram Mulders, Mo Suet Ng,**  
**Janice Tsui, JongSun Woo** piano

Tonight's songs inhabit a pre-industrial landscape – one might say soulscape. They are almost all set among forests, meadows, hills and valleys. Birds, streams, trees and flowers are omnipresent, and the relationship between people and nature is the overarching theme of our concert.

Moreover our poets, Pfarrius and Kerner, express a need to personify the natural world in their efforts to explore the relationship: forests whisper to us, trees have souls and can speak, birds have messages for us. Our poets find a quasi-religious quality in these encounters. They imbue the predominant colours of nature, the green of the forest, the blue of the sky, the gold of the sun and the silver of the moon, with an almost mystical significance.

Our poets' relationship with their fellow human beings is more problematic: they tell us of deep friendship, romantic attachments, social activities such as drinking, but also of betrayal, loss, lack of real communication. A feeling that other people are the source of hurt and upset runs through our songs.

The idea of travel is important: there is the desire to roam, a strong Wanderlust which drives us into the world. Young people need to leave home as a kind of rite of passage into adulthood. A sense of home and of alienation runs through our poets' exploration of travel.

Finally, the contemplation of death frequently fills our poets' thoughts. It is often seen as an escape from worldly woes, embodying a feeling of hope. Indeed, we end our concert with two such musings, which conclude with the thought that, after all the hurt of life, the only healing will come when an angel awakes us - to some spiritual life in Heaven, we assume.

*Richard Jackson*

Robert Schumann *3 Gedichte aus den Waldliedern von Gustav Pfarrerius*, Op 119

*Die Hütte* (The Hut)

A happy man in his woodland hut, far from humanity. He has planted roses and vines, he can hear the friendly murmuring of the stream, and at night he can even hear the spirits singing!

*Warnung* (Warning)

A little bird sings in the twilight; a man warns it to be silent – or the big owl will hear, and kill the bird...

*Der Bräutigam und die Birke* (The Bridegroom and the Birch Tree)

A dialogue in which a bridegroom asks a tree to help him: the tree offers a spray of greenery, a broomstick, even its own sap. The man takes these wedding gifts, but decides to cut down the tree to warm his new home.

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Clara Schumann

*Der Wanderer in der Sägemühle* (The Wanderer in the Sawmill)

A man sits by a sawmill watching the wheel turning. A pine tree is being cut into planks. It sings to the man: 'I am being cut up for your sake – for soon I will be made into your coffin'. The wheel stops.

*Geheimes Flüstern hier und dort* (Secret Whisperings)

The forest is murmuring – but what does it say to me? It is greeting and protecting me, like a great cathedral. I will hold this sound in my heart, where it will become my song.

*Die Wanderer* (The Wanderer)

I roam through alien lands; I find no resting place, no comfort. Only in the distance I see the high mountains: they shall be my home, in an eternal dawn.

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Robert Schumann *12 Gedichte von Justinus Kerner*, Op 35

*Lust der Sturmnacht* (Stormy Night)

Outside the storm rages, but in my heart is sweet peace. I have golden light, spring flowers and birdsong inside me!

*Stirb, Lieb' und Freud'!* (Die, Love and Joy)

A young woman kneels before the Virgin's shrine in the cathedral, praying. She moves to the high altar, a garland of lilies in her hair. She prays: 'let me be a nun. May love and joy die'. She is the woman I will love for ever, though she does not know it. My love and my light must now die too.

*Wanderlied* (Roaming)

Drink up – and farewell, my friends. I must leave you. I'm like the sun and the sea: never still! The birds will follow me and remind me of home, and the flowers I picked for my sweetheart will send me their scent, so love will always be with me. Farewell!

*Erstes Grün* (First Green)

Oh fresh green of nature, you have healed my heart. I press you to my lips, to my breast. I shun other people – they cannot make me happy. Only this green gives me peace.

*Sehnsucht nach der Waldgegend* (Yearning for the forest)

Why did I ever leave my home, my forests, birds and streams? Here in these blank meadows all seems barren and empty. I cannot sing my old songs any more.

*Auf das Trinkglas eines verstorbenen Freundes* (My dead friend's drinking glass)

He raised this glass happily so many times. But I now fill it with wine and drink to him – for nothing can sever true friendship. All is quiet, yet I can hear an echo of him from the crystal.

*Wanderung* (To roam)

I must set off, and tear up all my familiar bonds. But I will not be alone, for I carry my love's precious token next my heart.

*Stille Liebe* (Silent Love)

If I could sing to you, I would never cease! But I can only carry you silently in my heart. I have penned this little song, but it cannot reach you.

*Frage* (Question)

If I didn't have the evening light, the starry nights, flowers, mountains, trees, birds – human songs too – where would I find any joy?

*Stille Tränen* (Silent tears)

In the morning I awake and walk through the meadows. The sky is so blue. Yet the heavens poured down many a tear in the night. Often I too weep in the night – then next morning they think I'm happy again.

*Wer machte dich so krank?* (Who has hurt you so much?)

Who has hurt you? Not the cool winds, the starry nights, the warmth of the sun? If I am mortally wounded, it is because of other people. Nature does me no harm, but people destroy me.

*Alte Laute* (Old sounds)

Listen to the birds, see the blossoms: can they not heal you now? I hear old songs from my youthful heart – when I trusted the world. But those songs are gone, and only an angel can wake me from this sad dream.

This performance is being recorded by Guildhall School's Recording & Audio Visual department. It will be available to watch online from 1 December at 14pm.