
Part of *Traced Overhead: The Musical World of Thomas Adès*

Tuesday 3 April 2007, 7.30pm

Thomas Adès *piano*

Ian Bostridge *tenor*



Britten Sechs Hölderlin-Fragmente 12'

Liszt Funérailles 12'

Kurtág Tears • In memory of a just man • Postface à Zoltán Kocsis 4'

Wagner (arr. Liszt) Isolde's 'Liebestod' 8'

Kurtág Friedrich Hölderlin: An ... (Ein Fragment) 2'

interval

Schumann Dichterliebe 30'

LSO St. Luke's Jerwood Hall



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Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Sechs Hölderlin-Fragmente, Op.61

- I. Menschenbeifall
- II. Die Heimat
- III. Sokrates und Alkibiades
- IV. Die Jugend
- V. Hälfte des Lebens
- VI. Die Linien des Lebens



Born in the same year as Wordsworth (and Beethoven), Friedrich Hölderlin was similarly a torchbearer for Romanticism, but took his torch into the darkness of ancient Greece, to renew poetry's contact with myth and the gods. There, in his mid-30s, he lost his way. The whole second half of his life, from 1807 to 1843, he spent being cared for in the household of a cultivated carpenter, continuing to write, but beyond the bounds of sanity. For several generations afterwards, his often fragmentary poems and his lunacy were part of his weakness. Later they became part of his strength, in a culture now valuing the broken. Britten and Kurtág stand among many diverse composers drawn to his work during the last 50 years.

Britten wrote his compact Hölderlin cycle in 1958 – his principal contribution to the Lied repertory and an appeal, in particular, to the worlds of Schubert and

Schumann, whose songs he and the tenor Peter Pears were regularly performing. These composers are for the music what the classical gods are for the persona present in the verse: guardians, provokers, talismans.

Each song is a duet. Sometimes the pianist seems to be singing with the tenor, whose phrases – modelled on the shape, sound and meaning of the words – float on in one or other hand. Elsewhere, or even at the same time, the piano's concern is with atmosphere, creating, for example, the different waterscapes of the second and penultimate songs, or defining the two voices of the third (Alcibiades questioning, Socrates answering), or setting out 'the lines of life' in the finale – lines that wander on irresoluble, so that the final concord has something weightless about it. The story is not over. Perhaps it continues in what follows.

I. Menschenbeifall

Ist nicht heilig mein Herz,
schöneren Lebens voll,
Seit ich liebe? Warum achtetet
ihr mich mehr,
Da ich stolzer und wilder,
Wortreicher und leerer war?

Ah! der Menge gefällt, was auf
den Marktplatz taugt,
Und es ehret der Knecht nur
den Gewaltsamen;
An das Göttliche glauben
Die allein, die es selber sind.

The applause of men

Love has hallowed my heart,
filled it with fairer life,
filled it with beauty. Why
then did you esteem me more,
in my arrogant wilderness,
rich in empty resounding words?

Ah! the masses delight in ev'ry
cheap device,
and the servile obey nought but a
tyranny;
they acknowledge the godlike –
only they, who themselves are gods.

II. Die Heimat

Froh kehrt der Schiffer heim an
den stillen Strom
Von fernen Inseln, wo er
geerntet hat.
Wohl möcht' auch ich zur
Heimat wieder;
Aber was hab' ich, wie Leid,
geerntet?

Ihr holden Ufer, die ihr mich
auferzogt,
Stillt ihr der Liebe Leiden? ach
gebt ihr mir,
Ihr Wälder meiner Kindheit! wann ich
Komme, die Ruhe noch einmal
wieder?

III. Sokrates und Alcibiades

'Warum huldigst du, heiliger Sokrates,
Diesem Jünglinge stets? kennst
du Grössers nicht?
Warum siehst mit Liebe,
Wie auf Götter, dein Aug' auf ihn?'

Wer das Tiefste gedacht, liebt
das Lebendigste,
Hohe Tugend versteht, wer
in die Welt geblickt,
Und es neigen die Weisen
Oft am Ende zu Schönem sich.

IV. Die Jugend

Da ich ein Knabe war,
Rettet' ein Gott mich oft
Vom Geschrei und der Ruthe der
Menschen,
Da spielt' ich sicher und gut
Mit den Blumen des Hains,
Und die Lüftchen des Himmels
Spielten mit mir.

Home

With joy the fisher steers into quiet
port
from distant islands, where he has
harvested.
So too would I be turning
homewards;
ah, but what have I, save grief,
for harvest?

Ye blessed shores, the guardians of
my youth,
can you not ease my longing?
Then give me back,
you forests of my childhood, at my
coming, that peace which once you
gave me!

Socrates and Alcibiades

'And why favourest thou, holy Socrates,
such a stripling as this? Know'st
thou no higher things?
And why gazest upon him
like an immortal, with eyes of love?'

Who most deeply enquires, loves
what is liveliest,
and true Virtue perceives, who has
observed the world,
and at moments the sages
must be yielding to Beauty itself.

Youth

When I was still a boy
I was saved by a god
from the noise and the bruises of
mankind.
I played securely and free
with the flowers of the fields,
and the breezes of heaven
sporting with me.

Und wie du das Herz
 Der Pflanzen erfreust,
 Wenn sie entgegen dir
 Die zarten Arme streken,
 So hast du mein Herz erfreut,
 Vater Helios! und, wie Endymion,
 War ich dein Liebling,
 Heilige Luna!

O all ihr treuen
 Freundlichen Götter!
 Dass ihr wüsstet,
 Wie euch meine Seele geliebt!

Mich erzog der Wohllaut
 Des säuselnden Hains
 Und lieben lernt' ich
 Unter den Blumen.
 Im Arme der Götter wuchs ich gross.

V. Hälfte des Lebens

Mit gelben Birnen hängen
 Und voll mit wilden Rosen
 Das Land in den See,
 Ihr holden Schwäne,
 Und trunken von Küssen
 Tunkt ihr das Haupt
 Ins heilignüchterne Wasser.

Weh mir, wo nehm' ich, wenn
 Es Winter ist, die Blumen, und wo
 Den Sonnenschein
 Und Schatten der Erde?
 Die Mauern stehn
 Sprachlos und kalt, im Winde
 Klirren die Fahnen.

VI. Die Linien des Lebens

Die Linien des Lebens sind
 verschieden,
 Wie Wege sind, und wie der
 Berge Grenzen.
 Was hier wir sind, kann dort
 ein Gott ergänzen,
 Mit Harmonien und ew'gem
 Lohn und Frieden.

And as you delight
 the hearts of the flowers
 when they incline to you,
 their tender arms outstretching,
 so you filled my heart with joy,
 Father Helios! And, like Endymion,
 I was your darling,
 heavenly Luna!

O all you friendly,
 faithful Immortals!
 Could I tell you
 how belov'd you were to my heart!

I was taught the songs
 of the whispering trees
 and amid the flowers
 I learnt the art of love.
 The arms of the gods made me a man.

The middle of life

With golden fruit
 and full of wild roses
 the land hangs into the lake,
 ye gentle swans,
 and drunken with kissing
 you dip your heads
 into the pure hallowed water.

Alas! where are they, in
 the winter time, the flowers, and where
 the shining sun
 and shadows of the Earth?
 The walls stand there
 speechless and cold, the wind sets
 weather-vanes clatt'ring.

The lines of life

Each line of life is different from
 another,
 as paths are, or like the mountain
 ranges.
 What we are here is there by God
 completed
 with harmony, reward and peace
 eternal.

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Funérailles

This composed programme now moves into piano pieces by two Hungarian composers: Liszt and Kurtág. The two are very different: one ranging, the other condensed, one writing for virtuosos, the other for children. But there are links in their sure knowledge of keyboard effect, their shared ear for expressive gesture and even some of their harmonic preferences, brought out especially here in pieces that have to do with death, and that move from melancholy and protest over a political execution to the radiant undeath of Isolde's final monologue.

Liszt gave to 'Funérailles' – the seventh of the 10 pieces he published as *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* – the date 'October 1849', and associated it with friends who had been involved in the failed Hungarian uprising of 1848. In a darkened F minor, the music starts as a funeral march. This gives way to a melody that starts in the bass and rises into the right hand with increasing excitement, to be followed by a new right-hand melody in A flat major with arpeggiated accompaniment. Drums and fanfares intervene, and the two song strains are recalled before the end.

György Kurtág (b.1926)

Tears • In memory of a just man • Postface à Zoltán Kocsis

Trained, like Ligeti, at the music academy in Budapest right after World War II, Kurtág took his bearings from Bartók and Webern in pursuing a music of immediate expressive force, fresh and compact. He did not produce his Op.1, a string quartet, until he was in his mid-30s, and his output grew only slowly through the next decade. Part of the problem was that his music failed to appeal to the authorities in post-1956 Hungary, but he was restrained, too, by how hard it was to find, in times of rapid change, musical ground on which to stand and assert, with full intensity.

Then, in 1973, he started work on a volume of short piano pieces for children, *Játékok* (Games), and there, in the freedom of playfulness, he found his creative impulses unblocked. He has remained a self-critical artist, sometimes taking several years to complete a short work, or to feel satisfied with it. But that first book of *Játékok* led on to seven more (so far) and to what is now a large output of vocal settings and pieces for instrumental resources ranging from solo viola to large orchestra.

Almost all his compositions are made of very short movements: snapshots, sudden events, short stories, and jokes. This is the form and character, too, of *Játékok*. Of the three *Játékok* pieces included here, 'Tears' is a study in bitter cadences that bring no conclusion and 'In memory of a just man' has a walking melody above a distant bass into which it eventually folds, after an outburst. Many of Kurtág's pieces are devised as homages, and the last item is addressed to the pianist and conductor Zoltán Kocsis, one of the composer's foremost supporters among the next generation in Hungary.

Many musicians of that generation were profoundly marked by the training they received from Kurtág while students at the academy. Passionately involved and exacting, he has spent much of his life in the rehearsal room, coaching performers in the classic chamber music repertory and, especially since his retirement, in his own works. Adès, who paid homage to Kurtág in his Op.1 songs, is among those who have had this music from the source.

Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

arr. Franz Liszt

Isolde's 'Liebestod'



Liszt expressed his admiration for Wagner in several transcriptions, among which this, of the closing passage from *Tristan und Isolde*, he made in 1867, two years after the opera's premiere. The song Isolde sings over Tristan's

lifeless body – a lullaby of intuiting resurrection that rises to speak of 'the world-breath's wafting all' – is set against music that makes the sustaining earth of Wagner's orchestra into trembling water.

György Kurtág

Friedrich Hölderlin: An ... (Ein Fragment), Op.29

Kurtág wrote this song for tenor and piano in 1988-9, around the time he was considering an opera on a subject from – or on the subject of – Hölderlin. He revised it in 1994, by which time he had abandoned the opera plan and was at work on a sequence of Hölderlin settings for solo baritone, a sequence that opens with this

poem (and that includes the last of the fragments Britten selected). The unfinished text dates from the poet's late 20s, when he was just beginning to show signs of mental disturbance. He used the name of Diotima, a seeress in Plato's *Symposium*, for Susette Gontard, the married woman who was his inspiration.

Elysium

Dort find ich ja
Zu euch ihr Todesgötter
Dort Diotima Heroen.

Singen möcht ich von dir

Aber nur Tränen
Und in der Nacht in der ich wandle erlöscht mir dein
Klares Auge!
himmlischer Geist.

Elysium

There indeed I find
To you, gods of death
There Diotima heroes.

I have to sing of you

But only tears
And in the night in which I wander I lose sight of your
Clear eye!
heavenly spirit.

Translation: Paul Griffiths © 2007

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Dichterliebe, Op.48

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. Im wunderschönen Monat Mai | 9. Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen |
| 2. Aus meinen Tränen spriessen | 10. Hör' ich das Liedchen klingen |
| 3. Die Rose, die Lilie, die Taube, die Sonne | 11. Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen |
| 4. Wenn ich in deine Augen seh | 12. Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen |
| 5. Ich will meine Seele tauchen | 13. Ich hab' im Traum geweinet |
| 6. Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome | 14. Allnächtlich im Traume |
| 7. Ich grolle nicht | 15. Aus alten Märchen winkt es |
| 8. Und wüssten's die Blumen, die kleinen | 16. Die alten, bösen Lieder |



Schumann must have read Hölderlin, because he planned to dedicate his piano cycle *Gesänge der Frühe* of 1853 'to Diotima'. There was also an unsettling parallel with Hölderlin's life, for shortly after completing that work Schumann's derangement led to his being committed to a doctor's care – though, unlike Hölderlin, he died quite soon after.

Dichterliebe ('A Poet's Love') comes from a different time and a different poetic alliance. Early in 1840 – when he and Clara were taking legal action against her father's refusal to let them marry, and when almost his entire output so far consisted of piano music – Schumann turned to writing songs, choosing more often than any other poet Heinrich Heine. For the present cycle he made a selection from a sequence in Heine's *Buch der Lieder* ('Song Book'), setting 20 poems in the space of nine days (May 24 – June 1); four numbers were dropped when the opus was published three years later.

Even thus reduced the poems tell a story – a story of love and loss such as was habitual for song-cycles. In doing so they portray a lover of a particularly Romantic sort. Here is a young man who reaches for all the immediate clichés

(knowingly placed in his hands by the poet), and whose main concern from first to last is his own emotional temperature, which we may well feel he is manipulating. We may also feel that the heroine of the piece had a lucky escape. She barely features, except as the object of apostrophising. In every poem the first person is, indeed, the first person: I, me, mine.

But what does music, which the poems invite in their pseudo-folksy rhythms and rhymes, make of all this?

Schumann had met Heine in 1828, when he was not quite 18, yet old enough to recognise the poet's 'bitterly ironic smile'. How much he cherished the ironies in Heine's verse, and how much he undercut or underplayed them, is matter for debate. Music easily softens. Or, as Schumann himself put it: 'At certain points in time poetry dons the mask of irony in order to conceal its usage of pain; perhaps for a moment the friendly hand of a genius may lift that mask so that wild tears may be transformed into pearls.'

Programme notes by Paul Griffiths © 2007

Dichterliebe

1
 Im wunderschönen Monat Mai,
 Als alle Knospen sprangen,
 Da ist in meinem Herzen
 Die Liebe aufgegangen.

Im wunderschönen Monat Mai,
 Als alle Vögel sangen,
 Da hab ich ihr gestanden
 Mein Sehnen und Verlangen.

2
 Aus meinen Tränen spriessen
 Viel blühende Blumen hervor,
 Und meine Seufzer werden
 Ein Nachtigallenchor.

Und wenn du mich lieb hast, Kindchen,
 Schenk ich dir die Blumen all',
 Und vor deinem Fenster soll klingen
 Das Lied der Nachtigall.

3
 Die Rose, die Lilie, die Taube, die Sonne,
 Die lieb' ich einst alle in Liebeswonne.
 Ich lieb' sie nicht mehr, ich liebe alleine
 Die Kleine, die Feine, die Reine, die Eine;
 Sie selber, aller Liebe Wonne,
 Ist Rose und Lilie und Taube und Sonne.

4
 Wenn ich in deine Augen seh,
 So schwindet all mein Leid und Weh;
 Doch wenn ich küsse deinen Mund,
 So werd ich ganz und gar gesund.

Wenn ich mich lehn' an deine Brust,
 Kommt's über mich wie Himmelslust;
 Doch wenn du sprichst: Ich liebe dich!
 So muss ich weinen bitterlich.

A Poet's Love

1
 In the wondrous month of May,
 When all buds were bursting into bloom,
 Then it was that in my heart
 Love began to blossom.

In the wondrous month of May,
 When all the birds were singing,
 Then it was I confessed to her
 My longing and desire.

2
 From my tears will spring
 Many blossoming flowers,
 And my sighs will become
 A choir of nightingales.

And if you love me, child,
 I'll give you all the flowers,
 And at your window shall sound
 The nightingale's song.

3
 Rose, lily, dove, sun,
 I loved them all once in the bliss of love.
 I love them no more, I only love
 She who is small, fine, pure, rare;
 She, most blissful of all loves,
 Is rose and lily and dove and sun.

4
 When I look into your eyes,
 All my pain and sorrow vanish;
 But when I kiss your lips,
 Then I am wholly healed.

When I lay my head against your breast,
 Heavenly bliss steals over me;
 But when you say: I love you!
 I must weep bitter tears.

5

Ich will meine Seele tauchen
In den Kelch der Lilie hinein;
Die Lilie soll klingend hauchen
Ein Lied von der Liebsten mein.

Das Lied soll schauern und beben,
Wie der Kuss von ihrem Mund,
Den sie mir einst gegeben
In wunderbar süsser Stund'.

6

Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome,
Da spiegelt sich in den Welln,
Mit seinem grossen Dome,
Das grosse, heilige Köln.

Im Dom da steht ein Bildnis,
Auf goldenem Leder gemalt;
In meines Lebens Wildnis
Hat's freundlich hineingestrahlt.

Es schweben Blumen und Englein
Um unsre liebe Frau;
Die Augen, die Lippen, die Wänglein,
Die gleichen der Liebsten genau.

7

Ich grolle nicht, und wenn das Herz auch bricht,
Ewig verlornes Lieb! ich grolle nicht.
Wie du auch strahlst in Diamantenpracht,
Es fällt kein Strahl in deines Herzens Nacht.

Das weiss ich längst. Ich sah dich ja im Traume,
Und sah die Nacht in deines Herzens Raume,
Und sah die Schlang', die dir am Herzen frisst,
Ich sah, mein Lieb, wie sehr du elend bist.

8

Und wüssten's die Blumen, die kleinen,
Wie tief verwundet mein Herz,
Sie würden mit mir weinen,
Zu heilen meinen Schmerz.

5

Let me bathe my soul
In the lily's chalice;
The lily shall resound
With a song of my love.

The songs shall tremble and quiver
Like the kiss her lips
Once gave me
In a sweet and wondrous hour.

6

In the Rhine, the holy river,
There is reflected in the waves,
With its great cathedral,
Great and holy Cologne.

In the cathedral hangs a picture,
Painted on gilded leather;
Into my life's wilderness
It has cast its friendly rays.

Flowers and cherubs hover
Around Our beloved Lady;
Her eyes, her lips, her cheeks
Are the image of my love's.

7

I bear no grudge, though my heart is breaking,
O love forever lost! I bear no grudge.
However you gleam in diamond splendour,
No ray falls in the night of your heart.

I've known that long. For I saw you in my dreams,
And saw the night within your heart,
And saw the serpent gnawing your heart –
I saw, my love, how pitiful you are.

8

If the little flowers knew
How deeply my heart is hurt,
They would weep with me
To heal my pain.

Und wüssten's die Nachtigallen,
Wie ich so traurig und krank,
Sie liessen fröhlich erschallen
Erquickenden Gesang.

If the nightingales knew
How sad I am and sick,
They would joyfully make the air resound
With refreshing song.

Und wüssten sie mein Wehe,
Die goldenen Sternelein,
Sie kämen aus ihrer Höhe,
Und sprächen Trost mir ein.

And if they knew of my grief,
Those little golden stars,
They would come down from the sky
And console me with their words.

Sie alle können's nicht wissen,
Nur Eine kennt meinen Schmerz;
Sie hat ja selbst zerrissen,
Zerrissen mir das Herz.

But none of them can know,
My pain is known to one alone;
For she it was who broke,
Broke my heart in two.

9
Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen,
Trompeten schmetterten darein;
Da tanzt wohl den Hochzeitreigen
Die Herzallerliebste mein.

9
What a fluting and fiddling,
What a blaring of trumpets;
That must be my dearest love
Dancing at her wedding feast.

Das ist ein Klingen und Dröhnen,
Ein Pauken und ein Schalmlein;
Dazwischen schluchzen und stöhnen
Die lieblichen Engelein.

What a booming and ringing,
What a drumming and piping;
With lovely little angels
Sobbing and groaning between.

10
Hör' ich das Liedchen klingen,
Das einst die Liebste sang,
So will mir die Brust zerspringen
Von wildem Schmerzdrang.

10
When I hear the little song
My beloved once sang,
My heart almost bursts
With the wild rush of pain.

Es treibt mich ein dunkles Sehnen
Hinauf zur Waldeshöh,
Dort löst sich auf in Tränen
Mein übergrosses Weh.

A dark longing drives me
Up to the wooded heights,
Where my overwhelming grief
Dissolves in tears.

11
Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen,
Die hat einen andern erwählt;
Der andre liebt eine andre,
Und hat sich mit dieser vermählt.

11
A boy loves a girl
Who chooses another;
He in turn loves another
And marries her.

Das Mädchen nimmt aus Ärger
Den ersten besten Mann,
Der ihr in den Weg gelaufen;
Der Jüngling ist übel dran.

The girl, out of pique,
Takes the very first man
To come her way,
The boy is badly hurt.

Es ist eine alte Geschichte,
Doch bleibt sie immer neu;
Und wem sie just passiert,
Dem bricht das Herz entzwei.

It's an old story,
Yet remains ever new;
And he to whom it happens,
It breaks his heart in half.

12
Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen
Geh' ich im Garten herum.
Es flüstern und sprechen die Blumen,
Ich aber wandle stumm.

12
One bright summer morning
I walk round the garden.
The flowers whisper and talk,
But I move silently.

Es flüstern und sprechen die Blumen,
Und schaun mitleidig mich an:
'Sei unsrer Schwester nicht böse,
Du trauriger, blasser Mann.'

The flowers whisper and talk,
And look at me in pity:
'Be not angry with our sister,
You sad, pale man.'

13
Ich hab' im Traum geweinet,
Mir träumte, du lägest im Grab.
Ich wachte auf, und die Träne
Floss noch von der Wange herab.

13
I wept in my dream,
I dreamt you lay in your grave.
I woke, and tears
Still flowed down my cheeks.

Ich hab' im Traum geweinet,
Mir träumt', du verliessest mich.
Ich wachte auf, und ich weinte
Noch lange bitterlich.

I wept in my dream,
I dreamt you were leaving me.
I woke, and wept on
Long and bitterly.

Ich hab' im Traum geweinet,
Mir träumte, du wärst mir noch gut.
Ich wachte auf, und noch immer
Strömt meine Tränenflut.

I wept in my dream,
I dreamt you loved me still.
I woke, and still
My tears stream.

14
Allnächtlich im Traume seh ich dich,
Und sehe dich freundlich grüssen,
Und laut aufweinend stürz ich mich
Zu deinen süssen Füssen.

14
Nightly in my dreams I see you,
And see your friendly greeting,
And weeping loud, I hurl myself
Down at your sweet feet.

Du siehest mich an wehmütiglich
 Und schüttelst das blonde Köpfchen;
 Aus deinen Augen schleichen sich
 Die Perlenrörentröpfchen.

Du sagst mir heimlich ein leises Wort,
 Und gibst mir den Strauss von Zypressen.
 Ich wache auf, und der Strauss ist fort,
 Und's Wort hab' ich vergessen.

15
 Aus alten Märchen winkt es
 Hervor mit weisser Hand,
 Da singt es und da klingt es
 Von einem Zauberland;

Wo bunte Blumen blühen
 Im goldnen Abendlicht,
 Und lieblich duftend glühen,
 Mit bräutlichem Gesicht;

Und grüne Bäume singen
 Uralte Melodein,
 Die Lüfte heimlich klingen,
 Und Vögel schmettern drein;

Und Nebelbilder steigen
 Wohl aus der Erd' hervor,
 Und tanzen luft'gen Reigen
 Im wunderlichen Chor;

Und blaue Funken brennen
 An jedem Blatt und Reis,
 Und rote Lichter rennen
 Im irren, wirren Kreis;

Und laute Quellen brechen
 Aus wildem Marmorstein,
 Und seltsam in den Bächen
 Strahlt fort der Widerschein.

Ach, könnt ich dorthin kommen,
 Und dort mein Herz erfreu'n,
 Und aller Qual entnommen,
 Und frei und selig sein!

Wistfully you look at me,
 Shaking your fair little head;
 Tiny little pearl-like tears
 Trickle from your eyes.

You whisper me a soft word
 And hand me a wreath of cypress.
 I wake up and the wreath is gone,
 And I cannot remember the word.

15
 A white hand beckons
 From fairy tales of old,
 Where there are sounds and songs
 Of a magic land:

Where brightly coloured flowers
 Bloom in the golden twilight,
 And glow sweet and fragrant
 With a bride-like face;

And green trees
 Sing primeval melodies,
 Mysterious breezes murmur,
 And birds warble;

And misty shapes rise up
 From the very ground,
 And dance airy dances
 In a strange throng;

And blue sparks blaze
 On every leaf and twig,
 And red fires race
 Madly round and round;

And loud springs gush
 From wild marble cliffs.
 And strangely in the streams
 The reflection shines on.

Ah, could I but reach that land,
 And there make glad my heart,
 And be relieved of all pain,
 And be blissful and free!

Ach! jenes Land der Wonne,
Das seh' ich oft im Traum,
Doch kommt die Morgensonne,
Zerfließt's wie eitel Schaum.

16

Die alten, bösen Lieder,
Die Träume böß und arg,
Die lasst uns jetzt begraben,
Holt einen grossen Sarg.

Hinein leg ich gar manches,
Doch sag ich noch nicht was;
Der Sarg muss sein noch grösser
Wie's Heidelberger Fass.

Und holt eine Totenbahre,
Und Bretter fest und dick;
Auch muss sie sein noch länger,
Als wie zu Mainz die Brück'.

Und holt mir auch zwölf Riesen,
Die müssen noch stärker sein,
Als wie der starke Christoph,
Im Dom zu Köln am Rhein.

Die sollen den Sarg forttragen,
Und senken in's Meer hinab;
Denn solchem grossen Sarge
Gebührt ein grosses Grab.

Wisst ihr, warum der Sarg wohl
So gross und schwer mag sein?
Ich senkt' auch meine Liebe
Und meinen Schmerz hinein.

Ah, that land of delight,
I see it often in my dreams,
But with the morning sun
It melts like mere foam.

16

The bad old songs,
The bad and bitter dreams,
Let us now bury them,
Fetch me a large coffin.

I have much to put in it,
Though what I won't yet say;
The coffin must be even larger
Than the Vat at Heidelberg.

And fetch a bier
Made of firm thick timber:
And it must be even longer
Than the bridge at Mainz.

And fetch for me twelve giants,
They must be even stronger
Than Saint Christopher the Strong
In Cologne Cathedral on the Rhine.

They shall bear the coffin away,
And sink it deep into the sea;
For such a large coffin
Deserves a large grave.

Do you know why the coffin
Must be so large and heavy?
I'd like to bury there my love
And my sorrow too.

Translations from *The Book of Lieder* – the original texts of over 1,000 songs, chosen, translated and introduced by Richard Stokes with a foreword by Ian Bostridge (Faber 2005).

Tracing Thomas Adès



To begin at the beginning, or at the beginnings, a lot of Thomas Adès's works start out with some tiny corpuscle of sound that is repeated, and repeated again, and repeated again, but already it is changing. Through the repetitions a process is being set up, and there may well be something in the bass steering that process. The shape is recognisably the same, but it is mutating all the time, and it is going somewhere. It might be as simple a thing as a fall from one note to another, or a rising bit of scale, or a bar of dance rhythm. But the process, which started right away, will have made it seem instantly fresh, magical, a new beginning.

How does he do it? Harmony is the key: harmony that is 'neither atonal nor tonal', as György Ligeti said of his own, or, perhaps more exactly, harmony that knows other tonal rules than those of the old keys – though it certainly knows those rules too, and plays with them. Ligeti is also one point of reference for Adès's rhythm, which is at once elaborate and ramshackle, precision-engineered and on the point of collapse – collapse into confusion or into the daemonic pulsation that will often arrive in his music from somewhere else: the dance floor.

Other sources for Adès's harmony would have to include the French Spectralist composers, with their shimmering sonorities modelled on the overtone spectra of sounds – though Adès has been unusually bold and original in recognising how spectra could be trimmed to deliver, hey presto, common chords, complete with possibilities of new life instilled in them. To the Spectralists, Ligeti and Popstarz one could add other forebears, of whom some are assembled around Adès's music in this series: Sibelius and Nancarrow, Stravinsky and Kurtág, Schumann and Janáček.

Manifest as all these reflections will be, what is strange and wonderful is the freedom from irony. As with the small elements from which his music is made, so it is with things borrowed that their reuse refreshes them. A grand harmonic veer may signal Sibelius, but there is none of the old 20th-century's bother about this sort of reference. Echoes from the past are proving the habitability of a new world.

Assailing that world – tracing its continents that float overhead and glisten in so many harmonic lights – is easier for the ears than for words. Adès's music holds out an old promise that has widely been withdrawn (one understands the attraction Ligeti and Kurtág hold for him), of being fathomable. It not only attracts but conveys us, even if into curved spaces and down wonky perspectives, and convinces us that eventually it will be lucid to its ultimate recesses.

Sounding on from the past here are not only traits from earlier composers but ancient ideas suddenly replenished and brimming: theme, development, a tune as simple as a nursery rhyme but never heard before, a chord progression that moves powerfully forward in a quite new direction. As the private jokes and allusions of his earlier pieces have fallen away – things that helped make those pieces at once entrancing and maddening – so the music has become clearer without losing its ambiguity, which now depends on a richness of meanings infolded but no longer encrypted.

Always scintillating and at once enthralling, Adès's music has come to yield more and more on repeated listening, and one wonders to what extent his confidence that this could happen was bolstered by the immediacy with which his works were recorded when he was still in his

twenties. What was criticised at the time as hype, and potentially dangerous for an artist so young, may in fact have speeded up his growth.

Doubtless there will be further change, in ways unforeseeable. But Adès, at 36, is already the consistent master of a style that is – despite the echoes and reflections, which in any case are probably never quite what they seem – identifiable and unique. He has a genius for the big miniature – the piece that lasts just a few minutes, within which it thoroughly explores some new sound combination or compositional tactic, or else tackles an old one in a new way. Many of his pieces from the Nineties are of this kind, whether self-standing or contained within larger works (*Powder Her Face*, which was his first opera, or *Asyla*, effectively his first symphony). But he has always had a sure command, too, of larger forms, continuous and capacious, and beguilingly persuasive.

Even so, what may be his most valuable characteristic, and certainly his rarest, is that he can bring candour into a context of sophistication. The assurance that allows him to hold musical conversation with eminent composers two or three generations older, to programme his music, as he does here, with the marbled great, and to anticipate an audience that will want to come to his music again and again, that assurance, it may be, is what gives him access to the very frankest kinds of musical expression. Few other composers of today could have exited today's cynicism sufficiently to produce a full-blown love duet, as Adès does in his second opera, *The Tempest*. Few could conjure, or appropriately stage, the kind of naked melody that is cropping up more and more in Adès's music, even as that music deepens.

Simplicity in our time is the hardest thing to achieve. Here in Adès's music it is happening, time and again.

Paul Griffiths © 2007

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Thomas Adès piano

Born in London, where he lives, Thomas Adès studied piano at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, and read music at King's College, Cambridge. Among his best known works are *Living Toys*, *Arcadiana*, and *Asyla* – a commission for Sir Simon Rattle

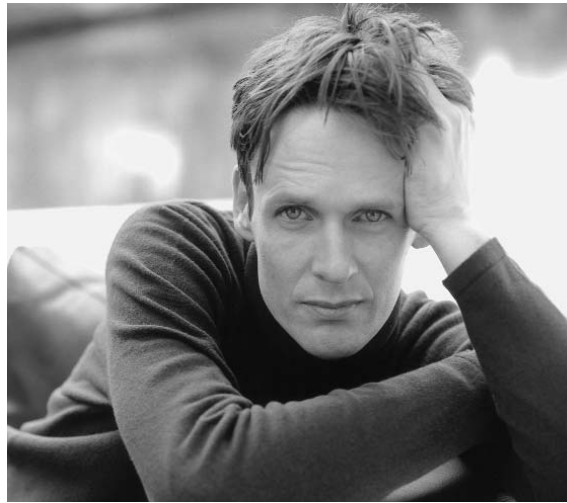
and the CBSO (1997) which enjoyed immediate and subsequent international success. *Tevoť*, his latest orchestral work, features as part of the Berliner Philharmoniker's current tour.

Adès's first opera, *Powder Her Face*, has been performed around the world, televised and recorded. Most of the composer's music has been recorded by EMI, with whom Adès has a contract as composer, pianist and conductor. His second opera, *The Tempest*, was commissioned by the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and was premiered there under the baton of the composer in 2004; it was revived at Covent Garden last month.

In demand worldwide as a conductor and pianist, Adès is a renowned interpreter of his own music, while his performances and recordings of other composers have also been critically acclaimed. His chamber music collaborators include Ian Bostridge and the Belcea Quartet and he has conducted many orchestras and ensembles including Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, with which he has a close association. He has been Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival since 1999. He is the featured composer this spring in the Présences Festival in Paris, where 23 of his works are being programmed and broadcast in just under a month, in performances involving over 700 musicians. Later this year Adès is the focus of Oslo's Ultima Festival, and in 2007/08 he undertakes a major residency at Carnegie Hall, New York.

The music of Thomas Adès has attracted wide international recognition including, most recently, the 2000 Grawemeyer Award for *Asyla* (the largest international prize for composition, here awarded to the youngest recipient), the 2001 Hindemith Prize, and a 2005 Royal Philharmonic Society Award for *The Tempest*.

Ian Bostridge *tenor*



Ian Bostridge was a post-doctoral fellow in History at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, before embarking on a full-time career as a singer. His international recital career includes the world's major concert halls and the Edinburgh, Munich, Vienna, Aldeburgh and Schwarzenberg-Schubertiade festivals, as well as artistic residencies at the Vienna Konzerthaus and the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and his own Perspectives series at Carnegie Hall.

In opera he has sung Tamino/*Die Zauberflöte*, Jupiter/*Semele* and Aschenbach/*Death in Venice* at English National Opera; Quint/*The Turn of the Screw*, Vašek/*The Bartered Bride*, Don Ottavio/*Don Giovanni* and Caliban/*The Tempest* for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Don Ottavio in Vienna and Nerone/*L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Tom Rakewell/*The Rake's Progress* and Male Chorus/*The Rape of Lucretia* in Munich.

His recordings include Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* with Graham Johnson (*Gramophone Award*, 1996); Tom Rakewell with John Eliot Gardiner (*Grammy Award*, 1999); and Belmonte/*Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (with William Christie). He is an exclusive artist with EMI/Angel, for whom he has recorded Lieder by Schubert, Schumann and Henze, as well as English song with Julius Drake, *Idomeneo* with Sir Charles Mackerras, Janáček with Thomas Adès, Schubert with Leif Ove Andsnes, Noël Coward with Jeffrey Tate, Britten's orchestral cycles with the Berliner Philharmoniker and Sir Simon Rattle, Wolf with Antonio Pappano, Bach cantatas with Fabio Biondi, Britten's *Canticles* and *The Turn of the Screw* (*Gramophone Award*, 2003).

His concert engagements include the Berliner Philharmoniker, Vienna Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Boston Symphony, London Symphony, London Philharmonic, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw of Amsterdam, New York Philharmonic and Los Angeles Philharmonic orchestras under Sir Simon Rattle, Sir Colin Davis, Sir Andrew Davis, Seiji Ozawa, Riccardo Muti, Mstislav Rostropovich, Daniel Barenboim, Daniel Harding, Donald Runnicles and Antonio Pappano.

In 2001 he was elected an honorary fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and in 2003 he was made an Honorary Doctor of Music by the University of St. Andrews. He was created a CBE in the 2004 New Year's Honours.

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