



Measha Brueggergosman & Simon Lepper

Wednesday 8 May 2019 7.30pm,
Milton Court Concert Hall

Ravel Shéhérazade

Debussy Chansons de Bilitis

Duparc Chanson triste; L'invitation au voyage; Phidylé;
La vie antérieure

interval 20 minutes

Cage The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs

Montsalvatge Cinco canciones negras

William Bolcom Cabaret Songs:

Surprise; The total stranger in the garden;
Toothbrush time; Song of Black Max; George;
Amor

Measha Brueggergosman soprano

Simon Lepper piano

Part of Barbican Presents 2018–19

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Welcome

A warm welcome to tonight's recital given by an artist who delights in defying expectation. The Canadian soprano Measha Brueggergosman made a big impact when she participated in Jeremy Denk's residency last season so we're delighted that she is tonight giving a complete recital.

She's an artist who doesn't believe in barriers between different genres, which is why she is equally at home as a mentor on *Canada's Got Talent* and singing in the UK premiere of Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* at the Barbican last year.

As a recitalist she has wide-ranging tastes, from the exotic beauty of Ravel's *Shéhérazade* and the sense of erotic

longing in Debussy's *Chansons de Bilitis* to the extraordinarily distilled world of Duparc, who left only a handful of songs.

From here we move to the piquancy of Montsalvatge and his *Five Negro Songs*. We also travel to America, with John Cage's strikingly original setting of James Joyce in *The Widow of Eighteen Springs*, before ending with a sequence of William Bolcom's brilliantly observed *Cabaret Songs* – by turns acerbic, poignant and even surreal.

It promises to be a remarkable evening; I hope you enjoy it.

Huw Humphreys, Head of Music, Barbican

Toothbrushes and wonderful widows: the art of song

For texts, see page 7

If recitals were only designed to show off a particular singer's vocal artistry then we should be disappointed. The most satisfying concerts are about the repertoire as much as the voice, about how a singer negotiates what are often very different kinds of song. Above all, it's about hearing a familiar repertoire in a new context, old favourites surrounded by unexpected choices from singers and their pianist partners.

So to hear William Bolcom's cabaret songs in the same programme as Henri Duparc's exquisite miniature masterpieces, as we shall tonight, or the combination of John Cage and Maurice Ravel, is both a measure of Measha Brueggergosman's talents as an artist and precisely what a carefully chosen programme ought to be. It's no surprise, though, given that Brueggergosman is as much at home singing contemporary works such as Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* – here at the Barbican last season – as she is in Verdi's *Requiem*, Strauss's *Elektra* and Brecht/Weill's *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*.

Ravel's song cycle *Shéhérazade* has its roots in the French obsession with all things oriental that began in the late 19th century and was subsequently fed by both Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes* and cultural memories of Napoleon's Egyptian expedition at the end of the 18th century. Both flowed into Ravel's song-cycle, which took its immediate cue from the collection of Middle Eastern folk-tales, *1,001 Nights*, which had been recently translated into French, and from Rimsky-Korsakov's concert suite *Scheherazade*.

In 1903 the poet Tristan Klingsor (Léon Leclère) published a collection of 100 poems inspired by Rimsky-Korsakov's music and stories from the *1,001 Nights*. Ravel and Klingsor belonged to a group of young artists who called themselves *Les Apaches*, and when the poet read the group

some of his poems Ravel was at once seduced by them.

He decided to set three of the poems and, hoping to capture the rhythms of French speech-patterns, insisted that the poet should re-read the lines aloud to him repeatedly. (Both men were admirers of the scrupulous way in which Debussy had set Materlinck's text for *Pelléas et Mélisande*.) Ravel also asked for changes, notably in the first of the three songs, 'Asie'. In the original poem a line in the final section reads, 'En conservant comme Sindbad ma vieille pipe arabe de temps en temps entre mes lèvres' ('Like Sinbad, putting my old Arab pipe between my lips from time to time'). However, in Parisian slang, 'pipe' had a phallic meaning, so Klingsor was persuaded to change the line to Sinbad raising an old Arab cup to his lips!

Nevertheless, 'Asie' with its languorous half-awake-half-dreaming opening is an erotically charged catalogue of the delights that await the traveller to the Orient. But as the repeated phrase 'Je voudrais voir...' ('I would like to see ...') tells us, this is armchair travelling. So as this richly imagined world slumps back into the everyday the music gently strokes the cushions of the chair.

In 'La flûte enchantée' a slave watching over a sleeping master hears her lover playing a flute outside, seemingly sending a kiss. It is music that unites the two lovers who yearn for each other but are separated by their circumstances.

'L'indifférent' is the most erotically ambiguous of the three songs. The poet is enticed by the charms of an androgynous youth, but fails to persuade him to visit his home to drink wine. There's the feeling of twilight around the song, underlined by hints of Debussy's *Nocturnes*, but is the boy's evening admirer male or female?

Shéhérazade was originally composed for piano and either a soprano or tenor; however,

it is almost always sung by a woman, either in the first version for piano and soloist which we hear tonight or the orchestral version which was planned to follow it. (It was Ravel's frequent practice to create orchestral versions of works first written for piano.) So the first performance of the cycle given in May 1904 at a Société Nationale concert in Paris was for orchestra and mezzo-soprano with Alfred Cortot conducting and Jeanne Hatto as soloist.

As members of Les Apaches Ravel and Klingsor were both cheerleaders for the music of Debussy. It was said that they attended every one of the 14 performances of the initial run of *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1902.

While working on the opera, Debussy found time to set three poems from *Chansons de Bilitis*, a collection of 143 poems and epigraphs by his friend Pierre Louÿs. He had passed off the collection as translations of verses from the ancient world, composed by a fictional Greek priestess who was a friend of the poet Sappho. No-one was fooled for long, but the poems, which circled the subjects of sacred and profane love, were greatly admired for their subtle blending of ancient and modern.

The three poems that Debussy chose can be heard as a shortened biography of Bilitis from her adolescence, growing up on Lesbos, to her sexual awakening and life as a celebrated courtesan in Cyprus. In 'La flûte de Pan' an adolescent Bilitis is strongly attracted to her flute teacher Lykas: clearly there are more than music lessons on the curriculum, and no prizes for guessing what the flute signifies! By the time of 'La chevelure' Lykas has become Bilitis's lover, and his dream of her hair is a metaphor for their relationship, now consummated. The tempo grows faster until it reaches a climax on the line 'entering into me like a dream'. 'Le tombeau des naïades' tells of the end of the affair. Winter has fallen on Bilitis's heart and over the landscape: this is the season

of ice, a tomb for the water nymphs. There is naught for our comfort in the line 'Depuis trente ans il n'a pas fait un hiver aussi terrible' (For thirty years there has not been so harsh a winter).

The drama in these songs is as much in the piano part as in the vocal line and, throughout, the latter aspires to the condition of spoken French with hints of the classical world in the piano part, which uses a version of the ancient Lydian mode.

If Debussy spent his later years endeavouring to banish the influence of Richard Wagner from his work, then Henri Duparc willingly embraced it. He was a pupil of César Franck, leader of the French Wagnerians, and in 1887 went on a pilgrimage to the Festspielhaus with Emmanuel Chabrier, who took against the composer's widow Cosima after she gave a long lecture on her late husband's greatness, and apparently disposed of an unwanted prune tart in a drawer containing the late master's silk underwear!

Duparc's career as composer lasted for just 16 years and its harvest is effectively just 17 songs, the last of which was composed in 1884, although he would live on until 1933. But what songs! 'Chanson triste', a setting of a poem by Henri Cazalis, known as Jean Lahor, was the composer's first *mélodie* and published in 1869, with four other songs, and then revised in 1902. The poet dreams of his heart and thoughts being cradled in his beloved's arms and Duparc sets an exquisite melody above the lightest of arpeggios to bear the promise of the poem that love is possible and that such love will heal. Life may be sad but there can be hope.

'L'invitation au voyage', dedicated to his wife Ellen, is possibly Duparc's masterpiece. It sets a poem by Baudelaire that proved irresistible to a whole generation of 19th-century French composers. The poet may seek to evoke the watery landscape of Holland but Duparc shakes the text free from its geography to create a song that is simultaneously

mysterious and nostalgic, that within its lilting melodic line yearns for what has been lost. Nothing is quite what it seems, underlined by ambiguous harmonies and unstable rhythms.

Wagnerian chromaticism stalks through 'Phidylé', which Duparc dedicated to his friend and fellow composer Ernest Chausson. There's a *Tristan*-esque feel to this setting of Leconte de Lisle's poem, with its sensual yearning and ecstatic climax. Asleep in the grass the shepherdess Phidylé will awake and greet her lover with a kiss. And as the piano part imperceptibly fades in a postlude, the rest is silence.

'La vie antérieure' was composed in 1884. The poem by Baudelaire evokes an ideal existence laced with happiness that proffers liberation and fulfilment, but there is a worm in the bud, there in the final line, 'the secret grief which made me languish'. Here is a place that cannot be reached. So Duparc suffuses his setting with a heartsore yearning for what cannot be. Honeyed nostalgia drips through every phrase, particularly in the extended postlude. This is Duparc's last magnificent word. One can only regret that there were to be no more new *mélodies*.

Melody in any traditional sense was not something that greatly troubled the American composer John Cage, yet he and Duparc both embraced a radical aesthetic in their music. Cage's *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs*, a song for voice and closed piano with a text from James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* – a novel that Cage once described as 'endless and attractive' – has earned itself the status of a classic, but in 1942 when it was commissioned by the non-professional soprano Janet Fairbank it was surely on the far frontier of Modernism. It also marked the beginning of Cage's lifelong interest in James Joyce, though he undermines the text in *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs* by abandoning its original punctuation and imposing a kind of narrative on Joyce's fragments.

The 'melody' that Cage writes for his soloist is a kind of hypnotic chant based on three separate pitches, but it's the piano part where Cage reveals his radical approach. The piano is closed, and the pianist produces a sound by hitting the outside of the instrument with fingers, knuckles and so on.

This is a work that confronts its audience. What is a song? What is the relationship between the singer and that song? Who is the 'author'? And, given that Cage puts every word in his prepared text in capital letters, the result, as one commentator has observed 'is a depersonalisation of Joyce's literary "voice", an early intimation perhaps of Cage's desire to release art from the constraints of individual taste and self-expression'.

Possibly wishing to escape the constraints imposed on composing in Catalonia during the Franco period, the Barcelona-trained composer Xavier Montsalvatge looked across the Atlantic for inspiration when he began what has become his best-known work, *Cinco canciones negras*. Written in 1945–6 these five songs relish the insistent rhythms and bold colours of the West Indies. Montsalvatge delights in jazz chords, Cuban dance rhythms and Caribbean percussion, all of which are given a subtle Spanish accent.

'Cuba dentro de un piano' is a setting of a text by the surrealist poet Rafael Alberti, which has sharp things to say about how the USA treated Cuba before the Castro Revolution. 'Punto de Habanera' sets a teasing poem by Néstor Luján. A pretty Creole girl in a hooped skirt is watched by sailors. Gentle dissonances in the piano part tell us that she knows exactly what she is doing. Then comes Nicolás Guillén's 'Chévere', a frightening encounter with a knife-waving cut-throat who slashes at the shadows and the moonlight before returning to slash at his woman. Again Montsalvatge deploys a subtle dissonance at the end of the song to hint at a grim end for the woman. 'Canción de

cuna para dormir a un negrito' is a lullaby by Ildefonso Pereda Valdés. A mother rocks her child and promises that in sleep he will no longer be a slave. The mother may caressingly sing her child to sleep but the piano part reminds us that this cannot be an all-is-well lullaby. In the final song, 'Canto negro', a setting of another poem by Guillén, there's drunken dancing and singing with jubilant cries of 'Yambambó, yambambé'.

The American composer William Bolcom learnt his music on both sides of the Atlantic studying first at the University of Washington and then with Milhaud, Messaien and Boulez. As eclectic in his tastes as Charles Ives, his youthful hero, Bolcom has happily commuted between the concert hall, opera house and less formal venues, writing a cluster of songs for cabaret. And he is in good company: Poulenc, Britten and Schoenberg also all wrote cabaret songs. Arnold Weinstein, a poet and the librettist for two of Bolcom's operas, wrote the texts for these songs and said: 'We wrote these songs as a cabaret in themselves, no production values to worry about [unlike in the operas]. The scene is the piano, the cast is the singer.'

The collaboration between Weinstein and Bolcom produced some two dozen songs which have often been performed by the composer and his wife, mezzo-soprano Joan Morris. As one American commentator observes, 'These 24 songs' fascinating blend of sophisticated rhetoric and seeming unrefinement have led to their frequent inclusion in both vocal recitals and theatrical revues. Rarely predictable but always pleasing, the songs tread a most delicate balance between pathos and bathos.'

'Surprise', wrapped about an unsettling chromaticism, springs a surprise party on

an office worker who, after 25 years with the company, would rather kill herself than party. If there are hints of Emily Dickinson in this bleak little tale, it's a cousin of Edgar Allan Poe's *doppelgänger* whom we meet in 'The total stranger in the garden'. A middle-aged woman whose husband has become a stranger finds a genuine stranger across her garden table. 'Toothbrush time' is a jazzy number about a woman desperate for an unwanted lover from the night before to exit her life. On the other hand no-one, however desperate, would want to mix with Black Max, 'always dressed in black, long black jacket, broad black hat, sometimes a cape'. Here's an American cousin of Brecht and Weill's Mackie Messer. It's a knowing ballad that snakes its way through an urban dystopia. 'George' is a scream – 'Oh call me Georgia, hon, get yourself a drink,' – who 'sang the best soprano in our part of town' and is knifed by a casual trick. There's Puccini in the piano part and lilting ragtime before they bury him 'at the cocktail hour.' 'Amor' is perhaps one of Bolcom's most familiar songs with a tender melody wrapped around a distinctly Latin beat from Chile as a young woman turns every head in town.

William Bolcom's cabaret songs surprise and delight, but with consummate skill they weave together the popular and the serious. It's said that Bolcom particularly likes a remark made by John Cage: 'some people divide the world into things that are good and things that are bad. Others take it all in and let their inner organism decide.' In other words, as Cole Porter tells us, 'anything goes'. And that perhaps is how you begin to programme a good song recital.

Programme note © Christopher Cook

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)**Shéhérazade****1 Asie**

Asie, Asie, Asie,
Vieux pays merveilleux des contes de nourrice,
Où dort la fantaisie comme une impératrice
En sa forêt tout emplie de mystère.

Je voudrais m'en aller avec la goëlette
Qui se berce ce soir dans le port,
Mystérieuse et solitaire,
Et qui déploie enfin ses voiles violettes
Comme un immense oiseau de nuit dans le ciel
d'or.

Je voudrais m'en aller vers les îles de fleurs,
En écoutant chanter la mer perverse
Sur un vieux rythme ensorceleur.

Je voudrais voir Damas et les villes de Perse

Avec les minarets légers dans l'air;
Je voudrais voir de beaux turbans de soie
Sur des visages noirs aux dents claires;

Je voudrais voir des yeux sombres d'amour
Et des prunelles brillantes de joie
En des peaux jaunes comme des oranges;
Je voudrais voir des vêtements de velours
Et des habits à longues franges.

Je voudrais voir des calumets entre des bouches
Tout entourées de barbe blanche;
Je voudrais voir d'âpres marchands aux regards
louches,
Et des cadis, et des vizirs
Qui du seul mouvement de leur doigt qui se
penche
Accorde vie ou mort au gré de leur désir.

Je voudrais voir la Perse, et l'Inde, et puis la
Chine,
Les mandarins ventrus sous les ombrelles,
Et les princesses aux mains fines,
Et les lettrés qui se querellent
Sur la poésie et sur la beauté;

Je voudrais m'attarder au palais enchanté
Et comme un voyageur étranger
Contempler à loisir des paysages peints
Sur des étoffes en des cadres de sapin
Avec un personnage au milieu d'un verger;

Je voudrais voir des assassins souriant
Du bourreau qui coupe un cou d'innocent
Avec son grand sabre courbé d'Orient.

Asia

O Asia, Asia, Asia,
magic land of nursery tales,
where fantasy, like an empress, sleeps
in her forest full of mystery.

I would like to set sail with the schooner
that lies rocking in the harbour this night.
Mysterious and alone,
it unfurls at last its purple sails
like a huge night-bird in the golden sky.

I would like to set sail for the isles of flowers,
listening to the song of the brutal sea
to an ancient spell-like beat.

I would like to see Damascus and the towns of
Persia,
their dainty minarets tall in the air;
I would like to see fine turbans of silk
above black faces with gleaming teeth;

I would like to see eyes dark with love
and pupils bright with joy
against skins colourful as oranges;
I would like to see velvet clothes
and fringed dresses.

I would like to see pipes in mouths
encircled by white beards;
I would like to see greedy merchants with
scheming eyes,
cadis and viziers
who with a snap of their fingers
dispense at will life or death.

I would like to see Persia, India and China too,
pot-bellied mandarins beneath parasols,
princesses with slender hands
and scholars debating
poetry and beauty;

I would like to linger in the enchanted palace
and like a foreign wayfarer
contemplate at my ease landscapes daubed
on canvases in frames of pine,
a lone person in an orchard's midst;

I would like to see assassins smiling
as the executioner slices off an innocent's head
with the great curved sabre of the East.

Je voudrais voir des pauvres et des reines;
Je voudrais voir des roses et du sang;
Je voudrais voir mourir d'amour ou bien de
haine.

Et puis m'en revenir plus tard
Narrer mon aventure aux curieux de rêves
En élevant comme Sindbad ma vieille tasse
arabe
De temps en temps jusqu'à mes lèvres
Pour interrompre le conte avec art ...

2 La flûte enchantée

L'ombre est douce et mon maître dort,
Coiffé d'un bonnet conique de soie
Et son long nez jaune en sa barbe blanche.

Mais moi, je suis éveillée encor
Et j'écoute au dehors
Une chanson de flûte où s'épanche
Tour à tour la tristesse ou la joie,

Un air tour à tour langoureux ou frivole,
Que mon amoureux chéri joue,
Et quand je m'approche de la croisée
Il me semble que chaque note s'envole
De la flûte vers ma joue
Comme un mystérieux baiser.

3 L'indifférent

Tes yeux sont doux comme ceux d'une fille,
Jeune étranger,
Et la courbe fine
De ton beau visage de duvet ombragé
Est plus séduisante encor de ligne.

Ta lèvre chante sur le pas de ma porte
Une langue inconnue et charmante
Comme une musique fausse ...
Entre!
Et que mon vin te reconforte ...

Mais non, tu passes
Et de mon seuil je te vois t'éloigner
Me faisant un dernier geste avec grâce,
Et la hanche légèrement ployée
Par ta démarche féminine et lasse ...

*Tristan Klingsor (Léon Leclère, 1874–1966),
reproduced by permission of Editions Durand SA,
Paris/United Music Publishers Ltd*

I would like to see paupers and queens;
I would like to see roses and blood;
I would like to see men die of love or of hate.

And then later, homeward bound,
my tale narrate to those who thrive on dreams,
raising like Sinbad my old Arab cup
to my lips now and then
in an adroit interruption of my tale ...

The enchanted flute

The shade is cool and my master sleeps,
a cone-shaped cap of silk upon his head,
his long yellow nose thrust in his white beard.

But I, awoken once more,
hear from afar
a flute song spreading
in turn sadness and joy,

a tune, now languorous, now shallow,
that my dear love plays,
and when I near the casement
each note seems to fly
from the flute to my cheek
like a mysterious kiss.

The indifferent one

Your eyes are as gentle as a girl's,
O unknown youth,
and the soft curve
of your exquisite face shaded with down
is in its contours more seductive still.

On my doorstep your lips sing
in a strange yet beguiling tongue,
like music out of tune ...
Enter!
Let my wine refresh you ...

But no, you go,
and from my threshold I watch you leave,
a last graceful wave in my direction,
your hips slightly swaying
in your languid, feminine gait ...

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Classics*

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)**Chansons de Bilitis****1 La flûte de Pan**

Pour le jour des Hyacinthies, il m'a donné une
syrinx
faite de roseaux bien taillés, unis avec la blanche
cire
qui est douce à mes lèvres comme le miel.

Il m'apprend à jouer, assise sur ses genoux; mais
je
suis un peu tremblante. Il en joue après moi, si
doucement que je l'entends à peine.

Nous n'avons rien à nous dire, tant nous sommes
près l'un de l'autre; mais nos chansons veulent se
répondre, et tour à tour nos bouches s'unissent sur
la flûte.

Il est tard; voici le chant des grenouilles vertes qui
commence avec la nuit. Ma mère ne croira jamais
que
je suis restée si longtemps à chercher ma ceinture
perdue.

2 La chevelure

Il m'a dit: 'Cette nuit, j'ai rêvé. J'avais ta chevelure
autour de mon cou. J'avais tes cheveux comme un
collier noir autour de ma nuque et sur ma poitrine.

'Je les caressais, et c'étaient les miens; et nous
étions liés pour toujours ainsi, par la même
chevelure
la bouche sur la bouche, ainsi que deux lauriers
n'ont
souvent qu'une racine.

'Et peu à peu, il m'a semblé, tant nos membres
étaient confondus, que je devenais toi-même ou
que
tu entras en moi comme mon songe.'

Quand il eut achevé, il mit doucement ses mains
sur
mes épaules, et il me regarda d'un regard si
tendre,
que je baissai les yeux avec un frisson.

The flute of Pan

For Hyacinthus day he gave me a syrinx made of
carefully cut reeds, bonded with white wax which
tastes
sweet to my lips like honey.

He teaches me to play, as I sit on his lap; but I am
a little fearful. He plays it after me, so gently that I
scarcely hear him.

We have nothing to say, so close are we one to
another, but our songs try to answer each other,
and
our mouths join in turn on the flute.

It is late; here is the song of the green frogs that
begins with the night. My mother will never
believe
I stayed out so long to look for my lost sash.

The tresses of hair

He said to me: 'Last night I dreamed. I had your
tresses around my neck. I had your hair like a
black
necklace all round my nape and over my breast.

'I caressed it and it was mine; and we
were united thus for ever by the same tresses,
mouth on mouth, just as two laurels
often share one root.

'And gradually it seemed to me, so intertwined
were our limbs, that I was becoming you, or you
were
entering into me like a dream.'

When he had finished, he gently set his hands on
my shoulders and gazed at me so tenderly that I
lowered
my eyes with a shiver.

3 Le tombeau des naïades

Le long du bois couvert de givre, je marchais; mes cheveux devant ma bouche se fleurissaient de petits glaçons, et mes sandales étaient lourdes de neige fangeuse et tassée.

Il me dit: 'Que cherches-tu?' – 'Je suis la trace du satyre. Ses petits pas fourchus alternent comme des trous dans un manteau blanc.' Il me dit: 'Les satyres sont morts.

'Les satyres et les nymphes aussi. Depuis trente ans il n'a pas fait un hiver aussi terrible. La trace que tu vois est celle d'un bouc. Mais restons ici, où est leur tombeau.'

Et avec le fer de sa houe il cassa la glace de la source où jadis riaient les naïades. Il prenait de grands morceaux froids, et les soulevant vers le ciel pâle, il regardait au travers.

Pierre Louÿs (1870–1925)

Henri Duparc (1848–1933)

Chanson triste

Dans ton cœur dort un clair de lune,
Un doux clair de lune d'été,
Et pour fuir la vie importune
Je me noierai dans ta clarté.

J'oublierai les douleurs passées,
Mon amour, quand tu berceras
Mon triste cœur et mes pensées
Dans le calme aimant de tes bras.

Tu prendras ma tête malade,
Oh! quelquefois sur tes genoux,
Et lui diras une ballade
Qui semblera parler de nous,

Et dans tes yeux pleins de tristesses
Dans tes yeux alors je boirai
Tant de baisers et de tendresses
Que peut-être je guérirai.

Jean Lahor (Henri Cazalis, 1840–1909)

The tomb of the Naiads

Along the frost-bound wood I walked; my hair across my mouth, blossomed with tiny icicles, and my sandals were heavy with muddy, packed snow.

He said to me: 'What do you seek?' 'I follow the satyr's track. His little cloven hoof-marks alternate like holes in a white cloak.' He said to me: 'The satyrs are dead.

'The satyrs and the nymphs too. For thirty years there has not been so harsh a winter. The tracks you see are those of a goat. But let us stay here, where their tomb is.'

And with the iron head of his hoe he broke the ice of the spring, where the naiads used to laugh. He picked up some huge cold fragments, and, raising them to the pale sky, gazed through them.

Translations © Richard Stokes

Song of sadness

Moonlight slumbers in your heart,
a gentle summer moonlight,
and to escape the cares of life
I shall drown myself in your light.

I shall forget past sorrows,
my sweet, when you cradle
my sad heart and my thoughts
in the loving calm of your arms.

You will rest my poor head,
ah! sometimes on your lap,
and recite to it a ballad
that will seem to speak of us;

And from your eyes full of sorrow,
from your eyes I shall then drink
so many kisses and so much love
that perhaps I shall be healed.

L'invitation au voyage

Mon enfant, ma sœur,
 Songe à la douceur
 D'aller là-bas vivre ensemble.
 Aimer à loisir,
 Aimer et mourir
 Au pays qui te ressemble!
 Les soleils mouillés
 De ces ciels brouillés
 Pour mon esprit ont les charmes
 Si mystérieux
 De tes traîtres yeux,
 Brillant à travers leurs larmes.

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
 Luxe, calme et volupté!

Vois sur ces canaux
 Dormir ces vaisseaux
 Dont l'humeur est vagabonde;
 C'est pour assouvir
 Ton moindre désir
 Qu'ils viennent du bout du monde.
 Les soleils couchants
 Revêtent les champs,
 Les canaux, la ville entière,
 D'hyacinthe et d'or;
 Le monde s'endort
 Dans une chaude lumière

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
 Luxe, calme et volupté!

Charles Baudelaire (1821–67)

Phidylé

L'herbe est molle au sommeil sous les frais
 peupliers,
 Aux pentes des sources moussues
 Qui dans les prés en fleurs germant par mille
 issues,
 Se perdent sous les noirs halliers.

Repose, ô Phidylé. Midi sur les feuillages
 Rayonne, et t'invite au sommeil.
 Par le trèfle et le thym, seules, en plein soleil,

Chantent les abeilles volages.

Un chaud parfum circule au détour des sentiers,
 La rouge fleur des blés s'incline,
 Et les oiseaux, rasant de l'aile la colline,
 Cherchent l'ombre des églantiers.

Invitation to journey

My child, my sister,
 think of the sweetness
 of going to live there together.
 To love at leisure;
 to love and to die
 in the land which resembles you.
 The watery suns
 of those hazy skies
 have, for me, the charms,
 so mysterious,
 of your treacherous eyes
 shining through their tears.

There, all is naught but order and beauty,
 comfort, peace and pleasure.

See, on those waterways,
 how the ships slumber,
 though wanderers by nature;
 it is to satisfy
 your smallest desire
 that they come from the ends of the earth.
 The setting suns
 clothe the fields,
 the waters, all the town,
 in hyacinth and gold;
 the world falls asleep
 in a warm light.

There, all is naught but order and beauty,
 comfort, peace and pleasure.

Phidylé

The grass is soft for sleep beneath the cool
 poplars
 On the banks of the mossy springs
 That flow in flowering meadows from a thousand
 sources,
 And vanish beneath dark thickets.

Rest, O Phidylé! Noon on the leaves
 is gleaming, inviting you to sleep.
 By the clover and thyme, alone, in the bright
 sunlight,
 The fickle bees are humming.

A warm fragrance floats about the winding paths,
 The red flowers of the cornfield droop;
 And the birds, skimming the hillside with their
 wings,
 Seek the shade of the eglantine.

Mais quand l'Astre, incliné sur sa courbe éclatante,
Verra ses ardeurs s'apaiser,
Que ton plus beau sourire et ton meilleur baiser
Me récompensent de l'attente!

Charles-Marie-René Leconte de Lisle (1818–94)

La vie antérieure

J'ai longtemps habité sous de vastes portiques
Que les soleils marins teignaient de mille feux,
Et que leurs grands piliers, droits et majestueux,
Rendaient pareils, le soir, aux grottes basaltiques.

Les houles, en roulant les images des cieux,
Mêlaient d'une façon solennelle et mystique
Les tout-puissants accords de leur riche musique
Aux couleurs du couchant reflété par mes yeux.

C'est là que j'ai vécu dans les voluptés calmes
Au milieu de l'azur, des vagues, des splendeurs,
Et des esclaves nus, tout imprégnés d'odeurs,

Qui me rafraîchissaient le front avec des palmes,
Et dont l'unique soin était d'approfondir
Le secret douloureux qui me faisait languir.

Charles Baudelaire

interval 20 minutes

But when the sun, low on its dazzling curve,
sees its brilliance wane,
let your loveliest smile and finest kiss
reward me for my waiting!

A previous life

For long I lived beneath vast colonnades
tinged with a thousand fires by ocean suns,
whose giant pillars, straight and majestic,
made them look, at evening, like basalt caves.

The sea-swells, mingling the mirrored skies,
solemnly and mystically interwove
the mighty chords of their mellow music
with the colours of sunset reflected in my eyes.

It is there that I have lived in sensuous repose,
with blue sky about me and brightness and waves
and naked slaves, all drenched in perfume.

Who fanned my brow with fronds of palm,
and whose only care was to fathom
the secret grief which made me languish.

Translations © Richard Stokes

John Cage (1912–92)**The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs**

NIGHT BY SILENTSAILING NIGHT ...

ISOBEL ...

WILDWOODS' EYES AND PRIMAROSE HAIR,
QUIETLY,ALL THE WOODS SO WILD, IN MAUVES OF
MOSS AND DAPHNEDEWS,HOW ALL SO STILL SHE LAY NEATH OF THE
WHITETHORN, CHILD OF TREE,

LIKE SOME LOSTHAPPY LEAF,

LIKE BLOWING FLOWER STILLED,

AS FAIN WOULD SHE ANON,

FOR SOON AGAIN 'T WIL BE,

WIN ME, WOO ME, WED ME,

AH WEARY ME!

DEEPLY,

NOW EVENCALM LAY SLEEPING; NIGHT

ISOBEL

SISTER ISOBEL

SAINTETTE ISOBEL

MADAME ISA

VEUVE LA BELLE

Adapted from James Joyce's 'Finnegans Wake'
Copyright © 1939 by James Joyce.

Xavier Montsalvatge (1912–2002)**Cinco canciones negras****1 Cuba dentro de un piano**Cuando mi madre llevaba un sorbete de fresa
por sombreroy el humo de los barcos aún era humo de
habanero.*Mulata vuelta bajera ...*Cádiz se adormecía entre fandangos y
habaneras

y un lorito al piano quería hacer de tenor.

*... dime dónde está la flor**que el hombre tanto venera.*

Mi tío Antonio volvía con su aire de insurrecto.

La Cabaña y el Príncipe sonaban por los patios
del Puerto.

(Ya no brilla la Perla azul del mar de las Antillas.

Ya se apagó, se nos ha muerto.)

Me encontré con la bella Trinidad ...

Cuba se había perdido y ahora era verdad.

Era verdad,

no era mentira.

Un cañonero huido llegó cantándolo en guajira.

*La Habana ya se perdió.**Tuvo la culpa el dinero ...***Five Negro Songs****Cuba in a piano**

When my mother wore a strawberry ice for a hat

and the smoke from the boats was still Havana
smoke.*Mulato from Vuelta Abajo ...*Cadiz was falling asleep to fandango and
habanera

and a little parrot at the piano tried to sing tenor.

*... tell me, where is the flower**that a man can really respect.*My uncle Anthony would come home
in his rebellious way.The Cabaña and El Príncipe resounded in the
patios of the port.(But the blue pearl of the Caribbean shines no
more.

Extinguished. For us no more.)

I met beautiful Trinidad ...

Cuba was lost, this time it was true.

True

and not a lie.

A gunner on the run arrived, sang Cuban songs
about it all.*Havana was lost**and money was to blame ...*

Calló,
cayó el cañonero.
Pero después, pero ¡ah! después
fue cuando al Sí
lo hicieron YES.

Rafael Alberti (1902–99)

2 Punto de Habanera

La niña criolla pasa con su miriñaque blanco.
¡Qué blanco!
¡Hola! Crespón de tu espuma;
¡Marineros, contempladla!
Va mojadita de lunas
que le hacen su piel mulata.
Niña no te quejes,
tan sólo por esta tarde.
Quisiera mandar al agua
que no se escape de pronto
de la cárcel de tu falda.
Tu cuerpo encierra esta tarde
rumor de abrirse de dalia.
Niña, no te quejes,
tu cuerpo de fruta está
dormido en fresco brocado.
Tu cintura vibra fina
con la nobleza de un látigo,
toda tu piel huele alegre
a limonal y naranjo.
Los marineros te miran
y se te quedan mirando.
La niña criolla pasa con su miriñaque blanco.
¡Qué blanco!

Néstor Luján (1922–95)

3 Chévere

Chévere del navajazo,
se vuelve él mismo navaja:
Pica tajadas de luna,
mas la luna se le acaba;
pica tajadas de canto,
mas el canto se le acaba;
pica tajadas de sombra,
mas la sombra se le acaba,
y entonces pica que pica
carne de su negra mala.

Nicolás Guillén (1902–89)

4 Canción de cuna para dormir a un negrito

Ninghe, ninghe, ninghe,
tan chiquito,
el negrito

The gunner went silent,
fell.
But later, ah, later
they changed Sí
to YES.

Habanera rhythm

The Creole girl goes by in her white crinoline.
How white!
The billowing spray of your crepe skirt!
Sailors, look at her!
She passes gleaming in the moonlight
which darkens her skin.
Young girl, do not complain,
only for tonight
do I wish the water
not to suddenly escape
the prison of your skirt.
In your body this evening
dwells the sound of opening dahlias.
Young girl, do not complain,
your ripe body
sleeps in fresh brocade,
your waist quivers
as proud as a whip,
every inch of your skin is gloriously fragrant
with orange and lemon trees.
The sailors look at you
and feast their eyes on you.
The Creole girl goes by in her white crinoline.
How white!

The dandy

The dandy of the knife thrust
himself becomes a knife:
he cuts slices of the moon,
but the moon is fading on him;
he cuts slices of song,
but the song is fading on him;
he cuts slices of shadow,
but the shadow is fading on him,
and then he cuts up, cuts up
the flesh of his evil black woman!

Lullaby for a little black boy

Lullay, lullay, lullay,
tiny little child,
little black boy

que no quiere dormir.

Cabeza de coco,
grano de café,
con lindas motitas,
con ojos grandotes
como dos ventanas
que miran al mar

Cierra tus ojitos,
negrito asustado;
el mandinga blanco
te puede comer.
¡Ya no eres esclavo!

Y si duermes mucho,
el señor de casa
promete comprar
traje con botones
para ser un 'groom'.

Ninghe, ninghe, ninghe,
duérmete, negrito,
cabeza de coco,
grano de café.

Ildefonso Pereda Valdés (1899–1996)

5 Canto negro

¡Yambambó, yambambé!
Repica el congo solongo,
repica el negro bien negro.
Congo solongo del Songo
baila yambó sobre un pie.

Mamatomba,
serembé cuserembá.

El negro canta y se ajuma.
el negro se ajuma y canta.
el negro canta y se va.

Acuememe serembó
aé,
yambó
aé.

Tamba, tamba, tamba, tamba,
tamba del negro que tumba,
tamba del negro, caramba,
caramba, que el negro tumba,
¡Yambá, yambó, yambambé!

Nicolás Guillén

who won't go to sleep.

Head like a coconut,
head like a coffee bean,
with pretty freckles
and wide eyes
like two windows
looking out to sea.

Close your tiny eyes,
frightened little boy,
or the white devil
will eat you up.
You're no longer a slave!

And if you sleep soundly,
the master of the house
promises to buy
a suit with buttons
to make you a 'groom'.

Lullay, lullay, lullay,
sleep, little black boy,
head like a coconut,
head like a coffee bean.

Negro song

Yambambó, yambambé!
The congo solongo is ringing,
the black man, the real black man is ringing;
congo solongo from the Songo
is dancing the yambó on one foot.

Mamatomba,
serembé cuserembá.

The black man sings and gets drunk,
the black man gets drunk and sings,
the black man sings and goes away.

Acuememe serembó
aé,
yambó
aé.

Bam, bam, bam bam,
bam of the black man who tumbles;
drum of the black man, wow,
wow, how the black man's tumbling!
Yambá, yambó, yambambé!

Translations © Jacqueline Cockburn and Richard Stokes from 'The Spanish Song Companion' (Gollancz)

William Bolcom (born 1938)

Cabaret Songs

Surprise

Surprise!

Her twenty-fifth year at the office!

They threw her a surprise party!

Surprise! Surprise! Surprise!

And they were surprised

when she tried to drink

iodine

from the paper cup

at the water cooler

of cool

spring water.

The total stranger in the garden

Sitting across the table

In the garden of our garden apartment

I stared at the paper my husband was reading

And I said to him:

You're a stranger

A total stranger

Always have been

Always will be

Sitting there

Hiding there

Behind that printed mask.

Stop reading, stop reading me out of house and
home

Must I ask till my mouth fills up with foam?

You total stranger

You stranger, you!

Then he lowered the paper

And I saw it was not my husband

But a total stranger

A total stranger who said to me:

'I am a kind of hobo of space

Trying to find a mask to erase

The mask behind

The mask behind

The mask behind

The face.'

Toothbrush time

It's toothbrush time,

Ten a.m. again

And toothbrush time.

Last night at half-past nine

It seemed OK.

But in the light of day

Not so fine

At toothbrush time.

Now he's crashing round my bathroom,

Now he's reading my degree,

Perusing all my pills

Reviewing all my ills

And he comes out smelling like me.

Now he advances on my kitchen,

Now he raids every shelf

Till from the pots and pans

And puddles and debris

Emerges three eggs all for himself.

Oh, how I'd be ahead

If I'd stood out of bed!

I wouldn't sit here grieving,

Waiting for the wonderful

Moment of his leaving

At toothbrush time,

Toothbrush time

Ten a.m. again

And toothbrush time.

I know it's sad to be alone

It's so bad to be alone,

Still I should've known

That I'd be glad to be alone.

I should've known, I should've known!

Never should've picked up the phone

And called him.

Hey – uh, listen, uhm,

(trying to remember his name)

Uh, I've got to, uh,

Oh, you gotta go too?

So glad you undersand.

And by the way,

Did you say,

Nine tonight again?

See you then.

(piano slams door)

Toothbrush time!

Song of Black Max*(As told by the de Kooning Boys)*

He was always dressed in black,
 Long black jacket, broad black hat,
 Sometimes a cape,
 And as thin, and as thin as rubber tape:
 Black Max.

He would raise that big black hat
 To the big shots of the town
 Who raised their hats right back,
 Never knew they were bowing to
 Black Max.

I'm talking about night in Rotterdam
 When the right night people of all the town
 Would find what they could
 In the night neighborhood of
 Black Max.

There were women in the windows
 With bodies for sale
 Dressed in curls like little girls
 In little dollhouse jails.
 When the women walked the street
 With the beds upon their backs
 Who was lifting up his brim to them?
 Black Max!

And there were looks for sale
 The art of the smile –
 (Only certain people walked that mystery mile:
 Artists, charlatans, vaudevillians
 Men of mathematics, acrobatics and civilians).
 There was knitting-needle music
 From a lady organ-grinder
 With all her sons behind her,
 Marco, Vito, Benno
 (Was he strong! Though he walked like a woman)
 And Carlo, who was five
 He must be still alive!

Ah, poor Marco had the syph, and if
 You didn't take the terrible cure those days
 You went crazy and died
 And he did.
 And at the coffin
 Before they closed the lid,
 Who raised *his* lid?
 Black Max!

I was climbing on the train
 One day going far away
 To the good old USA
 When I heard some music
 Underneath the tracks.
 Standing there beneath the bridge,

Long black jacket, broad black hat,
 Playing the harmonica, one hand free,
 To lift that hat to me:
 Black Max, Black Max, Black Max.

George

My friend George
 Used to say 'Oh, call me Georgia, hon,
 Get yourselves a drink.'
 And sang the best soprano
 In our part of town.

In beads, brocade and pins
 He sang if you happened in
 Through the door he never locked
 And said, 'Get yourselves a drink'.
 And sang out loud
 Till tears fell in the cognac
 And in the chocolate milk and gin
 And on the beads, brocade and pins.

When strangers happened through his open door
 George said, 'Stay,
 But you gotta keep quiet
 While I sing
 And then a minute after,
 And call me Georgia.'

One fine day
 A stranger in a suit
 Of navy blue
 Took George's life
 With a knife
 George had placed
 Beside an apple pie he'd baked
 And stabbed him in the middle
 Of *Un bel di vedremo*
 Which he sang
 For this particular stranger
 Who was in the United States Navy.

The funeral was at the cocktail hour.
 We knew George would like it like that.
 Tears fell on the beads, brocade and pins
 In the coffin
 Which was white
 Because George was a virgin.
 Oh, call him Georgia, hon,
 Get yourself a drink.

'You can call me Georgia, hon,
 Get yourself a drink!'

Amor

It wasn't the policeman's fault
In all the traffic roar
Instead of shouting halt
When he saw me, he shouted Amor.

Even the ice-cream man
(free ice creams by the score!)
Instead of shouting Butter Pecan
One look at me
He shouted Amor.

All over town it went that way
Everybody took off the day
Even philosophers understood
How good was the good 'cuz I looked so good!
The poor stopped taking less
The rich stopped needing more
Instead of saying no and yes
Both looking at me shouted Amor.
My stay in town was cut short
I was dragged to court
The judge said I disturbed the peace
And the jury gave him what for!
The judge raised his hand
And instead of Desist and Cease
Judgie came to the stand
Took my hand
And whispered Amor.

Night was turning into day
I walked alone away
Never see that town again.
But as I passed the church-house door
Instead of singing Amen
The choir was singing Amor.

Arnold Weinstein (1927–2005)

About the performers



Lisa MacIntosh

Measha Bruegggosman

Measha Bruegggosman soprano

Canadian soprano Measha Bruegggosman is renowned for her musicality and versatility across a wide range of repertoire. Recent highlights on the opera stage include *Giulietta* and *Antonia* (*Les contes d'Hoffmann*), *Elettra* (*Idomeneo*), *Jenny* (Weill's *Mahagonny*), *Emilia Marty* (*The Makropulos Affair*), *Hannah* (Miroslav Srnka's *Make No Noise*) and *Sister Rose* (Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*).

On the concert platform, she has appeared with the Orchestre de Paris, Philadelphia Orchestra, and New World and San Francisco Symphony orchestras, working with conductors such as Daniel Barenboim, Sir Andrew Davis, Gustavo Dudamel, Daniel Harding, Michael Tilson Thomas and Franz Welser-Möst.

Highlights this season include her operatic debut at Finnish National Opera as *Giulietta*, tonight's return to Milton Court Concert Hall, an appearance at Carnegie Hall with the New

World Symphony Orchestras, performances as *Elettra* at Opera Atelier and concerts with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Tilson Thomas.

Her earlier career was focused on the song recital and she has given innovative programmes at Carnegie Hall, Washington's Kennedy Center, the Wigmore Hall, the Vienna Konzerthaus and Musikverein and Madrid's Teatro Real, as well as at the Schwarzenberg, Edinburgh, Verbier and Bergen festivals. Pianists with whom she has worked include Justus Zeyen, Roger Vignoles, Julius Drake and Simon Lepper.

Her first recording for DG, *Surprise*, of works by Schoenberg, Satie and William Bolcom, was widely critically acclaimed. Her subsequent disc, *Night and Dreams*, featured songs by Mozart, Brahms, Richard Strauss, Schubert, Debussy, Duparc and Fauré, and won several awards, while her recording of Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder* with Welser-Möst and the Cleveland Orchestra earned her a Grammy nomination.

Off stage, she is just as active: she recently released her memoir *Something Is Always On Fire* (published by Harper Collins), and she appears regularly on primetime television, most recently advocating contemporary Canadian literature. She has also led Canadian children across the country in song, in celebration of the nationwide campaign for music education.

Measha Bruegggosman champions educational projects and the promotion of new audiences and holds several honorary doctorates.



Simon Lepper

Simon Lepper piano

Simon Lepper read Music at King's College, Cambridge. He is a professor of collaborative piano and a vocal repertoire coach at the Royal College of Music in London, where he is also in charge of the collaborative piano course. Since 2003 he has been an official accompanist for the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition.

Performance highlights include an invitation from the Wigmore Hall to present three concerts exploring the songs of Joseph Marx; a recital tour with baritone Stéphane Degout which included the Ravinia and Edinburgh festivals; his debut at Carnegie Hall with mezzo-soprano Karen Cargill; a recital with Christopher Purves at the Frick Collection, New York; performances of the Schubert song-cycles with Mark Padmore,

including at the Schubertiade, Hohenhems; and recitals with Angelika Kirchsclager in Verbier and at the Wigmore Hall where he has also given recitals with Christopher Maltman, Sally Matthews and Lawrence Zazzo.

Last season he gave a European tour with Stéphane Degout, including performances at the opera houses of Dijon, La Monnaie, Lausanne and Lyon as well as at the Wigmore Hall. He presented an all-Schubert programme with Ilker Arcayürek in Barcelona, Zurich, New York, San Francisco and at the Wigmore Hall, where further appearances included recitals with Dame Felicity Palmer, Karen Cargill and Mark Padmore. He toured to India with Benjamin Appl, including recitals in Mumbai and Chennai. Future highlights include a return to Carnegie Hall with Sally Matthews and the release of a CD of ballads with Stéphane Degout.

His discography includes two volumes of Debussy songs and Richard Strauss disc with Gillian Keith (*Deux-Elles*), a disc of Gustav and Alma Mahler songs with Karen Cargill (Linn Records), the complete songs of Jonathan Dove with Kitty Whately (*Champs Hill*) and a CD of contemporary violin works with Carolin Widmann, which received a *Diapason d'Or*. More recent releases include a song recital disc with Dame Felicity Palmer (*Resonus Classics*), a CD of Schubert Lieder with Ilker Arcayürek (*Champs Hill*) and a live recital disc with Stéphane Degout.