

# Mark Padmore & Jonathan Biss: Dichterliebe

**Start time:** 7.30pm

**Approximate running time:** 105 minutes including a 20-minute interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change

## Programme

### **Robert Schumann** *Liederkreis*, Op 24

1. Morgens steh' ich auf und frage
2. Es treibt mich hin
3. Ich wandelte unter den Bäumen
4. Lieb' Liebchen
5. Schöne Wiege meiner Leiden
6. Warte, warte, wilder Schiffmann
7. Berg und Burgen schaun herunter
8. Anfangs wollt' ich fast verzage
9. Mit Myrten und Rosen

### **Robert Schumann** *Sechs Gedichte und Requiem*, Op 90

1. Lied eines Schmiedes
2. Meine Rose
3. Kommen und Scheiden
4. Die Sennin
5. Einsamkeit
6. Der schwere Abend
7. Requiem

### **Robert Schumann** *Dichterliebe*, Op 48

1. Im wunderschönen Monat Mai
2. Aus meinen Tränen spießen
3. Die Rose, die Lilie
4. Wenn ich deine Augen seh'
5. Dein Angesicht
6. Lehn' deine Wang'
7. Ich will meine Seele tauchen
8. Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome
9. Ich grolle nicht
10. Und wüßten's die Blumen, die kleinen
11. Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen
12. Hör' ich das Liedchen klingen
13. Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen
14. Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen
15. Es leuchtet meine Liebe
16. Mein Wagen rollet langsam
17. Ich hab' im Traum geweinet
18. Allnächtlich im Traume
19. Aus alten Märchen winkt es
20. Die alten, bösen Lieder

**The finest Romantic poetry can distil the bittersweet pains of love, longing and loneliness, writes Natasha Loges.**

Tenor Mark Padmore believes that Robert Schumann's settings of this poetry results in not only a deep exploration of the human heart, but some of the finest chamber music ever written.

barbican

This recital celebrates a rewarding artistic partnership between singer and pianist between Padmore and pianist Jonathan Biss. 'I love Jonathan's intelligence and intensity; he is always exploring', says Padmore. He regularly collaborates with solo pianists who turn to song because of its sheer musical beauty. Schumann's music is hugely rewarding to pianists like Biss. Although Schumann himself failed to become a professional, he devoted his first 23 Opus numbers to the instrument. He pointed out to his publisher that songs of the *Liederkreis* Op 24 marked a change in direction, since people 'only know me as a piano composer'. For Padmore, 'the piano regularly surpasses the voice' in Schumann's music.

Both *Dichterliebe* and the *Liederkreis* Op 24 were composed in 1840, a year during which Schumann fought determinedly to marry the young pianist Clara Wieck, whose father bitterly opposed their marriage. They were separated for much of that turbulent year, and the songs which poured ceaselessly from him were both evidence of his professional abilities and testaments of his inner turmoil.

The *Liederkreis* Op 24 presents a series of contrasts over nine songs, that Padmore describes collectively as 'sheer wackiness'. The intimate opening song, 'Morgens steh' ich auf und frage', describes the singer's fruitless waiting for his beloved, all day and night. His agony mounts in the spiky No 2 'Es treibt mich hin'. No 3 'Ich wandelte unter den Bäumen' brings deflation, as the singer hears the echo of his beloved's voice in birdsong, while walking in the woods. By No 4, 'Lieb' Liebchen', he compares his pounding heart to a carpenter hammering the nails into his own coffin.

In the fifth song, 'Schöne Wiege meiner Leiden', the singer flees, bidding a dramatic farewell to his hometown. His journey seems to take him beyond Europe in No 6 'Warte, warte, wilder Schiffmann', an energetic rush to board the boat, yet he does not get far; the tranquil No 7 'Berg und Burgen schaun herunter', returns us to the familiar river Rhine in Germany. In No 8 'Anfangs wollt' ich fast verzagen', despair resurfaces as the singer contemplates his overwhelming sorrow. He closes resignedly in No 9 'Mit Myrten und Rosen', declaring that he will bury his dead songs, yet still hoping that the spirit of love will eventually revive them.

The Op 90 *Sechs Gedichte und Requiem* were composed in 1850, when the Schumanns had been married for ten years and were grappling with draining professional and family demands. Schumann's fondness for the Austrian poet Nikolaus Lenau, who's words he used here, is telling, given the poet's depressive nature and Schumann's own fragile mental health. By 1844, Lenau had developed syphilitic insanity and spent the rest of his tragic life under restraint in an asylum.

Schumann composed five settings, including the heart-rending 'Einsamkeit' and uniquely bleak 'Der schwere Abend' – and then, mistakenly believing Lenau had died, he added the final 'Requiem'. Padmore regards this late cycle as 'devastating; you come away understanding the depth of [Schumann's and Lenau's] interior lives, and a sense of the pain which is contained within beauty'. Somewhat prophetically, Lenau died on the day of the first performance of Schumann's settings, a coincidence which upset him greatly.

Tonight's closing cycle *Dichterliebe* is suffused with romantic longing, from its searching opening to its extended, nostalgic piano postlude. The poems are by Schumann's contemporary Heinrich Heine, whose pithy, twisted words have attracted thousands of musical settings. Collectively, the *Dichterliebe* poems trace a loose narrative from falling in love to bitter heartbreak. Padmore sees some of the songs as presenting scenarios which Schumann personally dreaded, such as a woman marrying someone she despises and weeping at her wedding, or indeed the recurring fear that she no longer loves him. In *Dichterliebe*, Padmore and Biss are seeking to forge new connections with listeners by performing Schumann's original twenty settings by Heine rather than just the sixteen songs which were published several years later.

This music remains intensely personal to Padmore, who only turned to it when he felt he was mature enough, at forty years old. Twenty years of dedication, he says, have 'just deepened my love'. After numerous acclaimed recordings and performances, Schumann holds a special place in both Padmore's and Biss's heart. 'You can have a friendly relationship with Schubert', Padmore believes, 'but with Schumann, you fall in love'. The three sets of songs this evening give listeners a profound insight into the turbulent and tender musical world of Schumann's songs.

© Natasha Loges

## Performers

**Mark Padmore** tenor  
**Jonathan Biss** piano

Produced by the Barbican



The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre