

GREEN PASTURES

11:30AM

SATURDAY 14 OCTOBER 2023

ST JOHN'S CHURCH



VOX PLEXUS

Lily Flynn

Elspeth Bawden

Liz Chong

Mia Robinson

Anish Nair

Dylan Casey

Thomas Drent

Lachlan McDonald

Gerald FINZI (1901 – 1956)

I praise the tender flower

Clear and gentle stream

Frederick Theodore Albert DELIUS (1862 – 1934)

To be sung on a summer night on the water I

To be sung on a summer night on the water II

On Craig Ddu

Wanderer's Song

Benjamin BRITTEN (1913 – 1976)

Marsh flowers

Evening primrose

Zoltán KODÁLY (1882 – 1967)

Mountain Nights I

Carl Wilhelm Eugen STENHAMMAR (1871 – 1927)

September

I seraillets have

Charles-Camille SAINT-SAËNS (1835 – 1921)

Calme des nuits

Les Fleurs et les arbres

TRAD. (arr. Goff Richards)

Le baylere

Program note by Monica Curro

The 2023 Festival theme “Habitat” was my inspiration for programming this concert, which is a celebration of natural wonders through the exquisite beauty of song. As a violinist and only a very occasional singer, it brought me great joy to listen to hours of gorgeous and (to me) unfamiliar repertoire - we hardly ever play Finzi or Delius in the symphony, and who is Stenhammar?!?

Gerald Raphael Finzi (1901 - 1956) was a British composer of German, Jewish and Italian descent, most celebrated for his choral works which incorporated many Christian texts, and his nine elegiac song cycles based on the poetry of masters such as Thomas Hardy, Christina Rossetti, William Shakespeare, Thomas Traherne and William Wordsworth. The songs in today’s concert are settings of bucolic poems by Robert Bridges - Finzi couldn’t stand living in London and settled in Wiltshire where he devoted his time and headspace to composing and apple growing. Fun fact - he actually saved a number of rare English apple varieties from extinction!

I PRAISE THE TENDER FLOWER

I praise the tender flower,
That on a mournful day
Bloomed in my garden bower
And made the winter gay.
Its loveliness contented
My heart tormented.
I praise the gentle maid
Whose happy voice and smile
To confidence betrayed

My doleful heart awhile;
And gave my spirit deploring
Fresh wings for soaring.
The maid for very fear
Of love I durst not tell:
The rose could never hear,
Though I bespake her well:
So in my song I bind them
For all to find them.

CLEAR AND GENTLE STREAM

Clear and gentle stream!
Known and loved so long,
That hast heard the song
And the idle dream
Of my boyish day;
While I once again
Down thy margin stray,
In the selfsame strain
Still my voice is spent,
With my old lament
And my idle dream,
Clear and gentle stream!

Many an afternoon
Of the summer day
Dreaming here I lay;
And I know how soon,
Idly at its hour,
First the deep bell hums
From the minster tower,
And then evening comes,
Creeping up the glade,
With her lengthening shade,
And the tardy boon
Of her brightening moon.

Where my old seat was
Here again I sit,
Where the long boughs knit
Over stream and grass
A translucent eaves:
Where back eddies play
Shipwreck with the leaves,
And the proud swans stray,
Sailing one by one
Out of stream and sun,
And the fish lie cool
In their chosen pool.

Clear and gentle stream!
Ere again I go
Where thou dost not flow,
Well does it beseem
Thee to hear again
Once my youthful song,
That familiar strain
Silent now so long:
Be as I content
With my old lament
And my idle dream,
Clear and gentle stream.

Frederick Theodore Albert Delius (1862 - 1934) was a British composer of German descent, his music is unconventional and defies categorization, and he is well loved for his ability to transport the listener into a VR state of pastoral ecstasy through his lush chromaticism and suspension of time and space. The two "Summer Night" songs are wordless and transcendent, and the other two are settings of the poet Arthur Symons - one expressing the stillness and silence of nature, and the other telling of a traveller who is weary of women and love, who now only yearns for outdoor adventures.

ON CRAIG DHU

The sky through the leaves of the bracken,
Tenderly, pallidly blue,
Nothing but sky as I lie on the mountain-top.
Hark! for the wind as it blew,

Rustling the tufts of my bracken above me,
Brought from below
Into the silence the sound of the water.
Hark! for the oxen low,

Sheep are bleating, a dog
Barks, at a farm in the vale:
Blue, through the bracken, softly enveloping,
Silence, a veil.

WANDERER'S SONG

I have had enough of women, and enough of love,
But the land waits, and the sea waits, and day and night
is enough;
Give me a long white road, and the grey wide path of
the sea.
And the wind's will and the bird's will, and the heart-
ache still in me.

Why should I seek out sorrow, and give gold for Strife?
I have loved much and wept much, but tears and love
are not life;
The grass calls to my heart, and the foam to my blood
cries up,
And the sun shines and the road shines, and the wine's
in the cup.

I have had enough of wisdom, and enough of mirth,
For the way's one and the end's one, and it's soon to
the ends of the earth;
And it's then good-night and to bed, and if heels or
heart ache,
Well, it's sound sleep and long sleep, and sleep too
deep to wake.

Benjamin Britten (1913 - 1976) was an English composer, pianist and conductor, prolific in output, and greatly lauded in his lifetime. These two songs are from a set of "Five Flower Songs" written as a 25th wedding anniversary present for Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst. The murky "Marsh Flowers" is by the poet George Crabbe, who had also written the poem "Peter Grimes" which inspired one of Britten's greatest operas, and "Evening Primrose" is a setting of John Clare's soporific nightscape.

MARSH FLOWERS

Here the strong mallow strikes her slimy root,
Here the dull night-shade hangs her deadly fruit;
On hills of dust the henbane's faded green,
And pencill'd flower of sickly scent is seen;
Here on its wiry stem, in rigid bloom,
Grows the salt lavender that lacks perfume.
At the wall's base the fiery nettle springs,
With fruit globose and fierce with poison'd stings;
In every chink delights the fern to grow,
With glossy leaf and tawny bloom below:
The few dull flowers that o'er the place are spread
Partake the nature of their fenny bed.
These, with our sea-weeds, rolling up and down,
Form the contracted Flora of our town.

EVENING PRIMROSE

When once the sun sinks in the west,
And dewdrops pearl the evening's breast;
Almost as pale as moonbeams are,
Or its companionable star,
The evening primrose opes anew
Its delicate blossoms to the dew;
And, hermit-like, shunning the light,
Wastes its fair bloom upon the night,
Who, blindfold to its fond caresses,
Knows not the beauty it possesses;
Thus it blooms on while night is by;
When day looks out with open eye,
Bashed at the gaze it cannot shun,
It faints and withers and is gone.

Zoltán Kodály (1882 - 1967) was a Hungarian composer, ethnomusicologist, pedagogue, linguist and philosopher, whose work immortalised in thousands of eponymous music education societies around the world. His life-long love of mountains is expressed in this song from a set of five without words for female voices - in his words "Mountains have their own songs".

Carl Wilhelm Eugen Stenhammar (1871 – 1927) was a Swedish composer, conductor and pianist, and these two dreamy songs come from a group of three settings of the Danish naturalist poet and author Jens Peter Jacobsen, who also translated the works of Charles Darwin into Danish.

SEPTEMBER

All the growing shadows have
Woven themselves into one,
Alone in the sky shines
A star so bright and pure.
The clouds have so heavy dreams,
Dew flows from flowers eyes,
And strangely sings the evening breeze,
Sings in the linden tree.

I SERAILLETS HAVE (IN SERAGLIO'S GARDEN)

The rose is sinking its head, heavy with dew and
fragrance,
And the pines are waving so silent and faint in the sultry
air.
The brooks roll their heavy iron in complete tranquility,
Minarets point at Heaven in the Turkish faith,
And the halfmoon slowly drifts away over the evening-
blue,
And kisses the herds of roses and lilies, all those little
flowers
In Seraglio's Garden, in Seraglio's Garden.

Charles-Camille Saint-Saëns (1835 – 1921) was a French composer, organist, conductor and pianist, probably most famous for his Carnival of the Animals. In addition to being a composer, Saint-Saëns was a poet, publishing a book of poetry in 1890. He wrote both the poetry and the music for these two luminescent choral works in 1882-1883.

CALME DES NUITS

Calme des nuits fraîcheur des soirs,
Vaste scintillement des mondes,
Grand silence des antres noirs
Vous charmez les âmes profondes.
L'éclat du soleil, la gaieté,
Le bruit plaisent aux plus futiles;
Le poète seul est hanté
Par l'amour des choses tranquilles.

Stillness of the night,
cool of the evening,
vast shimmering of the spheres,
great silence of black vaults,
deep thinkers delight in you.
The bright sun, merriment
and noise amuse the more frivolous;
only the poet is possessed
by love of quiet things.

LES FLEURS ET LES ARBRES

Les fleurs et les arbres,
Les bronzes, les marbres,
Les ors, les emaux,
La mer, les fontaines,
Les monts et les plaines
Consolent nos maux.
Nature éternelle
Tu sembles plus belle
Au sein des douleurs!
Et l'art nous domine,
Sa flamme illumine
Le rire et les pleurs.

The flowers and the trees,
the bronzes, the marbles,
the golds, the enamels,
the sea, the springs,
the mountains and the plains
bring solace for our ills.
Everlasting nature,
you seem more beautiful
in the midst of sorrow!
And art is our master,
its fire throws light
on laughter and tears.

Our environmental extravaganza closes with a beloved traditional French shepherd's song Le Baylere, arranged for chorus by Goff Richards.

Shepherd over the river,
you are not afraid,
sing the baïlèro lèro.
I am not afraid, and you sing
baïlèro lèro.

Shepherd, the field is in flower,
bring your flock over here,
sing the baïlèro lèro.
The grass is finer in the field here,
baïlèro lèro.

Shepherd, the stream is between us,
I cannot cross,
sing the baïlèro lèro.
Wait, I will get you downstream,
baïlèro lèro.