

Plush 3 ~ Song Recital

Saturday 17 June 2017 ~ 7.30pm

Mark Padmore tenor, Andrew West - piano
Adrian Brendel - cello

Schubert

'Auf dem Strom'
for tenor, cello & piano D943

Birtwistle

'Songs from the Same Earth'
for tenor & piano 2013 (25 mins)

~

Schubert

Der Wanderer an den Mond D870

Im Freien D880

Am Fenster D878

Das Zugenglocklein D871

Viola D786

Die Sterne D939

Des Fischers Liebersgluck D933

Der Winterabend D938

Programme Notes

Many of **Schubert's** works written in 1828 were dominated by thoughts of Beethoven. Schubert had been a pallbearer at his funeral the year before, and admired him as the great liberating musical colossus of the time. 'Auf dem Strom' is one of the most interesting examples of this, quoting a phrase from the 'Eroica' symphony whose own inscription read 'per festigare il Souvenire di un grand' Uomo'. Perhaps Schubert's intention was also to pay tribute to the memory of a great man.

It is an unusual combination. 'Das Hirt auf den Felsen' employs a clarinet as the only other trio work of this kind, but Schubert might well have chosen the horn for artistic and symbolic reasons in 'Auf dem Strom'. Beethoven was a noted composer for the horn, an instrument that embodied a nobility and strength of purpose, as well as an objective serenity. It was probably the publisher's choice to include a version for cello when printing the work in 1829 in the hope that more people might perform the piece. While the cello shares some qualities with the horn, the work's character changes of course as a result. Two contrasting lyrical lines interweave so beautifully that one can scarcely imagine it any other way.

The work is quintessential Schubert despite the implied dedicatee - many of his most recognised elements are there, not least the movement of water ('Auf dem Strom' meaning 'On the river'). Liquid triplets generate a musical current whose intensity ebbs and flows in relation to Rellstab's poem. The acuteness of Schubert's reaction to the text is more fascinating with every listen, as in so many of his vocal works, and rewards more detailed research than can be provided in these notes. The song ends with one of Schubert's most stunning codas, as if the music is transfigured after its turbulent emotional journey.

The relationship between **Harrison Birtwistle** and the poet **David Harsent** is a productive and enduring one. Drawn to Harsent by his breakthrough volume of poetry *Mister Punch* (1984), Birtwistle invited him to craft an opera

libretto from The medieval tale of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Subsequently Harsent has produced a range of resonant texts for the composer, including another major Opera for Covent Garden, *The Minotaur* (2008), two pieces for voice and ensemble, and *The Corridor*, a music theatre piece first performed at Aldeburgh in 2009, which took a new angle on the ancient story of Orpheus, a figure with whom Birtwistle has been obsessed across his creative life. Clearly there is a great synergy between these two artists. They share a body of ideas, and Harsent understands well how to produce texts to which Birtwistle is able to respond musically.

'Songs for the Same Earth' is a cycle of ten poems for tenor and piano, commissioned to mark both Britten's centenary and the bicentenary of the Royal Philharmonic Society. Though the texts are not explicitly about Orpheus, they nonetheless evoke a distinctly Orphic atmosphere. This is a familiar Birtwistle landscape, a liminal place of shadows, dreams, mirrors and memories. The imagery of the natural world is arresting and suggestive - 'the falcon through sunlight', 'a wheel of birds in the still eye', 'a bird skull, eaten clean' - though meaning is elusive, just beyond reach. Harsent skilfully leaves space for music. But the poems are also full of noises, evoking a rich soundscape to which Birtwistle often reacts directly. 'The house bells in the wind', for example, at the Start of Song III, are accompanied by bright, jangling sounds; the piano reacts violently and energetically to the storm in Song VIII, 'the glare and roar, the clash of atoms'. Silence, too, is important to the work, representing loss. The cycle begins with the 'silence of slow water, silence of the rose': exposed vocal utterances are joined by a simple flowing line in the piano. The still centre point (Song V) is about memory, a slow, soft echo of 'the world around you noiseless in half-light'.

The obsessive repeating gestures of the final Song X are like a half-remembered dance distorted in the memory; by the end the tenor can only half sing, half

speak, as he catches a last sight of a figure in a window, 'a sudden gleam in the glass,' again out of reach, as the music fades to nothing. It is a poignant conclusion that catches the melancholic mood of the cycle as a whole.

Schubert's enormous Lieder output is one of the most impressive bodies of work within a single genre in the whole musical canon. Tonight's second half explores a sequence of rarely heard songs set to texts by Seidl, Leitner and his close companion Franz von Schober. At the heart of this sequence is 'Viola', an extensive song that traces the life cycle of a violet from the start of spring to the winter weather that kills it off. The music elevates von Schober's somewhat sentimental text through its constantly subtle variation, each strophe brought to individual life in Schubert's inimitable way.

Johann Gabriel Seidl was a minor poet in Schubert's circle, whose texts were described by a prominent critic of the time as 'deeply felt, warm hearted, gemuetlich and tremendously musical'. Schubert clearly appreciated this last trait. Among his many Seidl songs, four are featured here. 'Im Freien' describes a traveller returning home, overcome with emotion at the familiar sights that greet him. 'Der Wanderer an den Mond' contrasts the melancholic wanderer's slow tread (depicted by accented piano chords) with moonlit serenity, evoked by gentle flowing semiquavers. 'Am Fenster' is an odd gem, its text possibly suggesting the confines of a monastery room. Often neglected by Schubertians, this is one of his finest and most unusual songs. The thick walls are conveyed by a dense piano accompaniment, while other moments suggest an atmosphere of transparent light. As usual, Schubert manages to transcend his text with his extraordinary musical imagination.

'Das Zuegengloecklein' is perhaps the finest song of the Seidl set, written at the height of Schubert's maturity. The title refers to a small bell rung in Austrian parishes when one of the faithful is dying, hypnotically realised in the piano's right hand by a tolling note in almost every bar. It was almost certainly premiered at one of the composer's Schubertiads in 1826, evenings held by the composer where he could present his new music in the company of friends. In the absence of a meaningful one-on-one relationship in his life, these evenings were perhaps Schubert's happiest moments. The last three songs are set to words by Karl Gottfried von Leitner, an author and public figure of the time. The delightful song 'Die Sterne' evokes the wonder

of the stargazer through musical pulses of light, its key changes suggesting the constellation of the stars in an ordered beauty - a 'divine choreography' as was noted at an early performance. 'Des Fischers Liebesglueck' is an intricate text with a concentrated intensity brought to musical life by a composer whose confidence in this genre was at an all-time high following the completion of 'Winterreise' shortly before. 'Der Winterabend' conveys a long winter's night with falling snow and the comfort of being indoors by the fireside. There is a hypnotic stillness about the music. The narrator sits in the dark alone with his thoughts until the arrival of the moon, his thoughts tranquil and pained in turn. The skill with which Schubert unfolds this picture in song is a talent unique to him in the history of music.

Schubert notes by **Adrian Brendel**

Birtwistle notes by **Jonathan Cross**, 2013

Musicians

Mark Padmore tenor



Mark Padmore was born in London and grew up in Canterbury. After beginning his musical studies on the clarinet he gained a choral scholarship to King's College, Cambridge, and graduated with an honours degree in music. He has established an international career in opera, concert and recital, with acclaimed performances as the Evangelist in the St Matthew and St John Passions with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and Sir Simon Rattle, staged by Peter Sellars, in Berlin, Salzburg, New York and at the BBC Proms. In the opera house Mark has worked with directors Peter Brook, Katie Mitchell, Mark Morris and Deborah Warner.

Recent work includes the leading roles in Harrison Birtwistle's *The Corridor* and *The Cure* at the Aldeburgh Festival and Linbury Theatre, Covent Garden; Handel's *Jephtha* for WNO and ENO; Captain Vere in Britten's *Billy Budd* and the Evangelist in a staging of the *St Matthew Passion* for Glyndebourne Festival Opera. He also played Peter Quint in an acclaimed BBC TV production of Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* and recorded the title role in *La Clemenza di Tito* with René Jacobs for Harmonia Mundi.

Future roles include Third Angel/John in George Benjamin's *Written on Skin* with the Royal Opera, Covent Garden. In concert he has performed with the world's leading orchestras including the Bavarian Radio and London Symphony Orchestras, Berlin, Vienna, New York and London Philharmonic Orchestras, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and the Philharmonia. He makes regular appearances with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, with whom he has conceived projects exploring both Bach's *St John* and *St Matthew Passions*. He has performed the three Schubert song cycles in London, Liverpool, Paris, Tokyo, Vienna and New York as well as at the Schubertiade in Schwarzenberg.

Regular recital partners include Kristian Bezuidenhout, Jonathan Biss, Imogen Cooper, Julius Drake, Till Fellner, Simon Lepper, Paul Lewis, Roger Vignoles and Andrew West. Composers who have written for him include Sally Beamish, Harrison Birtwistle, Jonathan Dove, Thomas Larcher, Nico Muhly, Alec Roth, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Huw Watkins, Ryan Wigglesworth and Hans Zender. His extensive discography include recent releases of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* and Haydn's *Die Schöpfung* with Bernard Haitink and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra on BR Klassik and *Lieder* by Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart with Kristian Bezuidenhout for Harmonia Mundi. Other Harmonia Mundi recordings include Handel arias *As Steals the Morn* with the English Concert (BBC Music Magazine Vocal Award); Schubert cycles with Paul Lewis (*Winterreise* won the 2010 Gramophone magazine Vocal Award); Schumann's *Dichterliebe* with Kristian Bezuidenhout (2011 Edison Klassiek Award) and Britten's *Serenade*, *Nocturne* and Finzi's *Dies Natalis* with the Britten Sinfonia (ECHO/Klassik

2013 award); *The staged St Matthew Passion* with the Berlin Philharmonic and Rattle was awarded the BBC Music Magazine 2013 DVD Award.

Mark was voted 2016 Vocalist of the Year by Musical America and awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Kent in 2014. He is currently Artistic Director of the St. Endellion Summer Music Festival in Cornwall.

Andrew West piano



Andrew West accompanies many of today's leading singers, including Benjamin Appl, Emma Bell, Susan Gritton, Robert Murray, Christopher Purves, Hilary Summers and Roderick Williams. He has a particularly successful partnership with Mark Padmore. World premieres include *Songs from the Same Earth* at the 2013 Aldeburgh Festival, subsequently repeated at the Wigmore Hall and Amsterdam Concertgebouw; and Thomas Larcher's *Padmore Cycle* at the Vienna Konzerthaus. They have given recitals together in New York and Washington DC, and appeared in Katie Mitchell's staging of Schubert's *Winterreise* at Lincoln Center. Andrew West's latest recordings are Schubert's *Die Schöne Müllerin*, with British tenor Robert Murray (Stone Records) and the English Lyrics of Hubert Parry, with Susan Gritton, James Gilchrist, and Roderick Williams (Somm Records).

He is Artistic Director of the Nuremberg Chamber Music Festival, now in its sixteenth year, which champions British music, and has mounted productions of four of Benjamin Britten's chamber operas. He has twice been invited as Guest Artist at the Australian Festival of Chamber

Music, and last summer gave further recitals in Melbourne and Sydney Opera House.

His longstanding duo with flautist Emily Beynon led to recordings for Hyperion and the BBC, and recitals throughout Europe. He has given further recitals with violinist Sarah Chang, cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras and pianist Cedric Tiberghien.

Andrew West read English at Clare College, Cambridge before going on to study at London's Royal Academy of Music, where he is now professor of Accompaniment and Chamber Music.

Altaussee Austria, Florence and IMS Prussia Cove. In the autumn Adrian resumes his Wigmore residency with Nash ensemble and teaching at London's Guildhall school amongst his many musical activities.

Adrian has devised programmes for Plush Festival since 1995 and is a regular visitor to other festivals including Salzburg, Verbier, Schubertiade, Edinburgh and Aldeburgh. He lives in South London with his partner Ellie and two sons Nico and Lucas.

Adrian Brendel cello



Adrian Brendel is a cellist of many different dimensions, equally at home in old and new repertoire and fascinated by many different styles of music. He is professor of cello and chamber music at Guildhall in London and a member of the Nash Ensemble since 2013.

Adrian first studied the cello with William Pleeth, with whom he developed a deep attachment to chamber music. He then went on to study with Alexander Baillie and Frans Helmerson in London and Cologne, also frequently attending the masterclasses of György Kurtág, Ferenc Rados, members of the Alban Berg quartet and his father Alfred Brendel. A close association with several leading contemporary composers such as Kurtág and Sir Harrison Birtwistle has led to collaborations and first performances, including the projected premiere of Birtwistle's cello concerto with the Hallé at Bridgewater Hall and NDR in Hamburg in 2018.

Plans for this summer include appearances at festivals in Stavanger, Dartington,



HISTORY

Founded in 1995, Plush Festival is a summer concert series of classical and contemporary music run by the Brendel family.

Musicians visit Plush from around the world to perform solo and ensemble works, with the platform given to both new formations and established groups. Programmes span a diverse repertoire; from Bach cantatas and Beethoven quartets to lesser known classical and Romantic works and modern discoveries. Contemporary composers such as Oliver Knussen, Harrison Birtwistle and Thomas Adès regularly feature, alongside jazz, improvisation and song recitals.

Since 2013 the festival has been running an annual education project connecting aspiring young players in Dorset with visiting musicians.

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