Most recitals for voice and piano follow a traditional pattern of programming — they comprise a few song cycles or groups of songs per concert, exploring the musical world of no more than four or five composers. Anyone who has had the good fortune to see Amanda Roocroft perform in opera will know that, in addition to her obvious gifts as a singer, she is an extraordinary actress. When we began working together in 2009 it occurred to us that we could tell a story through songs, similar to the way in which a story is told through opera. Taking my cue from cycles such as Frauenliebe und -leben by Loewe and Schumann, and inspired by more modern ways of programming (an obvious influence is Graham Johnson’s Songmaker’s Almanac), I thought we could explore one protagonist’s emotional journey by juxtaposing thirty or so songs. I was careful not to pick songs in which our two central characters moved from or into different social classes: we never learn his name, and her name is mentioned for the first time in the last song. Everything is kept in the first person so that the words sung are always from the point of view of the girl (subtleties in the music comment on his mental state, but he never speaks directly — only in reported speech through her). It is a story which communicates themes of love and loss, the joys and pains of a relationship. One of the delights of such programming is that a song, when placed in a new and challenging context, is often further illuminated, its power to communicate made new.

Juxtaposing songs from different epochs, composed with different musical languages and often in contrasting tongues, shines intriguing lights upon repertoire both well-known and less so. We hope you enjoy the journey we have created.

Joseph Middleton
Overture: the eternal question

'Tell me the truth about love' charts a love affair (through song) of a young woman who begins one Saturday morning asking the eternal question – 'Tell me the truth about love.' Written in January 1938, Britten's seductive setting of Auden's amusing poem tries to pin down and define the most elusive of human emotions. Announcing the subject of this recital in German, French and Latin words recited over exotic piano arpeggios, love as an ambiguous emotion is then pored over in the most sophisticated and rhythmically ingenious musical setting. The vamping piano part owes much to Noel Coward and Cole Porter.

Act 1: Saturday morning – love at first sight

During an early morning walk the girl catches first sight of the man who is to be this story's central character. Schumann's *Seit ich ihn gesehen*, the opening song of his *Frauenliebe und -leben*, is breathless with wonder and fervent reverence. Schumann uses a *sarabande* rhythm in the piano, together with specific articulation markings of staccato chords in a slur, to give the impression of the character's humble and shy nature. Accents lend the third bar character, while a rest in the vocal line gives the impressionable young girl time to catch her breath. The second verse of Chamisso's poem is darker as she realises she is outgrowing the games she used to play with her sisters. She would rather sit on her own and dream of the man she has seen. His passionate gaze has left her transfixed. Lili Boulanger's *Vous m’avez regardé avec toute votre âme* is one of the highlights of her 1914 cycle *Clairières dans le ciel* and, at forty minutes, it stands as her most ambitious extant work. Boulanger set thirteen poems from a book of twenty-four written by the Symbolist poet Francis Jammes, later orchestrating six of them. The gentle counterpoint and translucent textures Boulanger employs place her firmly in the early twentieth-century mainstream.

Another exquisite miniature describes the young girl's feelings as she leaves the scene of their first encounter. Having set eyes on this boy, she wishes that she could stand outside his house (in her imagination the house is made of glass) and stare at him all day. Wolf's *O war’ dein Haus* paints in sound the image of drops of rain falling on glass. The piano part's right hand, all transparent fragility, showers crystalline water-droplets on the windowpane while the left hand sighs its way through a poem filled with conditionals. The end of the song, number forty in the published order of Wolf's *Italienisches Liederbuch*, evaporates in a postlude which is both rueful and wistful.
Chausson's Le charme describes the quiver of excitement and the tender veneration the girl feels when the boy's smile catches her unawares. While managing to encompass exoticism and radiant wistfulness, there is also a quasi-religious air (the girl here seems struck by the vision of this boy and his words, 'I am yours forever', and weeping). She can't believe her luck when she meets this man. Speech marks are used half way through the poem when she recounts his words, 'I wish to know what her partner is thinking, but all the time she is glad that he cannot hear her thoughts.

In our story it is now Saturday afternoon and the couple take an impromptu walk. Brahms's Nachtgang by Otto Julius Bierbaum, and here set by Strauss in 1895 as the third song in his opus 29, is a harmonically inventive song. By moonlight the lovers walk arm in arm for the first fifteen bars of the song. Quaver movement in the piano part stops at this point and with a C-flat major chord the two lovers stop walking and look at one another. Quavers return nine bars later but here as triplets in the right hand depicting the onset of involuntary tears. At the line 'küssste dich ganz leise' (kissed you so gently) the piano slips into the remote key of E minor before melting into A-flat minor with the marking 'ppp' in the accompaniment and finally in the postlude back with poignancy to the home key of A-flat major.

During Strauss's song the two lovers have walked back to her home, and it is here that she asks him to 'tread softly on my dreams'. Dunhill's song The cloths of heaven sets Yeats's poem to a simple choral-like accompaniment allowing the natural prosody of the poem to speak. Thomas Dunhill (1877-1946) was one of a handful of British composers to study at the RCM with Stanford at the end of the nineteenth century and his contemporaries included Vaughan Williams, Holst and Ireland, who remained a lifelong friend.

We turn to the Catalan composer Frederic Mompou (1893-1987) to describe the most intimate and sensual moments just before the girl offers her body to the young man. Damant de tu només les flors is taken from his best-known set of songs, his Combat del somni. They use texts by his countryman, the publisher and poet Josep Janés, and the improvisatory style of this song is typical of Mompou: a heady mixture of understatement borrowed from his youthful obsession with Faure, the minimalism he learnt from Satie and something of the popular touch he had in common with Poulenc. Lionel
Salter wrote that Mompou seems to approach the ideal of silence in the ‘static, incantatory quality of his poetic evocations’. In parts of this song, time does seem to stand still.

A soft murmuring accompaniment begins what turns out to be something of a virtuoso piano étude in Rachmaninov’s ecstatic and erotic Midsummer nights. Saturated in moonlight, the couple experience waves of love and lust under a spacious sky. The poet of this song is Daniil Rathaus, a popular Russian poet of the nineteenth century, now almost forgotten but for a few poems set to music by Rachmaninov and Tchaikovsky (op. 73). The languor of the summer night is captured by the onomatopoeic quality of the open ya sound, which is repeated throughout the poem both in internal and end rhymes.

**Act 3: Sunday morning – the morning after the night before**

The second half of our recital begins with the man still asleep. The girl turns and looks at him; she realises that he has taken her heart as well as her body and sings this vow to him in her head. Frank Bridge’s remarkable song Adoration begins by setting Keats’s poem (from *Extracts from an Opera*) as quasi-recitative, the voice singing the first word unaccompanied and in hushed tones, before gradually blossoming into an operatic-scale climax, the piano part richly scored and the voice soaring to a long held ‘G’.

As the man stirs, the girl confesses her love for him in the most tender and innocent of poems. Taken from Grieg’s *Hjertets melodier* (Melodies of the heart), Jeg elsker Dig (I love you) sets a four-line poem by Hans Christian Andersen with chromatic yearning. At just a minute and a half long, the song expresses her feelings sincerely, with a freshness, artlessness and in the most uncomplicated way. Grieg presented the opus from which this song comes to his cousin Nina Hagerup as a secret engagement gift.

With the dawn of a new day, the girl realises that her neighbours are stirring and, anxious to bustle her lover out of her apartment lest the gossipmongers catch sight of him, she asks him to leave. Of our next song, Geh’, Geliebter, geh’ jetzt! (the last of the secular songs in Wolf’s *Spanisches Liederbuch*), the great Wolf scholar Eric Sams writes that ‘the operatic breadth and sweep of this marvellous song make a fitting conclusion to Wolf’s most highly wrought songbook’. The constantly shifting tempo brilliantly describes the young girl’s mixed emotions; her head commanding him to leave but her heart asking him to stay in bed and caress her a little longer. The essence of the song is distilled...
Within the fluctuating introduction, at one point lively and capricious and the next second tender and musing, the third piano bar composed in the inspired way with one hand representing one feeling and the other hand something quite different. As the song progresses, we see our girl express urgent, grief, vulnerability, sorrow, and an ecstatic, passionate outpouring of love. As the song dissolves and the man leaves the apartment the piano postlude neatly portrays her swoons and sighs dissolved and the man leaves the apartment the piano postlude neatly portrays her swoons and sighs. The voice enters, already resigned in tone and with no downbeat for security in the piano part. In her heart she knows what the answer is, but she must ask the question nonetheless. Brahms places the words ‘brannte’ and ‘brannten’ high in the voice as she remembers his kisses and how they burned. The major-key end for the song, loud and in mock confidence, portrays a feeling of emptiness, full of self-loathing and denial.

On her own once again, reality has begun to sink in. The bitter and obsessive setting of Platen by Schubert in his *Du liebst mich nicht* speaks in the most basic and human of ways of the suffering and torture of her heart. The rhythmic pattern in the piano is unbendingly uncomfortable and the lyricismo. With the repetition of the same idea of ‘you do not love me’ (we hear these words ten times in the course of the song), the girl works herself into a frenzy of loathing, self-hatred and violent anger, rare in Schubert’s songs. The shifting harmonic palette employed by Schubert leaves the girl disoriented but at the same time always coming back to the same hopeless conclusion.

She makes reference to the sun and moon they enjoyed together the previous day and is repelled by the thought of flowers in bloom.

In a moment of nostalgia the girl tries to remember exactly what the man said to her the previous night through Debussy’s *La chevalure*. The middle song of Debussy’s *Chanson de Bilitis* uses two tempos and two feelings: one for her, and one for his speech as told through her. Even at the beginning, the song is steeped in sensuality, but there is something sinister underlying this nocturnal setting. In the third bar when the boy recounts his dream, Debussy’s marking is *très expressif* et *passionnément concentré* (very expressive and passionately concentrated). His masculinity is pointed in the left hand of the piano, deep and sonorous, and in bar ten the piano begins a duet with itself, the right hand breathless in anticipation of their intercourse and the left hand drawn in longer sustained phrases. In a setting which must surely count as the most sexually explicit song in the repertoire, their lovemaking is recounted in language, both poetic and musical which pulsates and climaxes with animalistic rapture. The end of the song returns to the first tempo and to her voice. When he has finished, she lies exhausted and the postlude offers a frisson of post-coital reality.

A glance at the flowers he brought her snaps her out of her reverie, and her state as something used and discarded is aptly described in Fauré’s *Fleur jetée*. Written on 25 May 1884, with poetry by Armand Silvestre, this Erlkönig-like, whirlwind, turbulent and passionate song is unique amongst Fauré’s songwriting. The impetuous octave repetitions in the piano part begin *piano* and *crescendo* inexorably to the singer’s angry entrance. The temporary respite of the middle major-key section is
short lived as it is interrupted by the same downward octave pattern in the piano we heard at the start, with dissonances resounding through the accompaniment mirroring the anguished mental state of the rejected lover, desperate for her heart to wither in the same way a flower might.

Through clenched teeth (depicted both in the tessitura of the voice and piano at the start of the song) the girl now decides to approach the boy. Schoenberg's 1899 setting of Dehmel's *Warnung* with its sickly slow mock-waltz middle section, cannot disguise the fact that the girl has become mentally unhinged by the affair she has had. She has gone from an innocent girl caught up in a whirlwind romance, to an obsessed stalker. Having seen the boy with someone else, a transgression which has caused her sending him carnations stained with her blood and poisoning her dog as a warning to him for anyone who provokes quarrels, she has become potentially dangerous.

Barber's *Rain has fallen* paints rain in the piano-part quite differently from Wolf earlier in the programme. Here the rain is impressionistic and hazy in the right-hand piano part, hovering over ambiguous harmonies, a weary start to Barber's 1935 James Joyce cycle which was published as his opus 10. Barber mirrors the course of a love affair in settings that progress from lyrical memories (in this song) to the more dramatic. Having asked to speak to her man's heart, the piano breaks into a stormy and passionate interlude. Its end, with the drooping final interval in the vocal part, portrays what the outcome of this relationship has in store for the girl. Barber unfailingly set first-rank poets and was said to have a book of poetry by his bed at all times. This, combined with his own abilities as a fine pianist and baritone, made him a natural song writer.

Depression in the previous song has dissolved into resignation and a wish for acceptance in Copland's *Heart, we will forget him*. This is the fifth song in Copland's *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Copland recalled being drawn to the famously reclusive poet: 'The more I read, the more her vulnerability and loneliness touched me. The poems seemed the work of a sensitive yet independent soul.' Written in 1950, Copland's song paints a character who is world-weary and vulnerable with fatigue. She catches her breath after the word 'Haste...' in the last sentence and Copland places a comma in the vocal line before the last word 'him' to give the girl time to summon up the courage to utter a word which for her is painful.

Je ne t’aime pas (I don't love you) by Kurt Weill is the girl's last attempt at forgetting the man she met only the day before. In her first phrase she remains composed but as the song progresses, she loses the power to sing and resorts to broken speech. Written in 1934, a year after Weill left Germany, it is a song in which he explored a new idiom, that of the French chanson. In common with his general approach to song composition, Weill wrote: 'I have learned to make my music speak directly to the audience, to find the most immediate, the most direct way to say what I want to say, and to say it as simply as possible. That's why I think that, in the theatre at least, nobody is such an important element because it speaks directly to the heart—and what good is music if it cannot move people.'

At the end of the weekend, the girl ventures back to the trellis where she spent the previous afternoon and sits amongst the flowers he picked for her and under the shelter of the tree which shielded their first kisses from prying eyes. Hahn's *Infidélite* is painted in pastel shades exquisitely gliding Théophile Gautier's words, the calm of the evening mirroring her tentative thoughts and hazy memories. The air is pure and she sings unaccompanied that nothing has changed around her except for him. Love and matters of the heart are incomprehensible even though the static nature of the piano's harmonies imposes constancy.

**Postlude**

In recital we performed Britten's arrangement of *Early one morning* as our encore. This setting from Britten's fifth volume of *Folksong Arrangements* (1951-59) perfectly summed up the story of our young girl in four pages of music. The dreamy nature of the G-flat major accompaniment here allows the words to speak clearly, but also lends the setting an eerie unsettled atmosphere. She is trying to let go, but the freshness of the betrayal she has endured suggests she is not as mentally balanced as she was when the love affair began. Nothing in the piano part is grounded and while the postlude evaporates into the ether, the final message of the girl 'How could you use a poor maiden so?' lingers in the ear.

Seit ich ihn gesehen,
Glaub ich blind zu sein;
Wo ich hin nur blicke,
Seh ich ihn allein;
Wie im wachen Traume
Schwebt sein Bild mir vor,
T aucht aus tiefstem Dunkel,
Heller nur empor.
Sonst ist licht- und farblos
Alles um mich her,
Nach der Schwestern Spiele
Nicht begehr ich mehr,
Möchte lieber weinen,
Still im Kämmerlein;
Seit ich ihn gesehen,
Glaub ich blind zu sein.

Adelbert von Chamisso (1781 - 1838)

Seit ich ihn gesehen,
Glau ich blind zu sein;
Wo ich hin nur blicke,
Seh ich ihn allein;
Wie im wachen Traume
Schweich sein Bild mir vor,
T aucht aus tiefstem Dunkel,
Heller nur empor.

Schumann

O tell me the truth about love

Can it pull extraordinary faces?
Is it usually sick on a swing?
Does it spend all its time at the races,
or fiddling with pieces of string?
Has it views of its own about money?
Does it think Patriotism enough?
Are its stories vulgar but funny?
O tell me the truth about love.

When it comes, will it come without warning
Just as I’m picking my nose?
Will it knock on my door in the morning,
Or tread in the bus on my toes?
Will it come like a change in the weather?
Will its greeting be courteous or rough?
Will it alter my life altogether?
O tell me the truth about love.

W.H. Auden (1907 - 1973)

O tell me the truth about love

Since first seeing him,
I think I am blind.
Wherever I look,
Him only I see;
As in a waking dream
His image hovers before me,
Rising out of deepest darkness
Ever more brightly.

All else is dark and pale
Around me,
My sisters’ games
I no more long to share,
I would rather weep
Quietly in my room;
Since first seeing him,
I think I am blind.

Britten

O tell me the truth about love

Can it pull extraordinary faces?
Is it usually sick on a swing?
Does it spend all its time at the races,
or fiddling with pieces of string?
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Will its greeting be courteous or rough?
Will it alter my life altogether?
O tell me the truth about love.

W.H. Auden (1907 - 1973)

Boulangier

Vous m’aimez regardé avec toute votre âme

Vous m’avez regardé avec toute votre âme.
Vous m’avez regardé longtemps comme un ciel bleu.
J’ai mis votre regard à l’ombre de mes yeux...
Que ce regard était passionné et calme...

Francis Jammes (1868 - 1938)

Boulangier

Vous m’aimez regardé avec toute votre âme

Vous m’aimez regardé avec toute votre âme.
Vous m’avez regardé longtemps comme un ciel bleu.
J’ai mis votre regard à l’ombre de mes yeux...
Que ce regard était passionné et calme...

Francis Jammes (1868 - 1938)
O wär' dein Haus durchsichtig wie ein Glas,
Mein Holder, wenn ich mich vorüberstehle!
Dann säh' ich drinnen dich ohn' Unterlaß;
Wie blickt' ich dann nach dir mit ganzer Seele!

Wie viele Blicke schickte dir mein Herz
Mehr als da Tropfen hat der Fluß im März!
Wie viele Blicke schickt' ich dir entgegen,
Mehr als da Tropfen niedersprühn im Regen!

Paul Heyse (1830 - 1914)

Quand ton sourire me surprit,
Je sentis frémir tout mon être,
Mais ce qui domptait nous esprit,
Je ne pus d'abord le connaître.

Quand ton regard tomba sur moi,
Je sentis mon âme se fondre,
Mais ce que serait cet émoi,
Je ne pus d'abord en répondre.

Ce qui me vainquit à jamais,
Ce fut un plus douloureux charme;
Et je n'ai su que je t'aimais,
Qu'en voyant ta première larme.

Armand Silvestre (1837-1901)

O wär' dein Haus durchsichtig wie ein Glas,
Mein Holder, wenn ich mich vorüberstehle!
Dann säh' ich drinnen dich ohn' Unterlaß;
Wie blickt' ich dann nach dir mit ganzer Seele!

The fountains mingle with the river
And the rivers with the Ocean,
The winds of Heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;
All things by a law divine
In one another’s being mingle.

Why not I with thine?

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792 - 1822)
Brahms  

We were walking, we two together,  
I so silent and you so silent,  
I would give much to know  
What you were thinking then.  

What I was thinking—let it remain  
Unspoken! One thing only I shall say:  
All my thoughts were so beautiful,  
So heavenly and serene.  

The thoughts in my mind  
Chimed like golden bells:  
So wondrously sweet and lovely  
Is no other sound on earth.

Georg Friedrich Daumer (1800 - 1875)

Ireland  

With whispered words between  
And silent kisses.  

None but the flowers have seen  
Our white caresses  
Flowers and the bright-eyed birds.

Aldous Huxley (1894 - 1963)

Poldowski  

Calm in the twilight  
Cast by lofty boughs,  
Let us steep our love  
In this deep quiet.

Let us mingle our souls, our hearts  
And our enraptured senses  
With the hazy languor  
Of arbutus and pine.

Half-close your eyes,  
Fold your arms across your breast,  
And from your heart now lulled to rest  
Banish forever all intent.

Let us both succumb  
To the gentle and lulling breeze  
That comes to ruffle at your feet  
The waves of russet grass.

And when, solemnly, evening  
Falls from the black oaks,  
That voice of our despair,  
The nightingale shall sing.
Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths
Enwrought with golden and silver light
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

William Butler Yeats (1865 - 1939)

We walked through the gentle silent night, your arm in mine, your eyes gazing into mine; the moon shed silver light over your face; as though on gold your fair head lay, and you seemed to me like a saint: gentle, gentle and great, with a brimming soul, holy and pure like the dear sun. And a pressing warmth welled into my eyes, like impending tears. I held you closer and kissed you — kissed you so gently — my soul wept.

Otto Julius Bierbaum (1865 - 1910)

Could I have been the sigh Of a flower! Given myself as a lily, That my life might Wither over your breast, Nevermore to know the night, Vanished from your side.

Josep Janés (1913 - 1959)

Above you naught but flowers. They were like a white offering: The light they shed on your body Will nevermore belong to the branch. An entire life of perfume Was given you with their kiss, You were resplendent in the light, Treasured by your closed eyes.

William Butler Yeats (1865 - 1939)

Tu resplendies de la llum Treasured by your closed eyes.

Josep Janés (1913 - 1959)

We opened our hearts to one another, Helplessly in love, On that beautiful summer night, In the moon's resplendent light.

Josep Janés (1913 - 1959)
Bridge Adoration

Asleep! O sleep a little while, white pearl!
And let me kneel, and let me pray to thee,
And let me call Heaven's blessing on thine eyes,
And let me breathe into the happy air
That doth enfold and touch thee all about,
Vows of my slavery, my giving up,
My sudden adoration, my great love!

John Keats (1795 - 1821)

Grieg jeg elsker Dig

MinTankerTankerneuderaudorden,
Du er mit HjerterstørsteKærlighed.
Jeg elsker Dig,som IngenherpåJorden,
Jeg elsker Dig iTejdogEvighed!

Hans Christian Andersen (1805 - 1875)

Wolf Geh’, Geliebter, geh’ jetzt!

Geh, Geliebter, geh jetzt!
Sieh, der Morgen dämmert.
Leute gehen schon durch die Gasse,
Und der Markt wird so belebt,
Daß der Morgen wohl, der blasse,
Schon die weißen Flügel hebt.
Und vor unsern Nachbarn bin ich
Bange, daß du Anstoß giebst:
Denn sie wissen nicht, wie innig
Ich dich lieb’ und du mich liebst.
Denn, Geliebter, geh jetzt!
Sieh, der Morgen dämmert.

Emanuel von Geigel (1815 - 1884)

When the sun, shining in the sky,
Chases the bright pearls of dew from the fields,
I must also weep and leave the pearl.
That was once my treasure.
What to others shines as day,
My eyes see as night.
For parting darkens my mind,
When the red of morning dawns.

Go, beloved, go now!
Look, the day is dawning.

Fly then from my arms!
For if you let time slip by,
We shall pay with long sorrow
For our brief embrace.
One day in Purgatory
Can after all be borne,
When Hope, radiant from afar,
Reveals the glory of heaven.

Therefore, beloved, go now!
Look, the day is dawning.
Und gestern hat er mir Rosen gebracht,
Sie haben geduftet die ganze Nacht,
Für ihn geworben, der meiner denkt,
Da hab' ich den Traum einer Nacht ihm geschenkt
Und heute geh' ich und lächle stumm,
Trag seiner Rosen mit mir herum
Und warte und lausche und geht die Tür,
So zittert mein Herz, ach käm' er zu mir!
Und küsse die Rosen die er mir gebracht
Und gehe und suche den Traum der Nacht!

Thekla Lingen (1866 - 1931)

Am Sonntag Morgen

Du sprichst, daß ich mich täuschte,
Beschworn es hoch und hehr,
Ich weiß ja doch, du liebest,
Allein du liebst nicht mehr!
Dein schimmes Auge brannte,
Die Küsse brannten sehns.
Du liebest mich, behaun es,
Allein du liebst nicht mehr!
Ich rühle nicht auf neure,
Getreu Wiedenken;
Gesteh nur, daß du liebest,
Und liebe mich nicht mehr!

August von Platen-Hallermünde (1796 - 1835)
Emporte ma folie
Au gré du vent!
Comme la fleur fauchée
Périt l’amour!
Que le vent qui te sèche,
Ô pauvre fleur,
Tout à l’heure si fraîche
Et demain sans couleur!
– Emporte ma folie
Au gré du vent!
Comme la fleur fauchée
Périt l’amour!
May the wind that withers you,
O poor flower,
So fresh just now
But tomorrow faded,
May the wind that withers you,
Wither my heart!

Il m’a dit ‘Cetue 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,
pour 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 deviens toi-même,
ou que tu entrais en moi comme mon songe.’

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

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 forever by the same tresses, mouth on mouth, just as two lauriers 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.

Il m’a dit ‘Cetue 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,
pour 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 deviens toi-même,
ou que tu entrais en moi comme mon songe.’

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

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 forever by the same tresses, mouth on mouth, just as two lauriers 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.
Richard Feliz Leopold Dehmel (1863 - 1920)

Mein Hund, du, hast dich bloß beknurrt,
Und ich hab' ihn vergiftet;
Und ich hasse jeden Menschen,
Wer Zwietracht stiftet.

Ich sende dir zwei blutrote Nelken
O du mein Blut, die Blute von uns,
Gehst der einen eine Knospe;
Den dreien sei gut, du,
Bis ich komme.

Ich komme heute noch:
Sei allein, sei allein du!
Gestern, als ich ankam,
Starrtest du mit Jemand
Ins Abendrot hinein -- Du:
Denk an meinen Hund!

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Schoenberg Warning

Heart, we will forget him
You and I, tonight.
You may forgive the warmth he gave,
I will forget the light.

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Emily Dickinson (1830 - 1886)

Heart, we will forget him
You and I, tonight.
You may forgive the warmth he gave,
I will forget the light.

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James Joyce (1882 - 1941)

Rain has fallen all the day.
Come among the laden trees.
The leaves lie thick upon the way.
Of memories shall we depart.
Come, my beloved, where I may speak to your heart.

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Emma Dickinson (1830 - 1886)

Heart, we will forget him
You and I, tonight.
You may forgive the warmth he gave,
I will forget the light.

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Weill Je ne t’aime pas

Draw your hand back, I don’t love you,
because you wanted it, you’re only a friend.
For others are the fold of your arms
And your dear kiss, your sleeping head.
Don’t talk to me, when it’s the evening,
too intimately, even with a hushed voice
don’t give me your handkerchief:
it smells too much of the perfume I love.
Tell me your love affairs, I don’t love you,
what hour was the most kind for you.
I don’t love you...
and if she liked you well, and if she was ungrateful...
when telling me, don’t be charming;
I don’t love you...
I did not cry, I did not suffer,
it was only a dream and a folly.
It’ll be enough that your eyes are clear,
without an evening regret, or melancholy.
Il me suffira de voir ton bonheur,
it’ll be enough to see your happiness,
it’ll be enough to see your smile,
Tell me how she took your heart,
and tell me even what cannot be told...
No, be rather silent ... I am kneeling...
the fire has died, the door is closed...
I don’t love you.
Don’t ask anything, I’m crying... that’s all.
I don’t love you.
I don’t love you, oh my beloved,
draw back your hand, I don’t love you...
I don’t love you ...
Maurice Magre (1877 - 1941)

Il me suffira de voir ton sourir’.
Conte-moi comment elle a pris ton coeur
Et même dis-moi ce qu’on ne peut dir’...
Non, tais-toi plutôt... Je suis à genoux...
Le feu s’est éteint, la porte est fermée...
Je ne t’aime pas.
Ne demande rien, je pleure... C’est tout.
Je ne t’aime pas.
Je ne t’aime pas, à mon bien-aimé.
Retire ta main, je ne t’aime pas...
Je ne t’aime pas...

Voici l’orme qui balance
Son ombre sur le sentier:
Voici le jeune églantier,
Le bois où dort le silence.
Le banc de pierre où le soir
Nous aimions à nous asseoir.
Voici la voûte embaumée
D’ébéniers et de lilas.
Où, lorsque nous étions las,
Ensemble, ô ma bien aimée!
Sous des guirlandes de fleurs,
Nous laissions fuir les chaleurs.
L’air est pur, le gazon doux …
Rien n’a donc changé que vous.

Théophile Gautier (1811 - 1872)

Voici l’orme qui balance
Son ombré sur le sentier:
Vous le tenez délicatement,
Le bois où dort le silence.
Le banc de pierre où le soir
Nous aimions à nous asseoir.
Vous la voûte embaumée
D’ébéniers et de lilas.
Ô, lorsque nous étions las,
Ensemble, à ma bien aimée!
Sous des guirlandes de fleurs,
Nous laissions fuir les chaleurs.
L’air est pur, le gazon doux ...
Rien n’a donc changé que vous.

Richard Stokes

Hahn Infidélité

It’ll be enough to see your happiness,
Tell me how she took your heart,
and even what cannot be told...
No, be rather silent ... I am kneeling...
the fire has died, the door is closed...
I don’t love you.
Don’t ask anything, I’m crying... that’s all.
I don’t love you.
I don’t love you, oh my beloved,
draw back your hand, I don’t love you...
I don’t love you ...

Britten Early one morning

Early one morning, just as the sun was rising,
I heard a maid sing in the valley below:
‘O don’t deceive me, O never leave me!
How could you use a poor maiden so?’

‘O gay is the garland, fresh are the roses,
I’ve culled from the garden to bind on thy brow.
O don’t deceive me, O never leave me!
How could you use a poor maiden so?’

Remember the vows that you made to your Mary,
Remember the bow’r where you vowed to be true;
O don’t deceive me, O never leave me!
How could you use a poor maiden so?

Thus sung the poor maiden, her sorrow bewailing,
Thus sung the poor maid in the valley below:
O don’t deceive me, O never leave me!
How could you use a poor maiden so?

Song translations by Richard Stokes
Amanda Roocroft studied at the Royal Northern College of Music. She has appeared with the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, English and Welsh National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, the Bavarian State Opera, Teatro Real, Madrid, Houston Grand Opera and Netherlands Opera, appearing in roles that have included Fiordiligi (Così fan tutte), Countess (The Marriage of Figaro), Don Elvira (Don Giovanni), Desdemona (Othello), Amelia (Simon Boccanegra), Mimi (La Bohème), Eva (The Mastersingers of Nuremberg), the title roles in Madame Butterfly, Katya Kabanova, Jenůfa, Ginevra (Ariodante), Cleopatra (Julius Caesar), Jenifer (The Midsummer Marriage), Tatjana (Eugene Onegin) and Emilia Marty (The Makropulos Case). Recent highlights include her first Marschallin (Der Rosenkavalier) for ENO; Elisabetta (Don Carlos) in Amsterdam; Ellen Orford (Peter Grimes) in Salzburg and at Covent garden; a tour of Japan as the Countess with Bavarian State Opera under Zubin Mehta; Tatjana for WNO; and Jenůfa in Berlin, Madrid and ENO, for which she won the Laurence Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera.

In concert she has appeared with leading orchestras throughout Europe and North America with conductors including Ivor Bolton, Sir Andrew Davis, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Daniele Gatti, Valery Gergiev, Bernard Haitink, Mariss Jansons, Charles Mackerras, Sir Neville Marriner, Zubin Mehta and Sir Simon Rattle.

Amanda Roocroft has appeared in recital at the Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Vienna Musikverein, La Monnaie, Brussels and the Lincoln Center, New York.
Pianist Joseph Middleton specialises in the art of song accompaniment and chamber music and has been highly acclaimed within this field. The Times recently described him as ‘the cream of the new generation’ and The Telegraph wrote that he ‘represents the crème de la crème of young British-based musical talent’. He performs and records with the greatest international singers in major music centres across Europe and North America.

Born in Gloucestershire, Joseph graduated with an MPhil from the University of Birmingham before studying piano at the Royal Academy of Music on an EMI Scholarship. Joseph’s competitive successes include the Accompaniment Prizes of the Wigmore Hall International Song, Kathleen Ferrier, Richard Tauber, Royal Over-Seas League and Geoffrey Parsons Memorial awards. In Germany he won the ‘Best Lied-Pianist Prize’ at the International Schubert Competition LiedDuo.

Joseph has enjoyed recitals with internationally established singers of the opera world, including Sir Thomas Allen, Dame Felicity Lott, Ann Murray, Joan Rodgers, Amanda Roocroft, Mark Padmore, Christopher Maltman, Katarina Karnéus, Andrew Kennedy, Toby Spence, Matthew Rose, Carolyn Sampson, Sophie Daneman, Geraldine McGeever and Jonathan Lemalu. He regularly collaborates with rising stars from the younger generation including Clara Mouriz, Sophie Bevan, Allan Clayton, Marcus Farnsworth, Jennifer Johnston, Ruby Hughes, Benedict Nelson and Anna Grevillius. Work with instrumentalists includes concerts with Alexander Bailie, Natalie Klein, Emma Johnson and Nicholas Daniel.

In recent seasons he has appeared at major music centres including the Aix-en-Provence, Aldeburgh, Brighton, Cheltenham, City of London, Edinburgh, Oxford Lieder, Ravinia, Three Choirs, Toronto and Vancouver Festivals. At home he gives frequent recitals at such venues as London’s Wigmore Hall, Royal Opera House, Royal Festival Hall and St. John’s, Smith Square.

Joseph is increasingly in demand as an imaginative programmer and in 2012 the BBC invited him to curate his own week of Radio 3 lunchtime concerts from the Lammermuir Festival. He has also programmed recitals for the Wigmore Hall, Amsterdam Concertgebouw and London’s King’s Place. His discography includes ‘Elgar in Sussex’ with Dame Felicity Lott (Champs Hill Records), a CD of Spanish Songs with Clara Mouriz (Sonimage Classics) and the lieder of Ludwig Thuille with Sophie Bevan and Jennifer Johnston (Champs Hill Records). www.josephmiddleton.com