



Lammermuir Festival

8 September 2021, 1:00pm | Holy Trinity Church, Haddington

James Atkinson baritone
Sholto Kynoch piano

Robert Schumann *Liederkreis, Op. 39*
Madeleine Dring *Three Shakespeare Songs*
Maurice Ravel *Histoires naturelles*



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Lammermuir Festival 2021

Welcome to the 12th Lammermuir Festival — we're so glad to be back!

Two years ago, when we celebrated the landmark of our 10th festival we (perhaps fortunately!) had no inkling of what would unfold only a few months later. Then last year we mounted a small online festival and were grateful for the enthusiastic support, not only of our regular audience, but of many new Lammermuir followers around the world.

This year feels like both a celebration and a rebirth — not quite 'business as usual', but very much a festival that we have yearned, through many bleak months, to bring back to this beautiful part of Scotland and to share with you.

We have made a virtue of the new reality of international travel restrictions by inviting many old friends among our distinguished artists, but there are new faces too — headed by our Artist in Residence, the American pianist Jeremy Denk, and by vocal ensemble The Gesualdo Six. We explore a rich variety of repertoire and offer unique projects such as Hugo Wolf's *Italian Songbook*, an anniversary tribute to Dennis Brain, an intriguing afternoon chez the Wagners and a recital dedicated to a great British piano duo. We are delighted to welcome Scottish Opera back and look forward to BBC Radio 3's series of live vocal recitals.

For Covid-safety reasons we have concentrated many of our events in the larger venues in order to retain social distancing of one metre in our audience seating.

We are most grateful to Creative Scotland for their continuing support and to EventScotland for generously supporting our online streaming programme which will add a new and, we hope, permanent dimension to the festival.

We are fortunate indeed to have a number of generous individual donors, trusts and sponsors who, along with the support of our Friends of the Lammermuir Festival, make the festival possible. We thank each and every supporter most warmly, for without them we simply would not exist.

Hugh Macdonald and James Waters
Joint Artistic Directors

Next year's Lammermuir Festival dates:

9-19 September 2022



Lammermuir Festival

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Our valued supporters are at the very heart of our festival, helping it flourish, prosper and reach out so that as many people as possible can enjoy it every year.

To ensure that we can continue to bring people together in celebration of beautiful music in beautiful places, we need your support and invite you to become a Lammermuir Festival Friend.

To learn more about the benefits of becoming a Festival Friend and to sign up, please visit www.lammermuirfestival.co.uk/friends.

Welcome to Holy Trinity Church, Haddington

Holy Trinity stands on the site of a Franciscan friary (the original 'Lamp of Lothian' before that title passed to St Mary's Church nearby) which was built here in the 13th Century. The friary was demolished in 1572, and almost two centuries later, in 1769, work was begun on a 'qualified' Anglican chapel which was finally consecrated as Holy Trinity in 1815. The present chancel was added and the interior remodelled in an attractive neo-Byzantine style in 1930.

Lammermuir Festival is grateful to the Rector and Vestry of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church for making the church available for this concert

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Programme notes

Robert Schumann *Liederkreis*, Op. 39

1. *In der Fremde*
2. *Intermezzo*
3. *Waldegespräch*
4. *Die Stille*
5. *Mondnacht*
6. *Schöne Fremde*
7. *Auf einer Burg*
8. *In der Fremde*
9. *Wehmut*
10. *Zwielicht*
11. *Im Walde*
12. *Frühlingsnacht*

During the year 1840 — the so-called *Liederjahr* — **Robert Schumann** devoted himself almost exclusively to song composition, producing some 138 songs within twelve months. There were several reasons, both artistic and pragmatic, for this focus. As well an opportunity to compose the kind of songs that Schumann (who was also a prominent critic) regarded as edifying and artful, it was also an opportunity to publish some works from which he might expect some immediate financial return. At the time, Schumann had been facing increasing criticism from his prospective father-in-law Friedrich Wieck, for his failure to maintain control of his finances, and thus forbade Robert from marrying his daughter Clara. In any case, the couple defied Friedrich and were married on 12 September 1840.

The ***Liederkreis***, Op. 39, dates from this year. Writing to Clara, Schumann described the twelve songs as 'my most romantic music ever, with much of you in it.' The texts are all by Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff (1788–1857), one of the central figures of German Romanticism. Schumann drew together the texts from three different Eichendorff publications, selecting them for their exploration of common themes. With an emphasis on the nocturnal, they use the natural world as an allegory to convey a sense of internal emotional turmoil, musing particularly on loneliness and regret but ultimately culminating in an outpouring of euphoria in the final song, *Frühlingsnacht*.

Throughout the cycle, Schumann elevates the piano to an equal partner in the musical texture, as a means of exploring the underlying subtexts associated with the imagery as well as cleverly deploying thematic cross relations throughout the set, which gives the impression of certain feelings lingering between songs.

Madeleine Dring *Three Shakespeare Songs*

1. Blow, blow thou winter wind
2. Come away, death
3. Under the greenwood tree

Madeleine Dring was born into a musical family in North London. Her mother was a professional singer, and the Drings regularly hosted musical salons at their home, at which Madeleine played both the piano and violin. As a teenager, she went on to study at the Royal College of Music, where her composition teachers included Herbert Howells, Gordon Jacob and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Dring proved to be an extremely capable and versatile musician, presenter and composer, producing works across a wide range of genres, including songs, chamber music, orchestral music — as well as scores for the theatre, television and film. Known for her charismatic personality, she was also frequently invited to present performances, hosting the *Union at Home* broadcast concerts during the Second World War. She was renowned for her impish sense of humour, illustrated by a mock biography contained within one of her diaries:

Madeleine Dring was born on the moon and can therefore claim to be a purebred lunatic. Arriving on a speck of cosmic dust, she came face to face with the human race and has never really recovered.

Dring's ***Three Shakespeare Songs*** were published in 1949. They date from her final years at the Royal College of Music, and show how she had fluently absorbed the English song styles of composers of the previous generation such as C.H.H. Parry, John Ireland and Peter Warlock, while also introducing her own unique voice. A playful piano accompaniment brings a lightness to the first song, 'Under the greenwood tree', alluding to the suggestive imagery implicit in Shakespeare's text, taken from *As You Like It*. By contrast, 'Come away, death' (from *Twelfth Night*) is more melancholic, with a lyrical vocal melody that floats wistfully over the piano that guides the singer through a series of unexpected tonal regions. 'Blow, blow thou winter wind', the concluding song, sets another song text from *As You Like It*. In the play, both are sung by Amiens, a character whose role contributes little to the drama. However, his words are pure poetry and do much to clarify the play's sometimes opaque plot and underlying themes. In this song, by likening man's behaviour to harsh winter weather, he illustrates how alienating human relationships can be when friends forget the favours they have received in the past — despite an ostensibly upbeat refrain. Dring's setting captures this beautifully, with the piano's almost jazz-like harmonies drawing out the bittersweetness of Amiens' words. These three songs were later expanded into a set of seven Shakespeare settings — but as Dring rarely dated her scores, it is not clear exactly when she actually completed the cycle.

Maurice Ravel *Histoires naturelles*

1. Le paon
2. Le grillon
3. Le cygne
4. Le martin-pêcheur
5. La pintade

It's unusual for a song cycle to be the subject of such vehement criticism as that which **Maurice Ravel's *Histoires naturelles*** received, after its premiere in a concert at Paris's Salle Erard in January 1907. The programme also included his teacher Gabriel Fauré's first piano quintet. Writing for *La Revue musicale*, one critic lashed out at Ravel, claiming that, 'It would be difficult to mock music and musicians more intolerably.' Debussy, with whom Ravel had fallen out sometime before, slated the cycle for its 'artificial Americanisms' (though he later admitted that *Le cygne* was an exceptional piece).

A significant part of this harsh feedback was due to the texts Ravel selected. The cycle sets five prose poems by Jules Renard, which present a series of character portraits of different creatures — all birds, except the the cricket. Renard's texts employ a somewhat jocular and whimsical word choice, which was deemed by some contemporaries as unsuitable for serious music. Furthermore, Ravel frequently drops the mute 'e' vowel at the end of his words, in the then-popular café style — but which was always set as a full neutral syllable in 'proper' French song'. This is particularly noticeable in the first song *La paon* (The Peacock), which acts as a cautionary tale against vanity. *Le grillon* (The Cricket) describes a cricket returning home after a busy day, with a naive melodic line coloured by an impressionistic piano part. During the premiere, the silence at the pause where the cricket halts to rest (*Il se repose*) was reported to have been interrupted by protests from the audience. The central song, *Le cygne* (The Swan) is among the most exquisite of Ravel's chansons, with a rippling piano accompaniment depicting the shimmering water, as the elegant vocal line describes the gliding swan dipping beneath the surface to feed. *Le martin-pecheur* (The Kingfisher) opens with a series of chords that seem to foreshadow the kind of avant-garde harmonies Messiaen would later employ, in expressing Renard's awe at the understated majesty of the kingfisher. However, the final song — *La pintade* ('The Guinea-Fowl') returns to a more jocular mode, with the hesitant rhythms of the piano part reflecting the comically awkward movement of the bird that is the subject of the text.

Following the audience's jeers at the end of the cycle, Ravel and the singer Jane Bathori boldly decided to repeat the final song as a parting act of defiance. While the songs might seem to be trivial in nature, they seem to have liberated Ravel, allowing him to explore a style of word-setting in a small form that would characterise later masterworks — particularly *L'heure espagnole* (1911), which would come to be celebrated for the way it married music and text in a disarmingly natural manner.

Texts and Translations

Liederkreis, Op. 39

1. In der Fremde

Aus der Heimat hinter den Blitzen rot
Da kommen die Wolken her,
Aber Vater und Mutter sind lange tot,
Es kennt mich dort keiner mehr.

Wie bald, ach wie bald kommt die stille Zeit,
Da ruhe ich auch, und über mir
Rauscht die schöne Waldeinsamkeit,
Und keiner kennt mich mehr hier.

2. Intermezzo

Dein Bildnis wunderselig
Hab' ich im Herzensgrund,
Das sieht so frisch und fröhlich
Mich an zu jeder Stund'.

Mein Herz still in sich singet
Ein altes, schönes Lied,
Das in die Luft sich schwinget
Und zu dir eilig zieht.

3. Waldeggespräch

Es ist schon spät, es ist schon kalt,
Was reit'st du einsam durch den Wald?
Der Wald ist lang, du bist allein,
Du schöne Braut! Ich führ' dich heim!

„Groß ist der Männer Trug und List,
Vor Schmerz mein Herz gebrochen ist,
Wohl irrt das Waldhorn her und hin,
O flieh! Du weißt nicht, wer ich bin.“

So reich geschmückt ist Roß und Weib,
So wunderschön der junge Leib,
Jetzt kenn' ich dich—Gott steh' mir bei!
Du bist die Hexe Loreley.

„Du kennst mich wohl—von hohem Stein
Schaut still mein Schloß tief in den Rhein.
Es ist schon spät, es ist schon kalt,
Kommst nimmermehr aus diesem Wald!“

1. In a foreign land

From my homeland, beyond the red lightning,
The clouds come drifting in,
But father and mother have long been dead,
Now no one knows me there.

How soon, ah! how soon till that quiet time
When I too shall rest
Beneath the sweet murmur of lonely woods,
Forgotten here as well.

2. Intermezzo

I bear your beautiful likeness
Deep within my heart,
It gazes at me every hour
So freshly and happily.

My heart sings softly to itself
An old and beautiful song
That soars into the sky
And swiftly wings its way to you.

3. A Forest Dialogue

It is already late, already cold,
Why ride lonely through the forest?
The forest is long, you are alone,
You lovely bride! I'll lead you home!

'Great is the deceit and cunning of men,
My heart is broken with grief,
The hunting horn echoes here and there,
O flee! You do not know who I am.'

So richly adorned are steed and lady,
So wondrous fair her youthful form,
Now I know you—may God protect me!
You are the enchantress Lorelei.

'You know me well—from its towering rock
My castle looks silently into the Rhine.
It is already late, already cold,
You shall never leave this forest again!'

4. Die Stille

Es weiß und rät es doch Keiner,
Wie mir so wohl ist, so wohl!
Ach, wüßt' es nur Einer, nur Einer;
Kein Mensch es sonst wissen soll!

So still ist's nicht draußen im Schnee,
So stumm und verschwiegen sind
Die Sterne nicht in der Höh',
Als meine Gedanken sind.

Ich wünscht', ich wär' ein Vöglein
Und zöge über das Meer,
Wohl über das Meer und weiter;
Bis daß ich im Himmel wär'!

5. Mondnacht

Es war, als hätt' der Himmel,
Die Erde still geküßt,
Daß sie im Blütenschimmer
Von ihm nur träumen müßt'.

Die Luft ging durch die Felder,
Die Ähren wogten sacht,
Es rauschten leis' die Wälder,
So sternklar war die Nacht.

Und meine Seele spannte
Weit ihre Flügel aus,
Flog durch die stillen Lande,
Als flöge sie nach Haus.

6. Schöne Fremde

Es rauschen die Wipfel und schauern,
Als machten zu dieser Stund'
Um die halb versunkenen Mauern
Die alten Götter die Rund'.

Hier hinter den Myrtenbäumen
In heimlich dämmernder Pracht,
Was sprichst du wirr, wie in Träumen,
Zu mir, phantastische Nacht?

4. Silence

No one knows and no one can guess
How happy I am, how happy!
If only one, just one person knew,
No one else ever should!

The snow outside is not so silent,
Nor are the stars on high
So still and taciturn
As my own thoughts.

I wish I were a little bird,
And could fly across the sea,
Across the sea and further;
Until I were in heaven!

5. Moonlit Night

It was as though Heaven
Had softly kissed the Earth,
So that she in a gleam of blossom
Had only to dream of him.

The breeze passed through the fields,
The corn swayed gently to and fro,
The forests murmured softly,
The night was so clear with stars.

And my soul spread
Her wings out wide,
Flew across the silent land,
As though flying home.

6. A Beautiful Foreign Land

The tree-tops rustle and shudder
As if at this very hour
The ancient gods
Were pacing these half-sunken walls.

Here beyond the myrtle trees
In secret twilight splendour,
What are you saying, fantastic night,
Obscurely, as in a dream?

Es funkeln auf mich alle Sterne
Mit glühendem Liebesblick,
Es redet trunken die Ferne
Wie von künftigem großen Glück!

7. *Auf einer Burg*

Eingeschlafen auf der Lauer
Oben ist der alte Ritter;
Drüben gehen Regenschauer,
Und der Wald rauscht durch das Gitter:

Eingewachsen Bart und Haare,
Und versteinert Brust und Krause,
Sitzt er viele hundert Jahre
Oben in der stillen Klausen.

Draußen ist es still und friedlich,
Alle sind in's Tal gezogen,
Waldesvögel einsam singen
In den leeren Fensterbögen.

Eine Hochzeit fährt da unten
Auf dem Rhein im Sonnenschein,
Musikanten spielen munter,
Und die schöne Braut, die weinet.

8. *In der Fremde*

Ich hör' die Bächlein rauschen
Im Walde her und hin,
Im Walde, in dem Rauschen

Ich weiß nicht, wo ich bin.
Die Nachtigallen schlagen
Hier in der Einsamkeit,
Als wollten sie was sagen

Von der alten, schönen Zeit.
Die Mondschimmer fliegen,
Als sah' ich unter mir
Das Schloß im Tale liegen,

Und ist doch so weit von hier!
Als müßte in dem Garten
Voll Rosen weiß und rot,
Meine Liebste auf mich warten,
Und ist doch so lange tot.

9. *Wehmut*

Ich kann wohl manchmal singen,
Als ob ich fröhlich sei,
Doch heimlich Tränen dringen,

The glittering stars gaze down on me,
Fierily and full of love,
The distant horizon speaks with rapture
Of some great happiness to come!

7. *In a Castle*

Up there at his look-out
The old knight has fallen asleep;
Rain-storms pass overhead,
And the wood stirs through the portcullis.

Beard and hair matted together,
Ruff and breast turned to stone,
For centuries he's sat up there
In his silent cell.

Outside it's quiet and peaceful,
All have gone down to the valley,
Forest birds sing lonely songs
In the empty window-arches.

Down there on the sunlit Rhine
A wedding-party's sailing by,
Musicians strike up merrily,
And the lovely bride—weeps.

8. *In a Foreign Land*

I hear the brooklets murmuring
Through the forest, here and there,
In the forest, in the murmuring

I do not know where I am.
Nightingales are singing
Here in the solitude,
As though they wished to tell

Of lovely days now past.
The moonlight flickers,
As though I saw below me
The castle in the valley,

Yet it lies so far from here!
As though in the garden,
Full of roses, white and red,
My love were waiting for me,
Yet she died so long ago.

9. *Sadness*

True, I can sometimes sing
As though I were content;
But secretly tears well up,

Da wird das Herz mir frei.

Es lassen Nachtigallen,
Spielt draußen Frühlingsluft,
Der Sehnsucht Lied erschallen
Aus ihres Kerkers Gruft.

Da lauschen alle Herzen,
Und alles ist erfreut,
Doch keiner fühlt die Schmerzen,
Im Lied das tiefe Leid.

10. *Zwielicht*

Dämmerung will die Flügel spreiten,
Schaurig rühren sich die Bäume,
Wolken ziehn wie schwere Träume—
Was will dieses Graun bedeuten?

Hast ein Reh du lieb vor andern,
Laß es nicht alleine grasen,
Jäger ziehn im Wald und blasen,
Stimmen hin und wieder wandern.

Hast du einen Freund hienieden,
Trau ihm nicht zu dieser Stunde,
Freundlich wohl mit Aug' und Munde,
Sinnt er Krieg im tück'schen Frieden.

Was heut gehet müde unter,
Hebt sich morgen neugeboren.
Manches geht in Nacht verloren—
Hüte dich, sei wach und munter!

11. *Im Walde*

Es zog eine Hochzeit den Berg entlang,
Ich hörte die Vögel schlagen,
Da blitzten viel Reiter, das Waldhorn klang,
Das war ein lustiges Jagen!

Und eh' ich's gedacht, war alles verhallt,
Die Nacht bedeckt die Runde;
Nur von den Bergen noch rauschet der Wald
Und mich schauert's im Herzensgrunde.

And my heart is set free.

Nightingales, when spring breezes
Play outside, sing
Their song of longing
From their dungeon cell.

Then all hearts listen
And everyone rejoices,
Yet no one feels the pain,
The deep sorrow in the song.

10. *Twilight*

Dusk is about to spread its wings,
The trees now shudder and stir,
Clouds drift by like oppressive dreams—
What can this dusk and dread imply?

If you have a fawn you favour,
Do not let her graze alone,
Hunters sound their horns through the forest,
Voices wander to and fro.

If here on earth you have a friend,
Do not trust him at this hour,
Though his eyes and lips be smiling,
In treacherous peace he's scheming war.

That which wearily sets today,
Will rise tomorrow, newly born.
Much can go lost in the night—
Be wary, watchful, on your guard!

11. *In the Forest*

A wedding procession wound over the mountain,
I heard the warbling of birds,
Riders flashed by, hunting horns peeled,
That was a merry chase!

And before I knew, all had faded,
Darkness covers the land,
Only the forest sighs from the mountain,
And deep in my heart I quiver with fear.

12. Frühlingsnacht

Überm Garten durch die Lüfte
Hört' ich Wandervögel zieh'n,
Das bedeutet Frühlingsdüfte,
Unten fängt's schon an zu blühen.

Jauchzen möcht' ich, möchte weinen,
Ist mir's doch, als könnt's nicht sein!
Alte Wunder wieder scheinen
Mit dem Mondesglanz herein.

Und der Mond, die Sterne sagen's,
Und im Traume rauscht's der Hain
Und die Nachtigallen schlagen's:
Sie ist Deine, sie ist Dein!

Joseph von Eichendorff

Histoires naturelles

La paon

Il va sûrement se marier aujourd'hui.
Ce devait être pour hier. En habit de gala,
il était prêt. Il n'attendait que sa fiancée. Elle n'est
pas venue. Elle ne peut tarder.
Glorieux, il se promène avec une allure de prince
indien et porte sur lui les riches présents d'usage.
L'amour avive l'éclat de ses couleurs et son
aigrette tremble comme une lyre.
La fiancée n'arrive pas.
Il monte au haut du toit et regarde du côté du
soleil.
Il jette son cri diabolique:
Léon! Léon!
C'est ainsi qu'il appelle sa fiancée. Il ne voit rien
venir et personne ne répond.
Les volailles habituées ne lèvent même point la
tête. Elles sont lasses de l'admirer.
Il redescend dans la cour, si sûr d'être beau qu'il
est incapable de rancune.
Son mariage sera pour demain.
Et, ne sachant que faire du reste de la journée, il
se dirige vers le perron.
Il gravit les marches, comme des marches de
temple, d'un pas officiel.
Il relève sa robe à queue toute lourde des yeux
qui n'ont pu se détacher d'elle.
Il répète encore une fois la cérémonie.

12. Spring Night

Over the garden, through the air
I heard birds of passage fly,
A sign that spring is in the air,
Flowers already bloom below.

I could shout for joy, could weep,
For it seems to me it cannot be!
All the old wonders come flooding back,
Gleaming in the moonlight.

And the moon and stars say it,
And the dreaming forest whispers it,
And the nightingales sing it:
'She is yours, is yours!'

Translated by Richard Stokes

The Peacock

He will surely get married today.
It was to have been yesterday. In full regalia he was
ready. It was only his bride he was waiting for. She
has not come. She cannot be long.
Proudly he processes the with air of an Indian
prince, bearing about his person the customary
lavish gifts. Love burnishes the brilliance of his
colours, and his crest quivers like a lyre.
His bride does not appear.
He ascends to the top of the roof and looks
towards the sun. He utters his devilish cry:
Léon! Léon!
It is thus that he summons his bride. He can see
nothing drawing near; and no one replies.
The fowls are used to all this and do not even
raise their heads.
They are tired of admiring him. He descends once
more to the yard, so sure of his beauty that he is
incapable of resentment.
His marriage will take place tomorrow.
And, not knowing what to do for the rest of the
day, he heads for the flight of steps.
He ascends them, as though they were the steps
of a temple, with a formal tread.
He lifts his train, heavy with eyes that have been
unable to detach themselves.
Once more he repeats the ceremony.

Le grillon

C'est l'heure où, las d'errer, l'insecte nègre revient de promenade et répare avec soin le désordre de son domaine.

D'abord il ratisse ses étroites allées de sable.

Il fait du bran de scie qu'il écarte au seuil de sa retraite.

Il lime la racine de cette grande herbe propre à le harceler.

Il se repose. Puis, il remonte sa minuscule montre.

A-t-il fini? Est-elle cassée? Il se repose encore un peu.

Il rentre chez lui et ferme sa porte.

Longtemps il tourne sa clef dans la serrure délicate.

Et il écoute: Point d'alarme dehors.

Mais il ne se trouve pas en sûreté.

Et comme par une chaînette dont la poulie grince, il descend jusqu'au fond de la terre.

On n'entend plus rien.

Dans la campagne muette, les peupliers se dressent comme des doigts en l'air et désignent la lune.

Le cygne

Il glisse sur le bassin, comme un traîneau blanc, de nuage en nuage.

Car il n'a faim que des nuages floconneux qu'il voit naître, bouger, et se perdre dans l'eau.

C'est l'un d'eux qu'il désire. Il le vise du bec, et il plonge tout à coup son col vêtu de neige.

Puis, tel un bras de femme sort d'une manche, il le retire.

Il n'a rien.

Il regarde: les nuages effarouchés ont disparu.

Il ne reste qu'un instant désabusé, car les nuages tardent peu à revenir; et, là-bas, où meurent les ondulations de l'eau, en voici un qui se reforme.

Doucement, sur son léger coussin de plumes, le cygne rame et s'approche ...

Il s'épuise à pêcher de vains reflets, et peut-être qu'il mourra, victime de cette illusion, avant d'attraper un seul morceau de nuage.

Mais qu'est-ce que je dis?

Chaque fois qu'il plonge, il fouille du bec la vase nourissante et ramène en ver:

Il engraisse comme une oie.

The Cricket

It is the hour when, weary of wandering, the black insect returns from his outing and carefully restores order to his estate.

First he rakes his narrow sandy paths.

He makes sawdust which he scatters on the threshold of his retreat.

He files the root of this tall grass likely to annoy him.

He rests. Then he winds up his tiny watch.

Has he finished? Is it broken? He rests again for a while.

He goes inside and shuts the door.

For an age he turns his key in the delicate lock.

And he listens: Nothing untoward outside.

But he does not feel safe.

And as if by a tiny chain on a creaking pulley, he lowers himself into the bowels of the earth.

Nothing more is heard.

In the silent countryside the poplars rise like fingers in the air, pointing to the moon.

The Swan

He glides on the pond like a white sledge, from cloud to cloud.

For he is hungry only for the fleecy clouds that he sees forming, moving, dissolving in the water.

It is one of these that he wants. He takes aim with his beak and suddenly immerses his snow-clad neck.

Then, like a woman's arm emerging from a sleeve, he draws it back up.

He has caught nothing.

He looks about: the startled clouds have vanished.

Only for a second is he disappointed, for the clouds are not slow to return, and, over there, where the ripples fade, there is one reappearing.

Gently, on his soft cushion of down, the swan paddles and approaches ...

He exhausts himself fishing for empty reflections and perhaps he will die, a victim of that illusion, before catching a single shred of cloud.

But what am I saying?

Each time he dives, he burrows with his beak in the nourishing mud and brings up a worm.

He's getting as fat as a goose.

Le martin-pêcheur

Ça n'a pas mordu, ce soir, mais je rapporte une rare émotion.

Comme je tenais ma perche de ligne tendue, un martin-pêcheur est venu s'y poser.

Nous n'avons pas d'oiseau plus éclatant.

Il semblait une grosse fleur bleue au bout d'une longue tige.

La perche pliait sous le poids. Je ne respirais plus, tout fier d'être pris pour un arbre par un martin-pêcheur.

Et je suis sûr qu'il ne s'est pas envolé de peur, mais qu'il a cru qu'il ne faisait que passer d'une branche à une autre.

La pintade

C'est la bossue de ma cour. Elle ne rêve que plaies à cause de sa bosse.

Les poules ne lui disent rien: brusquement, elle se précipite et les harcèle.

Puis elle baisse sa tête, penche le corps, et, de toute la vitesse de ses pattes maigres, elle court frapper, de son bec dur, juste au centre de la roue d'une dinde.

Cette poseuse l'agaçait.

Ainsi, la tête bleuie, ses barbillons à vif, cocardière, elle rage du matin au soir.

Elle se bat sans motif, peut-être parce qu'elle s' imagine toujours qu'on se moque de sa taille, de son crâne chauve et de sa queue basse.

Et elle ne cesse de jeter un cri discordant qui perce l'air comme une pointe.

Parfois elle quitte la cour et disparaît. Elle laisse aux volailles pacifiques un moment de répit.

Mais elle revient plus turbulente et plus criarde. Et, frénétique, elle se vautre par terre.

Qu'a-t-elle donc?

La sournoise fait une farce.

Elle est allée pondre son œuf à la campagne.

Je peux le chercher si ça m'amuse.

Elle se roule dans la poussière, comme une bossue.

The Kingfisher

Not a bite, this evening, but I had a rare experience.

As I was holding out my fishing rod, a kingfisher came and perched on it.

We have no bird more brilliant.

He was like a great blue flower at the tip of a long stem. The rod bent beneath the weight.

I held my breath, so proud to be taken for a tree by a kingfisher:

And I'm sure he did not fly off from fear; but thought he was simply flitting from one branch to another.

The Guinea-fowl

She is the hunchback of my barnyard. She dreams only of wounding, because of her hump.

The hens say nothing to her: suddenly, she swoops and harries them.

Then she lowers her head, leans forward, and, with all the speed of her skinny legs, runs and strikes with her hard beak at the very centre of a turkey's tail.

This poseuse was provoking her.

Thus, with her bluish head and raw wattles, pugnaciously she rages from morn to night.

She fights for no reason, perhaps because she always thinks they are making fun of her figure, of her bald head and drooping tail.

And she never stops screaming her discordant cry, which pierces the air like a needle.

Sometimes she leaves the yard and vanishes. She gives the peace-loving poultry a moment's respite.

But she returns more rowdy and shrill. And in a frenzy she wallows in the earth.

Whatever's wrong with her?

The cunning creature is playing a trick.

She went to lay her egg in the open country.

I can look for it if I like.

And she rolls in the dust, like a hunchback.

James Atkinson is a graduate of the Royal College of Music Opera Studio, where he studied with Alison Wells. James won first prize at the Maureen Lehane Vocal Awards 2018, first prize and the Audience Prize at the Somerset Song Prize 2019 and the Schubert Prize at the Mozart Competition 2019.

James is in high demand as a recitalist and has performed at the London Song Festival, the Lewes Song Festival, The Red House in Aldeburgh, the North Norfolk Music Festival and the Ludlow English Song Weekend. He has also made multiple appearances at the Oxford Lieder Festival, most recently alongside Iain Burnside in the Winter into Spring festival, live-streamed from the Holywell Music Room and presented by Petroc Trelawny.

With the RCM Opera Studio, James has sung the roles of Buonafede *Il mondo della luna*, Sam *Trouble in Tahiti*, Le Gendarme *Les mamelles de Tirésias* and Blazes *The Lighthouse*. Performances of Ramiro *L'heure espagnole* and Papageno *Der Zauberflöte* were cancelled due to COVID-19. Other roles include Lysander *The Enchanted Island* (British Youth Opera), Boots *Der Rosenkavalier* (Garsington Opera), Papageno (Hurn Court Opera), and cover Aeneas *Dido and Aeneas* (English Touring Opera).

Upcoming engagements include an appearance at the Ludlow English Song Weekend in their Young Artist Showcase, featuring songs by Vaughan Williams and Rhian Samuel, and recitals with Sholto Kynoch at Rye Creative Centre and Fairlight Hall. In 2022, James will make his debut with Welsh National Opera as Masetto (*Don Giovanni*).

Sholto Kynoch is a sought-after pianist who specialises in song and chamber music. He is the founder and Artistic Director of the Oxford Lieder Festival, which won a prestigious Royal Philharmonic Society Award in 2015, cited for its 'breadth, depth and audacity' of programming. In July 2018, Sholto was elected a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music in the RAM Honours.

Recent recitals have taken him to Wigmore Hall, Heidelberger Frühling in Germany, the Zeist International Lied Festival in Holland, the LIFE Victoria festival and Palau de la Música in Barcelona, the Opéra de Lille, Kings Place in London, Opernhaus Zürich, Maison Symphonique de Montréal, and many other leading venues and festivals nationally and internationally. He has performed with singers including Louise Alder, Benjamin Appl, Sophie Daneman, Tara Erraught, Robert Holl, James Gilchrist, Dietrich Henschel, Katarina Karnéus, Wolfgang Holzmair, Jonathan Lemalu, Stephan Loges, Daniel Norman, Christoph Prégardien, Joan Rodgers, Birgid Steinberger and Roderick Williams, amongst many others.

Together with violinist Jonathan Stone and cellist Christian Elliott, Sholto is the pianist of the Phoenix Piano Trio. The trio's recent CD *The Leipzig Circle* was described as 'splendidly vibrant' (*BBC Music Magazine*) and having 'unaffected freshness and charm' (*Gramophone*). They have commissioned a number of new works, and recorded Cheryl Frances-Hoad's *The Forgiveness Machine* for Champs Hill and Philip Venables' *Klaviertrio im Geiste* for NMC.

In recent years, he has curated several series of recitals around exhibitions at the National Gallery, including their *Monet and Architecture* exhibition in 2018, and a series for the British Museum.

He has recorded, live at the Oxford Lieder Festival, the first complete edition of the songs of Hugo Wolf. Other recent and forthcoming recordings include discs of Schubert and Schumann lieder; the complete songs of John Ireland and Havergal Brian with baritone Mark Stone, recital discs with Martin Hässler and Anna Stéphany, and several CDs with the Phoenix Piano Trio.



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