Musings on Love & Longing
Art Song Re-imagined

28 July 2024, 7.30pm
Clare Hall Dining Hall, Herschel Road
Cambridge, CB3 9AL

Daughter and mother duo of harpist Eleanor Medcalf and soprano Susan Gritton
Musings on Love and Longing: Art Song Re-imagined

Eleanor Medcalf, harp
Susan Gritton, soprano

Franz Schubert
   *Der Fluss*
   *Nachtstück*

Felix Mendelssohn
   *Auf Flügeln des Gesanges*

Johann Sebastian Bach tans. Marcel Grandjany
   *Etude No. 6 (BWV 1003)*

Marcel Tournier
   *Etude de Concert: Au Matin*

Gabriel Fauré
   *Clair de lune*
   *Ici bas*
   *Dans les ruines d'une abbaye*
   *Après un rêve*

Interval

Benjamin Britten
   *Suite for Harp*
   A classical 'Overture,' with dotted rhythms and trumpet chords.
   'Nocturne,' a clear tune with increasing ornamentation over a low, chordal ground.
   'Fugue,' a brief scherzo, in three voices.
   'Hymn' (St Denio), a Welsh tune,
      a compliment to the dedicatee, with five variants.

Folksong arrangements:
   *The Last Rose of Summer*
   *Down by the Salley Gardens*

Gustav Holst trans. Eleanor Medcalf
   *Calm is the Morn*

Ralph Vaughan Williams
   *Let Beauty Awake from Songs of Travel*
   *The Infinite Shining Heavens*

Richard Strauss
   *Morgen*
Franz Schubert (1797 - 1828)
The early-Romantic Austrian composer Franz Schubert in his short lifetime wrote at least 600 lieder. He was in his early twenties when he composed the songs in today’s programme during the years 1819-20. This was a time when Schubert set many of Schlegel’s Abendröte poems which included Der Fluss and may have been one of his early attempts to create a unified set or cycle of songs following in the steps of Beethoven, who only just three years previously had written the first song cycle, An Die Ferne Geliebte. At this time Schubert was living in the cramped Viennese apartment of his close friend and mentor, the poet and classicist Johann Mayrhofer who was second only to Goethe in the number of poems Schubert set.

Der Fluss
Wie rein Gesang sich windet
Durch wunderbarer Saitenspiele
Rauschen, Er selbst sich wieder findet,
Wie auch die Weisen tauschen,
Dass neu entzückt die Hörer
evig lauschen.

So fließet mir gediegen
Die Silbermasse,
schlangengleich gewunden,
Durch Büsche, die sich wiegen
Vom Zauber süß gebunden,
Neu sich selbst gefunden.

Wo Hügel sich so gerne Und helle
Wolken leise schwankend zeigen,
Wenn fern schon matte Sterne
Aus blauer Tiefe steigen,
Der Sonne trunkne
Augen abwärts neigen.

So schimmern alle Wesen
Den Umriß nach
im kindlichen Gemüte,
Das zur Schönheit erlesen
Durch milder Götter Güte
In dem Kristall bewahrt
die flücht’ge Blüte.

Just as a pure song meanders through
The miraculous resonance of sounding strings
And finds itself again;
Just as melodies interweave so that
hearers, Newly enraptured,
continue to attend:

That is how, for me,
the river flows so solidly
In a silver mass,
twisted around like a snake,
Through bushes which sway
As they are sweetly bound up in the magic
Of finding themselves anew in a reflection.

Where the hills and bright clouds are so
keen To show themselves rocking gently,
While faint stars in the distance are
already Climbing out of the blue depth,
The drunken eyes of the sun
bend down.

Thus it is that all beings gleam
In outline within
a childlike attitude,
Which, dedicated to beauty
Through the gentle goodness of the gods,
Preserves the transitory blossom
in the crystal.

Karl Wilhelm Friedrich von Schlegel, 1801  © Richard Wigmore
Nachtstück
Wenn über Berge sich der Nebel breitet
Und Luna mit Gewölken kämpft,
So nimmt der Alte seine Harfe,
und schreitet
Und singt waldeinwärts
und gedämpft: „Du heilge Nacht:
Bald ist’s vollbracht,
Bald schlaf ich ihn,
den langen Schlummer,
Der mich erlöst von allem Kummer.”

Die grünen Bäume rauschen dann:
„Schlaf süß, du guter, alter Mann“;
Die Gräser lispeln wankend fort:
„Wir decken seinen Ruheort“;
Und mancher liebe Vogel ruft:
„O lass ihn ruhn in Rasengruft!“
Der Alte horcht, der Alte schweigt,
Der Tod hat sich zu ihm geneigt.

Johann Baptist Mayrhofer, 1824

When the mists spread over the mountains and the moon battles with the clouds, the old man takes his harp, and walks towards the wood, quietly singing: ‘Holy night, soon it will be done. Soon I shall sleep the long sleep which will free me from all grief.’

Then the green trees rustle: ‘Sleep sweetly, good old man’; and the swaying grasses whisper: ‘We shall cover his resting place.’ And many a sweet bird calls: ‘Let him rest in his grassy grave!’ The old man listens, the old man is silent. Death has inclined towards him.

© Richard Wigmore

Felix Mendelssohn (1809 - 1847)
Like Schubert, the German composer Felix Mendelssohn was rooted in the forms of classical music whilst playing with a harmonic language which gestures beyond. He set Heine’s Auf Flügeln des Gesanges in 1834 when he was coming to the end of a frustrating tenure in Dusseldorf. Perhaps Felix was dreaming that the wings of song would sweep him up and deposit him in Leipzig (where he would go on to take up direction of the Gewandhaus Orchestra the following year). Heine was a regular visitor to the Mendelssohn household, an admirer of his sister Rebecka. His famous sister Fanny remarked, “Heine is here, and I do not like him... he gives himself sentimental airs and talks incessantly of himself. But ... you cannot help confessing that he is a poet, a true poet!”. 

Auf Flügeln des Gesanges
Auf Flügeln des Gesanges,
Herzliebchen, trag ich dich fort,
Fort nach den Fluren des Ganges,
Dort weiß ich den schönsten Ort.

Dort liegt ein rotblühender Garten
Im stillen Mondenschein;
Die Lotosblumen erwarten
Ihr trautes Schwesterlein.

Die Veilchen kichern und kosen,
Und schaun nach den Sternen empor;
Heimlich erzählen die Rosen
Sich duftende Märchen ins Ohr.

On wings of song, my darling,
I’ll carry you off, and we’ll go
Where the plains of the Ganges are calling,
To the sweetest place I know.

Red flowers are twining and plaiting
There in the still moonlight:
The lotus flowers are awaiting
Their sister acolyte.

The violets whisper caresses
And gaze to the stars on high;
The rose in secret confesses
Her sweet-scented tales with a sigh.

© Richard Wigmore
Es hüpfen herbei und lauschen
Die frommen, klugen Gazelln;
Und in der Ferne rauschen
Des heiligen Stromes Welln.

Dort wollen wir niedersinken
Unter dem Palmenbaum,
Und Liebe und Ruhe trinken,
Und träumen seligen Traum.

Heinrich Heine, 1827

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) transcribed by Marcel Grandjany (1891-1975)
Marcel Grandjany was a French-born American harpist and student of Hasselmans at the Paris Conservatoire before he moved to New York in 1936 where he became head of the Harp Department at the Julliard School. His transcriptions of J. S. Bach and other baroque and classical composers formed a significant component of his output for the harp. This was vital work for a solo concert harpist whose instrument, the double action pedal harp, which uses pedals to chromatically alter the pitches of the strings, was less than 100 years old. However, it is clear that Grandjany also considered this work of pedagogical significance writing in the preface of this collection of arrangements of Bach’s solo violin works: “The student’s musical development requires the study of that master of all musicians, J.S. Bach.”

Etude No. 6 (Andante from Violin Sonata No. 2, BWV 1003)

Marcel Tournier (1879-1951)
Marcel Tournier, also educated at the Paris Conservatoire, was appointed head of the Harp Department as the successor to Hasselmans in 1912. A highly regarded composer for the harp, he was awarded second prize in the Prix de Rome in 1909. Unlike his contemporary Grandjany, Tournier never wrote a single transcription, believing it more important to write original works with the sonorities of the harp in mind. You can hear this in the Etude de Concert which also takes full advantage of the extended techniques available to the harpist including harmonics, enharmonic pedalling and glissandos.

Etude de Concert: Au Matin

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)
Fauré was contemporary with Grandjany and Tournier at the Paris Conservatoire and was appointed its director in 1905. Yet the songs in today’s recital were written by a much younger Fauré. All but Clair de lune were thought to have been written around 1865 when he graduated from his musical education at the Ecole Niedermayer. Clair de lune is regarded by many as the sign of his breaking with the influences of his early style and forging his own musical language. Ravel, his pupil, credited him with having “saved French music from the dominance of German lied”.

© Hal Draper
Clair de lune
Votre âme est un paysage choisi
Que vont charmant masques et bergamasques
Jouant du luth et dansant et quasi
Tristes sous leurs déguisements fantasques. Tout en chantant
sur le mode mineur L'amour vainqueur et la vie opportune,
Ils n'ont pas l'air de croire à leur bonheur Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune,
Au calme clair de lune triste et beau, Qui fait rêver les oiseaux dans les arbres
Et sangloter d'extase les jets d'eau, Les grands jets d'eau sveltes parmi les marbres.

Paul Verlaine, 1869

Ici-bas tous les lilas meurent
Ici-bas tous les lilas meurent,
Tous les chants des oiseaux sont courts,
Je rêve aux étés qui demeurent
Toujours...

Ici-bas les lèvres effleurent
Sans rien laisser de leur velours,
Je rêve aux baisers qui demeurent
Toujours...

Ici-bas, tous les hommes pleurent
Leurs amitiés ou leurs amours;
Je rêve aux couples qui demeurent
Toujours...

René-François Sully-Prudhomme, 1866

Dans les ruines d'une Abbaye
Seuls tous deux, ravis, chantants!
Comme on s'aime;
Comme on cueille le printemps
Que Dieu sème,
Quels rires étincelants
Dans ces ombres
Jadis pleines de fronts blancs,
De cœurs sombres.

Alone together, delighted, singing,
how we love one another;
how we gather the springtime
that God scatters,
what dazzling laughs
among these shadows
once full of pale brows,
of sombre hearts.
On est tout frais mariés.
On s'envoie
Les charmants cris variés
De la joie.

Frais échos mêlés au vent
qui frissonne!
Gaîété que le noir couvent
Assaisonne!

On effeuille des jasmins
Sur la pierre
Où l'abbesse joint les mains
En prière.

On se cherche,
on se poursuit,
On sent croître
Ton aube, amour, dans la nuit
Du vieux cloître.

On s'en va se becquetant,
On s'adore,
On s'embrasse à chaque instants,
Puis encore,

Sous les piliers, les arceaux,
Et les marbres.
C'est l'histoire des oiseaux
Dans les arbres.

Victor Hugo, 1865

Apres un rêve
Dans un sommeil que charmait
ton image Je rêvais le bonheur,
ardent mirage, Tes yeux étaient
plus doux, ta voix pure et sonore,
Tu rayonnais comme un ciel
éclairé par l'aurore;

Tu m'appelais et je quittais la terre
Pour m'enfuir avec toi vers la lumière,
Les cieux pour nous entr'ouvriraient leurs
nuées, Splendeurs inconnues,
lueurs divines entrevues.

Hélas! hélas, triste réveil des songes,
Je t'appelle, ô nuit, rends-moi
tes mensonges; Reviens, reviens,
radieuse, Reviens, ô nuit mystérieuse!

Romain Bussine

In sleep made sweet by a
vision of you I dreamed of happiness,
fervent illusion, Your eyes were softer,
your voice pure and ringing,
You shone like a sky
that was lit by the dawn;

You called me and I departed the earth
To flee with you toward the light,
The heavens parted their clouds for us,
We glimpsed unknown splendours,
celestial fires.

Alas, alas, sad awakening from dreams!
I summon you, O night, give me back
your delusions; Return, return in
radiance, Return, O mysterious night!

© Richard Stokes
Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)
British composer, conductor and pianist Benjamin Britten met the harpist Osian Ellis at a performance of his *Ceremony of Carols* in 1958. This led to many future collaborations with the harpist. He asked Ellis to put together a programme to be called “Artist’s Choice” at the Aldeburgh Festival in 1969, adding (with a twinkle in his eye according to Osian), “You may commission a new work for the harp from any composer whom you care to mention”. This is how the *Suite for Harp* came to be written, with Ellis as dedicatee and editor. Many of the movements give nods to “18th Century” forms, including the Overture and Fugue, and the final movement is based on a Welsh hymn tune “Immortal, Invisible, God only Wise” as a tribute to Ellis.

Britten was a vocal critic of the folk-revival movement and wrote an article “on the folk-art problem in Britain” whilst living in America during WWII. However, at the same time, Britten would go on to write his first of many folk-song arrangements, “*Down by the Salley Gardens*”. His folk settings form a stark contrast to those of the pastoral school (notably Vaughan Williams), with unexpected and sometimes uncompromising harmonic transformations. “*The Last Rose of Summer*”, from the fourth set published in 1960, is no exception.

*Suite for Harp*

- A classical 'Overture,' with dotted rhythms and trumpet chords.
- 'Nocturne,' a clear tune with increasing ornamentation over a low, chordal ground.
- 'Fugue,' a brief scherzo, in three voices.
- 'Hymn' (St Denio), a Welsh tune, a compliment to the dedicatee, with five variants.

*Folksong arrangements:*

*The Last Rose of Summer*

'Tis the last rose of summer, I'll not leave thee, thou lone one.  
Left blooming alone;  
To pine on the stem;
All her lovely companions  
Since the lovely are sleeping,  
Are faded and gone;  
Go, sleep thou with them;
No flower of her kindred,  
Thus kindly I scatter
No rose-bud is nigh,  
Thy leaves o'er the bed,
To reflect back her blushes  
Where thy mates of the garden
Or give sigh for sigh!  
Lie scentless and dead.

So soon may I follow,  
When friendships decay,  
And from love’s shining circle  
The gems drop away!
When true hearts lie withered,  
And fond ones are flown,  
Oh! who would inhabit  
This bleak world alone?  

Thomas Moore, 1805
**Down by the Salley Gardens**

Down by the salley gardens
my love and I did meet;
She passed the salley gardens
with little snow-white feet.

She bid me take love easy,
as the leaves grow on the tree;
But I, being young and foolish,
with her would not agree.

In a field by the river
my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder
she laid her snow-white hand.

She bid me take life easy,
as the grass grows on the weirs;
But I was young and foolish,
and now am full of tears.

William Butler Yeats, 1889

---

Gustav Holst (1874-1934) transcribed by Eleanor Medcalf

Gustav Holst was an English composer born in Cheltenham and educated at Royal College of Music (RCM). He is known mainly for his orchestral music including “The Planets” and for his keen interest in Sanskrit texts which went on to inspire many of his works. But Holst is not known for his Art Song and his contributions to this genre can feel quite unrooted. He never really settles on his musical voice nor do these works show many signs of inheritance from the English song tradition. In *Calm is the Morn* (an extract from Tennyson’s grief poem, *In Memoriam*) Holst is unafraid of allowing the voice to act independently, often entering in silence. This stark contrast with the panoramic range of the accompaniment gives this piece its vulnerable heart.

**Calm is the Morn**

Calm is the morn without a sound,
   Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
   And only thro' the faded leaf
The chestnut pattering to the ground:

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
   And on these dews that drench the furze.
   And all the silvery gossamers
That twinkle into green and gold:

Calm and still light on yon great plain
   That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,
   And crowded farms and lessening towers,
To mingle with the bounding main:

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
   These leaves that redden to the fall;
   And in my heart, if calm at all,
If any calm, a calm despair:

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,
   And waves that sway themselves in rest,
   And dead calm in that noble breast
Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, from *In Memoriam*, 1850
Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)
Vaughan Williams was a close friend of Gustav Holst. Both studied composition with Stanford at RCM. He would also go on to be an important figure in the folk-revival movement, collecting folk songs up and down the country. He wrote the *Songs of Travel* in 1905 and no future song cycle of his would be received with such acclaim. Set to poems by Robert Louis Stevenson, they feel like a re-negotiation of Schubert's *Winterreise* for an English countryside and early 20th century sensibility. The beauty of nature takes centre stage, but with a necessary counterpart of doubt as man’s relationship with that nature is brought into question.

*Let Beauty Awake* from *Songs of Travel* (1904)
Let Beauty awake in the morn from beautiful dreams,
Beauty awake from rest! Let Beauty awake For Beauty’s sake
In the hour when the birds awake in the brake
And the stars are bright in the west!
Let Beauty awake in the eve from the slumber of day,
Awake in the crimson eve! In the day’s dusk end
When the shades ascend, Let her wake to the kiss of a tender friend,
To render again and receive! Robert Louis Stevenson, 1904

*The Infinite Shining Heavens* from *Songs of Travel*
The infinite shining heavens Rose, and I saw in the night
Uncountable angel stars Showering sorrow and light.
I saw them distant as heaven, Dumb and shining and dead,
And the idle stars of the night Were dearer to me than bread.
Night after night in my sorrow The stars looked over the sea,
Till lo! I looked in the dusk And a star had come down to me.
Robert Louis Stevenson, 1904

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)
*Morgen* is one of four songs which the composer Richard Strauss wrote as a wedding gift for his wife. He would later orchestrate it, with the harp taking a central role. The poem by Scottish poet John Henry Mackay describes the anticipated reunion of lovers. Strauss leaves rising minor third intervals hanging in the air to represent suspension of desire. There is something heartbreakingly in this setting of the happiest text.

*Morgen, Opus 27, Number 4*
Und morgen wird die Sonne wieder scheinen und auf dem Wege, den ich gehen werde, wird uns, die Glücklichen sie wieder einen inmitten dieser sonnenatmenden Erde... und zu dem Strand, dem weiten, wogenblauen, werden wir still und langsam niedersteigen, stumm werden wir uns in die Augen schauen, und auf uns sinkt des Glückes stummes Schweigen.
John Henry Mackay, 1890

And tomorrow the sun will shine again and on the way that I will go, she will again unite us, the happy ones amidst this sun-breathing earth, and to the beach, wide, wave-blue will we still and slowly descend silently we will look in each other's eyes and upon us will sink the mute silence of happiness.
About the Artists

**Eleanor Medcalf**
Born in Surrey, harpist, soprano and pianist Eleanor Medcalf attended the Junior Department of the Royal College of Music and was a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain for two years, most notably as Principal Harpist under Marin Alsop in Bernstein’s *Mass* at the Royal Festival Hall. Since then she has performed in many major venues throughout the UK including the Royal Albert Hall, Snape Maltings, Symphony Hall Birmingham and the Bridgewater Hall Manchester under conductors such as Sir Mark Elder, John Wilson and Sian Edwards.

Eleanor graduated from her BA in Classics at Queens’ College, Cambridge in 2022 where she was a Choral Scholar and served as the Vice-President of Cambridge University Musical Society. She has undertaken administrative roles at Queens’ College and the English Concert, and goes on to take up a scholarship to study her Masters in harp performance at the Guildhall School of Music commencing in September 2024. As a soloist, Eleanor has performed Debussy *Danse Sacré et Danse Profane* and Ravel *Introduction and Allegro* and was a prize-winner in the Cambridge University Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition in 2019. Eleanor feels very lucky to be able to accompany her mother in concert: the mother-daughter duo gave their first performance in the Painted Church, Cambridge in April 2024.

**Susan Gritton**
Winner of the 1994 Kathleen Ferrier Award and Grammy-nominated artist, British soprano Susan Gritton has performed in concert, recital and opera on many of the world’s major stages. Highlights include Ellen Orford in Britten’s *Peter Grimes* at La Scala Milan and Opera Australia; Donna Anna in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* at Bolshoi; Countess Madeleine in Strauss’ *Capriccio* at Grange Park; Blanche in Poulenc’s *Les Dialogues des Carmélites* at Bayerisches Staatsoper, and title roles at Glyndebourne, Covent Garden, English National Opera and in Munich. Other career highlights have included Brahms *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, Ravel *L’Enfant et les Sortilèges* and Bach *Johannespassion* with the Berlin Philharmonic and Sir Simon Rattle; Handel’s *Theodora* with Paul McCreesh; Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis* at the Carnegie Hall with Sir Roger Norrington; Britten *Les Illuminations* with BBC Scottish Symphony and Martyn Brabbins, and Vaughan Williams *A Sea Symphony* with London Symphony Orchestra and Richard Hickox. She studied voice with David Mason, Jonathan Papp, at the Britten-Pears School Snape and National Opera Studio, was a Company Principal at English National Opera. Susan is also an ecologist having read botany at Oxford and Reading Universities and now combines her passions for music and plants by working professionally in both fields. Recent musical highlights include Haydn *Canzonets* at Sage Gateshead in Sir Roger Norrington’s farewell concert, and song recitals in London, Cambridge and Surrey.

Programme notes written by Eleanor Medcalf, edited by Susan Gritton.
The 2024-2025 Clare Hall Concert Series: Some Highlights

5 October 2024 (Saturday), 7:30 pm
L'Isola Early Music Vocal Consort

19 October 2024 (Saturday), 7:30 pm
Jâms Coleman, piano, Lesley Hatfield, violin
Clara Schumann, Beethoven, Elgar, Ravel

16 February 2025 (Sunday), 7:30 pm
Raphael Wallfisch, cello, Simon Callaghan, piano
Schumann, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin

The Clare Hall Music Committee acknowledges with gratitude the generosity of our annual donors and invites contributions to ensure the continuation of this series. Click the QR code below or visit our donor website. Donors in the current financial year will be recognised in the printed programmes for the forthcoming season, unless they prefer to remain anonymous.

Music Angels
Professor Howard & Mrs Diana Colquhoun
Professor Yale & Mrs Kitty Ferguson
Ms Anna Gustafson
Sir Martin & Lady Barbara Harris
Dame Caroline Humphrey & Lord Martin Rees
Mrs Gillian Moore & Dr Michael Nedo
Professors Eric Nye & Carol Frost
Lady Charlotte Pippard
Professors Andrew & Nancy Ramage
Professor Ekhard & Dr Lisa Salje
Mrs Joanna & Mr Michael Womack
Professor Dorothy Bray

Supporters
Mr Edward & Mrs Susan Coales
Dr Robert Duvall
Dr Birgitte Ginge
Dr Anthony Harris
Professor Ieuan Hughes
Mr Matthew Jones
Professor Georgia Mouroutsou
Professor Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr
Professor Roy Rotheim
Dr Atsuko Todoroki
Dr Michael Trower
Professor Guy Welbon
Drs Volker Wille & Aiping Mu

Donate Here