



Western Music

Don Wright Faculty of Music

FRIDAYS @ 12:30 SERIES

Friday, January 11, 2019
12:30 p.m., von Kuster Hall

Der kleine Tod

Frauke Jürgensen, *soprano*

Ralph Stelzenmüller, *pianoforte*

Vier Gesänge, Op. 2

Dem Schmerz sein Recht
Schlafend trägt man mich in mein Heimatland
Nun ich der Riesen Stärksten überwand
Warm die Lüfte

Alban Berg
(1885-1935)

Vier Lieder, Op. 27

Ruhe, meine Seele
Cäcilie
Heimliche Aufforderung
Morgen

Richard Strauss
(1864-1949)

Fünf Lieder für eine Frauenstimme (Wesendonck-Lieder)

Der Engel
Stehe still
Im Treibhaus
Schmerzen
Träume

Richard Wagner
(1812-1883)

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THE ARTISTS

Frauke Jürgensen, soprano, studied theory and composition at Western University, performance and musicology at McGill University, and is currently a Senior Lecturer (associate professor) at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. She performs a wide range of repertoire from late-medieval to contemporary, with a focus on Early Music as well as art song. She has appeared with ensembles such as Northern Baroque, Ensemble Combassal, and Combinatorics. Her performances include cantatas such as Bach's *Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen*, Clérambault's *La Muse de l'Opéra* and Händel's *Armida abbandonata*, as well as Graun's *Der Tod Jesu* and Händel's *Messiah*, *Gloria* and *Brockes-Passion*—and Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*. In 2017, she premièred a song cycle composed for her voice and solo cello by Aberdeenshire composer Geoff Palmer, *Unidentified Edges*. With the Aberdeen Early Music Collective, formed in 2014, she has embarked on a series of performance projects intended to showcase research by musicologists based in Aberdeen. *Chez Schedel*, a late-medieval programme centred around the city of Nuremberg, is based on her own research into 15th-century performance practice. The ensemble's first recording, *Prigionero d'Amor*, consisting of recently-edited cantatas and *sonate da chiesa* of Vivaldi's contemporary Giovanni Maria Ruggieri, was released on the *Vox Regis* label in 2018.

Ralph Stelzenmüller, piano, studied organ, church music and conducting at the Mozarteum in Salzburg before completing his postgraduate studies in harpsichord and organ at the Schola Cantorum in Basel. For three years, he held a lectureship for music history and rehearsal technique at the Athanor Academy of Theatre. In high demand both as a player of basso continuo and as an accompanist for Lied, he has performed and taught throughout Europe and South America, at venues such as Stationer's Hall (London, UK), St Cecilia's Hall (Edinburgh), *Triagonale* (Klagenfurt), the *Innsbrucker Festwochen Alter Musik*, the St Gall Festival, and with ensembles such as the Consort of Musicke, Capriccio Basel, and others. With his own ensemble Combassal (founded 2005) and as a guest conductor, he has directed works including Bach (Passions, Cantatas, Missae), Handel (Operas and cantatas), Purcell (theatre music) and vocal works by Monteverdi, Schütz, Rosenmüller, Gabrieli and Gesualdo. He directed the Modena consort in the première recording of Hans-Jürg Meier's *Wingert in der Frühe* for Pan Classics (2012). From 2010 to 2013, he pursued postgraduate studies at the University of Aberdeen, where he was instrumental in establishing a programme of study for basso continuo, and where he directs biannual baroque opera projects for students, in collaboration with Frauke.

Alban Berg's *Vier Gesänge* Op. 2 are often regarded as a turning point. The first song is composed in a highly-chromatic but still recognisably tonal harmonic language, and describes the speaker's escape from pain, by wrapping himself in the restfulness of sleep. The vestiges of tonality are further obscured in the second and third songs: although they have conventional key signatures and can be interpreted as a dominant-tonic pair, every single note is given an accidental, and the second song is often analysed in terms of alternating whole-tone scales. These two songs are thematically linked, evoking a dramatically eventful dream world and the image of returning home to an intense sense of alienation. Of the last song, Schönberg said that he thought the principles underlying its musical language would be discovered by future musicologists: it was featured in a volume of essays dedicated to the topic of the pitch-class set general theories of Western's own Richard Parks, and Allen Forte (1998). Though frequently the subject of analytical exercises (Frauke's first encounter with "Schlafend trägt man mich" was in third-year theory at Western with Alan Heard), this very dark and beautiful cycle is not performed nearly as often as it deserves.

1-To pain its due

Sleep, sleep, nothing but sleep,
No waking, no dream
Of those woes that afflicted me
Barely the faintest memory,
That, when life's fullness
Dies down into my rest,
I will wrap myself yet more deeply,
More firmly close my eyes!

2-Sleeping, I am carried to my homeland

Sleeping, I am carried
To my homeland.
I come from afar,
Over peaks, over chasms,
Over a dark ocean
To my homeland.

3-Now that I have overcome the strongest of giants

Now that I have overcome the strongest of
giants,
And from the darkest lands have found my way
home
On a white fairy-tale hand,
The bells toll heavily,
And I stagger through the streets,
numbed by sleep.

4-Forest sun

The breezes are warm,
Grass is sprouting on sunny meadows.
Hark! —
Hark, the nightingale whistles...
I want to sing:

High up in the dusky mountain forest,
Snow is melting and glistening,
A girl in a grey dress
Leans on a damp oak tree,
Her delicate cheeks are ill,
The grey eyes shine feverishly
Through dusky giant tree trunks,
"He's not coming yet! He's making me wait..."

Die!

One dies, while at the same time, the other lives:
That makes the world so deeply beautiful.

Richard Strauss's *Vier Lieder, Op. 27* were dedicated to his wife. The cycle contains several of his most famous songs, including "Morgen". The deceptively light-hearted poems of the two middle songs are raised to contemplative transcendence by the framing songs, which resemble recitative in their surface simplicity. The first song pushes the extreme boundaries of late-Romantic chromaticism, beginning with sonorities very similar to Berg's conclusion, followed by a long turbulent journey to a clear, sunny C major, as the troubled soul (just as in Berg's "Dem Schmerz sein Recht") sinks into the oblivion of rest. The second song addresses the absent lover, suggesting that both rest and ecstatic understanding of life are found in togetherness, and this theme is continued in the third song, an altogether more direct invitation to leave a party and disappear into a rose-scented night garden. In the sunny morning of the fourth song, the united lovers descend to the beach, and gaze at each other in blissful silence. This bliss is reached via a Neapolitan chord, carrying fateful harmonic implications: whether these imply transcendence of the turbulence of the first song, or something altogether darker, is left open, as the blissful silence dissolves in delicate G major arpeggios.

1-Rest, my soul!

Not a breeze stirs softly,
Gently, the grove falls asleep,
Through the dark covering of the leaves
Bright sunlight is stealing.
Rest, rest, my soul,
Your storms were wild,
You raged and trembled,
Like the swelling surf.
These times are tremendous,
Bringing distress to heart and mind—
Rest, rest, my soul,
And forget what is threatening you!

2-Cecily

If you knew
What it means to dream of burning kisses,
Of wandering and resting with one's lover,
Eye looking into eye,
Cuddling and chatting,
If you knew,
You would incline your heart.

If you knew
What it means to be trembling in lonely nights,
Surrounded by the storm, when no one is
comforting
With gentle words the soul, tired of battle,
If you knew,
You would come to me!

If you knew
What it means to live, enveloped in God's
World-creating breath,
To float up, carried by light
To blissful heights,
If you knew,
You would live with me!

3-Secret Invitation

Come, raise the sparkling cup to your mouth,
And at the joyful banquet drink your heart's
health,
And when you raise it, drink to me secretly,
Then I will smile, and drink as quietly as you.

And quietly, like me, look at the horde
Of drunken babblers—don't mock them too
much.
No, raise the twinkling cup, filled with wine,
And let them be happy at the loud banquet.

And once you have enjoyed the meal, stilled your
thirst,
Then leave the joyful loud companions,
And wander down into the garden, to the rose
bush,
There, I will wait for you, as is our custom,

And will sink to your breast, sooner than you
hope,
And drink your kisses, as so often before,
And twine into your hair the splendour of the
roses,
O come, you wondrous, longed-for night!

4-Tomorrow

And tomorrow, the sun will shine again,
And on the path that I will walk,
We, the happy ones, it will reunite
On this sun-breathing Earth...

And to the shore, wide, blue with waves,
We will quietly and slowly descend,
Mutely, we will look into each other's eyes,
And on us will descend happiness's mute
silence...

Richard Wagner's *Wesendonck-Lieder* are perhaps more familiar in their orchestral versions. However, the cycle was initially composed for female voice and piano, and Wagner himself orchestrated only two of the songs. Beginning tonally and gesturally where Strauss's cycle finishes, they paint the clandestine love affair of Wagner (thinly disguised as a rescuing angel to a suffering soul in the first song) and the poet Mathilde Wesendonck. Compared with Strauss's Op. 27, which was composed about 30 years later, these songs appear startlingly modern in their harmonic language and vocal line, while other aspects such as the treatment of the piano are more reminiscent of Wagner's close contemporaries, such as Schumann. In the second song, two souls fuse to transcend the material world, and dissolve together in the harmony of the spheres, which is reached through an astonishing chromatic journey from C minor to C major. The central song, "Im Treibhaus", uses the metaphor of hot-house plants displaced from their home-land to express Wesendonck's unhappiness with her marriage situation. The slithering harmonies and lack of satisfaction produced by constant plagal cadences link this song most closely back to the first of Berg's Op. 2, as the speaker wraps herself in the darkness of silence. Both in Wagner's increasingly-unstable harmonic language and in the poetic metaphors of dreaming, dying, and home-coming, we come full circle to the beginning of this programme in the last two songs.

1-The Angel

In the early days of childhood
I often heard tell of angels
who exchanged the holy bliss of Heaven
for the sunlight of Earth.

That, where a heart with worries
pines, hidden from the world,
that, where it quietly bleeds
and dissolves in floods of tears,

That, where ardently its prayer
pleads solely for release,
then the angel floats down,
and lifts it gently to heaven.

Yes, for me also an angel came down,
and on shining wings,
far from all suffering,
he now leads my spirit towards heaven!

2-Stand still

Rushing, roaring wheel of time,
measure of eternity;
glowing spheres in the breadths of space
you that surround the Earth's globe;
eternal creation, please desist,
enough becoming, let me be!

Keep to yourself, generative power,
Primal thought, which eternally creates,
Hold your breath, still your urge,
be silent only a second!
Swelling pulse, chain your beating;
end the eternal day of desire!
That in blissfully sweet forgetfulness
I might measure all delights.

When eye in drinks blissfully into eye,
when soul completely sinks into soul,
when one being finds itself in another,
and the end of all hope declares itself,
when lips become mute in astounded silence,
No more inner wishes are created:
then Man recognises the trace of the eternal,
And solves your riddle, holy Nature!

3-In the hothouse

High-arched crowns of leaves,
canopies of emerald,
you children of distant lands,
tell me, why are you lamenting?

Mutely, you incline your branches,
draw signs in the air,
and the mute witness of suffering
rises upwards, a sweet scent.

Broadly in desirous longing
you spread your arms
and, delusional, wrap them around
desolate emptiness's void horror.

Well I know, poor plant,
that we share a fate,
although surrounded by light and radiance,
our home is not here!

And as gladly the sun parts
from the empty glow of day,
he who truly suffers wraps himself
in the darkness of silence.

It becomes quiet, a whispering fluttering
uneasily fills the dark room:
I see heavy drops hovering
on the leaves' green hem.

4-Pain

Sun, every evening you weep
until your lovely eyes are red,
when, bathing in the mirror of the sea,
you are reached by an early death.

But you are resurrected in old splendour,
glory of the dusky world,
awake anew in the morning,
like a proud conquering hero!

Ah, how should I then lament,
why, my heart, are you so heavy,
if even the sun must despair,
if even the sun must set?

And since death gives birth only to life,
and pain brings only delight:
Oh, how I give thanks
that Nature has given me such pain!

5-Dreams

Say, what wondrous dreams
enfold my senses,
that they have not, like empty foam,
vanished into desolate nothingness?

Dreams, which with every hour,
every day bloom more fair,
and with their tidings of heaven
blissfully roam through my mind!

Dreams, which like holy rays
sink into the soul,
there to paint an eternal image:
Forgetting all, thinking only of one!

Dreams, as when the spring's sunshine
kisses blossoms from out of the snow,
that to unsuspected bliss
the new day welcomes them,

That they grow, that they bloom,
and dreaming spend their scent,
gently fade against your breast,
and then sink into the tomb.