

# SONGS WITH AND WITHOUT WORDS

ALISON WRAY (SOPRANO)

ROBERT OSBORNE (CLARINET)

CHARLES MATTHEWS (PIANO)

**On the Wings of Love**

Ionian Song  
The Moon Sails Out  
Sonnet XI  
Epitaph  
Reluctance  
When You Are Old

**Ian Venables (1955- )**

A.P. Cavafy  
Frederico Garcia Lorca  
Jean de Sponde  
The Emperor Hadrian  
Robert Frost  
W.B. Yeats

**Song Without Words****Edward German (1862-1926)****Three Folk Songs**

Johnny has Gone for a Soldier  
Hush-a-ba, Birdie, croon croon  
John Peel

**John McCabe (1939-2015)**

(American)  
(Scottish)  
(English)

**Interval****Six German Songs**

Sei still mein Herz (Be still, my heart)  
Zwiesang (Duet)  
Sehnsucht (Longing)  
Wiegenlied (Lullaby)  
Das heimliche Lied (The secret song)  
Wach auf (Wake up)

**Louis Spohr (1784-1859)**

Karl von Schweitzer  
Robert Reinick  
Emanuel Geibel  
Hoffman von Fallersleben  
E. Koch  
anon

**Songs without Words**

*Opus 32, no.2*  
*Opus 19, no.3*  
*Opus 67, no.2*

**Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)****Der Hirt auf dem Felsen**

(The shepherd on the rock)

**Franz Schubert (1797-1828)**

Wilhelm Müller  
Karl August Varnhagen

### **Alison Wray**

Originally from London, Alison has a degree and doctorate in linguistics from York, and it was while there that she developed her solo singing career. She has taken principal roles in 17 operas in Yorkshire and Wales and has sung with several of the top British professional early music groups including The Sixteen, Gabrieli Ensemble, Finzi Singers, New London Consort and Cappella Nova. As a soloist with choral societies she has performed most of the major repertoire, and with orchestras in London she has sung Mahler's 4th Symphony and opera gala concerts. She has appeared as soloist as far afield as Kenya and China and her solo song recitals often showcase her expertise in foreign and historical languages. Her CD recordings span repertoire from 12<sup>th</sup> century plainchant to 21<sup>st</sup> century works for soprano and recorder orchestra. In addition to working with Bob and Charles, she is part of Park West, a small ensemble for voice, spinet/piano and recorder(s). Alison's next recital in Wales is with pianist Philip May, at Ewenny Priory near Bridgend, on Thurs 18<sup>th</sup> July. It features two song cycles (Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben* and Grieg's *Haugtussa*) along with items by Rebecca Clarke, Andre Previn, William Walton and others.

### **Charles Matthews**

Born in 1966, Charles studied at the Royal College of Music and was organ scholar at Trinity College Cambridge. He has gone on to win numerous awards, perhaps most notably the Franz Liszt Organ Interpretation prize in Budapest. Recent engagements include solo performances in the UK and Spain as well as duo recitals with flute, recorder, violin, cello and voice. Charles is organist of St. Catherine's Church, Chipping Campden. He works extensively with young people, acting as accompanist and organ tutor at Birmingham Conservatoire. Charles is married with three children.

### **Robert Osborne**

Bob started playing the clarinet immediately after going to grammar school in 1964 and played throughout school and university years. On moving to Scotland at the end of his university career the clarinet case was closed and only reopened seven years later when he moved to the hills above Tintern where he still lives. Early retirement from a career as a chemist working in process research has enabled him to spend more time on other pursuits including playing the clarinet and he has taken part in many concerts of chamber and orchestral music as well as making the occasional appearance in the pit for amateur shows.

British composers (notwithstanding the name of one of them) provide the music for the first half of the programme, while the second half features music by German and Austrian ones.

**'On the Wings of Love' Op.38** was commissioned for a couple's 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in 2006. The songs are all settings by non-British poets, reflecting places that Venables had travelled to. **Ionian song** (Greece) suggests that the Greek gods, despite having been cast aside by the people, are still watching over their ancient land. As the music moves from dramatic to poignantly lyrical, it captures the stillness of an August morning, when, as through a veil, Apollo himself seems to cross the Arcadian Hills. **The moon sails out** (Spain) is an energetic setting of a poem by Lorca. Draped in surrealist imagery, it expresses the joy and excitement of an evening spent in a moonlit landscape. Daylight has been replaced by a nocturnal world of shadows and dreams. The line 'no one eats oranges under a full moon' refers to a Spanish superstition. **Sonnet XI** (France) creates a mood of tranquillity in which the poet reflects upon the changing nature of his love. This is evoked in the minimalist figuration of the piano accompaniment. In the second stanza, the serenity is broken as the music gives way to a passionate outpouring that tries to recapture something of the 'burning love' of youth, leading to a dramatic release of tension: *'That, loving you, I love without regret'*, before returning to the reflective mood of the opening, growing to another climax, and fading to a barely audible echo. In **Epitaph** (Italy), Emperor Hadrian muses on the age-old question of what happens to the human spirit after its earthly life is over. Venables has set the words to a simple melody, supported by a chorale-like accompaniment, with a prelude for solo clarinet, and postlude for clarinet and piano. Frost's **Reluctance** (USA) was written in 1894 and was the result of his deep love for Elinor White. Set against a dying landscape, Frost expresses his disappointment following her refusal to marry him. In Yeats' **When you are old** (Ireland), Venables evokes an undercurrent of anticipation of the opening line. The seemingly simple poetic form in three four-line stanzas belies a subtly changing metre, as emotional intensity grows. (*Adapted from notes by Graham J. Lloyd*) Spohr's **Six German songs** were composed for the Princess of Sonderhausen in 1837, probably for her to perform at home. The combination of voice, clarinet and piano was popular at this time, as evidenced also by Schubert's **Shepherd on the Rock**, composed only nine years earlier, in 1828, during the final months of his life. Both the Spohr and the Schubert explore themes of love and loss, and the settings are intended to show off the remarkable virtuosity and range of the clarinet.

**On the Wings of Love** (various authors)  
Ian Venables (1955 - )

**I. Ionian song**

*Constantine P. Cavafy (1863–1933) (Translation by George Barbanis; Dedicated to Ned Rorem)*

Just because we have broken their statues,  
Just because we have driven them out of their  
temples,  
the gods did not die because of this at all.  
O Ionian land, it is you they still love,  
it is you their souls still remember.

When an August morning dawns upon you  
A vigour from their life moves through your air;  
and at times an ethereal youthful figure,  
indistinct, in rapid stride, crosses over your hills.

**2. The moon sails out**

*Federico García Lorca (1898–1936) (Translation by Robert Bly; Dedicated to Ian Flint)*

When the moon sails out  
the church bells die away  
and the paths overgrown  
with brush appear.

No one eats oranges  
under the full moon.  
The right thing are fruits  
green and chilled.

When the moon sails out  
the waters cover the earth  
and the heart feels it is  
a little island in the infinite.

When the moon sails out  
with a hundred faces all the same  
the coins made of silver  
break out in sobs in the pocket.

**3. Sonnet XI**

*Jan de Sponde (1557–1595) (Translation by Gilbert F. Cunningham; Dedicated to Graham Lloyd)*

First in my verse, I hitherto have set  
The burning love in which my passions glow,  
But now that kinder looks your eyes bestow,  
All but my constancy I would forget.

Many there are who burn with hot desires,  
Yet in the end their self-consuming fires  
To wisps of smoke or scraps of ash will turn.  
But in their squalor let such lovers lie;

Even Love himself, whose help avails me yet,  
Aware how mortal spirits often go  
From change to change, now stands amazed  
To know that, loving you, I love without regret.

I am well pleased if you consent to learn  
My fire, till I am dead, will never die.

**4. Epitaph**

*The Emperor Hadrian (76–138 AD) (Translation by Royston Lambert; Dedicated to Kenneth Prendergast)*

Little spirit,  
Gentle and Wandering,  
Companion and guest of the body,

In what place will you now abide,  
Pale, stark and bare,  
Unable as you used, to play?

## 5. Reluctance

Robert Frost (1874-1963) (Dedicated to Gregory Gullickson)

Out through the fields and the woods  
And over the walls I have wended;  
I have climbed the hills of vie  
And looked at the world, and descended;  
I have come by the highway home,  
And lo, it is ended.

The leaves are all dead on the ground,  
Save those that the oak is keeping  
To ravel them one by one  
And let them go scraping and creeping  
Out over the crusted snow,  
When others are sleeping.

And the dead leaves lie huddled and still,  
No longer blown hither and thither;  
The last lone aster is gone;

The flowers of the witch hazel wither;  
The heart is still aching to seek,  
But the feet question 'Whither?'

And the dead leaves lie huddled and still,  
No longer blown hither and thither;  
The last lone aster is gone;  
The flowers of the witch hazel wither;  
The heart is still aching to seek,  
But the feet question 'Whither?'

Ah, when to the heart of man  
Was it ever less than a treason  
To go with the drift of things,  
To yield with a grace to reason,  
And bow and accept the end  
Of a love or a season?

## 6. When you are old

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) (Dedicated to Gilly Lowson)

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,  
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,  
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look,  
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,  
And loved your beauty with love false or true,

But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,  
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,  
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love hath fled  
And paced upon the mountains overhead.

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## Sechs deutsche Lieder (Six German songs) (various authors)

Louis Spohr (1784 - 1859)

### *Sei still, mein Herz (Be still, my heart) (Karl Friedrich, Freiherr von Schweitzer)*

I harboured hope deep in my breast,  
Which embraced it trustingly;  
My eyes gleamed full of life's joy,  
As its magic flowed over me;  
When I listened to its flattering voice,  
In the storm its echo is drowned out.  
Be still, my heart, and don't think on it;  
This, now, is the truth - the other was deception.

I built, from flowers and sunshine,  
A bridge through my life,  
Upon which I walked, crowned with laurel,  
Dedicated to the most noble efforts;  
Humanity's gratitude was my loveliest reward -  
But now the mob laughs aloud with brazen scorn.  
Be still, my heart, and don't think on it;  
This, now, is the truth - the other was deception.

**Zwiesang (Duet)** (Robert Reinick)

In a lilac bush sat a little bird  
In the quiet, lovely May night,  
Beneath was a girl in the high grass  
In the quiet, lovely May night.

The girl sang, the bird kept silent;  
The bird sang, the girl listened;  
And far and wide their duet rang out  
Through the moonlit valley.

What did the bird sing in the branches  
Through the quiet, lovely May night?  
What was the girl singing at the same time  
Through the quiet, lovely May night?

The bird: about the spring sun;  
The girl: about love's delight:  
And how that song pierced my heart  
I won't forget, my whole life long.

**Sehnsucht (Longing)** Emanuel Geibel)

I look into my heart, and I look out at the world,  
Until tears fall from my brimming eyes;  
Although the distance shines with a golden light,  
The north holds me fast, and I cannot reach it.  
Oh, such narrow constraints, and such a broad  
world,  
And time, so fleeting!

Oh, if I had wings to fly through the blue air  
How I would bathe in the sun's fragrance!  
But in vain! And hour after hour passes –  
Mourning youth, burying song! –  
O such narrow constraints, and such a broad  
world,  
And time, so fleeting!

**Wiegenlied in drei Tönen (Lullaby on three notes)** (A.H. Hoffman von Fallersleben)

Everything is quiet and sweetly peaceful,  
And so, my child, you should also sleep.  
Outside the wind only murmurs,  
Su, su, su, go to sleep, my child!

Close your little eyes,  
Let them be like two buds.

Tomorrow, when the sun shines,  
They will blossom like flowers.

And I'll look at the little flowers,  
And I'll kiss those little eyes,  
And this mother's heart will forget  
That it is springtime outside.

**Das heimliche Lied (The secret song)** (E. Koch)

There are secret sufferings  
That mouths never express,  
Carried deep in the heart  
They are never made known to the world.

There are secret longings  
That always shun the light,  
There are hidden tears,  
The stranger does not see them.

There is a soft slumber  
Where sweet peace dwells,  
Where quiet rest heals  
The anguish of the weary soul.

Yet there is a more beautiful hope  
That soars over all worlds,  
where the heart, open to other hearts,  
lies, full of love.

### **Wach auf (Wake up) (anon)**

Why do you stand so long, brooding?  
Ah! love has been awake so long already!  
Do you hear the ringing all around?

The birds are singing like sweet bells;  
From the barren branches spring tender little  
leaves,

Life flows through bough and branch.

The little drops slide from the forest hollows,

The brook leaps with swelling strength;  
The sky bends towards the clear waves,

The blueness is wondrously revealed.  
A bright flourish of shape and sound,  
An endless yielding to endless impulse.

Why do you stand so long, brooding?  
Ah! love has been awake so long already!  
An endless dance to a constant beat!

[Note: For this concert, songs 1, 3 and 5 have been slightly abridged, in the interests of performance time]

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### **Der Hirt auf dem Felsen (The Shepherd on the Rock)**

*(Wilhelm Müller; Karl August Varnhagen)*

*Franz Schubert (1797-1828)*

When I stand on the highest rock,  
And look deep down into the valley,  
And sing,

Out of the dark and deep valley far below  
The chasm's echoes resonate upward  
and back to me.

The further my voice resounds,  
The brighter it echoes back  
From below.

My sweetheart lives so far from me,  
I burn with longing to be with her  
Over there.

I am consumed by misery,  
My happiness has gone,  
Hope on earth has eluded me,  
I am so lonely here.

So longingly did the song ring out through the  
wood

So longingly through it rang through the night,  
It draws all hearts towards heaven  
With astounding strength.

The Springtime will come,  
The Springtime, my happiness,  
Now I must make ready.  
To wander forth.

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