

Romantic Words and Music for Valentine's Day

14 February 2016 at St. Paul's Church, Knightsbridge

In der Nacht from Fantasiestücke: Robert Schumann (Piano solo)

Prayer for my Daughter: WB Yeats (extract)

Once more the storm is howling, and half hid
Under this cradle-hood and coverlid
My child sleeps on. There is no obstacle
But Gregory's wood and one bare hill
Whereby the haystack- and roof-levelling wind
Bred on the Atlantic, can be stayed;
And for an hour I have walked and prayed
Because of the great gloom that is in my mind.
I have walked and prayed for this young child an hour
And heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower,
And-under the arches of the bridge, and scream
In the elms above the flooded stream;
Imagining in excited reverie
That the future years had come,
Dancing to a frenzied drum,
Out of the murderous innocence of the sea.

May she be granted beauty and yet not
Beauty to make a stranger's eye distraught,
Or hers before a looking-glass, for such,
Being made beautiful overmuch,
Consider beauty a sufficient end,
Lose natural kindness and maybe
The heart-revealing intimacy
That chooses right, and never find a friend.
Helen being chosen found life flat and dull
And later had much trouble from a fool,
While that great Queen, that rose out of the spray,
Being fatherless could have her way
Yet chose a bandy-legged smith for man.
It's certain that fine women eat
A crazy salad with their meat
Whereby the Horn of plenty is undone.

from Frauenliebe und Leben: Robert Schumann

I - Seit ich ihn gesehen (translation by Lois Phillips)

Since first I saw him I have been as if blind; I see only him wherever I look. His image hovers before me as in a waking dream, and rises from deepest darkness all the brighter.

Everything around me is colourless and dull; I care no longer for my sisters' frolics. I would rather

weep alone in my little room; since first I saw him I have been as if blind.

II - Er, der Herrlichste von allen

He, the most splendid of all, as gentle as he is good - with his tender lips, bright eyes, clear mind and firm courage.

Like a bright and glorious star in the lofty blue, so too is he in my firmament; exalted and remote.

Go, go your way; whilst I behold your radiance, behold it in my humility, full of joy and misery.

You shall not hear my silent prayer offered for your joy alone. You, my high and glorious star, can never know a lowly maid like me.

Only she, the worthiest of all can make your choice a happy one, and her I'll bless a thousand times in her sublimity.

Then I will rejoice and weep; blissful, blissful I will be. Even though my heart should break - break, O heart, what matter?

Before The World Was Made - WB Yeats

If I make the lashes dark
And the eyes more bright
And the lips more scarlet,
Or ask if all be right
From mirror after mirror,
No vanity's displayed:
I'm looking for the face I had
Before the world was made.
What if I look upon a man
As though on my beloved,
And my blood be cold the while
And my heart unmoved?
Why should he think me cruel
Or that he is betrayed?
I'd have him love the thing that was
Before the world was made.

from Frauenliebe und Leben: Robert Schumann

III - Ich kann's nicht fassen, nicht glauben (translation by Lois Phillips)

I cannot believe or grasp it - I've been beguiled by a dream; that he from amongst all others, has blessed and exalted me?

It seemed as if he said to me: "I am yours for ever!" I thought I must be dreaming still, for that could never be so.

O let me die within this dream, cradled upon his breast. Let me embrace a blessed death with tears of infinite joy!

The Mask - WB Yeats

'Put off that mask of burning gold
With emerald eyes.'
'O no, my dear, you make so bold
To find if hearts be wild and wise,
And yet not cold.'

'I would but find what's there to find,
Love or deceit.'
'It was the mask engaged your mind,
And after set your heart to beat,
Not what's behind.'

'But lest you are my enemy,
I must enquire.'
'O no, my dear, let all that be,
What matter, so there is but fire
In you, in me?'

from Frauenliebe und Leben: Robert Schumann

IV - Du Ring an meinem Finger (translation by Lois Phillips)

You, ring upon my finger, little ring of gold, with reverence I press you to my lips, with devotion to my heart.

The serene beauty of my childhood dream was gone; I found myself lost and alone in an endless desolate world.

You, ring upon my finger, you taught me - opened my eyes for the first time to the deep and eternal in life.

I want to serve him, live for him and wholly belong to him; I want to surrender, and find myself transfigured by his splendour.

Her Triumph - WB Yeats

I did the dragon's will until you came
Because I had fancied love a casual
Improvisation, or a settled game
That followed if I let the kerchief fall:
Those deeds were best that gave the minute wings
And heavenly music if they gave it wit;
And then you stood among the dragon-rings.
I mocked, being crazy, but you mastered it
And broke the chain and set my ankles free,
Saint George or else a pagan Perseus;
And now we stare astonished at the sea,
And a miraculous strange bird shrieks at us.

from Frauenliebe und Leben: Robert Schumann

V - Helft mir, ihr Schwestern (translation by Lois Phillips)

Help me, sisters, help me today in my joy; to adorn myself, and eagerly twine the myrtle blossom about my brow.

Whenever my beloved held me in his arms, my heart was full of joy, and always he looked forward with such longing to this day.

Help me, sisters, help me banish my foolish fears, that I may receive him, the source of my joy, with unclouded eyes.

When you, my beloved, come for me, will your light shine on me, O sun? In devotion, and humility, let me bow to my lord.

Strew him with flowers, dear sisters - bring him blossoming roses! But you I bid a sad farewell, as I joyfully leave the flock.

VI - Süßer Freund, du blickest mich (translation by Lois Phillips)

Dearest one, you look at me in wonder; you cannot understand how I can weep. But let the rare jewelled drops in my eyes tremble with joy.

How anxious is my heart, how full of bliss! If only I could find the words to say it. Come, hide your face upon my breast, so I may whisper in your ear all my joy.

Now you understand the tears I weep. Should you not see them, my beloved husband? Stay near my heart, and feel its beat, so I may clasp you to me ever closer.

Here beside my bed will be the cradle, softly sheltering my lovely dream. The morning will come when the dream comes true, and from it your image will smile up at me.

To A Child Dancing in the Wind - WB Yeats

Dance there upon the shore;
What need have you to care
For wind or water's roar?
And tumble out your hair
That the salt drops have wet;
Being young you have not known
The fool's triumph, nor yet
Love lost as soon as won,
Nor the best labourer dead
And all the sheaves to bind.
What need have you to dread
The monstrous crying of wind?

from Frauenliebe und Leben: Robert Schumann

VII - An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust (translation by Lois Phillips)

Lying on my heart, at my breast, you my delight, my joy! Joy is love, love is joy - I have said it, and cannot deny it! I thought I knew rapture, but now I know perfect bliss. Only she who loves the child she nourishes - only a mother can know the meaning of happiness and love. O how I pity a man, who cannot know a mother's joy! My dear sweet angel, how you look at me and smile!

To a Child Dancing in the Wind (cont) - WB Yeats

Has no one said those daring
Kind eyes should be more learn'd?
Or warned you how despairing
The moths are when they are burned,
I could have warned you, but you are young,
So we speak a different tongue.

O you will take whatever's offered
And dream that all the world's a friend,
Suffer as your mother suffered,
Be as broken in the end.
But I am old and you are young,
And I speak a barbarous tongue.

from Frauenliebe und Leben: Robert Schumann

VIII - Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz getan (translation by Lois Phillips)

Now, for the first time you have caused me grief, and it has struck deep. Cruel and merciless, you sleep the sleep of death.

Abandoned, I stare before me; the world is empty. I have loved and lived, but now I live no more.

Silently I withdraw into myself, the veil falls. There I hold you and my lost happiness - you, my whole world.

A Last Confession - WB Yeats

What lively lad most pleased me
Of all that with me lay?
I answer that I gave my soul
And loved in misery,
But had great pleasure with a lad
That I loved bodily.
Flinging from his arms I laughed
To think his passion such
He fancied that I gave a soul
Did but our bodies touch,
And laughed upon his breast to think
Beast gave beast as much.
I gave what other women gave

'That stepped out of their clothes.
But when this soul, its body off,
Naked to naked goes,
He it has found shall find therein
What none other knows,
And give his own and take his own
And rule in his own right;
And though it loved in misery
Close and cling so tight,
There's not a bird of day that dare
Extinguish that delight.

The Cloths of Heaven: Dilys Elwyn Edwards

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.

Intermezzo Opus 116 No.2: Johannes Brahms (piano solo)

The Wild Swans at Coole - WB Yeats

The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine-and-fifty swans.
The nineteenth autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count;
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,
And now my heart is sore.
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,
The first time on this shore,
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,
Trod with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old;

Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water,
Mysterious, beautiful;
Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day
To find they have flown away?

from Die Wesendoncklieder: Richard Wagner

I - Der Engel (The Angel) (translation by Lois Phillips)

When I was young, I often heard tell of angels, who left the sublime joys of heaven for the sunny earth where, hidden from the world, a heart was pining in anxious grief, silently bleeding and wasting away amid floods of tears; its prayer recently begging only for deliverance. Then an angel would descend and bear it tenderly to Heaven.

Yes, an angel came down to me too, and bore my spirit on gleaming wings far from all grief to Heaven!

II - Stehe Still! (Be still!)

Blustering, raging wheel of time, you who measure eternity; gleaming spheres in the wide universe encircling the globe; O halt, primeval creation - enough of evolution, let me be!

Hold back, creative power - ancient of thoughts eternally creating! Curb your breath, stay your impulse, be still one second long! Throbbing pulses, restrain your beat. End, eternal day of desiring,

that in sweet blessed oblivion, I might measure all my joys! When eyes in eyes are blissfully absorbed, and soul submerged in soul; being rediscovers being, and the end of all hoping is revealed; lips grow dumb in astonished silence, and desire no longer betrays the heart - then man perceives the mark of the Eternal and penetrates your mystery, holy Nature.

Michael Robardes Remembers Forgotten Beauty (extract) - WB Yeats

When my arms wrap you round I press
My heart upon the loveliness
That has long faded from the world;
The jewelled crowns that kings have hurled
In shadowy pools, when armies fled;
The love-tales wove with silken thread
By dreaming ladies upon cloth
That has made fat the murderous moth;
The roses that of old time were
Woven by ladies in their hair,
The dew-cold lilies ladies bore

Through many a sacred corridor
Where such gray clouds of incense rose
That only the gods' eyes did not close:
For that pale breast and lingering hand

Come from a more dream-heavy land,
A more dream-heavy hour than this;

from Die Wesendoncklieder: Richard Wagner

III - Im Treibhaus (In the greenhouse) (translation by Lois Phillips)

High-arching leafy crowns, canopies of emerald - you children from far-off lands, tell me, why do you lament?

Silently you bow your branches, make signs in the air, and in silent witness of your sorrow, a sweet fragrance rises up.

You stretch your arms wide in yearning desire and, caught in your delusion, embrace in horror a desolate void.

Well I know, for plant, that we share one fate; though we are both bathed in splendour and light, our homeland is not here.

And, as the sun is glad to leave the empty light of day, so he who truly suffers seeks to enfold himself in silent darkness.

It grows still, and a weaving, whispering uneasily fills the dark space. And I see heavy drops hovering on the leaves' green edge.

IV - Schmerzen (Sorrows) (translation by Lois Phillips)

O sun, you weep each evening till your lovely eyes are red; and, floating on the ocean's mirror, are overtaken by an early death.

Yet you arise in all your splendour, glorious in a dark world, when you wake in the morning, victorious and proud!

Ah, why should I then lament, to see you, my heart, so heavy! Must the sun himself despair, must even he go down?

And if death brings forth only life, and grief only rapture, O what thanks I give that Nature bestowed on me such grief!

A Poet to His Beloved - WB Yeats

I bring you with reverent hands
The books of my numberless dreams;
White woman that passion has worn
As the tide wears the dove-gray sands,
And with heart more old than the horn
That is brimmed from the pale fire of time:
White woman with numberless dreams
I bring you my passionate rhyme.

from Die Wesendoncklieder: Richard Wagner

V - Träume (Dreams) (translation by Lois Phillips)

Tell me, what wondrous dreams are these that enfold my mind but do not, like empty bubbles,
vanish into a void?

Dreams, that blossom more fair each hour each day, and blissfully move through my mind with
their tidings of heaven!

Dreams, that like sacred rays penetrate my soul and paint an everlasting image there: a deep
oblivion, and memory.

Dreams, that like the sun in spring kissing blossoms in the snow, and greeting each new day with
unsuspected joy;

to grow and flower, and dreaming spread their fragrance, then slowly fading in your breast, sink
down into their grave.

When You Are Old - WB Yeats

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 fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

Warum? from Fantasiestücke: Robert Schumann (Piano solo)