



Thomas Tallis Society Choir
Directed by Eamonn Dougan



L is for Liederabend

FRANZ SCHUBERT

CLARA & ROBERT SCHUMANN

Partsongs, duets & piano works

*PIANO - Khrystyna Mykhailichenko
& Jack Redman*



Tonight's Programme

An die Sonne - Schubert

Die König von Thule - Schumann

Das Zügelglöcklein - Schubert

An die Musik - Schubert

Impromptu in Bb major - Schubert

An die Sterne & Ungewisses Licht - Schumann

INTERVAL - Drinks served at the back of church

Abendfeier in Venedig - Clara Schumann

Die Lotosblume - Schumann

Zuversicht & Talismane - Schumann

Impromptu in F minor - Schubert

Des Tage Weihe - Schubert

Der Tanz & Lebenslust - Schubert

PROGRAMME NOTES

Liederabend – literally ‘evening of song’ – is a standard German term for a song recital. Tonight we are using it in the sense of a convivial evening of song and music, inspired by the *Schubertiads* in which Franz Schubert not only presented his own songs, but also played new piano pieces, and accompanied informal yet talented gatherings of friends singing ensembles and choral pieces such as we present in tonight’s programme. We also include Schubert’s great successor Robert Schumann, who further developed the German art song, and in his few essays for a cappella mixed chorus raised that form of music-making to new levels of beauty and harmonic expressiveness.

An die Sonne, D439

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

In early 1816 Schubert, having failed in his application to become music master at the German Normal School in Laibach, chose to quit his poorly paid position as assistant teacher at his father’s school, and to devote himself to composition. This was an extremely brave, even foolhardy decision (indeed, in late 1817, he was to be forced to resume his teaching at a new school set up by his father): Schubert, then aged 19, was yet to be published as a composer, and was scarcely known beyond his devoted and enthusiastic circle of friends. But among them was the extremely well-to-do Franz von Schober, a dilettante poet (some of whose verse Schubert made into songs – one of which we will hear later) and actor, who encouraged Schubert to lodge with him as a guest in his mother’s house.

Schubert had been introduced to Schober in the previous autumn by a mutual friend, Josef von Spaun, who in May 1816 was lodging in a garden house – owned by a Professor Watteroth – with another friend, Josef Witteczek. Together, they started what became known as *Schubertiads*, convivial gatherings of friends, at the heart of which was Schubert playing new piano pieces and songs composed by himself.

It was for one such early gathering that in June 1816 Schubert composed his piece for mixed choir and piano, *An die Sonne* (To the sun). Throughout human existence, the sun has inspired worship and paeans for its light and life-giving qualities – so it appears a natural subject or excuse for Schubert to compose such a piece as a joyous yet serious-minded celebration for the group. One may hear in its music his admiration of his Viennese predecessors Mozart and Haydn: its noble style has kinship with Mozart’s Masonic music in *The Magic Flute*; and Haydn’s late vocal quartets with piano accompaniment – which mix philosophy, humour, and a love of God and his creation – may also have inspired Schubert in composing for such an ensemble (albeit one more suitable for a full choir).

Even at its most stately, Schubert’s music in this work is good humoured – a quality further heightened by his offering a playful moment of word painting: immediately after the choir sings ‘Im Wald’ (in the forest), Schubert has the piano playing a triplet figure as if suggesting hunting horns.

Die König von Thule

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Die König von Thule is taken from Robert Schumann’s collection of part songs *Romanzen und Balladen*, Op. 67. Similar to the pieces from *Vier Doppelchörige Gesänge*, op.141 later in the programme, Schumann composed the collection for his mixed choir. This is its opening number, ‘The King of Thule’, the text taken from Gretchen’s song, ‘Es war ein König in Thule’ (‘There was a king in Thule’), from the first part of Goethe’s *Faust*. Thule is the legendary kingdom – first postulated by Virgil – supposedly at the northernmost point of the earth.

A simple tale of lost love, the song’s character of an ancient air is suggested by Schumann by setting the text mostly to a modal tonality, with striking moments of alien tonality – such as at the words ‘Den Becher’ (‘the goblet’) to suggest how the king’s beloved cup has been invested with almost supernatural significance.

Das Zügelglöcklein (The Passing Bell) – Soloist Larry Howes

Franz Schubert

This song was composed in 1826, when *Schubertiads* were in full swing and Schubert still performing, even while his health deteriorated. In his setting of a poem about the final rest of a dead man, deserted by all except his faithful hound, Schubert accentuates the “sweet peace” promised by the bell which rings persistently at the top end of the piano throughout the song.

An die Musik (To music) – Soloist Emma Wilkins

Franz Schubert

Setting words by his friend Schober (introduced earlier in the programme), here is one of Schubert’s most noble, anthem-like songs. Composed in 1817, it is apparently simple in style (the same melody is used for both stanzas of the poem) and sentiment; yet its very sincerity is what elevates it to what has been regarded as one of Schubert’s most sublime statements – effectively an expression of his artistic credo.

Impromptu in Bb major, op.142, no.3

Franz Schubert

Taken from Schubert’s second set of Impromptus – composed in 1827, the penultimate year of Schubert’s life, but only published posthumously in 1839 – this piece presents five variations on a theme taken from one of the Entr’actes of his incidental music to the play *Rosamunde*, first staged in 1823. From the gentle, unassuming yet memorable theme, Schubert spins strongly contrasting variations, including the striking drama of the third, its tragic atmosphere quickly dispelled by the following variations.

Vier Doppelchörige Gesänge, Op. 141

Robert Schumann

In the mid-1840s, Robert Schumann and his family left Leipzig for Dresden. Before their move, his self-confidence had been crumbling to the point of depression, reaching a nadir during his 1844 tour of Russia with his wife, the great pianist and composer Clara Schumann, whose success there further shadowed his own faith in his abilities as a creative artist (the acclamation she received as a pianist may also have triggered for him thoughts of how his early and apparently well-founded ambition of becoming a great pianist was destroyed by a self-inflicted hand injury). In Dresden, Schumann’s morale steadily improved, not least through his taking up conducting once again when he took charge of the all-male Dresden Liedertafel: as he later confessed, that experience gave him ‘renewed confidence in my directing powers, which, due to nervous hypochondria, I thought had been completely shattered.’ Emboldened by this experience, he created a new mixed choir early in 1848 – the Verein für Chorgesang.

With this choir, he was able to try out sections of such major works of his in progress as *Scenes from Goethe’s Faust* and *Requiem für Mignon*. The experience clearly inspired him to write several works specifically for his mixed choir, including in 1849 *Vier Doppelchörige Gesänge* (Four Songs for Double Choir), op.141. These Schumann appears to have composed quite rapidly, in the order in which they are published (and performed tonight), in October that year.

An die Sterne (‘To the stars’)

The opening work of this opus sets words by one of Schumann’s favourite poets, Friedrich Rückert. In reflecting the poet’s poignant hope as he gazes heavenward – is the ‘heavenly peace’ apparently promised by the stars real? – Schumann uses several harmonies and harmonic progressions which seem to step well outside his mid-19th century musical world, anticipating an expressiveness Richard Strauss cultivated close to a century later.

“Ungewisses Licht” (“Uncertain light”)

In this setting of a poem by Joseph Christian Freiherr von Zedlitz, a man, with ferocious determination (as reflected by Schumann’s march-like stride at the start), climbs a wind-swept cliff.

Sudden contrast is provided by upper voices in choir 1*, who sing of “ein Irrlicht” (a will-o’-the-wisp) which draws the man: “How it entices me, how it beckons to me!” Again, there is ambiguity – does the will-o’-the-wisp promise love, or death?

*Curiously singing the same chord – albeit transcribed a semitone higher – that in 1945 Benjamin Britten, a great admirer of Schumann’s music, used in his opera *Peter Grimes* for the off-stage chorus which by turns torments and beguiles the title character in his final mad delirium.

INTERVAL – Drinks served at the back of church

Abendfeier in Venedig’ from *Drei gemischte Chöre* (1848)

Clara Schumann (1819-96)

Celebrated as one of the greatest pianists of her time, Clara Schumann made several acclaimed tours around Europe. She was also a fine composer in her own right, whose work has until recently been overshadowed by her husband’s – not because of any superior quality, but simply since he did not have the burden of bringing up their seven surviving children or her domestic duties.

Clara’s compositional mastery, however, is fully manifest in her one venture into choral composition, the *Drei gemischte Chöre*, composed in 1848 – possibly for Robert’s mixed choir – when she was 29 and already the mother of four children. ‘Abendfeier in Venedig’, setting a text by the celebrated poet Emanuel Geibel, paints an evening idyll in Venice suffused with cathedral bells, and suggests that the worshippers are being joined by a heavenly host. Clara Schumann’s choral writing, mostly homophonic with apparently straight-forward harmonies, creates a serenity – also evoked by her husband’s ‘Zuversicht’ (which follows in tonight’s programme) – which Richard Strauss would recreate in several of his songs.

Die Lotosblume – Soloist Becky Ryland-Jones

Robert Schumann

Setting words by the great German poet Heinrich Heine, ‘Die Lotosblume’ is taken from one of Schumann’s great song collections, *Myrthen*. The title of this collection presents a clue as to its nature: myrtle is an evergreen plant, rather more special than the traditional orange blossom, that can be used to create a wedding wreath. Robert presented the cycle to Clara as a wedding present.

Though habitually called a ‘cycle’, unlike most of Schumann’s works of that genre *Myrthen* mixes several poets of different cultures and languages (albeit all translated into German), united simply by the themes of marriage, love, family life, parenthood, while also realistically including episodes concerning separation and introspection.

Woven into the song collection are some hidden musical motives, most famously the Clara-Motif, which features the notes C-A-A, omitting the letters “l” and “r”, and instead connecting them by notes B-flat and G-sharp. This appears most conspicuously in the opening phrase of ‘Die Lotosblume’, which is the seventh song of the set. This is perhaps the most sensual song of the cycle, and indirectly suggests Schumann’s longing to consummate his love with his bride.

Vier Doppelchörige Gesänge, Op. 141

Robert Schumann

‘Zuversicht’ (‘Assurance’)

Schumann’s third setting in his Op.141 again uses poetry by Zedlitz, but of a very different character from that of ‘Ungewisses Licht’. Here, poet and composer hymn the restorative power of love. This opens with a remarkable series of entries by each voice, extending the chord and only gradually modulating to the first cadence to words promising that ‘your deepest sorrow will soon be transformed into rapture’. What follows was greatly admired by the two great architects of the English Music Renaissance some fifty years later, Parry and Stanford, and can be heard in their a cappella choral works in the first decades of the 20th century.

'Talismane' ('Talismans')

This is a triumphal setting of Goethe's 'Gottes ist der Orient' from the *West-Ostlicher Diwan*, one that evidently appealed to Schumann, as he had previously set it nine years earlier as a solo song (as part of the *Myrthen* cycle): now he returned to it, perhaps feeling that his succinct song setting failed to do full justice to the sweeping grandeur of Goethe's text, to create a longer and more complex setting for double chorus. Cast in the form of a rondo, with the refrain 'Gottes ist der Orient! Gottes ist der Occident!', the reiterations of 'Gottes ist' particularly suggest the exuberant trumpet fanfares.

Impromptu in F minor, op.142, no.4

Franz Schubert

Published in the same volume as the B flat major Impromptu we heard earlier, this piece is quite different in character. Fairly spicy in character, with even a suggestion of the 'gypsy' style that was so popular in the 19th century, it is clearly a showpiece with its dazzling trills and virtuosic runs up and down the keyboard which punctuate the piece's dancelike if tricky rhythms. Particularly 'Liszt-like' but predating similar pieces by that Hungarian composer are the dramatic pauses which anticipate the return of the main theme after the central section.

Des Tages Weihe (The Day's Consecration)

Franz Schubert

This beautiful piece is, remarkably, a rare instance of a piece that Schubert wrote to a commission and was paid for. It was originally to celebrate the recovery from illness of a man – a certain Herr Ritter – that Schubert had never met: nonetheless, he composed the work in a single day – on 22 November 1822 – evidence of his extraordinary fund of inspired melodic invention.

Originally titled *Schicksalskenker* (Guider of Fate), and published as such in the *Neue Schubert Ausgabe*, it has become better known as *Des Tages Weihe*, the title given by its first publisher in 1842 – presumably to make it more applicable for birthday celebrations rather than for that time the rather rarer occasion of recovering one's health.

It begins with a melodious bass solo over a piano accompaniment which sounds a plausible ancestor for the noble procession that opens Elgar's First Symphony. This noble theme is taken up by the full ensemble. Sorrow ('Lied') is briefly recalled in a more anxious-sounding minor key episode, quickly dispersed by the revelation of God's healing presence ('durch die Nebel strahlt der Glanz'). Then follows a passage, initiated by the tenors singing solo, which tells of the 'bitter cup of sorrows' being removed to music which fully reflects Schubert's love and admiration for Mozart in its ensemble writing. The piece ends with a recapitulation of the noble opening.

Der Tanz (The Dance)

Franz Schubert

By a terrible irony, Schubert composed *Schicksalskenker* just before he himself became aware of the symptoms of syphilis which would ultimately kill him six years later. During 1823 he was largely housebound when not in hospital, undergoing painful treatment and – desperately short of cash – offering his music for pitiful sums to secure quick sales.

By 1825 he appeared to be much better. Possibly believing that he was on the path of full recovery and no longer a danger to others, Schubert appears to have flung himself wholeheartedly back into partying and taking part in Schubertiads once again. Something of this carefree spirit is reflected in this vocal waltz, which yet reflects in its text an awareness that neither youth nor health is eternal.

This is another charming vocal waltz, this time from much earlier in Schubert's life and well before his own health was in jeopardy. Composed in 1818, it shows Schubert in light and convivial mood, though he includes a characteristic touch of word painting at the phrase 'Allein sein ist öde' ('Being alone is bleak'), the repetition of 'öde' bringing a chilly touch of D minor in an otherwise sunny D major piece.

Programme notes by Daniel Jaffé

EAMONN DOUGAN



Eamonn Dougan is an inspirational conductor and renowned vocal coach and baritone. He is Associate Conductor of The Sixteen, founding Director of Britten Sinfonia Voices, Music Director of the Thomas Tallis Society, and Chief Conductor for Jersey Chamber Orchestra and Ryedale Festival Opera.

Recent conducting debuts include Handel's *Semele* at Sibelius Summer Academy and Haydn's *Seven Last Words of our Saviour on the Cross* with the English National Opera. Forthcoming conducting engagements include performances as part of the Royal Academy of Music's Bach the European series, concerts with Chorwerk Ruhr, celebrating Byrd's 400th anniversary, a Christmas tour with Ars

Nova, Copenhagen and Messiah with Chamber Choir Ireland and the Seville Baroque Orchestra. His third recording with De Profundis will be released in 2024.

Eamonn is vocal consultant for the ongoing Bach series at the Royal Academy of Music, where he also gives conducting masterclasses. He is a Visiting Professor to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, where he teaches ensemble singing and directs the Guildhall Consort. Eamonn read music at New College, Oxford, before continuing his vocal and conducting studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Eamonn Dougan is managed worldwide by Percius. www.percius.co.uk.

KHRYSTYNA MYKHAILICHENKO - PIANO

Khrystyna Mykhailichenko is an 18 year old Ukrainian pianist who was born in Simferopol (Crimea, Ukraine). She performs with exceptional virtuosity throughout the world, in prestigious concert halls and music festivals.

Her career began in early childhood when she displayed such tremendous talent in classical music that she started performing when she was only 5 years old. Since then, she has won European international piano competitions, mastered an extensive piano repertoire with 15 recital programmes, and been the soloist with symphony orchestras worldwide more than 40 times. She was 8 when her special prize in a competition led to her premiere solo performance with a full orchestra in Sevastopol.

Soon after, the Russians occupied Crimea and Khrystyna's family was forced to flee to the capital of Ukraine, Kyiv. She studied at Kyiv State Music Lyceum under Natalia Tolpygo-Rusina until 2022.

In March 2016, after winning three International competitions in one month, 10 year old Khrystyna met another music professor, Alexei Grynyuk, the international pianist who became her teacher and mentor. He began working with her in masterclasses at the Vladimir Horowitz Memorial Summer Academy in Kyiv and after her first lessons he said: "Khrystyna's gift is stronger and more powerful than anyone I've ever been able to work with before. This is a performer of the highest level." His influence has added depth and emotional maturity to her approach to complex, challenging pieces some of which are rarely tackled by older pianists.

Despite her success in competitions, Khrystyna and her family and teachers decided to suspend competitive activities, believing that she could develop better as a solo artist without the distraction of competitions. She stopped competing in 2016 and instead she has concentrated on growing a formidable piano repertoire which has been heard all over the world.

Khrystyna has performed recitals at the International Summer Music Academy in Memory of Vladimir Horowitz in Ukraine, the International Festival "Art Dialogue" in Switzerland, LvivMozArt International Festival in Ukraine, the International Chamber Music Course and Festival "Musica Mundi" in Belgium, the 69th Young Artists Festival in Germany, the 9th International Chopin Master Classes Festival in Poland, the 4th Frost Chopin Festival in the USA among many others. The venues include Salle Cortot in Paris, Bozar Hall in Brussels, the Music Academies of Bruges, Antwerp, Krakow, Bremen, Gariunu concert hall in Vilnius, the University of Miami and Broward Centre for the Performing Arts, the World Bank in Washington DC, the UN residence in New York and all the National Philharmonics of Ukraine.

At the outbreak of war in February 2022, Khrystyna fled to Poland with her mother and sister before settling in the UK in June. As well as continuing to travel extensively for performances, she is currently refining her studies with Graham Scott at the Royal Northern College of Music, and has become a full time student at the Royal Academy of Music in September 2023 under Joanna MacGregor.

JACK REDMAN – PIANO

Jack is a freelance pianist and répétiteur based in London. He recently completed a masters in piano accompaniment at the Royal Academy of Music, studying with Michael Dussek and James Baillieu. Graduating with a DipRAM and Regency prize, he won the Marjorie Thomas Art of Song Prize in competition. A thoroughly rewarding two years at the Academy produced many highlights with some extremely talented soloists. He has earned a place on the Oxford Lieder Young Artist's programme with soprano Clara Orif, performed as part of the Academy's Song Circle, and performed at Wigmore Hall with trombonist Isobel Daws.

Jack has acted as répétiteur for a range of productions, most recently Massenet's *Werther* for Lyric Opera Ireland, and also productions of Bizet's *Carmen*, Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, and Adam Gorb's new opera *The Path to Heaven*. He also sings professionally for choirs and opera chorus, including under Carlo Rizzi for Opera Rara's performance of Mercadante's *Il Proscritto* at the Barbican.

THOMAS TALLIS SOCIETY CHOIR

With around 60 auditioned voices TTS presents four or five concerts a year in the beautiful setting of St Alfege Church. Although many of the choir members live locally in Greenwich, TTS attracts musicians from all over London owing to the high standards it maintains. All singers are required to have very good sight-reading abilities as the choir works on a few concentrated rehearsals before each concert.

We are always keen to recruit new voices. If you are interested, please contact our membership secretary Kathryn Strachan strac157@ntlworld.com.

Sopranos Imogen Faris, Philippa Kent, Chloe Lam, Rosemary Naylor, Nelly Nickerson, Olivia Peacock, Becky Ryland-Jones, Kathryn Strachan, **Emma Wilkins**

Altos Christine Balls, Rosemary Burch, Joanna Clark, Jessy Croghan, Susan Dean, Emma Humphries, Emily John, Sonia Johnson, Alice Shelton, Ruthie Smith

Tenors David Abrahams, Andrew Green, Larry Howes, Andrew Lang, Adam Oliver, Graham Voke

Basses Richard Brooks, Quentin Evans, David Houghton, Stephen Jackson, Daniel Jaffé, Will Kendal, Jonathan Louth, Geoff Woodhouse

Bold denotes Choral Ambassadors.

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We are very grateful to our faithful group of Patrons and Friends that have been loyally supporting us for a number of years. Their generosity and support have really helped the Society to keep going. A reliable yearly income is a huge benefit in planning programmes and means we can budget more accurately.

We are very keen to increase the number of Patrons and Friends to help us go forward in a sustainable manner and we would love your support as either a Patron or Friend.

A Friend contributes £30 per year and this special relationship with the choir is recognised by:

- A newsletter with early notification of concerts
- An invitation to the annual Friends and Patrons party
- Recognition of support in TTS programmes.

As a Patron of the Society you receive additional benefits in recognition of an annual donation of £150:

- A complimentary top price ticket to all concerts
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Please consider whether you could support TTS by becoming a Patron or a Friend of the Society. Speak to Carole tonight or contact her at carolelowe@rocketmail.com.

We would like to recognise the important contribution of the following TTS Patrons:

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With thanks to the Churchwardens of St Alfege for their continued support.

And look out for updates on our website www.thomas-tallis-society.org.uk.

2024 DATES

Saturday 23 March – Bach St Matthew Passion

Saturday 15 June – Handel Semele