

# Epiphanies & Ephemerality



Belbello da Pavia *Initial A: Young Christ Blessing*

**Gerard Lim (Baritone)**  
with  
**Koh Kai Jie (Harpsichord, Piano)**  
**Daniel Chong (Tenor)**

**22 November 2021 | 7.45 P.M. | YST Concert Hall**

# Programme

12th Century

*Natus est rex*

**Jacopo Peri**

From *Le varie musiche*

*'Lungi dal vostro lume'*

**Giulio Caccini**

From *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle*

*'Al fonte, al prato'*

**Claudio Monteverdi**

From *Concerto: settimo libro de madrigali*

*'Interrotte speranze'*

From *Madrigali guerrieri e amorosi*

*'Se vittorie si belle'*

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**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

*Abendempfindung*, K. 523

**Robert Schumann**

From *Liederkreis*, Op. 39

No. 5 *'Mondnacht'*

No. 6 *'Schöne Fremde'*

**Johannes Brahms**

From Op. 85

No. 1 *'Sommerabend'*

From Op. 106

No. 1 *'Ständchen'*

## **Felix Mendelssohn**

From Op. 71

No. 6 '*Nachtlied*'

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## **Gerald Finzi**

*Till Earth Outwears*, Op. 19a

1. Let Me Enjoy the Earth
2. In Years Defaced
3. The Market-Girl
4. I Look Into My Glass
5. It Never Looks Like Summer
6. At a Lunar Eclipse
7. Life Laughs Onward

This evening's programme explores two themes: Epiphanies and Ephemerality.

**Epiphany:** A moment of sudden and great revelation/realisation. From the Greek *epiphainein* (to manifest/reveal).

**Ephemeral:** Lasting for a short time. From the Greek *ephemera* (to last one day).

We will listen to varied moments of epiphany, preserved and captured in song, from the joyous proclamation of salvation at the birth of Christ, to an existential realisation of the frailty and triviality of human existence. From the bitter torments and hateful sentiments rendered by heartbreak, to the exuberant discovery of new found love.

Concurrently presented are works which celebrate life's ephemerality. We will hear of the evanescent pleasures of nature and the seasons, of clandestine love, of a fleeting encounter with the supernatural, and of the flitting nature of time.

Indeed, Epiphanies and Ephemerality have constantly been celebrated in many guises of song, an inherently transient art form, often arising from inspiration. This evening, the two themes are explored through the lenses of 12th century Aquitanian Medieval verse, ardent 17th century Italian Monody, 18-19th century German Lieder (bound together by nocturnal texts/sentiments), and 20th century English Art Song.

# Programme Notes; Texts and Translations

## *Natus est rex* (ca. 1100)

The king is born of the Virgin Mary! This sparkling proclamation announces the birth of Christ in the verse, *Natus est rex*.

The tradition of singing tropes and verses, additive texts or melodies designed to embellish the Roman Catholic liturgy, has been abolished since the 16th century, as decreed by the Council of Trent. However, a varied and abundant repertory of tropes and verses, dating from the late middle ages, survives.

Many of these tropes and verses, especially 'New Song' (a flourishing of Aquitanian Latin song around 1100), were written and performed by troubadours. *Natus est rex* is such a verse. The text '*Et gratia*' (and grace) identifies the song as a *Benedicamus* trope for the Christmas season. It glorifies the birth of Christ, but also tells of Christ's sacrifice, for the salvation of souls.

This piece is set in a highly dramatic fashion, starting on a high reciting tone, before descending down the octave as the verse progresses. The mixolydian mode provides a rich and open sonority that is festive, but at times serious and pensive. The refrain, beginning at '*Et gratia*', features an ascending impulse, working its way back up the octave, rejoicing in the grace of God and the freedom granted by salvation.

Ia)

Natus est rex

De Virgine Maria

Mundi salus,

Eterne vite via,

Quem peperit

Intacta mater pia.

Ia)

The king is born

Of the Virgin Mary

Deliverance of the world,

The way of eternal life,

Whom the intact, pious

Mother brought forth

Ib)

O Quanta gaudia

Dant in ecclesia

Hec natalitia

Christi presentia

Et eius gratia.

Ib)

O what great joys

These birth occasions

In the church

Through Christ's presence

And his grace.

**R.**

*Et gratia  
Dat gaudia  
Celestia  
Sunt pervia,  
In patria,  
Patet via,  
Perfida,  
Superbia,  
Potentia*

*Hostis frangitur.*

*Introitus  
Est redditus,  
Rex genitus  
Humanitus  
Dat additus,  
Et perditus,  
Expositus  
Ad genitus,*

*Homo solvitur.*

IIa)

Novum regem  
    Laudet orbis terrarum  
Cum novarum  
    Laude melodiarum,  
Qui nos trahit  
    De lacu tenebrarum  
Et cunctarum  
    Mole miseriarum.

IIb)

Adam, quem fecerat,  
Hostis deceperat,  
Regnum perdiderat,  
Quod Deus dederat  
Et eius gratia.

**R.**

**R.**

*And grace  
Gives joy,  
The heavens  
Are open,  
In the land of the father,  
The way is apparent;  
The treachery,  
Arrogance,  
Power*

*Of the enemy is crushed.*

*The entrance  
Is restored,  
The King, born  
Of humankind  
Gives access;  
And lost,  
Exposed  
To weeping,*

*Man is set free.*

IIa)

Let the world praise  
    The new king  
With the praise  
    Of new melodies,  
He drags us  
    From the lake of shadows  
And the weight  
    Of all miseries.

IIb)

Adam whom he had made  
Was deceived by the Enemy,  
He had lost his kingdom,  
Which God and his  
Grace had given him.

**R.**

IIIa)

Iam sunt dicta

Completa prophetarum,

Namque nobis

Propago divinarum

Deum natum

Testatur scripturarum,

Quod cum cede

Salus est animarum.

IIIb)

Virgo virginibus

Dignior omnibus

Subvenientibus

Salva nos precibus.

Laus et gratia.

**R.**

IVa)

Primus Adam

In morte nos prostravit,

Secundus hic

Ad vitam reparavit,

Carnem sumptam

Miro modo beavit,

Quam ad dextram

Summi patris locavit.

IVb)

Quod reddit aditum

Per gustum perditum,

Non fuit debitum

Vel nostrum meritum

Sed sola gratia.

**R.**

IIIa)

Now are the sayings of the

Prophets fulfilled,

For to us

The offspring of the

Holy Scriptures bears witness

That God is born,

That with his death

Comes the salvation of souls.

IIIb)

Virgin worthier

Than all virgins,

Save us with

Your helping prayers.

Glory and thanks.

**R.**

IVa)

The first Adam

Laid us low in death;

This second [Adam]

Restored us to life.

The flesh he took

In wondrous wise he blessed,

And placed it at

The right hand of the Father on high.

IVb)

That he restores access [to God]

Which was lost by taste [i.e. the apple]

Was not owed to us

Nor our desert,

But by grace alone.

**R.**

*Text: Anonymous*

*Translation by Peter Marshall*

Keyboard improvisation coached by Karst de Jong.

## Jacopo Peri (1561–1633)

Jacopo Peri contributed substantially to the development of monody, and *stile recitativo* (recited style), which is a declamatory manner of singing supported by harmonic punctuations, a precursor to the modern recitative.

He was associated with the Florentine Camerata, a group of intellectuals and musicians who pioneered the *seconda prattica* (second practice) style of composition at the behest of Count Giovanni de' Bardi. This saw the melodic polyphony of the *prima prattica* (first practice) utilised by composers like Palestrina, Victoria, and Lassus, sacrificed for a more direct manner of composition, focused on text presentation.

His lost pastoral opera, *Dafne* (ca. 1594), is accredited as the first known opera and was sung largely in *stile recitativo*, which mimics the rhythmic cadence and text stresses of Italian speech. He also composed various monodies, arias and madrigals, gathered in the song collection, *Le varie musiche*.

Peri was also a renowned performer. The composer, theorist, and monk Severo Bonini claimed that his dramatic and expressive singing could 'move the hardest heart to tears'.

### From *Le varie musiche*: '*Lungi dal vostro lume*' (1609)

These dramatic and expressive sensibilities are found in '*Lungi dal vostro lume*', a monodic lament about love torn asunder. The wistful opening, elegant and lyric in character, belies the deep sorrow and agony which permeate the text. This gives way to a more intense, speech-like segment, in which the melancholy of lost love is expounded upon. Crunching dissonances are used to augment the meaning of emotive words like '*rei*' (evil), and '*sospiri*' (sigh). The section climaxes in a florid gesture, on the word '*venti*' (wind), a skilful moment of word painting.

Following this the opening figure is reprised, offering a brief respite as the text recalls love's fleeting pleasures. This however swiftly turns into a doleful cry. Peri once again utilises bracing dissonances and plangent chromaticism on '*pianto*' (tears) and increasingly elaborate expressions of '*dolore*' (pain), to seal a rueful ending.

Lungi dal vostro lume,  
Luci d'alba gentil, de' giorni miei  
Traggo le notti su l'odiose piume,  
E nubilosi e rei  
Spargo de' miei sospiri all'aria i venti:

O funesti contenti,  
O gioie fugacissime d'amore,  
Fatte al mio dipartir pianto e dolore.

Far from the light of your eyes,  
Dawn's lovely light,  
I drag out my nights on these hateful  
feathers, and I scatter the winds of my sighs  
in the air that is evil and heavy with clouds.

Oh ruinous pleasures,  
such fleeting joys of love that  
turned to tears and pain on my departure.

*Text: Anonymous*

*Translation (Paraphrased) by Tim Carter*



## Giulio Caccini (1551–1618)

A contemporary and rival of Peri, Giulio Caccini was also involved with the *Florentine Camerata* and spearheaded the development of the *seconda prattica*. In particular, he claimed to be the inventor of *musica recitativa* (recited music), a style which focused on closely representing the poetic structure through a fluidity in rhythm and tempo.

Like Peri, Caccini was a renowned singer. In contrast to Peri's dramatic singing, Caccini was known for his vocal lyricism. He boasted to have the ability to 'move the affect of the soul', while 'delighting the senses' through his adroit ornamentation and diminution.

Today, he is most recognised as a song composer who published two notable collections of madrigals and arias, *Le Nuove Musiche*, and *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle*. The preface to the former serves as an important treatise on vocal performance, technique, and ornamentation. In it Caccini employs the term *sprezzatura* (graceful effortlessness) to encapsulate a 'noble' singing style which expresses the text.

### From *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle* '*Al fonte, al prato*' (1614)

This notion is evident in '*Al Fonte, al prato*', a sprightly aria, which revels in the delights of nature and pastoral life. Caccini manages to capture both the rusticity of the text and the prosody of the poem, through a canny strophic setting. The lilting vocal melody is built upon a dance-like triple meter, yet retains a direct, almost spoken character. Hemiola rhythms and melismatic flourishes provide verve, though the overarching sentiment is one of pleasure, contentment, and bliss.

Al fonte, al prato,  
Al bosco, a l'ombra,  
Al fresco fiato  
Ch'il caldo sgombra,  
Pastor correte;  
Ciascun ch'a sete,  
Ciascun ch'è stanco  
Ripos' il fianco.

Fugga la noia,  
Fugga il dolore,  
Sol riso e gioia,  
Sol caro amore.  
Nosco soggiorni  
Ne' lieti giorni.  
Nè s'odan mai  
Querele o lai.

Ma dolce canto  
Di vaghi uccelli  
Pe 'l verde manto  
Degli arbuscelli  
Risuni sempre  
Con nuovi tempre,  
Mentre ch'a l'onde  
Ecco risponde.

E mentre alletta  
Quanto più puote  
La giovinetta  
Con rozze note  
Il sonno dolce,  
Ch'il caldo molce,  
E noi pian piano.  
Con lei cantano.

To the spring, to the meadow,  
to the woods, to the shade,  
to the fresh breeze  
that disperses the heat,  
hasten, O shepherds!  
Let him who is thirsty,  
let him who is weary, rest.

Away with boredom,  
away with grief!  
Let only laughter, joy,  
and love be among us.  
In these happy days,  
never let there be heard  
complaints or laments.

Rather let there resound with new  
timbres  
the sweet song of pretty birds  
through the green mantle  
of the saplings,  
while echoes  
call back and forth  
to the waves.

And while the damsel  
charms as best she can  
with rough notes  
the sweet sleep that  
soothes the heat,  
let us softly sing  
with her.

*Text: Francesco Cini*

*Translation (Paraphrased) by H. Wiley Hitchcock*

## Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643)

Claudio Monteverdi was one of the most progressive and innovative composers of his time. He is regarded as the key figure bridging Renaissance and Baroque musical styles. His evocative, eclectic, and rich compositional voice is often regarded as a summation of the late melodic Renaissance musical style, as well as the herald of the harmonically driven music of Baroque.

Though not connected with the *Florentine Camerata*, he was perhaps the foremost practitioner of *stile moderno* (modern style) monodic writing, seeking to magnify the affects of the texts. He was also the composer of the first extant modern opera, *L'orfeo*. This work, and his two other surviving operas, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* and *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, constitute the starting point of the modern operatic canon.

Furthermore, Monteverdi composed extensively for the church, contributing many colourful and vivid liturgical pieces, such as the *Vespro della Beata Vergine*. He was in the employ of Saint Mark's Basilica in Venice for the second half of his life, and was an ordained priest.

Monteverdi's skilful vocal composition is most evident in the nine madrigal books, produced throughout the span of his life. These consolidated late Renaissance musical ideals, while pioneering new stylistic and aesthetic foundations upon which much of Baroque music would be built. The pieces within the madrigal books often feature complex harmonies, rhetorically charged text presentation, and imaginative word painting.

### From *Concerto: settimo libro de madrigali* '*Interrotte speranze*' (1619)

The duet, '*Interrotte speranze*', is a bitter soliloquy expressing the agony of unrequited love. In typical *seconda prattica* fashion, the text presentation keenly mimics spoken Italian. A plaintive unison opening gradually disintegrates into tortured dissonances, revealing a concealed, yet burning despair. The musical material is then repeated, this time laced with an increased sense of hopelessness and faster vocal rhythms.

Following this, a rising sequence of descending figures depicts ever intensifying hope, ire, and ultimately, dejection. It is here where Monteverdi displays his ingenuity, deviating from the poetic structure to achieve a barbed antiphony between the two voices, '*questi | donna crudel*' (this cruel woman). This launches into a begrudging remonstrance

culminating in an ardent fugato between the two voices, before piteously waning back to the unison.

Interrotte speranze, eterna fede,  
fiamme e strali possenti in debil core,  
nutrir sol di sospir un fero ardore  
e celar il suo mal quand'altri'il vede.

Hopes cut short, faith eternal,  
potent arrows and flames in a weak  
heart,  
to nourish a burning ardour with sighs  
alone  
and hide its pain from others' eyes.

Seguir di vago e fuggitivo piede,  
l'orme rivolte a volontario errore,  
perder del seme sparso el frutto el fiore  
e la sperata al gran languir mercede.

To follow with uncertain, wandering  
steps  
the tracks that lead to wilful error,  
to lose both fruit and flower of scattered  
seed  
and the longed-for reward for so much  
distress.

Far d'uno sguardo sol legge ai pensieri  
e d'un casto voler freno al desio,  
e spender lacrimando i lustri interi.

To impose laws on thought with just one  
look,  
and smother desire with chaste resolve,  
and to spend year after year weeping.

Questi, ch'a voi quasi gran fascio invio,  
donna crudel, d'aspri tormenti e fieri,  
saranno i trofei vostri el rogo mio.

This great bundle of harsh and bitter  
torments  
that I send you, cruel woman,  
will be your trophy and the pyre on  
which I burn.

*Text: Giovanni Battista Guarini*  
*Translation by Susannah Howe*

From *Madrigali guerrieri e amorosi*  
'*Se vittorie sì belle*' (1638)

A valiant call to arms reverberates at the beginning of '*Se vittorie sì belle*'. Monteverdi opens with a bellicose duet in a pulsating triple meter, imploring the heart to become a warrior, in order to obtain the beautiful victory of love. Imitative entries between the two voices augment the rousing atmosphere.

The gradual layering of voices commencing the next section signals courage - the heart is beseeched to fear not the mortal arrows of love. This then launches into a rapid declamatory section, where both voices sing exuberantly in canon, amid a persistently rising *tessitura*, implying the strain of battle.

Of particular significance is the overt madrigalism Monteverdi applies on '*pugna*' (fight), which is set to a rousing melismatic turn. The noble chorale-like ending extols a glorious death, stemming from a desire for victory.

Se vittorie sì belle  
han le guerre d'Amore,  
fatti guerrier, mio core,  
e non temer de gl'amorosi strali  
le ferite mortali:  
pugna sappi ch'è gloria  
il morir per desio della vittoria.

If Cupid's wars  
end in such fine victories,  
become a soldier, my heart,  
and fear not the mortal wounds  
of his arrows:  
fight in the knowledge that it is glorious  
to die from a desire for victory.

*Text: Fulvio Testi*

*Translation by Susannah Howe*

## Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's extensive body of music needs no introduction. His prolific scope of vocal composition spans across the liturgical music composed for the Prince Archbishops of Salzburg, the Mass in C Minor, K. 427, the *Requiem*, K. 626, and the famous Da Ponte operas, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, K. 492, *Don Giovanni*, K. 527, and *Così Fan Tutte*, K. 588. Perhaps lesser known are his intimate Lieder.

While German Lieder is often considered a mainstay 19th century art form - reaching its zenith with the works of such composers as Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms - its genesis can be traced back to the 18th century. Composers like CPE Bach, Haydn, and Mozart also composed Lieder. These were typically smaller in scale, featured a light subject matter, and of a simple strophic nature.

### *Abendempfindung*, K. 523 (1787)

*Abendempfindung* is somewhat of an anomaly. This piece acknowledges the swift passage of time and is a sanguine meditation upon death. A significantly more substantial composition, Mozart's setting is through-composed, and showcases the Italian *bel canto* style with which he was acquainted with, and employed in his ecclesiastical and theatrical music. In these larger vocal forms, the clear differentiation between recitative and aria demarcates sections.

In *Abendempfindung*, this distinction is somewhat blurred. The elegant vocal line is largely underpinned by a graceful, arpeggiated piano accompaniment, resulting in a *cantabile* style. This ekes out reflective sentiments, such as on the graceful melismatic setting of 'und mit deinem seelenvollen Blicke' (and with your soulful gaze).

More direct text settings akin to recitative, however punctuate this texture. These moments present realisations or imperative statements, like on 'Schenk' auch du ein Tränchen mir' (may you too shed a tear for me).

The smooth transitions between lyrical and declamatory text settings result in an organic flow of ideas, forming an almost spiritual monologue. Despite the overarching poignancy of the text, Mozart achieves a rather ecstatic ending with dramatic text repetitions and melismatic flourishes, reminiscent of his operatic writing.

Abend ist's, die Sonne ist verschwunden,  
Und der Mond strahlt Silberglanz;  
So entflieh'n des Lebens schönste Stunden,  
Flieh'n vorüber wie im Tanz!

It is evening, the sun has vanished,  
And the moon sheds its silver light;  
So life's sweetest hours speed by,  
Flit by as in a dance!

Bald entflieht des Lebens bunte Szene,  
Und der Vorhang rollt herab.  
Aus ist unser Spiel! Des Freundes Träne  
Fließet schon auf unser Grab.

Soon life's bright pageant will be over,  
And the curtain will fall.  
Our play is ended! Tears wept by a friend  
Flow already on our grave.

Bald vielleicht mir weht, wie Westwind leise,  
Eine stille Ahnung zu –  
Schließ' ich dieses Lebens Pilgerreise,  
Fliege in das Land der Ruh'.

Soon perhaps, like a gentle zephyr,  
A silent presentiment will reach me,  
And I shall end this earthly pilgrimage,  
Fly to the land of rest.

Werdet ihr dann an meinem Grabe weinen,  
Trauernd meine Asche seh'n,  
Dann, o Freunde, will ich euch erscheinen  
Und will Himmel auf euch weh'n.

If you then weep by my grave  
And gaze mourning on my ashes,  
Then, dear friends, I shall appear to you  
Bringing a breath of heaven.

Schenk' auch du ein Tränchen mir  
Und pflücke mir ein Veilchen auf mein  
Grab;  
Und mit deinem seelenvollen Blicke  
Sieh' dann sanft auf mich herab.

May you too shed a tear for me  
And pluck a violet for my grave;  
And let your compassionate gaze  
Look tenderly down on me.

Weih mir eine Träne, und ach!  
Schäme dich nur nicht, sie mir zu weih'n,  
Oh, sie wird in meinem Diademe  
Dann die schönste Perle sein.

Consecrate a tear to me and ah!  
Be not ashamed to do so;  
In my diadem it shall become  
The fairest pearl of all.

*Text: Attributed to Joachim Heinrich Campe*

*Translation © Richard Stokes, author of The Book of Lieder, published by Faber,  
provided courtesy of Oxford Lieder ([www.oxfordlieder.co.uk](http://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk))*

## Robert Schumann (1810–1856)

Robert Schumann was a leading composer and music critic during the first half of the 19th century. His compositional style, musical views, and considerable clout greatly influenced the development of musical Romanticism.

Best known for his piano and vocal music, Schumann's approach to Lieder composition saw the two worlds coalesce - the oftentimes evocative and idiomatic piano accompaniment an equal partner to the vocal part. The *Liederjahr* (year of song) of 1840, inspired by his impending marriage to Clara Wieck, resulted in a prolific output of Lieder. These include some of his best known song cycles/collections, such as *Dichterliebe*, Op. 48, *Frauenliebe und Leben*, Op. 42, and the Heine *Liederkreis*, Op. 24.

Another notable collection composed in 1840 was the Eichendorff *Liederkreis*, Op. 39. This song cycle features settings of texts by the poet Joseph von Eichendorff, which were chosen by Clara. In a letter to her, Schumann states that this was his 'most romantic music'. The fifth and sixth songs of the cycle are presented tonight.



## From *Liederkreis*, Op. 39 (1840)

### No. 5 *Mondnacht*

'*Mondnacht*' is a soulful nocturne which showcases Schumann's sheer compositional originality. The piano prelude is reminiscent of a fantasy, with shimmering chromaticism and widely spaced figurations. A dreamy pulse then takes over, forming a gossamer veil upon which the vocal line unfolds. The vocal material exhibits supreme compositional economy - four identical arched shaped phrases occur before any variation.

These seemingly simple elements are rendered highly effective by Schumann, who chooses to begin with and linger on the dominant chord, delaying the tonic resolution. This, coupled with false relations between the ascending vocal part and descending bass, conjures a gravity and depth of feeling, augmenting the theme of desire.

Following this and reacting to the impulse of the text '*Meine Seele spannte*' (my soul spreads), Schumann employs a thicker and more insistent piano pulse. The vocal line is now more expansive in character. The opening phrase returns, this time inspired instead of longing, the hemiola ending imparts a sense of transcendental peace.

Es war, als hätt' der Himmel,  
Die Erde still geküßt,  
Daß sie im Blütenschimmer  
Von ihm nur träumen müßt'.

It was as though Heaven  
Had softly kissed the Earth,  
So that she in a gleam of blossom  
Had only to dream of him.

Die Luft ging durch die Felder,  
Die Ähren wogten sacht,  
Es rauschten leis die Wälder,  
So sternklar war die Nacht.

The breeze passed through the fields,  
The corn swayed gently to and fro,  
The forests murmured softly,  
The night was so clear with stars.

Und meine Seele spannte  
Weit ihre Flügel aus,  
Flog durch die stillen Lande,  
Als flöge sie nach Haus.

And my soul spread  
Her wings out wide,  
Flew across the silent land,  
As though flying home.

*Text: Joseph von Eichendorff*

*Translation © Richard Stokes, author of The Book of Lieder, published by Faber, provided courtesy of Oxford Lieder ([www.oxfordlieder.co.uk](http://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk))*

## No. 6 *Schöne Fremde*

The rustling leaves, depicted in the lively piano part, ushers in the excitable '*Schöne Fremde*'. The abrupt vocal entry seemingly chances upon a clandestine scene, while unexpected accents in the piano provide a feverish exhilaration. Schumann then contrasts this with a lyrical gesture, which marvels at the forest's nocturnal secrets. An echoing piano counter melody offers a sense of premonition.

The rustling in the piano returns, underpinning a speech-like melody on a reciting tone that gradually ascends and builds in joyous anticipation. This leads to an ebullient peak on the text '*großen Glück*' (great joy), before the evanescent scene is whisked quickly away.

Es rauschen die Wipfel und schauern,  
Als machten zu dieser Stund'  
Um die halb versunkenen Mauern  
Die alten Götter die Rund'.

The tree-tops rustle and shudder  
As if at this very hour  
The ancient gods  
Were pacing these half-sunken walls.

Hier hinter den Myrtenbäumen  
In heimlich dämmernder Pracht,  
Was sprichst du wirr, wie in Träumen,  
Zu mir, phantastische Nacht?

Here beyond the myrtle trees  
In secret twilit splendour,  
What are you saying, fantastic night,  
Obscurely, as in a dream?

Es funkeln auf mich alle Sterne  
Mit glühendem Liebesblick,  
Es redet trunken die Ferne  
Wie von künftigem großen Glück

The glittering stars gaze down on me,  
Fierily and full of love,  
The distant horizon speaks with rapture  
Of some great happiness to come!

*Text: Joseph von Eichendorff*

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## Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

Johannes Brahms was a prominent musical figure during the second half of the 19th Century. He was a keen student of older musical works by composers like Mozart, Haydn, Bach, and Palestrina, but also composed with a lush romantic idiom. His works achieve a synthesis between the contemporary Romantic sensibilities of his time and 17-18th Century forms and counterpoint.

Recognised primarily for his symphonic and piano music, Brahms also composed abundantly for the voice. His most prominent vocal works include the German *Requiem*, numerous choral works, and an extensive corpus of Lieder. The Lieder typically feature an effortless and idiomatic text presentation, fashioned through a lyric and expressive vocal line that is supported by rich and varied piano figurations.

### From Op. 85 (1882)

#### No. 1 *Sommerabend*

'*Sommerabend*', with text by Heinrich Heine, describes an enchanted summer's evening in the forest. The first strophe is set to an ebbing piano accompaniment which is offset by a drooping vocal line. The ensuing sense of serenity perfectly depicting a lustrous moonlit forest.

The flowing middle section paints an image of chirping crickets and splashing water, the oscillating vocal melody and syncopated piano bass conjuring a sense of mysterious wonderment. This gives way to a more languid passage, where a breathing in the stillness is heard.

Ever the master of developing variations, Brahms reuses the initial melodic material for the sensuous final strophe, as the protagonist stumbles upon a bathing elf. The melody is now underpinned by purling triplets which portray the water while a lyrical countermelody, based off the middle section, adds a film of covert excitement. The lyrical ending is filled with both enthrallment and repose.

Dämmernd liegt der Sommerabend  
Über Wald und grünen Wiesen;  
Goldner Mond, im blauen Himmel  
Strahlt herunter, duftig labend.

Summer evening twilight lies  
Over forest and green meadows;  
A golden moon in the blue sky  
Shines down in a soothing haze.

An dem Bache zirpt die Grille,  
Und es regt sich in dem Wasser,  
Und der Wanderer hört ein Plätschern  
Und ein Athmen in der Stille.

By the brook the cricket chirps  
And the waters stir,  
And the traveller hears a splashing  
And a breathing in the stillness.

Dorten, an dem Bach alleine,  
Badet sich die schöne Elfe;  
Arm und Nacken, weiß und lieblich,  
Schimmern in dem Mondenscheine.

Over there by the brook, alone,  
A lovely water-nymph is bathing;  
Arms and neck, white and comely,  
Shimmer in the moonlight.

*Text: Heinrich Heine*

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## From Op. 106 (1888)

### No. 1 *Ständchen*

While most pieces entitled *Ständchen* are typically fashioned as a serenade for a beloved, Brahms's setting is unique. It is instead a description, illustrating a group of youthful serenaders. The charming piano prelude displays a fantastical swagger, while the mellifluous vocal line paints the image of a lovely moonlit evening and a gurgling fountain.

In the second section, the serenaders are introduced. Brahms mimics the instruments and sounds of music through a dizzying spate of modulations, a slowing growing vocal part, and dazzling piano writing.

The opening music is repeated in the final strophe, but with greater intimacy, as the sounds of the serenade flit into the dreams a girl. She sweetly whispers to her blond lover, 'forget me not!', before the prancing piano postlude sweeps the evening away.

Der Mond steht über dem Berge,  
So recht für verliebte Leut;  
Im Garten rieselt ein Brunnen,  
Sonst Stille weit und breit.

The moon shines over the mountain,  
Just right for the people in love;  
A fountain purls in the garden –  
Otherwise silence far and wide.

Neben der Mauer, im Schatten,  
Da stehn der Studenten drei  
Mit Flöt' und Geig' und Zither,  
Und singen und spielen dabei.

By the wall in the shadows,  
Three students stand  
With flute and fiddle and zither,  
And sing and play.

Die Klänge schleichen der Schönsten  
Sacht in den Traum hinein,  
Sie schaut den blonden Geliebten  
Und lispelt: „Vergiß nicht mein!“

The sound steals softly into the dreams  
Of the loveliest of girls,  
She sees her fair-headed lover  
And whispers “Remember me.”

*Text: Heinrich Heine*

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provided courtesy of Oxford Lieder ([www.oxfordlieder.co.uk](http://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk))*

## Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

An eminent conductor, musicologist, and composer, Felix Mendelssohn's output perhaps best encapsulates the tension and duality between musical Classicism and Romanticism. His style was largely influenced by the institutionalised musical education he received from Carl Friedrich Zelter, during which he was acquainted with the works of Handel, Bach, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.

While the aforementioned compositional influences are evident in his larger vocal works, like the oratorios *Elijah* and *St. Paul*, his Lieder reveal the direct influence of Zelter and the compositional tradition of north German Lieder. These are often elegantly strophic settings with emotional restraint, suitable for domestic music making.

### From Op. 71

#### No. 6 *Nachtlied* (1847)

'*Nachtlied*' is one of the more substantial Lieder. A setting of Eichendorff's text, this work was completed while Mendelssohn was grieving the death of his sister, Fanny Hansel. The piece opens with an introspective and, at times, longing mood. An insistent, syncopated piano pedal forms a pulsing backdrop against which the hymn-like opening stanzas, which describe the serenity and solitude of the night, are presented.

This is then contrasted by a more expansive section, in which the loneliness of the night is swept away by a sonorous nightingale and a rapturous praise of God. The arching vocal melody, accompanied by a chorale-like piano part, climaxes on a sweeping descending line before softening into a gentler figure, as Mendelssohn concludes with an assured promise of the morning light, in what was to be his last Lied.

Vergangen ist der lichte Tag,  
Von ferne kommt der Glocken Schlag;  
So reist die Zeit die ganze Nacht,  
Nimmt manchen mit, der's nicht gedacht.

Daylight has departed,  
The sound of bells comes from afar;  
Thus time moves on throughout the night,  
Taking many an unwitting soul.

Wo ist nun hin die bunte Lust,  
Des Freundes Trost und treue Brust,  
Der Liebsten süßer Augenschein?  
Will keiner mit mir munter sein?

Where now is all the garish joy,  
The comforting breast of a faithful friend,  
The sweet light of the loved one's eyes?  
Will no one stay awake with me?

Frisch auf denn, liebe Nachtigall,  
Du Wasserfall mit hellem Schall!  
Gott loben wollen wir vereint,  
Bis daß der lichte Morgen scheint!

Strike up then, dear nightingale,  
You cascade of bright sound!  
Together we shall praise God,  
Until the light of morning dawns!

*Text: Heinrich Heine*

*Translation © Richard Stokes, author of The Book of Lieder, published by Faber,  
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## **Gerald Finzi (1901–1956)**

*Till Earth Outwears*, Op. 19a

Text: Thomas Hardy

One of the finest British song composers, Gerald Finzi's oeuvre comprises many vocal compositions for both solo voice and choir. His love of the English language and culture is perhaps best displayed in his Art Songs, which are considered some of his finest works. These combine a supple lyricism, deft accompaniment, and imaginative use of harmony for text painting.

Finzi was especially adroit at text setting, sensitively eking out the meaning of the poem through nimble rhythmic shifts, while retaining a natural flow of the text. He was also an avid curator of British literature - his collection is housed today in the University of Reading - and a cultivator of rare English apple breeds in his Gloucestershire orchard.

*Till Earth Outwears* comprises settings of texts by the English poet Thomas Hardy, Finzi's poetic kindred spirit. It was published posthumously, ordered together by Finzi's executors and wife, Joy. These songs celebrate the temporal nature of love and life, while commemorating significant musings or experiences.



## 1. Let Me Enjoy the Earth (1936)

The opening ditty, 'Let Me Enjoy the Earth' presents an optimistic contemplation on life and a higher power. Finzi's romantic sensibilities are evident in the lithe piano part and lyrical vocal writing throughout. The piece begins warmly with an expansive vocal melody and imitative piano accompaniment, revealing a cheerful insistence to revel in life despite a seeming existential insignificance.

A flowing section follows, with limpid piano writing underpinning an energetic vocal line, as the text expounds upon life's (sometimes vicarious) pleasures. A poignant piano interlude floats an inkling of doubt, before the opening material returns, modified with impassioned leaps in the vocal part which express a pang of fear regarding an exclusion from paradise. The unexpected dissonance in the postlude reinforces that uncertainty.

Let me enjoy the earth no less  
Because the all-enacting Might  
That fashioned forth its loveliness  
Had other aims than my delight.

About my path there flits a Fair,  
Who throws me not a word or sign;  
I'll charm me with her ignoring air,  
And laud the lips not meant for mine.

From manuscripts of moving song  
Inspired by scenes and dreams unknown  
I'll pour out raptures that belong  
To others, as they were my own.

And some day hence, towards Paradise  
And all its blest - if such should be -  
I will lift glad, a far-off eyes,  
Though it contain no place for me.

## 2. In Years Defaced (1936)

The next piece, 'In Years Defaced', contains perhaps the most complex narrative in the collection and is one of Finzi's most powerful songs. The grave and dissonant piano prelude is met by a mournful descending vocal melody as the first strophe reminisces a lost love. Active gestures on words like 'lit' and 'momently' provide sparks of energy, though these are counterbalanced with longing appoggiaturas on 'wilted' and 'nothing'.

Finzi then transforms the opening material into a serene interlude, introducing the second strophe which recalls passing seasons of loneliness. The vocal melody starts off nobly, but gets increasingly impassioned. The climax, a brief moment of unrestraint, is supported by a blustering piano figure, underlining the text 'And gust and gale | As everywhere'.

Following this, a lilting melody hints that wisps of the aforementioned great love still linger, enriched by a melodious piano descant and an expressive falling chain of suspensions. The final line of the poem, chosen by Joy Finzi as this song collection's title, is ethereal and delicate, a haunting affirmation that such powerful love will never again occur. The bleak dissonance in the postlude delivers a sense of gravitas.

In years defaced and lost,  
Two sat here, transport-tossed,  
Lit by a living love  
The wilted world knew nothing of:

Scared momentarily  
By gaingivings,  
Then hoping things  
That could not be.

Of love and us no trace  
Abides upon the place;  
The sun and shadows wheel,  
Season and season sereward steal;

Foul days and fair  
Here, too, prevail,  
And gust and gale  
As everywhere.

But lonely shepherd souls  
Who bask amid these knolls  
May catch a faery sound  
On sleepy noontides from the ground:

‘O not again  
Till Earth outwears  
Shall love like theirs  
Suffuse this glen!’

### 3. The Market-Girl (1927)

In contrast to the poetic lyricism and drama of the previous song, the third piece, 'The Market-Girl' is composed in a prose like, *parlando* fashion. The piano introduction is uncertain and furtive. The vocal line enters in a speech like manner, sympathetically describing the piteous market girl. In this opening section Finzi sets the text to a *quasi-recitative*, with chordal punctuations under the melody, much like in the Italian monody heard earlier in the programme.

The second half of the piece unfolds more melodiously. Finzi builds a sense of excitement as the text presents the memory of the two lovers' initial interaction. A more tender brushing gesture captures the first words shared between the lovers. A triumphant ending then ensues, both piano and vocal lines broadening in exultation to the text 'a prize had been won by me'.

Nobody took any notice of her as she stood on the causey kerb,  
All eager to sell her honey and apples and bunches of garden herb;  
And if she had offered to give her wares and herself with them too that day,  
I doubt if a soul would have cared to take a bargain so choice away.

But chancing to trace her sunburnt grace that morning as I passed nigh,  
I went and I said, "Poor maidy dear! -- and will none of the people buy?"  
And so it began; and soon we knew what the end of it all must be,  
And I found that though no others had bid, a prize had been won by me.

#### 4. I Look Into My Glass (1956)

The elation of the previous song quickly dissipates with the next piece, 'I Look Into My Glass'. A harmonically ambiguous piano prelude portrays the strain between ageing, and youthful memories. The vocal melody is dignified but bears a tinge of regret, the ardent leap on 'Would God it came to pass' divulging a sense of desperation. This mollifies into a more composed passage, the text seemingly acceptant.

A tolling figure, representative of the passage of time, then leads to the crux of this song. It is, in fact, not a description of acceptance, but a compelling longing for youth. Stirring chromatic harmonies reveal the fervour of this yearning, while the stark dissonance on 'shakes this fragile frame' is particularly powerful. No harmonic resolution is forthcoming till the very end, after the vocal line has ended.

I look into my glass,  
And view my wasting skin,  
And say, "Would God it came to pass  
My heart had shrunk as thin!"

For then, I, undistrest  
By hearts grown cold to me,  
Could lonely wait my endless rest  
With equanimity.

But Time, to make me grieve,  
Part steals, lets part abide;  
And shakes this fragile frame at eve  
With throbbings of noontide.

## 5. It Never Looks Like Summer (1956)

The lullaby-like melody of 'It Never Looks Like Summer' perhaps conceals the grief that consumes the text, which was inspired by Hardy's memories of his own courtship in Cornwall after the death of his wife, Emma Gifford.

The opening sings like a folk song with a simple descending melody that encapsulates memories of a past love. This is juxtaposed by an ascending vocal line that climaxes with a flourish in the piano part, signifying the bliss associated with the memory. The second strophe features a mournful reharmonisation of the opening melody, before closing with a low fragmented vocal line above wilting harmonies, which signify sorrow and desolation.

"It never looks like summer here  
On Beeny by the sea."  
But though she saw its look as drear,  
Summer it seemed to me.

It never looks like summer now  
Whatever weather's there;  
But ah, it cannot anyhow,  
On Beeny or elsewhere!

## 6. At a Lunar Eclipse (1929)

Finzi's setting of the next song, 'At a Lunar Eclipse' wonderfully illustrates the 'even monochrome and curving line' mentioned in the poem. An unmeasured piece enclosing a fugue, the perpetual movement of the stoic piano part is utilised scenically, painting the lunar eclipse, while the vocal line contemplates the significance, and conscience of humanity.

Despite the intense existential tone of the poem, Finzi adopts an austere approach with the absence of his usual melodic charm lending a spoken quality to the text. The opening vocal phrase is persistent, describing the magnitude of the cosmic event. This is contrasted by a declamatory section that reflects upon the relationship between humanity and the universe. A return to the sustained vocal material provides a dramatic ending, as the text attempts to reconcile the troubled existence of humanity with the immensity of creation. The floating picardy third ending is tranquil.

Thy shadow, Earth, from Pole to Central Sea,  
Now steals along upon the Moon's meek shine  
In even monochrome and curving line  
Of imperturbable serenity.

How shall I link such suncast symmetry  
With the torn troubled form I know as thine,  
That profile, placid as a brow divine,  
With continents of moil and misery?

And can immense Mortality but throw  
So small a shade, and Heaven's high human scheme  
Be hemmed within the coasts yon arc implies?

Is such the stellar gauge of earthly show,  
Nation at war with nation, brains that teem,  
Heroes, and women fairer than the skies?

## 7. Life Laughs Onward (1955)

The final song of the set, 'Life Laughs Onward' was written close to Finzi's death and is described by Stephen Banfield as a compendium of his 'best idiomatic fabrics'. It extols the virtue of change and displays an accepting attitude towards ageing. It is perhaps symbolic that Finzi chooses a tempo marking of 60 beats a minute, to represent the inevitable passage of time.

The first strophe is simple and ditty-like in character, and depicts visiting an old dwelling place. An expansive harmonic shift on 'new' highlights the central theme of the piece. In the second strophe, a dizzying array of juxtaposed bars - oscillating between serious and playful moods, and energetic and reposed passages - elucidates the constant change.

In the last strophe, a plethora of modulations constantly affects the atmosphere, bringing one from a blissful pastoral soundscape to a gleeful lilting segment (which embodies laughter), to an abrupt recitative which casts a shroud over change, especially with the grim dissonance on the word 'young'. A bare octave leap signifies an epiphany of acceptance. A return to the opening material brings the piece to a cyclic end, the conclusion of one ephemeral life, and the beginning of the next.

Rambling I looked for an old abode  
Where, years back, one had lived I knew;  
Its site a dwelling duly showed,  
But it was new.

I went where, not so long ago,  
The sod had riven two breasts asunder;  
Daisies thrived gaily there, as though  
No grave were under.

I walked along a terrace where  
Loud children gambolled in the sun;  
The figure that had once sat there  
Was missed by none.

Life laughed and moved on unsubdued,  
I saw that Old succumbed to Young:  
'Twas well. My too regretful mood  
Died on my tongue.



# Biographies



Baritone **Gerard Lim** is a strong advocate of the accessibility of classical music through dynamic presentation of texts and singing.

An undergraduate at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music under tenor Alan Bennett, Gerard discovered his interest in vocal music while singing in school choirs. During his military service, Gerard furthered that interest by taking up solo voice training under tenor Jonathan Charles Tay. He is particularly passionate about Baroque repertoire, sacred music, German Lied, and English art song.

Gerard has appeared in the chorus of Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, and has worked with esteemed collaborative pianist Roger Vignoles in concert. He has also sung in masterclasses by baritones Eduardo Chama and Allen Henderson.

He has performed the baritone role in Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*, conducted by Masaaki Suzuki, and was praised for the 'great expressiveness and characterisation' in his singing by The Straits Times. Gerard has also sung the part of Adam in Haydn's *The Creation*, and will be singing in the conservatory's upcoming performance of Bach's *St. John Passion* in 2022, in the role of Jesus.

Gerard hopes to communicate through his work that classical music is not only for trained listeners and practitioners, but an important function in all lives. Apart from solo singing, his other musical passions are exploring early music and the choral repertoire. In his free time, Gerard leads the choir in church. His other interests include cooking, poetry, and tea.



**Koh Kai Jie** is an emerging Singaporean conductor and pianist. Kai Jie graduated from the Yong Siew Toh (YST) Conservatory of Music with a Bachelor of Music with Honours (Highest Distinction) in Piano Performance, studying with Albert Tiu. He is currently pursuing a masters' degree in conducting at YST Conservatory, under the guidance of Jason Lai.

During the second year of his undergraduate degree, Kai Jie formed a chamber orchestra comprising of YST conservatory musicians, conducting the orchestra for rehearsals and public performances during YST Noon Recitals regularly since. In particular,

the orchestra's performance of the Beethoven *Coriolan Overture* was highly commended by music critic Dr Marc Rochester, who was "deeply impressed with both the quality of playing [he] drew from the orchestra and [his] insightful interpretation of the Beethoven Overture". Kai Jie has also worked with prominent conductors and conducting pedagogues in masterclasses, including Colin Metters, Darrell Ang, Jac van Steen and Otto Tausk.

As a pianist, Kai Jie has achieved numerous accolades. Most recently in 2020, he attained the first prize in the YST Conservatory Concerto Competition (Piano Category). He also won the second prizes in the Singapore National Piano and Violin Competition (Senior Category) and the Yamaha Piano Competition (Singapore) in 2013. In the same year, Kai Jie obtained the ABRSM Licentiate of the Royal Schools of Music (LRSM) in Piano Performance (Distinction) and was a High Scorer across all Southeast Asia candidates. He has also worked with eminent pianists Daejin Kim and Noriko Ogawa in public masterclasses in YST Conservatory.



**Daniel Chong's** interest in vocal music began in his years as a chorister in secondary school. This carried on throughout his time in Junior College, leading to formal studies with tenor Jonathan Charles Tay, and eventually to undergraduate studies in the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music under Professor Alan Bennett.

During his time in university, Daniel gained a keen interest in modernist music of the 20th century, particularly the works of Benjamin Britten and Francis Poulenc, and has performed these works in various recitals and concerts. He has also performed with several choirs, in which he has occasionally served as student conductor. He is also an active member of the NUS Jazz Band, performing with them in their semi-annual showcases.

Daniel hopes to work with youth to inspire them to create and collaborate on music of their own, as he believes singing and music-making is universal, and is one of humanity's greatest gifts.

