
Final Honour School Examination in Music

SOLO PERFORMANCE

Programme notes and scores

Journeys of the heart, body, and soul

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Introduction

This afternoon's programme has been constructed around the theme of journeys. Through a varied selection of songs, I wish to explore different kinds of journey and illustrate the way that composers depicted them over the past three centuries. These journeys range from the explicitly geographical to the ineffably spiritual and have been arranged so as to create broader narratives between the songs which supplement their own internal stories.

The repertoire is divided into three sets, each depicting their own unique journey. The first set of three songs together depict a journey of the heart, beginning with Die Schöne Müllerin's wandering protagonist who encounters 'the beautiful miller-girl'; Quilter's 'O Mistress Mine' then follows, as if our protagonist is now calling out to her. The set concludes with Fauré's 'Au Bord de l'eau' in which the narrator addresses the ephemerality of worldly things in comparison to the permanence of love. The songs, therefore, portray not only the emotional love-journeys of an internal character but also the journey of a virtual protagonist running between them, progressing from an initial youthful encounter to the stability of long-term love.

The second set depicts explicitly geographical journeys. These journeys of the body are more unsettling in nature, wrought with anxiety and explored from both first and third person perspectives. Each song involves its own mode of transportation which progress in a technologically chronological manner, beginning with the horseback riding of 'Canción de Jinete', moving through the train in 'The Journeying Boy', and culminating with the daring arial voyage made by the refugee in 'Dawn. Still Darkness'. Thus, in a similar manner to Set I these three songs both paint their own internal geographical journeys whilst also insinuating between them the progression of time, perhaps the most fundamental journey of all.

The third set explores the final and inevitable human journey, that of death. Here, I contrast two different portrayals of this spiritual voyage: one more secular and humanistic and one almost fanatically pious in nature. The three sets together create a looser macro-narrative: the journey of life, which begins with youthful optimism, progresses through hardship and apotheosis, and concludes with the final acceptance of one's mortality. These three sets of songs therefore depict three levels of journey: that of the individual song, the set, and the recital as a whole. Through this layering, I hope to reflect the diversity and simultaneity of the journeys upon which we all embark throughout our lives.

Set I – Journeys of the heart

‘Wohin?’ from *Die Schöne Müllerin*; D. 795 (1823) – Franz Schubert,

‘Wohin’ is the second song from Schubert’s song cycle *Die Schöne Müllerin*. The protagonist is cheerfully wandering through the countryside and comes across a brook which eventually leads him to the mill. Here, he falls in love with the miller’s beautiful daughter. This song both evokes the Schubertian ‘wanderer’ trope and presages the journey of love, rejection, and despair that Schubert’s narrator is yet to experience; its use in the present programme, therefore, sets up an alternative conclusion. Schubert depicts the ‘babbling’ of the brook with a typical ostinato figure in the piano whilst the cheer of the narrator is manifest in light-hearted melodic figurations.

Ich hört’ ein Bächlein rauschen
Wohl aus dem Felsenquell,
Hinab zum Tale rauschen
So frisch und wunderhell.

I heard a little brook babbling
from its rocky source,
babbling down to the valley,
so bright, so wondrously clear.

Ich weiss nicht, wie mir wurde,
Nicht, wer den Rat mir gab,
Ich musste auch hinunter
Mit meinem Wanderstab.

I know not what came over me,
nor who prompted me,
but I too had to go down
with my wanderer’s staff.

Hinunter und immer weiter
Und immer dem Bache nach,
Und immer heller rauschte,
Und immer heller der Bach.

Down and ever onwards,
always following the brook
as it babbled ever brighter
and ever clearer.

Ist das denn meine Strasse?
O Bächlein, sprich, wohin?
Du hast mit deinem Rauschen
Mir ganz berauscht den Sinn.

Is this, then, my path?
O brook, say where it leads.
With your babbling
you have quite befuddled my mind.

Was sag’ ich denn vom Rauschen?
Das kann kein Rauschen sein:
Es singen wohl die Nixen
Tief unten ihren Reihn.

Why do I speak of babbling?
That is no babbling.
It is the water nymphs singing
as they dance their round far below.

Lass singen, Gesell, lass rauschen,
Und wandre fröhlich nach!
Es gehn ja Mühlenräder
In jedem klaren Bach.

Let them sing, my friend; let the brook babble
and follow it cheerfully.
For mill-wheels turn
in every clear brook.

Wilhelm Müller

*Translation © Richard Wigmore, provided courtesy of
Oxford Lieder*

'O Mistress Mine' from *Three Shakespeare Songs*; Op. 6, No. 2 (1905) – Roger Quilter

This song sets words from act II, scene *iii* of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Once again, the original narrative of this poem has been repurposed for the sake of this recital. Quilter's pithy setting is full of an endearing and youthful optimism with which our virtual protagonist reaches out to their potential suiter.

O mistress mine, where are you roaming?
O stay and hear; your true love's coming,
That can sing both high and low;
Trip no further, pretty sweeting;
Journeys end in lovers' meeting,
Every wise man's son doth know.

What is love? 'tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter;
What's to come is still unsure:
In delay there lies no plenty;
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty;
Youth's a stuff will not endure.

William Shakespeare

‘Au Bord de l’eau’ from *Trois Mélodies*; Op. 8, No. 1 – Gabriel Fauré

Fauré’s sumptuous setting of Prudhôme’s poem suits the subject matter perfectly. The perpetual quaver motion, which shifts dialogically between the voice and piano, paints the flowing stream whilst the frequent use of harmonic pedals creates a contrasting sense of stasis and stability, intimating the permanence of love against all else that passes with time. Prudhôme’s use of infinitives, and the repeated rhythmic figure with which they are set by Fauré, is particularly effective in creating the sense of being caught in the moment.

S’asseoir tous deux au bord du flot qui passe, Le voir passer;	To sit together on the bank of a flowing stream, To watch it flow;
Tous deux, s’il glisse un nuage en l’espace, Le voir glisser;	Together, if a cloud glides by, To watch it glide;
À l’horizon, s’il fume un toit de chaume, Le voir fumer;	On the horizon, if smoke rises from thatch, To watch it rise;
Aux alentours si quelque fleur embaume, S’en embaumer;	If nearby a flower smells sweet, To savour its sweetness;
Entendre au pied du saule où l’eau murmure, L’eau murmurer;	To listen at the foot of the willow, where water murmurs, To the murmuring water;
Ne pas sentir, tant que ce rêve dure, Le temps durer;	Not to feel, while this dream passes, The passing of time;
Mais n’apportant de passion profonde Qu’à s’adorer,	But feeling no deep passion, Except to adore each other,
Sans nul souci des querelles du monde, Les ignorer;	With no cares for the quarrels of the world, To know nothing of them;
Et seuls, tous deux devant tout ce qui lasse, Sans se lasser,	And alone together, seeing all that tires, Not to tire of each other,
Sentir l’amour, devant tout ce qui passe, Ne point passer!	To feel that love, in the face of all that passes, Shall never pass!

Sully Prudhôme

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Oxford Lieder*

Set II – Journeys of the body

Cancion de Jinete; 'Rider's Song' (2021) – Will Harmer

Loca's poem presents a palpable anxiety surrounding death as the rider becomes increasingly aware that they will never make it to their destination, Cordova. This not only contrasts with Set III but also reflects Loca's own fear of mortality as an outspoken socialist during the Spanish civil war. Harmer deploys a neo-Schubertian accompanying ostinato to depict the galloping of the horse whilst the increasingly chromatic harmonic language reflects the narrator's encroaching sense of dread and anguish.

Córdoba. Lejana y sola.

Cordova, far and lonely.

Jaca negra, luna grande,
y aceitunas en mi alforja.
Aunque sepa los caminos
yo nunca llegaré a Córdoba.

Black pony, full moon,
And olives in my pocket
Although I know the roads,
I'll never reach Cordova

Por el llano, por el viento,
jaca negra, luna roja.
La muerte me está mirando
desde las torres de Córdoba.

For the plain, for the wind,
Black Pony, red moon,
And death is watching for me
Beside the towers of Cordova.

¡Ay qué camino tan largo!
¡Ay mi jaca valerosa!
¡Ay, que la muerte me espera,
antes de llegar a Córdoba!

Alas! The long, long highway,
Alas! My valiant pony,
Alas, that death is waiting
Before I reach Cordova

Córdoba. Lejana y sola.

Cordova, far and lonely.

Frederico García Loca

Translation from 'Poetry: A Magazine of Verse' (April, 1937)

'Midnight on the Great Western' (or The Journeying Boy) from *Winter Words*; Op. 52, No. 2
(1953) – Benjamin Britten

Britten sets Hardy's text in an unsettling manner, channelling a characteristically disquieting musical language to portray the anxiety of the narrator. In contrast to the other two songs in Set II, however, this anxiety is experienced on behalf of someone else as the narrator questions how it is possible that the young boy in 'the third-class seat' can be so blissfully unaware of the 'region of sin' that surrounds him.

In the third-class seat sat
The journeying boy.
And the roof-lamp's oily flame
Played down on his listless form and face,
Bewrapt past knowing to what he was going,
Or whence he came.

In the band of his hat the journeying boy
Had a ticket stuck; and a string
Around his neck bore the key of his box,
That twinkled gleams of the
Lamp's sad beams
Like a living thing.

What past can be yours, O journeying boy,
Towards a world unknown,
Who calmly, as if incurious quite
On all at stake, can undertake
This plunge alone?

Knows your soul a sphere, O journeying boy,
Our rude realms far above,
Whence with spacious vision
You mark and mete
This region of sin that you find you in,
But are not of?

Thomas Hardy

'Dawn, Still Darkness' from act III *Flight* (1998) – Jonathan Dove

This aria comes from the third act of Dove's opera *Flight* which is based on the true story of Mehran Karimi Nasseri, an Iranian refugee who lived at the Charles de Gaulle Airport for 18 years. Like Nasseri, The Refugee in Dove's opera is granted asylum in the unspecified airport terminal after The Immigration Officer pursuing him is moved by the story of his struggle which he details in this aria. The Refugee's highly personal account of his perilous voyage, and the fraught music language employed by Dove to depict it, serves to humanise him, and his real-world counterparts who are so often spoken of as mere statistics rather than real people with stories of their own.

Dawn.
 Still darkness
 We are two dark shapes
 like shadows

It's easy
 So simple
 That's what we'd been told
 So simple
 It's been done before and before

We touched hands
 and then we ran
 Like rats or cats
 No need for fear
 They made it clear

We paid our dollars and we ran
 Climbed inside the wheels
 There's room for a man
 "See you there!" I shouted
 To thin air

And then the plane began to roar
 Shaking,
 The terrible noise it was making
 Roaring so loud
 I am shaking, shaking, shaking,
 So loud

And then suddenly the cold

Are you there, brother?
 Twin?

It's so cold I am dreaming
 The sky is ice
 So cold that I am burning

I pray and wait for a new beginning

April De Angelis

Set III – Journeys of the soul (the final journey)

Abendempfindung; K. 523 (1787) – Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

This rare stand-alone song of Mozart's depicts a wistful and largely secular acceptance of one's mortality. The narrator focuses on the impact of his death on the important people in their life, lending it a more humanistic angle. Mozart's musical setting is appropriately tranquil and sentimental in manner with occasional moments of musical drama corresponding with the text. The contrasts of character explored by Mozart in this song, along with its melodic and accompanimental figurations identify it as a precursor to Schubertian Lieder.

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.

Joachim Heinrich Campe

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of Oxford Lieder*

‘Wer sollte sich demnach’ and ‘Mir ekelt mehr zu leben’ from Alto cantata *Vergnügte Ruh* BWV 170 (1726) – Johann Sebastian Bach

If the previous take on death is somewhat secular and wistful, this aria presents a comparatively fanatical piety. The narrator expresses a disdain for earthly life and an almost perverse excitement at the prospect of death, rooted in an unshakeable belief that they will join God in heaven. This restless spiritual striving is evident from the very first bar of the aria which immediately moves the tonality away from the home key of D major.

Recitative

Wer sollte sich demnach
Wohl hier zu leben wünschen,
Wenn man nur Hass und Ungemach
Vor seine Liebe sieht?
Doch, weil ich auch den Feind
Wie meinen besten Freund
Nach Gottes Vorschrift
lieben soll,
So flieht
Mein Herze Zorn und Groll
Und wünscht allein bei Gott zu leben,
Der selbst die Liebe heißt.
Ach, eintrachtvoller Geist,
Wenn wird er dir doch nur sein
Himmelszion geben?

Who in these circumstances would
wish to live here at all
when only hate and misfortune
Are seen in place of God's love?
But since also my enemy
as if he were my best friend
should be loved by me according
to God's commandment
then there depart
from my heart anger and resentment
and my wish is to live for God alone
Who is Love itself
Ah, spirit filled with harmony,
When will the promised land of heaven
be given to you?

Aria

Mir ekelt mehr zu leben,
Drum nimm mich, Jesu, hin!
Mir graut vor allen Sünden,
Laß mich dies Wohnhaus finden,
Wo selbst ich ruhig bin.

*I feel revulsion to prolong my life,
And so take me away from here, Jesus!
I am horrified by all the sins,
grant that I may find this place to live
Where I myself may be at peace*

Georg Christian Lehms

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of 'Bach Cantatas Website'*