

Program Notes and Words/Translations “British Inspirations behind Music from Distant Lands”

Sumer is icumen in!

We start the program with something native. The first written source of this round was found in Reading Abbey, Berkshire in 1260. It is possible the song is much older. It is the first known account of six part polyphony (which I will not attempt alone). It's a preference for me to lead a recital in out of sight with an acapella folksong, often something not usually heard in classical programs.

Fine al rito...Ah bello a me ritorna

Norma, Act I, Scene 4

Libretto: F. Romani

Set in Britannia during the early Roman invasion, a large, public sacred rite to the Moon Goddess has just ended. The Druid priestess Norma seeks to calm the crowd's call to fight against the Romans, particularly for the blood of the proconsul Pollione, who is Norma's secret lover. She commands that when the God of the grove asks for Roman blood, they will hear her voice, and he will fall.

As the crowd still calls for his death, she sings an aside love song to Pollione, wondering where he is.

In Norma, we see someone who is both wise and naïve. She is the head of a society she represents, and she has violated its rules. She dearly loves her native Gods and her station as priestess and also loves Pollione. She wants it all, and through secrecy, so far, she has had it. But her country is reaching a crisis of invasion, and things are about to change...

Fine al rito, e il sacro bosco
Sia disgombro dai profani.
Quando il Nume. Quando il Nume irato e fosco,
Chiegga il sangue dei Romani,
Dal Druidico delubro La mia voce Tuonerà!...
Cadrà punirlo io posso.
(Ma, punirlo, il cor non sa...)

(Ah! bello, a me ritorna
Del fido amor primiero
E contro il mondo intieh ro,
di feza a te sarò.
Ah! bello a me ritorna.
Del raggio tuo sereno;
E vita nel tuo se no Patria e cielo avrò....Si!
Ah, riedi ancora qual eri al lora,
Quando a quando il cor ti die..di ahl lora,
Qual eri al lora. Quando, ah quando a quando
il cor ti die..di die diah, riedi Ah meh!)

Finish the rite, and the sacred forest,
may it be scrubbed of the profane.
When the Divine Presence, irate and gloomy
Asks for the blood of the Romans,
From the Druidic temple,
My voice will thunder!...
He'll fall...I can punish him...
(But punishing, my heart does not know).

(Ah! Beautiful, return to me,
your faithful first love;
And against the world, I'll protect you
Ah! Beautiful, return to me,
of rays of serenity and life in your bosom;
And homeland and heaven... Yes!
I will have in my heart.
Ah, you still have what you were, when my heart I
gave to you.
The heart I gave to you, bring it back to me!)

In the early incarnations of this recital, I was looking for songs and lyrics that would be in the timeframe of William Bradford (1590 - 1657), due to the 400th Anniversary of the Mayflower crossing in 2020. We needn't say why the concert is happening in 2023 instead. I approached my friend and composer Scott Mohnkern about arranging some folksongs from Yorkshire. Here I give the dates of their first known printing, although the songs likely go farther back in oral tradition. These verses are excerpts of the original songs, where verses are added and subtracted depending upon the version.

Hear the Nightingales Sing (c.1636)

Words: Trad.

Known as “The Nightingale Song”, “The Bold Grenadier”, or “The Souldier's Rare Musick and Maid's Recreation”, this folksong has wide spread with different versions in England and the USA.

<p>As I was a-walking one morning in May, I espied a young couple upon the highway, And one was a lady</p>	<p>They hadn't been there long when he put his arm round her middle, He took off his knapsack and drew out</p>	<p>Now he hadn't been playing long when he said it's time to give o'er, "Oh now," said the lady,</p>	<p>... And if we e'er return again it will be in the Spring, For to see the pretty</p>
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most beautiful and fair, The other was a soldier, a brave volunteer.	a fiddle, And he played such a tune, me boys, such a lovely thing, That it made the woods to echo and the valleys to ring.	"just play one tune more, For I like all your music and the touching of one string, It will make the woods to echo and the valleys to ring."	flowers grow and hear the nightingales sing.
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The Lyke Wake Dirge (printed 1639; origin perhaps 14th century)

Words: Trad.

This dirge was likely a mourning song sang by certain women overseeing the "Lyke" (corpse), at their wake. It refers to the trials the soul will come to after death.

This ae neet, this ae neet, Any neet and all. Fire an' fleet an' candleleet And Christ receive thy soul.	If thou from here our wake has passed, To Whinny Moor thou comes at last. And Christ receive thy soul.	And if ever thou gavest hosen or shoen, Then sit ye down and put them on. And Christ receive thy soul.	But if hosen or shoen thou ne'er gav'st nane, The whinny will prick thee to thy bare bane. And Christ receive thy soul.
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Al dolce guidami

Anna Bolena: Act I, Scene 2

Libretto: F. Romani

In Donizetti's opera inspired by the last days of Anne Boleyn, this aria is part of a longer "Mad Scene". Anna is about to go to the scaffold. She asks the also condemned Smeaton to tune his harp to play along with this song, where she dreams of happier times in the past: Of her home castle (Hever in Kent is the one she would have remembered most.) and the times when Henry still loved her. The tune is based on the English folksong *Home Sweet Home*. Anna Bolena is one of a triad of operas based upon English historical queens, the others being Maria Stuarda and Roberto Deveraux.

Al dolce guidami castel natio, ai verdi platani, al cheto rio, che i nostri mormora sospiri ancor. Ah! colà, dimentico de' scorsi affanni, un giorno rendimi de' miei primi'anni, un giorno sol del nostro amor.... Al dolce guidami castel natio, un giorno rendimi del nostro amor... un giorno sol del nostro, del nostro amor.	Lead me to the dear castle where I was born, to the green plane trees, to that brook that still murmurs to our sighs... Ah! There I forget Past griefs; give me back one day of my youth, give me back one day of our love.... Lead me to the dear castle where I was born; give me back one single day of our, of our love...
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From *Proses Lyriques*, L. 90 (84)

Poems: A. C. Debussy

Inspired by the music of Richard Wagner, *Proses Lyriques* is a milestone for Claude Debussy's creative work. This is his only published song cycle where Debussy wrote both. He also makes use of motives and contextual themes that run through the cycle, such as Dream/Reality, Night, Longing, Despair, and Salvation.

The English connection in these selections is from the inspiration Debussy drew from the paintings of JMW Turner. 'Holy Island, Northumberland' is a watercolor of Bamburgh beach and Lindisfarne in a sudden storm and the most likely source for de Grève.

II. de Grève

Sur la mer les crépuscules tombent,
Soie blanche effilée.
Les vagues comme de petites folles,
Jasent, petites filles sortant de l'école,
Parmi les froufrous de leur robe,
Soie verte irisée!
Les nuages, graves voyageurs,
Se concertent sur le prochain orage,

of The Shore

Twilight falls on the sea,
Tapered white silk.
The waves like crazy little ones,
Chattering, little girls coming out of school,
Among the frills of their dresses,
Iridescent green silk!
The clouds, serious travelers,
They are a concert on the next storm,

Et c'est un fond vraiment trop grave
 A cette anglaise aquarelle.
 Les vagues, les petites vagues,
 Ne savent plus où se mettre,
 Car voici la méchante averse,
 Froufrous de jupes envolées,
 Soie verte affolée.
 Mais la lune, compatissante à tous,
 Vient apaiser ce gris conflit,
 Et caresse lentement ses petites amies,
 Qui s'offrent, comme lèvres aimantes,
 A ce tiède et blanc baiser.
 Puis, plus rien... Plus que les cloches attardées des
 flottantes églises,
 Angelus des vagues,
 Soie blanche apaisée!

And it's a really too serious background
 For this English watercolor.
 The waves, the little waves,
 Do not know where to go,
 Because here is the wicked downpour,
 Frilly skirts flown away,
 Distraught green silk.
 But the moon, compassionate to all,
 Comes and calms this gray conflict,
 And slowly caresses her girlfriends,
 Who offer themselves, as loving lips,
 To that warm, white kiss.
 Then nothing... Nothing more than the belated
 bells of floating churches,
 Afternoon prayer of the waves,
 Soothed white silk!

Likely inspired from Turner's 'Conservatory, with Memorial Window, (c.1818)', which was painted at Farnley Hall in N. Yorkshire. the ominous lighting reminds us of the moody *de Fleurs*. 'Alnwick Castle (1829)' with its large hot houses in Debussy's time is another candidate.

III. de Fleurs

Dans l'ennui si désolément vert
 De la serre de douleur,
 Les Fleurs enlacent mon cœur
 De leurs tiges méchantes.
 Ah! quand reviendront autour de ma tête
 Les chères mains si tendrement désenlaceuses?
 Les grands iris violets
 Violèrent méchamment tes yeux,
 En semblant les refléter,
 Eux, qui furent l'eau du songe
 Où plongèrent mes rêves si doucement
 Enclos en leur couleur;
 Et les lys, blancs jets d'eau de pistils embaumés,
 Ont perdu leur grâce blanche
 Et ne sont plus que pauvres malades sans soleil!
 Soleil! ami des fleurs mauvaises,
 Tueur de rêves! Tueur d'illusions,
 Ce pain béni des âmes misérables!
 Venez! Venez! Les mains salvatrices!
 Brisez les vitres de mensonge,
 Brisez les vitres de maléfice,
 Mon âme meurt de trop de soleil!
 Mirages! Plus ne reflurira la joie de mes yeux,
 Et mes mains sont lasses de prier,
 Mes yeux sont las de pleurer!
 Éternellement ce bruit fou
 Des pétales noirs de l'ennui,
 Tombant goutte à goutte sur ma tête
 Dans le vert de la serre de douleur!

of The Flowers

In the tedium, so desolately green, of the hothouse
 of sorrow,
 The flowers enlacc my heart with their malicious
 stems.
 Ah, when will there be the dear hands of
 tenderness around my head, to untangle them?
 The grand purple irises cruelly violated your eyes,
 by seeming to reflect them.
 Those eyes, the water of reflection,
 where I plunged my dreams, sweetly enclosed in
 their color.
 And the lilies, white jets of water of perfumed
 pistils, have lost their grace.
 Pale, and more like the poor sick, without sun.
 Sun! Friend of evil flowers! Killer of dreams!
 Killer of illusions!
 The holy bread of miserable souls.
 Come! Come! Hands of salvation!
 Smash the glass panes of lies. Smash the glass of
 evil charms!
 My soul is dying of too much sun!
 Mirages!
 Never again will joy flower in my eyes.
 And my hands are tired of praying. My eyes are
 tired of crying.
 Eternally, this crazed noise of the black petals of
 tedium,
 drip, drop by drop on my head.
 In the green of the hothouse of sorrow.

Regnava nel silenzio...Quando rapito in estasi Lucia Di Lammermoor: Act I, Scene 2 *Libretto: S. Cammarano*

British literature was fertile ground for Romantic era Italian composers. Sir Walter Scott's 1819 novel The Bride of Lammermoor is loosely based upon the life of Janet Dalrymple of Carsecreugh Castle. Here Lucia (Scott's Lucy Ashburn) is with her maid, waiting near a fountain for her secret lover. She tells of when she met a shadowy figure at that fountain. Her maid urges her to put aside such fantasy, as well as any fantasy of marrying her beloved. Lucia retorts, reinforcing that she will be with him who is her only joy.

Regnava nel silenzio
alta la notte e bruna...
Colpia la fonte un pallido
raggio di tetra luna...
Quando un sommesso gemito
fra l'aure udir si fe';
ed ecco au quel margin
ah! l'ombra mostrarsi a me. Ah!

Reigning in silence,
The night, high and shadowed,...
A pale ray from the dreary moon
struck the fountain...
When a low moan
was heard through the air;
and there on the fountain's edge
the shadow showed its face to me. Ah!

Qual di chi parla, muoversi
il labbro suo vedea, e con la mano esanime
chiamarmi a sè pareva.
Stette un momento immobile,
poi rattab dileguò.
E l'onda, pria sì limpida,
di sangue rosseggiò.

As if speaking, her lips moved
and with her lifeless hand
she seemed to call me to her.
She stood there for a moment, still,
then disappeared.
And the water, earlier so clear,
reddened with blood.

Egl' è luce ai giorni miei,
È conforto al mio penar.

He is the light in my days,
and of comfort in my suffering.

Quando rapita in estasi
Del più concenti ardore,
Col favellar del core,
Mi giura eterna fè.

When rapt in ecstasy
of the most burning heat,
with words from the heart
he swears to me eternal faith.

Gl'affanni miei dimentico,
Gioia diviene il pianto.
Parmi che a lui d'accanto,
Si schiuda il ciel per me!

I forget my worries,
Tears turn into joy.
It seems that when he is next to me,
Heaven opens up for me!

Den teuren zu versöhnen

Martha: Act IV, Number 15

Libretto: F. W. Riese

The German opera Martha's alternate title is Der Markt zu Richmond (The Market at Richmond). This comedy fictionally takes place surrounding the fair at Richmond and the court of Queen Anne. It was written during Queen Victoria's reign. The class system is the driving force of the plot. Queen Anne's maid of honor, the fictional Lady Harriet of Durham, is bored and decides to slum it as a commoner named Martha. She discovers that the common man (and her employer) who offered to marry her, and she rebuked him, is actually of noble birth. So now they can be together after all.

Den Teuren zu versöhnen
Durch wahre Reu',
Sein Dasein zu verschönen
Mit Lieb' und Treu'
Mein Loos mit ihm zu theilen,
Durch's Leben hin zu eilen,
Ach welch Glück!

To be reconciled with the Beloved
with true remorse
To brighten up his existence
With love and fidelity.
To share fate with him,
To go through life with him,
Ah! Such happiness!

Ja, nun darf ich frei ihm sagen,
Wie mein Herz, seit ich ihn sah,
Nur für ihn geschlagen, ja!

Yes! Now I can freely tell him
How much my heart has beaten for him
Since I first saw him, yes!

Wie sein Bild mir immer nah!
Ah! O seliger Gedankem
O Hoofnungsschein!
Es sank die Trennungsschranke,
Mein wird er, mein, ja, mein!

How his image came ever nearer!
Ah! O blessed thought,
O ray of hope!
All barriers have disappeared.
He shall be mine. Yes, mine!

From *Six Elizabethan Songs*

From composer Dominick Argento's native York, Pennsylvania, where I regularly perform, to Yorkshire, England, come two pieces from *Six Elizabethan Songs*. These are some of Argento's earlier works. William Shakespeare's Love's Labour's Lost, from which *Winter* is taken, is an early work of The Bard. It's a song in a play within a play. *Winter* is a comical poem, full of puns and innuendo, describing actions in the season. The debut of this play was presented for Queen Elizabeth I.

The Virgin Queen, often compared to the Goddess of the Hunt, is also the subject of Ben Jonson's poem Hymn to Diana. It is full of praise and anxiety. He asks her to spare him to write freely and not to share Actaeon's fate of the Goddess turning him into a hart and being ripped apart by hounds. Tudor times were fraught with uncertainty. A poet whose work ran afoul of the monarch could find their works and themselves literally destroyed.

III. Winter

Poem: William Shakespeare

When icicles hang by the wall
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When blood is nipp'd and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl
Tu-whoo! Tu-whit! Tu-whoo! A merry note!
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.
When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw;
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl
Tu-whoo! Tu-whit! Tu-whoo! A merry note!
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

VI. Hymn

Poem: Ben Jonson

Queen and huntress, chaste and fair,
Now the sun is laid to sleep,
Seated in thy silver chair,
State in wonted manner keep:
Hesperus entreats thy light,
Goddess excellently bright.
Earth, let not thy envious shade
Dare itself to interpose;
Cynthia's shining orb was made
Heaven to clear when day did close:
Bless us then with wished sight,
Goddess excellently bright.
Lay thy bow of pearl apart,
And thy crystal-shining quiver;
Give unto the flying hart
Space to breathe, how short soever:
Thou that mak'st a day of night—
Goddess excellently bright.

Vien diletto è in ciel la luna

I Puritani: Act II, Scene 3

Libretto: C. Pepoli

I Puritani (The Puritans) is Vincenzo Bellini's last opera. Based on the vaudeville play *Têtes Rondes et Cavaliers* by Ancelot and Saintine, which was based upon Sir Walter Scott's novel Old Mortality. This was Queen Victoria's favorite opera. It debuted in Paris in 1835, a year of revolution in France. In Italy, restrictions were placed on certain numbers in the opera which it was feared would inspire the masses to riot for freedoms.

Set during the English Civil War, this is part of a "Mad Scene" where a Puritan, Elvira, is distressed by her fiancée Arturo leaving to help Charles the First's widow Queen Enrichetta (Henrietta) escape, and thus, he becomes a fugitive from the Parliamentarians. All is well for the couple in the opera's end though, when Cromwell pardons all the Royalist prisoners.

Vien, diletto, è in ciel la luna!
Tutto tace intorno, intorno;
Finchè spunti in ciel il giorno,
Ah, vien, ti posa sul mio cor!
Deh! t'affretta, o Arturo mio,
Riedi, o caro, alla tua Elvira;
Essa piange e ti sospira,
Vien, o caro, all'amore.

Come, beloved, the moon is in the sky!
Everything is silent around, around;
As long as you come out in the sky the day,
Ah, come, lay you on my heart!
Ah! Hurry, O my Arturo,
Come back, dear, to your Elvira;
She cries and sighs for you,
Come, dear, to love.

Two Puritan Songs

I found very little in terms of Puritan music of the time of William Bradford, as music was considered too distracting from the word of God. Although they did not object to some secular music, musical study was not nourished in their communities, and so, they tended to not have melodious voices. Thus, in some cases, congregations were told not to sing at all. Writing, however, was encouraged, and for women as well as for men. When I asked composer Scott Mohnkern to explore these writings, he returned to musical composition after a hiatus.

The Four Elements, published 1650 in *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America*, by Anne Bradstreet, the first poet of the American colonies born in England, was very popular on both sides of the Atlantic. Bradford was governor of Massachusetts at this time (30 years total). Mohnkern sets *The Four Elements* as a hymn.

William Bradford was a prolific writer in giving accounts of events. He needs no introduction at St. Helena's. I set to find something appropriate for this concert that he had penned. This reminiscing of Bradford on his life, including his time at St. Helena's, fit nicely. Mohnkern chose the Blues style for its emphasis on experience and advice, and it being a musical blend of African and European cultures in the United States.

The Four Elements *Poem: Anne Bradstreet*

Fire, Air, Earth, and Water did contest.
Which was the strongest, noblest, and the best.
Who was of greatest use and mightiest force.
In placid Terms they did thought now to course.
Which was the strongest, noblest and the best,
Who was of greatest use and might'est force;
In placid Terms they thought now to discourse,
That in due order each her turn should speak;
But enmity this amity did break
All would be chief, and all scorn'd to be under
Whence issu'd winds & rain lightning & thunder.
The quaking earth did groan, the Sky lookt black
The Fire, the forced Air, in sunder crack;
The sea did threat the heav'ns, the heav'n's earth,
All looked like a Chaos or new birth:
Fire broyled Earth, & scorched Earth it choaked
Both by their darings, water so provoked
That roaring in it came, and with its source
Soon made the Combatants abate their force
The rumbling hissing: puffing was so great
The worlds confusion, it did seem to threat
Till gentle Air, Contention so abated
That betwixt hot and cold, she arbitrated
The others difference, being less did cease
All storms now laid, and they in perfect peace
That Fire should first begin, the rest consent,
The noblest and most active Element.
Fire, Air, Earth, and Water did contest.
Which was the strongest, noblest, and the best
Fire, Air, Earth, and Water.

Bradford Blues *Words: William Bradford*

From my years young in days,
God did make known to me truth,
And call'd me from my native place
For to enjoy the means of grace.
In wilderness he did me guide.
And in lands for me provide.
In fears and wants, through weal and woe
A pilgrim passed I, to and fro.
Oft left of them whom I did trust.
How vain it is to rest on dust.
A man of sorrows I have been.
And many changes I have seen.
Wars, Wants, Peace, plenty I have known
And some advanced. Others have thrown down.
The humble, poor, cheerful, and glad.
Rich, discontent, sower, and sad.

When fears and sorrows have been enmixt,
consolations came betwixt.
Faint not, poor soul, in God still trust.
Fear not the things thou suffer must.
Faint not, poor soul, in God still trust.
Fear not the things thou must suffer most.
For whom he loves he doth chastise.
And then all tears wipes from their eyes.

Farewell, dear children, whom I love,
Your better Father is above.
When I am gone, He can supply;
To Him I leave you when I die.
Fear him in truth, walk in his ways,
And he will bless you all your days,
My days are spent, old age is come,
My strength it fails, my glass near run,
Now I will wait, when work is done,
Until my happy change shall come,
When from my labors I shall rest,
With Christ above, be blest.