

**signum**  
CLASSICS

# Visions Illuminées

**MARY BEVAN**  
**12 ENSEMBLE**  
**RUISI QUARTET**  
**JOSEPH MIDDLETON**

**BRITTEN • RAVEL • DEBUSSY**  
**HOLMÉS • CHABRIER • HOLLOWAY**  
**CHAUSSON • FAURÉ**



# VISIONS ILLUMINÉES

|      |  |  |        |
|------|--|--|--------|
| [1]  | <b>Clair de Lune</b> , Op. 46 No. 2<br><i>Mary Bevan, 12 Ensemble</i>                                    | Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)                      | [3.00] |
|      | <b>Les Illuminations</b> , Op. 18  | Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)                   |        |
| [2]  | I. Fanfare   |  | [2.08] |
| [3]  | II. Villes   |  | [2.31] |
| [4]  | IIIa. Phrase   |  | [1.08] |
| [5]  | IIIb. Antique  |  | [2.13] |
| [6]  | IV. Royauté  |  | [1.41] |
| [7]  | V. Marine  |  | [1.03] |
| [8]  | VI. Interlude  |  | [2.32] |
| [9]  | VII. Being beauteous   |  | [4.16] |
| [10] | VIII. Parade   |  | [2.52] |
| [11] | IX. Départ<br><i>Mary Bevan, 12 Ensemble</i>   |  | [2.37] |
|      | <b>Un grand sommeil noir</b>   | Maurice Ravel (1875-1937), arr. Robin Holloway |        |
| [12] | Les grands vents venus d'outre-mer   |  | [2.54] |
| [13] | Un grand sommeil noir  |  | [5.02] |
| [14] | Si morne<br><i>Mary Bevan, Joseph Middleton, 12 Ensemble</i>   |  | [4.46] |
| [15] | <b>Chanson triste</b><br><i>Mary Bevan, 12 Ensemble</i>  | Henri Duparc (1848-1933)                       | [3.52] |
| [16] | <b>Tes yeux bleus</b> *<br><i>Mary Bevan, 12 Ensemble - String orchestra arrangement by the composer</i> | Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-1894)                  | [4.38] |

|      |   |   |         |
|------|---|---|---------|
| [17] | <b>Chanson perpétuelle</b> , Op. 37<br><i>Mary Bevan, Joseph Middleton, Ruisi Quartet</i> | Ernest Chausson (1855-1899)                     | [7.00]  |
|      | <b>Quatre Mélodies de Verlaine</b> *  | Claude Debussy (1862-1918), arr. Robin Holloway |         |
| [18] | La mer est plus belle   |   | [2.43]  |
| [19] | Mandoline   |   | [1.36]  |
| [20] | Le son du cor s'afflige   |   | [2.54]  |
| [21] | L'échelonnement des haies<br><i>Mary Bevan, Joseph Middleton, Ruisi Quartet</i>           |   | [1.37]  |
|      | <b>Sérénades</b> *  | Augusta Holmés (1847-1903)                      |         |
|      | <i>Piano Quintet arrangement by the composer</i>  |   |         |
| [22] | Sérénade printanière  |   | [2.34]  |
| [23] | Sérénade d'Été  |   | [2.44]  |
| [24] | Sérénade d'Automne  |   | [2.02]  |
| [25] | Sérénade d'Hiver  |   | [2.05]  |
| [26] | Sérénade de toujours<br><i>Mary Bevan, Joseph Middleton, Ruisi Quartet</i>                |   | [2.19]  |
|      | Total timings:  |   | [74.58] |
|      | * World Premiere Recording  |   |         |

MARY BEVAN SOPRANO  
12 ENSEMBLE · RUISI QUARTET  
JOSEPH MIDDLETON PIANO

## FOREWORD

Over the years since the release of my debut album *Voyages* with Joseph Middleton in 2017, my passion for French *mélodie* has grown and deepened. There is something about the way the language sits in the voice that enables the singer to shape lines and phrases in the most expressive way possible. The texts that composers of *mélodie* have set to music contain a depth and a mystery that I find fascinating and a source of repeated inspiration. When a singer stands up on that most exposing and vulnerable of platforms, the recital stage, singing words and music which unlock the imagination is a gift.

My idea for the album began simply with a desire to record Britten's *Les Illuminations*, a work I feel closely connected to, having performed it many times over the years and each time having found something new in it to interest me. I chose not to use a conductor, preferring instead to create as intimate a musical relationship with the orchestra as possible.

With this main piece of the jigsaw puzzle in place, I chose the other works for the programme with the idea of 'illuminations' in mind. These are illuminations for the emotions, deeply felt in the

soul of the music. There are pieces by some well-known and some not-so-well-known composers, each of whom create their rich musical canvas without getting in the way of the original music or poetry. Just as Rimbaud casts a strange and evocative light upon the visions in *Les Illuminations* which Britten then brings to life with his music, so too have Fauré, Chabrier, Holloway, Holmès, Chausson, and Duparc 'illuminated' their songs in challenging, calming, daunting, and uplifting ways.

I hope that, in listening to these new arrangements alongside pieces you might be more familiar with, the texts might take on fresh meaning and colour, and that you find deeper veins of richness in the music, just as I have experienced in recording them.

**Mary Bevan**

## VISIONS ILLUMINÉES

What visions can poetry and music conjure up? Poets translate what they see into words, and composers illuminate those visions with music. Musical settings of poetry are not just for voice and piano: Poetic worlds take on enticing new shades through layers of instrumentation, which become kaleidoscopic in the hands of

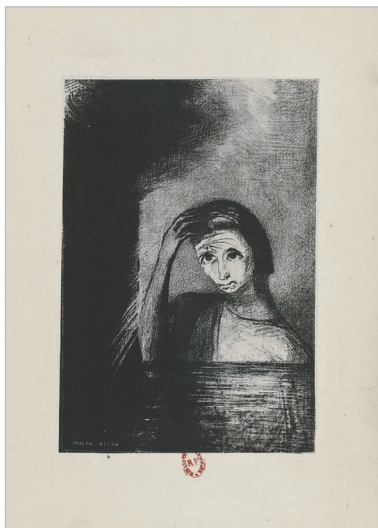
composers such as Fauré, Britten, and Duparc. In this multifaceted programme we hear songs composed, or adapted, for voice and chamber ensemble, always with strings, and often with other instruments too, such as harp or piano, or flutes, clarinets, or horns. Where not originally conceived as chamber works, arrangements are prepared by composers themselves or by a new arranger well-versed in the French tradition, casting fresh light on otherwise familiar sounds and visions.

Fauré's famous *Clair de lune* was orchestrated just a year after the well-regarded voice and piano composition of 1887 at the request of the salon hostess the Princesse de Polignac. This version (Op. 46 No. 2 for tenor and orchestra) was premiered at the Société Nationale de Musique in 1888 with the tenor Maurice Bagès and was later included in an Op. 112 orchestral suite based on the story of *Clair de lune* which hails from Verlaine's *Fêtes galantes [Courtship]* (1869). The scenes created by Verlaine are derived from Watteau's 18th-century paintings of figures in masquerade costumes and modish dress, set in natural parklands and enjoying a life of leisure. These charmed lives are translated musically by Fauré in playful dialogues between the voice and the instruments, toying with rhythmic patterns

and harmonic colours, particularly between strings and harp, and flute and bassoon, which do not always mimic the voice and piano version.

Britten's settings of Rimbaud's *Illuminations* for voice and string orchestra (1940) capture the energy and intensity of a poet who called himself a visionary. Begun in 1939, the composition of these songs was disrupted by the outbreak of war while Britten was abroad in the United States with his companion the tenor Peter Pears, meaning that Britten himself never heard the world premiere given in London by the Swiss soprano Sophie Wyss in 1940. Wyss had advocated for Britten to set French poems to music, yet in selecting lively and fanciful prose poems compiled into a collection by a 20-year old Rimbaud around 1875, Britten was in many ways a pioneer, since French composers themselves often avoided setting prose poetry to music. Britten's colouration of Rimbaud's parade of outlandish figures is achieved through orchestral textures that are reliant on pizzicatos, harmonics, and thinly-voiced chords. Britten creates an appearance of an emotional nonchalance, masking the deeper anxieties buried in the texts themselves.

More ominous, interior visions are imagined in songs by Ravel composed between 1895–1906 using poems by French and Belgian symbolists. These songs are stitched together with newly-composed *intermèdes* as *Un grand sommeil noir* by composer and author Robin Holloway. Holloway uses the same instrumentation selected by Ravel for the later Mallarmé songs (1913), with the addition of a double-bass and a harp. As Holloway explains: ‘the composite result is dark and melancholy, here or there anguished, always disquieted or perturbed – a three-faceted depiction of the composer’s “dark side”, complement to his more usual gaiety, wit, delicate sensuality, hedonism’ (Holloway, 2019). De Régnier’s threatening vision of marauding strangers in a hollowed-out town is presented in densely symbolic language that Ravel translates into short musical bursts. Verlaine’s ‘dark sleep’ poem envisions a deep depression captured by Ravel through static musical language, in which infinitesimal shifts of creeping harmonies wheedle their way round the voice. Verhaeren’s shattered self is trapped in a mournfulness for which the lull of Ravel’s 9/8 time signature offers scant comfort, while the darkness that envelops the whole scene is captured, too, in the print engraving by Odilon Redon for Verhaeren’s *Les Débâcles* [Defeats] (1888), from which Ravel selected his text.



Odilon Redon frontispiece for Émile Verhaeren *Les Débâcles* (1888)

Holloway complements Debussy, too, in his interweaving and extending of Debussy’s *Trois mélodies de Verlaine* (1891) with the insertion of the song *Mandoline* composed a decade earlier (1882). Exploiting his knowledge of Debussy’s writing (Holloway published a foundational study on Debussy and Wagner in 1979), Holloway’s

arrangement for string quartet and piano (2022) uses the same technique of link-passages. The songs are characterised by scenes of nature which represent different emotional staging posts, from the euphoria of the expansive seascape in *La mer est plus belle*, to the carefree music-making within the treescape setting of *Mandoline*, to more troubled agonies dulled by the autumn-to-winter change of seasons in the forests of *Le son du cor*, rounding off in a more happy-go-lucky scene of fields and hedgerows in *L’échelonnement des haies*.

Adding to the soundworlds of composers such as Ravel and Debussy, as Holloway has artfully done, is akin to increasing the exposure of a photograph, giving us access to more expansive visions by revealing what is possible when instruments are used creatively to illuminate French poetry and make the familiar unfamiliar. Less familiar, too, are chamber versions of songs that never been recorded because their composers’ manuscripts languished in the archives.

Chabrier’s *Tes yeux bleus* is heard here for the first time in a version for string orchestra prepared in the composer’s own hand but left untouched in his publishers’ archives for well over a century. Setting the words of his friend the cabaret artist, poet, and songwriter Maurice Rollinat, it is hard

not to hear this song as a musical homage to Wagner who had died that same year (1883). The disarming simplicity of the poem is shaded by its confined soundworld; the poem uses just one rhyme sound for each of the 15 lines of verse, characteristic of the anxieties and obsessions of Rollinat’s collection *Les Névroses* [*Neuroses*] (1883) from which the poem comes. Chabrier offsets the poem’s melancholy by a chromatic intensity that unfolds in shimmers of sound. The opening C major held chords build up to an intensity of emotion that never quite finds its release and we never quite learn whose eyes are trained upon the poet.

If we never fully discover what the eyes can see in Chabrier’s song, Holmès’ *Sérénades* from the same year (1883) give us a clarity of vision through much more limpid musical textures, even though Wagner, too, is an important influence for Holmès. Holmès’ integration of Wagner’s ideas are found less in the musical language than in her decision to compose her own lyrics for the songs, inspired by her encounters with Wagner who wrote his own poems for his operas. Holmès’ *Sérénades*, heard here in her arrangement for string quintet and piano, express themes of intense, passionate love, composed at a time when her long relationship with poet Catulle Mendès was coming to an end. The songs are dedicated to her new companion,

the singer Eugène Cougoul who would go on to cover a role in Holmès' *La Montagne noire* at its Paris opera premiere in 1895. Rarely heard today, the popularity of Holmès' songs lasted well into the twentieth century, often characterised as *bluettes*, a term which describes well-crafted but unpretentious songs, such as that encapsulated by the music-box charm of *Sérénade d'hiver*. It is likely that these *Sérénades* would have been designed for salon-scale performance, such as for the artistic salon in Versailles that Holmès hosted for much of her career.

Also inspired by aspects of Wagner, this time the concept of the *Liebestod*, is Chausson's more well-known *Chanson perpétuelle* (1898–9), which sets stanzas from Cros' poem 'Nocturne' from the poet's 1873 collection *Le coffret de santal* [*Sandalwood box*] and equates love with death. In desolation at the departure of her lover, the poem's lead character plots her own death by drowning. The musical scale of the scene is presented in chamber forces, using voice, piano, and string quartet, although Chausson also prepared other versions of the song – for voice and piano, and for voice and orchestra – the motivations for which were curtailed by the composer's untimely death in a cycling accident after completing this version of the piece.

Duparc's celebrated song *Chanson triste* was first composed for voice and piano in 1868–9 and orchestrated in 1910–11, using 2 flutes, 4 horns, harp, and strings. The orchestration was premiered by the Montreux Casino Orchestra in Switzerland in 1911, near to where Duparc was then living. Duparc had stopped formal composing some years earlier, around 1885, following a period of mental illness and ongoing troubles with vision loss. The harp takes centre stage in the orchestration, through continuous arpeggiated chords which drive the song, while the other instruments add depth and colour. The poem's central idea is the same as Rollinat's *Tes yeux bleus* set by Chabrier – the poet hopes to find solace and recovery by looking deep into the eyes of a woman – and has clear resonance for Duparc's own life experience.

These *Visions illuminées* offer moments of introspection and insight. If poets and composers reveal different ways to escape from the realities of everyday life, they do so by exposing both how we feel pain and how we can ease it.

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## TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

### 1 Clair de lune

Votre âme est un paysage choisi  
Que vont charmant masques et bergamasques  
Jouant du luth et dansant et quasi  
Tristes sous leurs déguisements fantasques.

Tout en chantant sur le mode mineur  
L'amour vainqueur et la vie opportune,  
Ils n'ont pas l'air de croire à leur bonheur  
Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune,

Au calme clair de lune triste et beau,  
Qui fait rêver les oiseaux dans les arbres  
Et sangloter d'extase les jets d'eau,  
Les grands jets d'eau sveltes parmi les marbres.

Text: Paul Verlaine (1844-1896)

### Les illuminations

### 2 Fanfare

J'ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage.

### Moonlight

*Your soul is a chosen landscape  
Bewitched by masque and bergamasque,  
Playing the lute and dancing and almost  
Sad beneath their fanciful disguises.*

*Singing as they go in a minor key  
Of conquering love and life's favours,  
They don't quite seem to believe in their fortune  
And their song mingles with the light of the moon,*

*The calm light of the moon, sad and fair,  
That sets the birds dreaming in the trees  
And the fountains sobbing in their rapture,  
Tall and svelte amid the marble statues.*

### Illuminations

### Fanfare

*I alone hold the key to this savage parade.*

### 3 Villes

Ce sont des villes! C'est un peuple pour qui se sont montés ces Alleghany et ces Libans de rêve! Ce sont des villes! Des chalets de cristal et de bois se meuvent sur des rails et des poulies invisibles. Les vieux cratères ceints de colosses et de palmiers de cuivre rugissent mélodieusement dans les feux. Ce sont des villes! Des cortèges de Mabs en robes rousses, opalines, montent des ravines. Là-haut, les pieds dans la cascade et les ronces, les cerfs tettent Diane. Les Bacchantes des banlieues sanglotent et la lune brûle et hurle. Vénus entre dans les cavernes des forgerons et des ermites. Ce sont des . . . Des groupes de beffrois chantent les idées des peuples. Des châteaux bâtis en os sort la musique inconnue. Ce sont des villes! Ce sont des villes! Le paradis des orages s'effondre. Les sauvages dansent sans cesse la fête de la nuit. Ce sont des villes!

Quels bons bras, quelle belle heure me rendront cette région d'où viennent mes sommeils et mes moindres mouvements?

### 4 Phrase

J'ai tendu des cordes de clocher à clocher; des guirlandes de fenêtre à fenêtre; des chaînes d'or d'étoile à étoile, et je danse.

### Towns

*These are towns! This is a people for whom these imagined Alleghanies and Lebanons have been raised! Towns! Chalets of crystal and wood move on invisible rails and pulleys. Old craters, encircled by colossi and palms of copper, roar melodiously in the fires. These are towns! Cortèges of Queen Mabs, in russet and opaline robes, climb up from the ravines. Up there, their hoofs in the waterfalls and brambles, the deer suckle at Diana's breast. Bacchantes of the suburbs sob, and the moon burns and howls. Venus enters the caves of blacksmiths and hermits. These are . . . Groups of belfries ring out peoples' ideas. From castles built of bone unknown music issues. These are towns! These are towns! The paradise of storms subsides. Savages dance unceasingly the festival of night. These are towns!*

*What kindly arms, what lovely hour will restore to me those regions from which my slumbers and my slightest movements come?*

### Phrase

*I have hung ropes from steeple to steeple; garlands from window to window; golden chains from star to star, and I dance.*

### 5 Antique

Gracieux fils de Pan! Autour de ton front couronné de fleurettes et de baies tes yeux, des boules précieuses, remuent. Tachées de lies brunes, tes joues se creusent. Tes crocs luisent. Ta poitrine ressemble à une cithare, des tintements circulent dans tes bras blonds. Ton cœur bat dans ce ventre où dort le double sexe. Promène-toi, la nuit, en mouvant doucement cette cuisse, cette seconde cuisse et cette jambe de gauche.

### 6 Royauté

Un beau matin, chez un peuple fort doux, un homme et une femme superbes criaient sur la place publique: 'Mes amis, je veux qu'elle soit reine!' 'Je veux être reine!' Elle riait et tremblait. Il parlait aux amis de révélation, d'épreuve terminée. Ils se pâmaient l'un contre l'autre.

En effet, ils furent rois toute une matinée, où les tentures carminées se revelèrent sur les maisons, et tout l'après-midi, où ils s'avancèrent du côté des jardins de palmes.

### Antique

*Graceful son of Pan! Around your brow, crowned with little flowers and berries, your eyes – precious globes – move. Stained with brown lees, your cheeks are hollowed out. Your fangs gleam. Your breast resembles a cithara, tintinnabulations course through your white arms. Your heart pulses in that belly where Hermaphrodite sleeps. Walk forth, at night, gently moving this thigh, that second thigh, and that left leg.*

### Royalty

*One beautiful morning, among a most gentle people, a man and a woman of proud presence cried out in the public square: 'Friends, I want her to be queen.' 'I want to be queen!' She laughed and trembled. To his friends he spoke of a revelation, of a trial concluded. They swooned against each other.*

*And during one whole morning, whilst the crimsoned hangings festooned the houses, and during the whole afternoon, as they headed for the palm gardens, they were indeed kings.*

## 7 Marine

Les chars d'argent et de cuivre –  
Les proues d'acier et d'argent –  
Battent l'écume, –  
Soulèvent les souches des ronces.  
Les courants de la lande,  
Et les ornières immenses du reflux,  
Filent circulairement vers l'est,  
Vers les piliers de la forêt,  
Vers les fûts de la jetée,  
Dont l'angle est heurté par les tourbillons de lumière.

## 8 Interlude

J'ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage.

## 9 Being beauteous

Devant un neige un Être de Beauté de haute taille.  
Des sifflements de mort et des cercles de musique  
sourde font monter, s'élargir et trembler comme  
un spectre ce corps adoré; des blessures écarlates  
et noires éclatent dans les chairs superbes. Les  
couleurs propres de la vie se foncent, dansent, et  
se dégagent autour de la Vision, sur le chantier.  
Et les frissons s'élèvent et grondent, et la saveur  
forcenée de ces effets, se chargeant avec les  
sifflements mortels et les rauques musiques que

## Marine

*Chariots of silver and copper –  
Prows of steel and silver –  
Thrash the foam, –  
Uproot the stumps of thorns.  
The streams of the wasteland,  
And the huge ruts of the ebb-tide  
Flow away in a circle toward the east,  
Toward the pillars of the forest,  
Toward the shafts of the jetty,  
Whose quoins are battered by whirlpools of light.*

## Interlude

*I alone hold the key to this savage parade.*

## Being beauteous

*Against a background of snow, a tall Being of  
Beauty. Wheezings of death and circles of muffled  
music cause this adored body to rise, to swell, to  
quiver like a spectre; scarlet and black wounds  
break out on the glorious flesh. The true colours of  
life deepen, dance and detach themselves around  
the Vision in the making. And tremors rise and  
rumble, and the frenzied flavour of these effects,  
being burdened with the dying gasps and raucous  
music that the world, far behind us, hurls at our*

le monde, loin derrière nous, lance sur notre mère  
de beauté, – elle recule, elle se dresse. Oh! nos os  
sont revêtus d'un nouveau corps amoureux.

Ô la face cendrée, l'écusson de crin, les bras de  
cristal! le canon sur lequel je dois m'abattre à  
travers la mêlée des arbres et de l'air léger!

## 10 Parade

Des drôles très solides. Plusieurs ont exploité  
vos mondes... Sans besoins, et peu pressés de  
mettre en œuvre leurs brillantes facultés et leur  
expérience de vos consciences. Quels hommes  
mûrs! Des yeux hébétés à la façon de la nuit d'été,  
rouges et noirs, tricolores, d'acier piqué d'étoiles  
d'or; des facies déformés, plombés, blémis,  
incendiés; des enrouements folâtres! La démarche  
cruelle des oripeaux! – Il y a quelques jeunes!

Ô le plus violent Paradis de la grimace enrage!  
Chinois, Hottentots, bohémiens, niais, hyènes,  
Molochs, vieilles démences, démons sinistres, ils  
mêlent les tours populaires, maternels, avec les  
poses et les tendresses bestiales. Ils interpréteraient  
des pièces nouvelles et des chansons 'bonnes  
filles'. Maîtres jongleurs, ils transforment le lieu et  
les personnes et usent de la comédie magnétique.

J'ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage.

*mother of beauty – she draws back, she starts up.  
Oh! our bones are dressed in a new and loving body.*

*Ah! The ashen face, the horsehair escutcheon, the  
crystal arms! the cannon at which I must charge  
across the skirmish of trees and soft air!*

## Sideshow

*These are very real rogues. Several have exploited  
your worlds. Having no needs, and in no hurry to  
put into action their brilliant faculties and their  
experience of your consciences. What mature  
men! Vacant eyes like a summer night, red and  
black, tricoloured, steel-studded with stars of gold;  
features deformed, leaden, livid, inflamed; wanton  
hoarsenesses! The cruel swagger of tawdry finery!  
– There are youths among them!*

*Oh! Most violent paradise of maddened grimaces!  
Chinese, Hottentots, gypsies, simpletons, hyenas,  
Molochs, old insanities, sinister demons, they  
mingle popular and maternal tricks with bestial  
poses and caresses. They would perform new  
plays and respectable songs. Master jugglers,  
they transform place and person and make use of  
magnetic comedy.*

*I alone hold the key to this savage parade.*

**11** **Départ**

Assez vu. La vision s'est rencontrée à tous les airs.

Assez eu. Rumeurs des villes, le soir, et au soleil,  
et toujours

Assez connu. Les arrêts de la vie. – O Rumeurs  
et Visions!

Départ dans l'affection et le bruit neufs!

**12** **Les grands vents venus d'outre-mer**

Les grands vents venus d'outre-mer  
Passent par la Ville, l'hiver,  
Comme des étrangers amers.

Ils se concertent, graves et pâles,  
Sur les places, et leurs sandales  
Ensablent le marbre des dalles.

Comme des crosses à leurs mains fortes  
Ils heurtent l'auvent et la porte  
Derrière qui l'horloge est morte;

Et les adolescents amers  
S'en vont avec eux vers la Mer!

Text: Henri de Régnier (1864-1936)

**Departure**

*Enough seen. The vision was encountered under  
all skies.*

*Enough had. Murmurs of the towns at night, and in  
the sun, and always.*

*Enough known. The decrees of life. – O Sounds  
and Visions!*

*Departure into new affection and new clamour!*

Texts: Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891)

**The great ultramarine winds**

*The great ultramarine winds  
Pass through the City in winter,  
Like bitter strangers.*

*Solemn and pale, they scheme together  
In the squares, and their sandals  
Strew with sand the marble flagstones.*

*As though holding crooks in their strong hands,  
They ram the porch-roof and the door,  
Behind which the clock has died.*

*And the bitter adolescents  
Make off with them toward the sea!*

**13** **Un grand sommeil noir**

Un grand sommeil noir  
Tombe sur ma vie:  
Dormez, tout Espoir,  
Dormez, toute envie!

Je ne vois plus rien,  
Je perds la mémoire  
Du mal et du bien . . .  
Ô la triste histoire!

Je suis un berceau  
Qu'une main balance  
Au creux d'un caveau:  
Silence, silence!

Text: Paul Verlaine

**A vast dark sleep**

*A vast dark sleep  
Falls on my life:  
Slumber, all hope,  
Slumber, all desire!*

*I have lost my sight,  
All memories fail  
Of good and evil . . .  
Oh dismal tale!*

*I am a cradle  
Rocked by a hand  
In a hollow vault:  
Silence, silence!*



14 Si morne!

Se replier toujours sur soi-même, si morne!  
Comme un drap lourd, qu'aucun dessin de fleur  
n'adorne.

Se replier, s'appesantir et se tasser  
Et se toujours, en angles noirs et mats, casser.

Si morne! et se toujours interdire l'envie  
De tailler en drapeaux l'étoffe de sa vie.

Tapir entre les plis ses mauvaises fureurs  
Et ses rancœurs et ses douleurs et ses erreurs.

Ni les frissons soyeux, ni les moires fondants  
Mais les pointes en soi des épingles ardentes.

Oh! le paquet qu'on pousse ou qu'on jette à l'écart,  
Si morne et lourd, sur un rayon, dans un bazar.

Déjà sentir la bouche âcre des moisissures  
Gluer, et les taches s'étendre en leurs morsures.

Pourrir, immensément emmailotté d'ennui;  
Être l'ennui qui se replie en de la nuit.

Tandis que lentement, dans les laines ourdies,  
De part en part, mordent les vers des maladies.

Text: Émile Verhaeren (1855-1916)

*So bleak!*

*So bleak to retreat within oneself!  
Like a heavy cloth, unadorned by flowers.*

*To retreat, be weighed down and to cower  
And always, in dark and dull corners, to snap.*

*So bleak! And always to disallow oneself the desire  
Of slicing into flags the fabric of one's life.*

*To crouch between the folds with one's evil rages,  
One's bitternesses, griefs and mistakes.*

*With neither silky shimmers nor melting moire,  
But burning pins to pierce one's flesh.*

*Oh! the package you push or cast aside,  
So bleak and heavy, on a shelf in some cheap store.*

*Already to feel your mouth, acrid with mould,  
Gluing up, and the stains spreading in their bites.*

*To putrefy, hugely swathed in ennui,  
To be that ennui retreating into night.*

*While slowly, in warped wool,  
The worms of disease gnaw their way right through.*

15 Chanson triste

Dans ton cœur dort un clair de lune,  
Un doux clair de lune d'été,  
Et pour fuir la vie importune,  
Je me noierai dans ta clarté.

J'oublierai les douleurs passées,  
Mon amour, quand tu berceras  
Mon triste cœur et mes pensées  
Dans le calme aimant de tes bras.

Tu prendras ma tête malade,  
Oh! quelquefois, sur tes genoux,  
Et lui diras une ballade  
Qui semblera parler de nous;

Et dans tes yeux pleins de tristesses,  
Dans tes yeux alors je boirai  
Tant de baisers et de tendresses  
Que peut-être je guérirai.

Text: Jean Lahor / Henri Cazalis (1840-1909)

*Song of sadness*

*Moonlight slumbers in your heart,  
A gentle summer moonlight,  
And to escape the cares of life  
I shall drown myself in your light.*

*I shall forget past sorrows,  
My sweet, when you cradle  
My sad heart and my thoughts  
In the calm and loving allure of your arms.*

*You will rest my poor head,  
Ah! sometimes on your lap,  
And recite to it a ballad  
That will seem to speak of us;*

*And from your eyes full of sorrow,  
From your eyes I shall then drink  
So many kisses and so much love  
That perhaps I shall be healed.*

16 Tes yeux bleus

Tes yeux bleus comme deux bleuets  
Me suivaient dans l'herbe fanée  
Et près du lac aux joncs fluets  
Où la brise désordonnée  
Venait danser des menuets.

Chère Ange, tu diminuais  
Les ombres de ma destinée,  
Lorsque vers moi tu remuais  
Tes yeux bleus.

Mes spleens, tu les atténuais,  
Et ma vie était moins damnée  
À cette époque fortunée  
Où dans mon âme, à frissons muets,  
Tendrement tu m'insinuais  
Tes yeux bleus.

Text: Maurice Rollinat (1846-1903)

17 Chanson perpétuelle

Bois frissonnants, ciel étoilé,  
Mon bien-aimé s'en est allée,  
Important mon cœur désolé!

*Your blue eyes*

*Your blue eyes, as blue as two cornflowers,  
Pursued me through the withered grass  
And by the lake of slender rushes  
Where the wild breezes  
Came to dance minuets.*

*Dear Angel, you diminished  
The darkness of my destiny,  
When you fluttered for me  
Your blue eyes.*

*You lightened my melancholy,  
And my life was less damned  
At that fortunate time,  
When, in my silently trembling soul,  
You pierced me tenderly with  
Your blue eyes.*

*Song without end*

*Quivering woods, starlit sky,  
My beloved has gone away,  
Carrying off my desolate heart!*

Vents, que vos plaintives rumeurs,  
Que vos chants, rossignols charmeurs,  
Aillent lui dire que je meurs!

Le premier soir qu'il vint ici  
Mon âme fut à sa merci.  
De fierté je n'eus plus souci.

Mes regards étaient pleins d'aveux.  
Il me prit dans ses bras nerveux  
Et me baisa près des cheveux.

J'en eus un grand frémissement;  
Et puis, je ne sais plus comment  
Il est devenu mon amant.

Je lui disais 'Tu m'aimeras  
Aussi longtemps que tu pourras!  
Je ne dormais bien qu'en ses bras.

Mais lui, sentant son cœur éteint,  
S'en est allée l'autre matin,  
Sans moi dans un pays lointain.

Puisque je n'ai plus mon ami,  
Je mourrai dans l'étang, parmi  
Les fleurs, sous le flot endormi.

Sur le bord arrivée, au vent  
Je dirai son nom, en rêvant  
Que là je l'attendis souvent.

*Winds, let your plaintive sounds,  
Bewitching nightingales, let your songs  
Tell him I am dying!*

*The first evening he came here,  
My soul was at his mercy.  
I cared no more for pride.*

*My eyes were full of love,  
He took me in his strong arms  
And kissed me on my brow.*

*I was seized by a great trembling;  
And then, I no longer know how,  
He became my lover.*

*I said to him: 'Love me  
As long as you can!'  
Only in his arms could I sleep soundly.*

*But he, feeling his heart grown cold,  
Went away one morning  
Without me, to a distant land.*

*Since I no longer have my lover,  
I shall die in the pond among  
The flowers beneath the still water.*

*Halting on the edge, to the winds  
I'll speak his name, dreaming  
That there I often awaited him.*

Et comme en un linceul doré,  
Dans mes cheveux défaits, au gré  
Du vent je m'abandonnerai.

Les bonheurs passés verseront  
Leur douce lueur sur mon front;  
Et les joncs verts m'enlaceront.

Et mon sein croira, frémissant,  
Sous l'enlacement caressant,  
Subir l'étreinte de l'absent.

Text: Charles Cros (1842-1888)

#### **18** La mer est plus belle

La mer est plus belle  
Que les cathédrales,  
Nourrice fidèle,  
Berceuse de râles,  
La mer sur qui prie  
La Vierge Marie!

Elle a tous les dons  
Terribles et doux.  
J'entends ses pardons  
Gronder ses courroux . . .  
Cette immensité  
N'a rien d'entêté.

*And as if in a golden shroud,  
With my flowing hair about me, to the will  
Of the water I'll abandon myself.*

*Past joys will shed  
Their gentle light on my brow,  
And the green rushes will entwine me.*

*And my breast shall believe, trembling  
Beneath its enfolding arms,  
It feels the absent one's embrace.*

#### *The sea is lovelier*

*The sea is lovelier  
Than the cathedrals,  
A faithful wet-nurse,  
Lulling those in the grip of death,  
The sea over which  
The Virgin Mary prays!*

*It has all the qualities,  
Awesome and sweet.  
I hear its pardons,  
Its wrath roaring . . .  
This immensity  
Is without wilfulness.*

Oh! si patiente,  
Même quand méchante!  
Un souffle ami hante  
La vague, et nous chante:  
'Vous sans espérance,  
Mourez sans souffrance!'

Et puis, sous les cieux  
Qui s'y rient plus clairs,  
Elle a des airs bleus,  
Roses, gris et verts . . .  
Plus belle que tous,  
Meilleure que nous!

Text: Paul Verlaine

#### **19** Mandoline

Les donneurs de sérénades  
Et les belles écouteuses  
Echangent des propos fades  
Sous les ramures chanteuses.

C'est Tircis et c'est Aminte,  
Et c'est l'éternel Clitandre,  
Et c'est Damis qui pour mainte  
Cruelle fait maint vers tendre.

*Oh, so forbearing,  
Even when wicked!  
A friendly breath haunts  
The wave, and sings to us:  
'You without hope,  
May you die without pain!'*

*And then beneath the skies,  
Reflected there more brightly,  
It seems blue,  
Pink, grey and green . . .  
Lovelier than all,  
Better than we!*

#### *Mandolin*

*The serenading swains  
And the fair listening ladies  
Exchange sweet nothings  
Beneath singing boughs.*

*Tircis is there, Aminte is there,  
And tedious Clitandre too,  
And Damis who for cruel maids a-plenty  
Writes many a tender song.*

Leurs courtes vestes de soie,  
Leurs longues robes à queues,  
Leur élégance, leur joie  
Et leurs molles ombres bleues

*Their short silken doublets,  
Their long trailing gowns,  
Their elegance, their joy  
And their soft blue shadows*

Tourbillonnent dans l'extase  
D'une lune rose et grise,  
Et la mandoline jase  
Parmi les frissons de brise.

*Whirl madly in the rapture  
Of a grey and roseate moon,  
And the mandolin jangles on  
Amid the quivering breeze.*

Text: Paul Verlaine

#### 20 Le son du cor s'afflige

Le son du cor s'afflige vers les bois  
D'une douleur on veut croire orpheline  
Qui vient mourir au bas de la colline  
Parmi la bise errant en courts abois.

#### *The sound of the horn*

*The sound of the horn wails towards the woods  
With an almost orphan sorrow  
Which fades away at the foot of the hill  
Amid the gusts of the fierce North wind.*

L'âme du loup pleure dans cette voix  
Qui monte avec le soleil qui décline  
D'une agonie on veut croire câline  
Et qui ravit et qui navre à la fois.

*The soul of the wolf weeps in that voice  
Which rises with the setting sun  
With an almost soothing agony,  
Which delights and distresses all at once.*

Pour faire mieux cette plainte assoupie,  
La neige tombe à longs traits de charpie  
À travers le couchant sanguinolent,

*To enhance this lulled lament,  
The snow falls in long shreds of lint  
Across the blood-flecked setting sun,*

Et l'air a l'air d'être un soupir d'automne,  
Tant il fait doux par ce soir monotone  
Où se dorlote un paysage lent.

*And the air has the air of an autumn sigh,  
So mild is this dulled evening  
On which a languid landscape takes its ease.*

Text: Paul Verlaine

#### 21 L'échelonnement des haies

L'échelonnement des haies  
Moutonne à l'infini, mer  
Claire dans le brouillard clair  
Qui sent bon les jeunes baies.

#### *The hedgerows stretch out*

*The hedgerows stretch out  
Frothing into the distance, sea-like  
And clear in the clear mist,  
Fragrant with young berries.*

Des arbres et des moulins  
Sont légers sur le vert tendre  
Où vient s'ébattre et s'étendre  
L'agilité des poulains.

*Trees and windmills  
Insubstantial on the delicate green,  
Where agile colts  
Come to stretch and frolic.*

Dans ce vague d'un Dimanche  
Voici se jouer aussi  
De grandes brebis aussi  
Douce que leur laine blanche.

*On this lazy Sunday,  
Some large ewes,  
Soft as their white wool,  
Join them in their play.*

Tout à l'heure déferlait  
L'onde, roulée en volutes,  
De cloches comme des flûtes  
Dans le ciel comme du lait.

*Just now there broke  
A wave, curled in spirals,  
Of flute-like bells  
In the milk-white sky.*

Text: Paul Verlaine

## Les sérénades

### 22 Sérénade printanière

Hier comme aujourd'hui, ce soir comme demain,  
Je t'adore !  
Quand je vois ton regard, quand je frôle ta main,  
C'est l'aurore !

Qui donc nous avait dit que le monde est méchant,  
Que l'on souffre,  
Que la vie est un pont qui tremble, se penchant  
Sur un gouffre ?

Où donc sont les ennuis, les erreurs, les dangers,  
Les désastres ?  
Avril gazouille et rit dans les tendres vergers  
Fleuris d'astres !

Le sombre hiver a fui ; le radieux printemps  
Nous délivre.  
Viens mêler à mes pleurs tes baisers haletants ;  
Je veux vivre !

Nos cœurs sont confondus, nos âmes pour toujours  
Sont unies ;  
Nous avons épelé le livre des amours  
Infinies !

## Serenades

### Spring serenade

*Today as yesterday, this evening as tomorrow,  
I adore you !  
When I see your gaze, when I brush your hand,  
Dawn breaks !*

*Who told us that the world is wicked,  
That we suffer,  
That life is a swaying bridge that leans  
Over an abyss ?*

*Where is the tedium, the errors, the dangers,  
The disasters ?  
April warbles and laughs in the tender orchards  
Strewn with stars !*

*Sombre winter has fled ; radiant spring  
Rescues us.  
Come and mingle your gasping kisses with my  
tears ;  
I want to live !*

*Our hearts are joined, our souls forever  
United ;  
We have written the book of infinite  
Loves !*

### 23 Sérénade d'été

Ô mon cœur, mon cœur, ô ma vie,  
Ô mon amour inassouvie,  
Ferme tes yeux !  
Ô mon cœur, mon cœur, ô mon âme,  
Ferme tes yeux si pleins de flamme,  
Si radieux !

Car c'est l'heure de la faiblesse,  
Où l'amour alanguie ne blesse  
Qu'avec des fleurs,  
Des étreintes lasses et lentes  
Et des extases nonchalantes,  
Ivres de pleurs !

Enlacés, les paupières closes,  
Endormons-nous parmi les roses  
Aux chauds parfums ;  
Endormons-nous dans notre joie  
Sous la tiède brise qui ploie  
Les roseaux bruns !

Voici l'enchantement de l'ombre,  
Voici la nuit ardente et sombre,  
Voici les cieux !  
Ô mon cœur, mon cœur, ô ma vie,  
Ô mon amour inassouvie,  
Ferme tes yeux !

## Summer serenade

*O my heart, my heart, O my life,  
O my unappeased love,  
Close your eyes !  
O my heart, my heart, O my soul,  
Close your eyes so filled with passion,  
So radiant !*

*For this is the hour of weakness,  
When languid love wounds  
Only with flowers,  
With slow and weary embraces  
And listless tear-drunk  
Raptures !*

*Intertwined, with closed eyes,  
Let us fall asleep among the roses  
With their warm scents ;  
Let us fall asleep in our joy  
Beneath the balmy breeze which bends  
These brown reeds !*

*Behold the magical shade,  
Behold the dark and fervent night,  
Behold the heavens !  
O my heart, my heart, O my life,  
O my unappeased love,  
Close your eyes !*

24 Sérénade d'automne

Mon amour, ô mon trésor,  
Donne-moi ta lèvre encor ;  
J'y veux boire un vin sans mélange !  
Donne ta lèvre encor ! toujours !  
Car c'est le temps de vendange  
Des amours !

Coule, coule sans nous apaiser,  
Coule sans nous apaiser,  
Ô vin cruel du baiser !  
Nous qu'un désir mortel embrase,  
Nous à qui le bonheur sourit,  
Nous ne connaissons pas l'extase  
Qui guérit !

Mon amour, ô mon trésor,  
Donne-moi ta lèvre encor !  
Grisons-nous aux coupes du rêve !  
Non ! rien, rien ne peut apaiser  
L'angoisse ineffable et sans trêve  
Du baiser !

*Autumn serenade*

*My love, O my treasure,  
Give me your lips once more ;  
I wish to drink from them unalloyed wine !  
Give me your lips once more ! for evermore !  
For the time has come to harvest  
Love !*

*Flow, flow without assuaging us,  
Flow without assuaging us,  
O cruel and vinous kiss !  
We, aflame with mortal desire,  
We, on whom happiness smiles,  
We never experience the rapture  
That heals !*

*My love, O my treasure,  
Give me your lips once more !  
Let us intoxicate ourselves with dreams !  
No ! Nothing, nothing can assuage  
The ineffable and relentless anguish  
Of a kiss !*

25 Sérénade d'hiver

Viens, ô toi qu'on a fait souffrir,  
Ô ma chère âme !  
Viens ! je sais un divin dictame  
Qui peut te guérir.  
Viens, je veux rendre à ta pensée  
Les printemps verts.  
Au dehors les cœurs sont pervers,  
La bise est glacée ;  
Au dehors sont les froids dédains,  
La froide neige,  
Plus de nid fleuri qui protège  
L'oiseau des Édens !  
Mais c'est dans mes bras qu'il t'envoie,  
L'hiver cruel !

Retrouves-y l'azur du ciel  
Et les chants de joie !  
Dors, dors en paix jusqu'au nouveau jour.  
Je t'aime, je t'aime, je t'aime !  
Oublie !  
Tout est vain, tout n'est que folie,  
Hormis notre amour !

*Winter serenade*

*Come, O you who have been made to suffer,  
O my dear soul !  
Come ! I know of a divine balm  
That can heal you.  
Come, I wish to bestow on your thoughts  
Verdant springs.  
Outside, hearts are evil,  
The North wind blows icy cold ;  
Outside, there is cold disdain,  
Cold snow,  
No more flowery nest to protect  
The bird of Paradise !  
But it is to my embrace that cruel winter  
Sends you !*

*Find in my embrace again the blue sky  
And the songs of joy !  
Sleep, sleep in peace till the new day dawns.  
I love you, I love you, I love you !  
Forget !  
All is vain, all is but folly –  
Except love !*

## 26 Sérénade de toujours

Ouvre tes yeux, voici l'aube nouvelle ;  
Ouvre ton cœur, voici le renouveau !  
Ouvre tes bras, ouvre tes bras, voici l'amour fidèle  
Qui te suivra jusqu'au tombeau !

Viens ! pardons-nous sous la jeune feuillée  
Où la colombe, au fond du nid froissé  
Roucoulera, par nos chants réveillée :  
« Ils s'aiment plus encor que l'an passé ! »

Oh ! viens mêler en l'extase divine  
Les souvenirs aux espoirs radieux !  
Oui, mon cœur pour toujours souffre dans ta poitrine,  
Et ton âme à jamais respire dans mes yeux !

## *Eternal serenade*

*Open your eyes to the new dawn ;  
Open your heart to renewal !  
Open your arms, open your arms to faithful love  
That will follow you to the tomb !*

*Come ! Let us lose ourselves beneath the fresh boughs  
Where the dove, deep in its ruffled nest,  
Will coo, awoken by our songs :  
'They love each other more than last year !'*

*Ah, come and blend with the divine rapture  
The memories of radiant hopes !  
Yes, my heart suffers forever in your breast,  
And your soul glows forever in my eyes !*

Texts : Augusta Holmès (1847-1903)

Translations by Richard Stokes © from *A French Song Companion*  
(Johnson/Stokes, OUP, 2000)

## MARY BEVAN

Mary Bevan's engagements for the 2022/23 season include a return to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden as Morgana in a new Richard Jones production of *Alcina* that was conducted by Christian Curnyn, *LIGHT: Bach Dances* with the Hofesh Shechter Company at the Philharmonie de Paris, *Eurydice Orfeo and Eurydice* at Teatro La Fenice, and debut performances with the Bayerische Staatsoper in the title role of *La Calisto* as well as at Zurich Opera as *Thalie* and *La Folie in Platée* by Rameau.

Previously for the Royal Opera House, she created the role of Lila in David Bruce's *The Firework-Maker's Daughter*, performed the title role in Rossi's *Orpheus* at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse and the title role in Turnage's *Coraline* at the Barbican, and sang Barbarina *Le nozze di Figaro* on the main stage. Recent opera highlights also include Rose Maurrant in Weill's *Street Scene* for Opera de Monte Carlo, *Eurydice* in Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld* and *Zerlina Don Giovanni* for English National Opera, *Bellezza in Il Trionfo del tempo e del desinganno*, and *Merab Saul* for the Adelaide Festival.



Concert appearances have included Haydn *The Creation*, Handel *The Messiah*, Sally Beamish *The Judas Passion* and B Minor Mass (2022 BBC Proms) with the Academy of Ancient Music, Roxanna Panufnik's *Faithful Journey* (world premiere) with CBSO, Bach *Christmas Oratorio* on tour in Australia with the Choir of London and Australian Chamber Orchestra, Belinda and First Witch *Dido & Aeneas* with the Early Opera Company at St John's Smith Square, a European tour of Handel *Messiah* with the Kammerorchester Basel, Handel *Theresienmesse* with the Handel and Haydn Society, Bach *Mass in B minor* with the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, *Christmas Oratorio* at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and Arthur Bliss *Rout* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra; also recitals at Wigmore Hall, and the Lammermuir, Osafestivalen and Oxford Lieder festivals. Her many appearances with The English Concert include a tour of Asia (Harry Bicket) and her Carnegie Hall debut as Dalinda *Ariodante*.

Mary Bevan is winner of the Royal Philharmonic Society's Young Artist award and UK Critics' Circle Award for Exceptional Young Talent in music, and was awarded an MBE in the 2019 Queen's birthday honors list.

## 12 ENSEMBLE

### Violin 1

Eloisa-Fleur Thom  
Roberto Ruisi  
Venetia Jollands  
Zahra Benyounes

### Violin 2

Alessandro Ruisi  
Oliver Cave  
Ellie Consta  
Juliette Roos

### Viola

Luba Tunnicliffe  
Matthew Kettle  
Hannah Shaw

### Cello

Max Ruisi  
Sergio Serra  
Peteris Sokolovskis

### Bass

Toby Hughes  
Marco Behtash

### Flute

Henry Roberts  
Rebecca Griffiths

### Clarinet

Max Welford  
Harry Cameron-Penny

### Bassoon

Susana Dias

### Horn

Richard Bayliss  
Kate Hainsworth  
Phillippa Koushk-Jalali  
Diana Sheach

### Harp

Oliver Wass

12 Ensemble is a pioneering un-conducted string orchestra. Evolving from a visionary group of like-minded musicians into one of Europe's leading string orchestras, the ensemble has developed a critically-acclaimed reputation as an exhilarating,



© Raphael Neal

trend-setting collective, reaching audiences worldwide with powerful musical experiences. Formed in 2012 by Artistic Directors Eloisa-Fleur Thom & Max Ruisi, the 12 Ensemble's unique approach to performing & presenting diverse



music of the highest quality sets them apart as an influential ensemble relevant in today's shifting musical landscape. The group has become synonymous with innovative programming, combining core-classical repertoire with exceptional new commissions and creative collaborations from a broad range of artistic spheres.

Always playing without conductor, the core formation brings together twelve of London's leading chamber musicians. Without a conductor, every member of the group develops an intense engagement with the music they play, combining the energy, commitment and spontaneous creativity of a small ensemble with the breathtaking sound and power afforded by a larger string orchestra.

The 12 Ensemble are in demand internationally, regularly performing at leading venues including the Barbican, Royal Albert Hall, Wigmore Hall, Berlin Philharmonie and Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg. The group have also made appearances at leading festivals worldwide, including the BBC Proms (2019-2022) plus performances in the US, South Korea and Iceland, as well as multiple broadcasts on BBC TV, Radio 3 and Radio 6 Music.

With a strong commitment to new music, the group regularly commission and collaborate with leading composers. 2022 saw the 12 Ensemble in residence at the Royal Opera House for Oliver Leith's new opera *Last Dayshi*, based on the film by Gus Van Sant depicting the final days of Nirvana's Kurt Cobain. The ensemble has also collaborated closely with Radiohead guitarist and composer Jonny Greenwood (recording his soundtracks to the Oscar-nominated films *Spencer* and *The Power of the Dog*), and have a long-established relationship with composer Max Richter, with whom they gave two sell-out concerts at the Barbican in October 2022.

The 12 Ensemble have released two highly critically-acclaimed albums, *Resurrection* and *Death and the Maiden* (★★★★★ BBC Music Magazine). With their own arrangement of Schubert's iconic string quartet at its heart, *Death and the Maiden* is a highly-charged journey through an evolving musical landscape, featuring accompanying works by Tavener and Icelandic band Sigur Rós plus an IVORS award-winning commission from the ROH Composer-in-Residence Oliver Leith.

## RUISI QUARTET

**Alessandro Ruisi & Oloiver Cave** *violins*  
**Luba Tunnicliffe** *viola*  
**Max Ruisi** *cello*

Celebrated for their deeply engaging performances of early repertoire alongside championing progressive new music, the Ruisi Quartet has established a reputation as a charismatic and expressive young ensemble. Dedicating equal commitment to both the established classical cannon and progressive new works, the group present insightful and unique programme curation alongside the fine, expressive playing the quartet have become synonymous with.

Known for their commitment and conviction performing a broad range of music, the quartet have garnered high-praise for their historically-informed performances of Purcell and Haydn, as well as championing new commissions from leading composers. Based in London, the group regularly perform throughout Europe at leading concert halls, recently giving the world premiere of a new work by Thomas Adès at Wigmore Hall (Növények, Nov 2022).



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Founded in 2013 by British/Sicilian brothers Alessandro and Max, the quartet were winners of the Kirkman Concert Society Artists award and the Royal Philharmonic Society award for Young String Players, as well as being recipients of a Career Development Award from the Banff International String Quartet Competition 2019.

Their debut album *Big House*, released in early 2023 on the Pentatone record label, features two early Haydn quartets, viol music by Matthew Locke and two premiere recordings of works by Oliver Leith commissioned by the quartet.

## JOSEPH MIDDLETON

Pianist Joseph Middleton specializes in the art of song accompaniment and chamber music and has been highly acclaimed in this field. Described in Opera Magazine as 'the rightful heir to legendary accompanist Gerald Moore', by BBC Music Magazine as 'one of the brightest stars in the world of song and Lieder', he has also been labeled 'the cream of the new generation' by The Times. He is Director of Leeds Lieder, Musician in Residence and a Bye Fellow at Pembroke College, Cambridge and a Fellow of his alma mater, the Royal Academy of Music, where he is also a Professor. He was the first accompanist to win the Royal Philharmonic Society's Young Artist Award.

Joseph is a frequent guest at major music centres including London's Wigmore Hall (where he has been a featured artist), Royal Opera House and Royal Festival Hall, New York's Alice Tully Hall and Park Avenue Armory, Het Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Konzerthaus and Musikverein Vienna, Zürich Tonhalle, Hamburg Elbphilharmonie, Berlin BoulezSaal, Kölner Philharmonie, Strasbourg, Frankfurt, Lille and Gothenburg Opera Houses, Baden-Baden, Philharmonie Luxembourg, Musée d'Orsay Paris, Oji Hall Tokyo and Festivals in Aix-en-Provence, Aldeburgh, Barcelona,



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Schloss Elmau, Edinburgh, Munich, Ravinia, San Francisco, Schubertiade Hohenems and Schwarzenberg, deSingel, Soeul, Stuttgart, Toronto and Vancouver. He made his BBC Proms debut in 2016 alongside Iestyn Davies and Carolyn Sampson and returned in 2018 alongside Dame Sarah Connolly where they premiered recently discovered songs by Benjamin Britten.

Joseph enjoys recitals with internationally established singers including Sir Thomas Allen, Louise Alder, Mary Bevan, Ian Bostridge, Allan

Clayton, Dame Sarah Connolly, Marianne Crebassa, Iestyn Davies, Fatma Said, Samuel Hasselhorn, Christiane Karg, Katarina Karnéus, Angelika Kirchschrager, Dame Felicity Lott, Christopher Maltman, John Mark Ainsley, Ann Murray DBE, James Newby, Mark Padmore, Mauro Peter, Miah Persson, Sophie Rennert, Ashley Riches, Dorothea Röschmann, Kate Royal, Carolyn Sampson, Nicky Spence and Roderick Williams.

He has a special relationship with BBC Radio 3, frequently curating his own series and performing alongside the BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists. His critically acclaimed and fast-growing discography has seen him awarded a Diapason D'or, Edison Award and Priz Caecilia as well as receiving numerous nominations for Gramophone, BBC Music Magazines and International Classical Music Awards. His interest in the furthering of the song repertoire has led Gramophone Magazine to describe him as 'the absolute king of programming'.

[www.josephmiddleton.com](http://www.josephmiddleton.com)

## THANKS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Prof. Helen Abbott for all her advice and work behind the scenes on this album. Also to Roy Howat, Robin Holloway, and of course Steve Long and Mike Hatch, for everything.  
*Mary Bevan*

Recorded in All Hallows' Church, Gospel Oak, London, UK from 16th to 19th March 2022.

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Cover Image – © Victoria Cadiscsh

Design and Artwork – Woven Design [www.wovendesign.co.uk](http://www.wovendesign.co.uk)

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