



EP



ORCHID CLASSICS

# Persian Love Songs

**HAMISH McLAREN**  
*countertenor*

**Matthew Jorysz**  
*piano*

## **Anton Rubinstein (1829-1894)**

### Persian Songs Op.34 (1851)

1	Op.34/1	4.47
2	Op.34/2	2.33
3	Op.34/4	2.07
4	Op.34/8	2.58
5	Op.34/10	3.04

**Total time** **15.30**

Hamish McLaren, *countertenor*

Matthew Jorysz, *piano*

Anton Rubinstein wrote his Persian Songs in 1854, while on tour in Germany. The source was a recent collection of poems by Friedrich von Bodenstedt, who advertised them as translations from the work of the Azeri poet Mirza Shafi Vazeh (Mirzə Şəfi Vazeh, 1805-52), with whom he had studied during his travels to the Caucasus. Tchaikovsky was later commissioned to produce a singable Russian translation of the German texts, but he disputed the provenance, maintaining that Bodenstedt, whom he had met, did not know Persian and simply invented the poems (Bodenstedt, as it happens, had by then decided to claim the authorship of these bestselling poems for himself). The 20th century saw a revival of Vazeh's work, and an examination of the original texts showed that Bodenstedt had indeed translated them, although his versions were much more effusive than Vazeh's.

Rubinstein, in these twelve songs, pioneered the use of “oriental” colouring in Russian music. It is not known how he arrived at these idioms, since he had not made any ethnomusicological study in the region. Some have even suggested that his childhood absorption of Jewish cantorial chant might have provided much of his inspiration. But whatever the source, Rubinstein handles the style with discretion and taste. The distinctive “oriental” features can be heard in the

unusual phrase lengths, certain distinctive harmonic progressions, and arabesque melodic patterns. The original score was for voice with orchestra, including unusual instruments, such as the guitar and cimbalom. Some of the characteristics of the scoring can still be divined from the piano version.

Contemporary audiences thought more highly of Rubinstein's Persian Songs than his operas and symphonies. Friedrich Niecks, writing for the *Musical Times* in 1885, thought they displayed "a character of their own" of "great piquancy". Later, Charles Bennett, in his obituary for Rubinstein, singled out these songs as miniatures whose "art is perfect, the charm complete". The little quirks of the Persian Songs provided the seed for the Russian Orientalist style of Borodin's *Polovtsian Dances* and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sheherazade* and *Golden Cockerel*, among many other works. This, unfortunately, was never properly acknowledged by The Five, since they habitually disparaged Rubinstein for reasons of institutional politics.

In this selection of five songs, we encounter stories of love, enmeshed in rich metaphor. Rubinstein endows them with nostalgia and melancholy, but preserves their essential simplicity.



## Hamish McLaren

Hamish studied history at St. John's College, Cambridge, where he also sang as a choral scholar and as a lay clerk. From 2016 to 2019 he studied vocal performance at the Royal Academy of Music in London. Hamish developed a passion for Russian culture as a teenager and studied Russian while at school. One of his first opera roles, despite its absurd incongruity, was Vava; a petulant, social climbing mistress in Shostakovich's ludicrous operetta *Cheryomushki Moskva*. While studying at the Royal Academy Hamish was fortunate enough to be taught Russian song by Ludmilla Andrew, and it was in the library of the Royal Academy of Music (as well as in the chaotic sheet music shops of Moscow and St Petersburg) that Hamish first stumbled across the songs of Rubinstein alongside those of Tanayev, Myaskovsky, Firsova and many others. The exuberant, albeit somewhat naïve and self-conscious orientalism of these selected Persian Songs renders them exceptionally unusual, hence their standalone release here separate from Hamish's debut album *Sphinx* which explores songs from Borodin to Shostakovich, and onto Boris Tchaikovsky.



## **Matthew Jorysz**

Matthew Jorysz studied at Clare College, Cambridge, where he read music and held the Organ Scholarship. After graduating, he moved to London where he has held the post of Assistant Organist at Westminster Abbey since 2016. His work as an organist has seen tours of Europe and the USA, broadcasts on BBC Radio and television and several recordings, most notably of Duruflé's Requiem with Neal Davies and Jennifer Johnston.

Alongside this, he works as a pianist and chamber musician, chiefly collaborating with singers. Recent projects have included performances of Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin*, Messiaen's *Poèmes pour Mi*, Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, Britten's *Winter Words*, and a series of Britten's *Canticles* performed at Westminster Abbey.

## 1 Op.34/1

Зулейка

Ах, сравню ль тебя с небесным  
ангелом  
или с розой, царицей цветов полей,  
  
или даже с светом ярким  
солнечным,  
о нет, моя дева Зылейка, нет!

Страсти бурной нет в груди у ангела,

а за розой шипы укрываются,  
солнца яркого не видать в ночи,

с тобою, Зулейка, сравниться ль им!

Лучше, краше ты небесных ангелов,

за тобою шипы не скрываются,

ярче солнца светится любовь твоя,  
Зулейка моя несравненная!

Zuleika

Akh, sravnyu l' tyebya s nyebyesnÿm  
angyelam  
ili s rozai, tsaritsei tsvyetov  
palyei,  
ili dazhe s svyetam jarkim  
sollnyechnÿm,  
o nyet, maya dyeva Zyleika, nyet!

Strasti burnai nyet v grudi u angyella,

a za rozai shipÿ ukrÿvayutsa,  
sollntsa yarkava nye vidat' v  
nachi,

s taboyu, Zulyeika, sravnit'sa  
l' im!

Lluchshe, krashe tÿ nyebyesnÿkh  
angyelav,

za taboyu shipÿ nye skrÿvayutsa,

yarche sollntsa svyetitsa lyubov' tvaya,  
Zuleika maya nyesravnyennaya!

Ah, can I compare you to the angels  
in heaven  
or to the rose, queen of the flowers in  
the fields,  
or even to the bright sunlight.

Oh no, my girl Zyleika, no!

There's no tumultuous passion in the  
angel's chest,  
and thorns are hidden behind the rose,  
and the bright sun at night can't be  
seen,  
Zuleika, to compare with you!

You're better, more beautiful than the  
angels in heaven,  
there are no thorns hidden behind  
you,

your love shines brighter than the sun  
my incomparable Zuleika!

## 2 Op.34/2

Как солнце небесам, ты свет  
и жизнь вливаешь в сердце мне;  
там без тебя холод и смерть  
и, как в сырой могиле, тьма,

Так на земле божественную  
красу скрывает мрак ночной.  
Но лишь опять солнце взойдёт,  
снова красуется земля.

Kak sollntse nyebyesam, tÿ svyet  
i zhÿzn' vlivayesh' v syerditse mnye;  
tam byez tyebya kholad i smyert'  
i, kak v sÿroi magilye, t'ma,

Tak na zemlye bazhestvyennuyu  
krasu skrÿvayet mrak nachnoi.  
No lish' apyat' sollntse vzaidyot,  
snova krasuyetsa zyemlya.

Like the sun in the sky, you are the light  
and you pour life into my heart;  
without you, it is cold and dead there  
and, like a damp grave, dark.

Thus on earth divine beauty  
hides the darkness of the night.  
But only when the sun rises again will  
the earth go on display once more.

## 3 Op.34/4

Мне розан жалобно сказал:  
“Не долго я душист бываю:  
весна пройдёт, и умираю.”  
Я в утешенье отвечал,  
что жизнь его оберегаю  
и в песне к жизни возвращаю.

Mnye rozan zhallabna skazall:  
“Nye dollga ya dushÿst bÿvayu:  
vyesna praidyot, i umirayu.”  
Ya v utyeshen'ye atvyechall,  
shto zhÿzn' yevo abyeryegayu  
i v pyesnye k zhÿzni vazvrashhayu.

The rose plaintively said to me:  
“Not for long am I a scent:  
spring will pass, and I will die.”  
I answered comfortingly  
that I would protect its life  
and restore its life in a song.

#### 4 Op.34/8

Нераспустившийся цветочек,  
склонись в объятия мои!  
Ты так давно мне полюбился.

И выращу тебя,  
чтоб ты, расцветая,  
в лилею обратился.

Nyeraspustifshÿsya tsvyetochoyek,  
skllanis' v abyatiya moi!  
Tÿ tak davno mnye palyubillsa.

I vÿrashchu tyebya,  
shtob tÿ, rastsvyetaya,  
v lilyeyu abratillsa.

Little flower bud,  
yield to my embrace!  
You've been in love with me for so long.

And I'll tend to you,  
so that when you blossom,  
you become a lily.

#### 5 Op.34/10

Над морем солнце блещет  
и, солнце отражая,  
катятся тихо волны,  
одна с другой играя.  
Так в море моих песен  
твоя краса сияет,  
тобой полны, те песни,  
тебя лишь отражают.

Nad moryem solntse blyeshchyet  
i, solntse atrazhaya,  
kатыatsa tikha volnÿ,  
adna s drugoi igraяa.  
Tak v morye maikh pyesyen  
tvaya краса siyayet,  
taboi polnÿ, tye pyesni,  
tyebya lish' atrazhayut.

Over the sea the sun shines  
and, reflecting the sun,  
the waves gently roll,  
playing with each another.  
Thus, in the sea of my songs,  
your beauty shines;  
full of you, those songs  
reflect you alone.

Venue: St. Paul's Church, Knightsbridge, London

Recording dates: 27/08/2019, 07/09/2019, 16-19/09/2019

Engineer: Andrew Fell

Producer: Richard Shaw

Cover image: The Vakil Mosque, decorative tilework (photo)

Gerard Degeorge licensed from Bridgeman Images

Hamish McLaren photo: Benjamin Durrant

