

RUBICON



BRITTEN
PROKOFIEV
SHOSTAKOVICH

THE POET'S ECHO

GEMMA SUMMERFIELD · GARETH BRYNMOR JOHN
ABI HYDE-SMITH · JOCELYN FREEMAN

SERGEI PROKOFIEV 1891–1953

Three Romances on words by Alexander Pushkin op.73

- | | | |
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DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH 1906–1975

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BENJAMIN BRITTEN 1913–1976

The Poet's Echo Op.76 arr. Jocelyn Freeman & Abi Hyde-Smith

Text: Alexander Pushkin

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65.33

GEMMA SUMMERFIELD *soprano*

GARETH BRYNMOR JOHN *baritone*

ABI HYDE-SMITH *cello* · **JOCELYN FREEMAN** *piano*

THE POET'S ECHO

AN INTRODUCTION BY JOCELYN FREEMAN

This project was initially inspired by the prophetic nature of Shostakovich's *Four Pushkin Romances*, which Gareth Brynmor John introduced me to in 2019. Not only was I struck by the profundity of how the poetry echoed messages of censorship and exile forward through time; but also by similarities to the cello sonata from two years prior, particularly the composer's approach to rhythmic features, texture and tessitura. These two works are partnered on our album by Prokofiev's *Three Pushkin Romances* which also lyrically reference Pushkin's exile; and Britten's *The Poet's Echo*, premiered by soprano Galina Vishnevskaya and cellist and pianist Mstislav Rostropovich, a dedicatee of several cello works by the aforementioned composers.

This final work was written during a composers' retreat to Armenia in the company of Vishnevskaya and Rostropovich, thus devising a cello part for Britten's only Pushkin cycle felt like an opportunity too good to pass by. I am hugely indebted to Abi Hyde-Smith for her collaborative approach to this process and for her patience exploring a broad variety of techniques and soundworlds which resulted in the arrangement recorded on this album; and to Gemma Summerfield for her creative input to the final drafts during initial rehearsals. We would also like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Britten Pears Arts, Faber Music and Colin Matthews for their support and permission to record this new version of *The Poet's Echo*.

The English translations of the Prokofiev and Shostakovich sung texts are by Professor Philip Bullock with deepest gratitude. The Britten translation is by Peter Pears, as published by Faber Music.

Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837) effectively founded Russian literature, elevating his mother tongue to match the wit and penetrating observation of the French, Spanish and English writers he admired. He was revered even through the Soviet years, the 100th anniversary of his death being grandly commemorated in 1937 during Stalin's reign. It was for that occasion that the two sets of Pushkin songs by Russia's leading composers of that time – Prokofiev and Shostakovich – were originally composed.

Of Prokofiev's three songs, only the last sets an entire poem. The first, 'Pine Trees', sets just the opening nine lines of an originally untitled poem (the title was added after Pushkin's death by the editor and poet Valery Bryusov), in which Pushkin recalls revisiting a lakeside location where he spent two years of his exile from St Petersburg and Moscow (having been banned from those cities in May 1820 by Alexander I for his 'seditious' verses). In lines not set by Prokofiev – but surely intended to be recalled by those who know the poem – the poet describes how an old tree he last saw standing in isolation now has growing by its 'obsolete roots' a fresh young grove, which Pushkin optimistically assumes will outlive his own life. In the actual lines set by Prokofiev, the poet reflects that both himself and his own life have changed a great deal in the past decade, yet it seems 'but yesterday that I last walked in these groves'. Was Prokofiev thinking of his own experience, having lived outside Russia for 18 or so years? The music itself is ambiguous, its chilly opening dissonances looking forward to the enigmatic style of his Eighth Piano Sonata (of 1944), which similarly looks back to an implicitly distant past (including music he originally composed for a dramatised version of *Eugene Onegin* – one of several Pushkin projects intended for the anniversary which were aborted due to repressive Stalinist cultural policies).

His second song, by contrast, is slyly humorous in style as befits the saucy character of Pushkin's poem as originally written: a young maid climbs a tree to gather some cherries, but, seeing a handsome shepherd approaching across the field, she mis-steps and slips, a branch catching her dress to – from the shepherd's point of view – revealing effect. The risqué stanzas were omitted when the poem was first published in 1857. Prokofiev's song initially follows that published text, which ends with the maid's mis-step (just before the 'reveal'); but then – as if teasing those 'on the know' – it continues with a couple of stanzas from slightly later in the poem which has the shepherd helping the young girl down from the tree and passionately embracing her (discreetly cutting off before Pushkin's description of what follows!). The final song, 'Into Your Room', again concerns two lovers, yet is of a more tender and deeper emotion as it concerns their final parting (Pushkin probably recalling one of his several romantic dalliances while in exile).

Shostakovich likewise had a tendency of getting emotionally entangled in various extra-marital relationships. After one such episode, his wife Nina insisted on a temporary separation. It was during that time that in mid-August 1934 Shostakovich started writing his Cello Sonata. This curiously looks forward to the neo-classical style he was to cultivate in his Fifth Symphony of 1937. In this respect, it appears very much a forerunner of Shostakovich's very public change of style after the notorious editorial 'Muddle Instead of Music' was published early in 1936 in the state-run newspaper *Pravda*. One can hear parallels with the later symphony in the sonata's four-movement structure and in particular the character of its central two themes.

There's a strong connection with the Fifth, too, in the first of Shostakovich's *Four Pushkin Romances*. In 'Rebirth', Shostakovich clearly saw parallels between Pushkin's words – 'With his lethargic brush, an artist-barbarian / Scrawls over a painting made by a genius', – and his own recent lambasting by the Stalinist apparatchiks following the *Pravda* editorial. Not only is Shostakovich's setting of that opening phrase alluded to by the opening of the Fifth's finale, but the piano part's motif at the song's final stanza is quoted directly in that symphonic movement before its final peroration. 'A Youth and a Maiden' tells of a young maiden who reproaches her lover, yet forgives him as he falls asleep on her shoulder (Shostakovich, notably, became reconciled with Nina, their marriage further cemented by the arrival of their first child, Galina, in 1936). 'Foreboding' may appear to be pertinent to Shostakovich's life again: the insouciant bravado of Shostakovich's setting characterises the brave and reassuring words addressed to a beloved whose memory will be a substitute for 'strength, pride, hope and valour'. In contrast, the final song, 'Stanzas', has a stark and baleful piano introduction, reflecting its ultimate concern – the narrator's own death. Some of its imagery – an old oak, and a 'babe-in-arms' for whom the poet will make way by his own death – recalls similar themes in 'Pine Trees'.

In later life, Shostakovich became friends with the English composer Benjamin Britten, who also befriended the cellist and pianist Mstislav Rostropovich (a sometime pupil of Shostakovich's) and his wife, the soprano Galina Vishnevskaya. It was specifically for the latter two artists that Britten in 1965 composed *The Poet's Echo*. Though not a song cycle as such, it follows a theme, as Britten explained: 'It is really a dialogue between the poet and the unresponsiveness of the natural world he describes.' Given Rostropovich's dual abilities as pianist and cellist, it seems appropriate that we hear the piano part in these songs arranged for these two instruments, the cello effectively a second 'singing' line that duets with the voice part originally written for his wife, Vishnevskaya.

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Gareth Brynmor John, Abi Hyde-Smith,
Gemma Summerfield and Jocelyn Freeman



THE POET'S ECHO

EINE EINFÜHRUNG VON JOCELYN FREEMAN

Die Inspiration zu diesem Projekt war der prophetische Charakter von Schostakowitschs *Vier Romanzen nach Texten von Alexander Puschkin*, die ich 2019 durch den Bariton Gareth Brynmor John kennenlernte. Nicht nur war ich fasziniert von der geballten Wirkung der Botschaften von Zensur und Exil in den Gedichttexten, die bis heute nachhallt; auch die Ähnlichkeiten mit der zwei Jahre zuvor entstandenen Cellosonate, insbesondere die Gestaltung von Rhythmus, Textur und Tessitur, haben mich beeindruckt. Diese beiden Werke haben wir auf unserem Album mit Prokofjews *Drei Romanzen nach Texten von Puschkin*, ebenfalls eine lyrische Auseinandersetzung mit der Exilerfahrung des Dichters, sowie Britten's Werk *The Poet's Echo* kombiniert, das von der Sopranistin Galina Vischnewskaja und dem Cellisten und Pianisten Mstislaw Rostropowitsch uraufgeführt wurde, dem alle drei hier genannten Komponisten einige Cellowerke gewidmet haben.

Dieses abschließende Werk schrieb Britten während eines Komponistentreffens in Armenien, an dem auch Vischnewskaja und Rostropowitsch teilnahmen – und diese ideale Gelegenheit, einen Cellopart für Britten's einzigen Puschkin-Zyklus auszu-arbeiten, ließen sie sich nicht entgehen. Mein außerordentlicher Dank gilt der Cellistin Abi Hyde-Smith für ihre tatkräftige Mitwirkung an diesem Prozess, ihre Geduld bei der Erprobung verschiedenster Techniken und Klangwelten, die das Arrangement auf diesem Album geprägt haben, sowie der Sopranistin Gemma Summerfield, die in Probedurchläufen kreative Impulse für die fertigen Versionen gesetzt hat. Ebenfalls von Herzen danken möchten wir Britten Pears Arts, Faber Music und Colin Matthews für ihre Unterstützung und ihre Genehmigung zur Aufnahme dieser neuen Fassung von *The Poet's Echo*.

Aufrichtiger Dank gebührt außerdem: dem Oleg-Prokofjew-Trust, der Nimbus Foundation, dem Carne Trust und dem Viola-Tunnard-Fonds für die großzügige finanzielle Förderung dieses Albums.

Alexander Puschkin (1799–1837), dessen Texte von demselben Esprit und der scharfen Beobachtungsgabe seiner französischen, spanischen und englischen literarischen Vorbilder geprägt waren und das Niveau seiner Muttersprache steigerten, kann als Begründer der russischen Literatur gelten. Selbst zu Zeiten der Sowjetunion wurde er verehrt, und so gab es unter Stalins Herrschaft anlässlich seines 100. Todestages im Jahr 1937 eine große Feier. Zu diesem Anlass vertonten die beiden einflussreichsten Komponisten jener Zeit – Prokofjew und Schostakowitsch – jeweils einige seiner Gedichte.

Prokofjew nahm sich drei Gedichte vor, wobei er nur das letzte vollständig vertonte. Von dem ursprünglich unbetitelten Gedicht „Kiefern“ (diesen Titel ergänzte der Verleger und Dichter Waleri Brjussow posthum), in dem Puschkin einen Besuch in dem Ort am See beschreibt, wo er nach seiner Verbannung aus St. Petersburg und Moskau (diese hatte Alexander I. im Mai 1820 nach der Veröffentlichung von Puschkins „aufwieglerischen“ Versen angeordnet) zwei Jahre im Exil gelebt hatte, sind nur die ersten neun Zeilen vertont. Der Rest des Gedichts, den Prokofjew unvertont ließ – wobei er sicherlich darauf vertraute, dass Kenner des Werks sich daran erinnern würden – beschreibt der Dichter seine Beobachtung, wie aus den „althehrwürdigen Wurzeln“ eines alten Baums, den er zuletzt einsam hatte stehen sehen, ein frischer junger Hain erwächst, dem Puschkin zuversichtlich prophezeit, dass er ihn einst überleben werde. In den Zeilen, die Prokofjew tatsächlich vertonte, sinniert der Dichter über die großen Veränderungen in seinem Leben im vorangegangenen Jahrzehnt, während es doch scheint, als sei er „erst gestern noch durch diesen Hain gewandelt“. Sah Prokofjew sich hier etwa an seine eigene, über 18 Jahre währende Zeit außerhalb Russlands erinnert? Die Musik selbst ist mehrdeutig, nimmt durch ihre schaurigen Dissonanzen zu Beginn bereits den rätselhaften Stil der Achten Klaviersonate (von 1944) vorweg, die ihrerseits auf eine ange-deutete ferne Vergangenheit zurückblickt (sie beinhaltet Musik, die er eigentlich für eine Dramenfassung von *Eugen Onegin* komponiert hatte – eines von mehreren Vorhaben für das Jubiläum des 100. Todestages, die Stalins repressiver Kulturpolitik zum Opfer gefallen waren).

Sein zweites Lied hingegen greift verschmitzt den frechen Charakter von Puschkins Gedicht in der ursprünglichen Textfassung auf: Ein junges Mädchen klettert auf einen Baum, um Kirschen zu pflücken. Doch als sie einen gutaussehenden Schäfer erblickt, der ihr über das Feld entgegenkommt, strauchelt sie und rutscht ab, wobei sich ein Ast in ihrem Kleid verfängt – und dem Schäfer einen freizügigen Ausblick gewährt. Die schlüpfrigen Strophen fehlten in der ersten veröffentlichten Ausgabe von 1857. Prokofjews Lied orientiert sich zu Beginn noch an diesem veröffentlichten Text, der mit dem Ausrutscher des Mädchens endet (kurz vor der „Enthüllung“); dann jedoch – wie um die „Eingeweihten“ zu necken – geht es mit einigen etwas späteren Strophen des Gedichts weiter, in denen der Schäfer dem jungen Mädchen beim Herunterklettern vom Baum hilft und sie leidenschaftlich umarmt (vor Puschkins Schilderungen der folgenden Ereignisse reißt der Text diskret ab!). Das letzte Lied „In dein Zimmer“ handelt ebenfalls von einem Liebespaar, aber die Emotion ist brisanter und ernster, da eine endgültige Trennung thematisiert wird (Puschkin verarbeitete hier wohl eine seiner vielen Liebeleien im Exil).

Auch Schostakowitsch hatte einen Hang zu außerehelichen Liebesabenteuern. Seine Frau Nina hatte irgendwann die Nase voll von den Eskapaden und forderte eine vorübergehende Trennung. In dieser Zeit, Mitte August 1934, begann Schostakowitsch mit der Arbeit an seiner Cellosonate. Kurioserweise klingt hier bereits der neoklassische Stil an, den er in seiner Fünften Sinfonie von 1937 kultivieren sollte. Unter diesem Aspekt lässt sich hier deutlich ein Vorläufer von Schostakowitschs sehr prominenter Stilveränderung nach der Veröffentlichung des berüchtigten Editorials „Chaos statt Musik“ Anfang 1936 in der staatlichen Zeitung *Prawda* erkennen. Im viersätzigen Aufbau der Sonate und vor allem im Charakter ihrer zentralen beiden Themen klingen Parallelen mit der späteren Sinfonie an.

Auch zur Fünften Sinfonie gibt es einen engen Bezug, in der ersten von Schostakowitschs *Vier Romanzen nach Texten von Puschkin*. In „Wiedergeburt“ entdeckte Schostakowitsch eindeutig Parallelen zwischen Puschkins Text – „Mit seinem lethargischen Pinsel, ein Künstler-Barbar / beschmiert das Gemälde eines Genies“ – und seiner eigenen Erfahrung kurz zuvor, als ihn die stalinistischen Apparatschiks nach dem Editorial in der *Prawda* abgewatscht hatten. Nicht nur spielt der Beginn des Finales der Fünften auf Schostakowitschs Vertonung dieses Anfangssatzes an, sondern das Motiv des Klavierparts in der letzten Liedstrophe ist in diesem sinfonischen Satz direkt vor dem Schlusswort zitiert. „Ein Jüngling und ein Mädchen“ erzählt von einem Mädchen, das ihren Liebhaber scheltet, ihm aber vergibt, als er an ihrer Schulter einschläft (wohlgemerkt versöhnte Schostakowitsch sich wieder mit Nina, und die Geburt ihrer ersten Tochter Galina im Jahr 1936 schweißte sie als Eheleute noch stärker zusammen). Auch „Vorahnung“ mag relevant für Schostakowitschs Leben sein: Das Sorglos-Draufgängerische seiner Vertonung drückt die mutigen und bestärkenden Worte des Dichters an seine Liebste aus, deren Bild in seinem Geiste ihm „Stärke, Stolz, Hoffnung und Tapferkeit“ ersetzen werden. Im Gegensatz dazu hat das letzte Lied „Strophen“ eine schonungslose und unheilvolle Klaviereinleitung, in der die letztendliche Bewandnis zum Ausdruck kommt – der Tod des Erzählers. Einige Symbole – eine alte Eiche und ein „Säugling“, für den der Dichter durch sein eigenes Ableben den Weg freimachen wird – stellen in „Kiefern“ ähnliche Themen dar.

In fortgeschrittenem Alter freundete Schostakowitsch sich mit dem englischen Komponisten Benjamin Britten an, der seinerseits mit dem Cellisten und Pianisten Mstislaw Rostropowitsch (der einst bei Schostakowitsch studiert hatte) und dessen Frau, der Sopranistin Galina Vischnewskaja, befreundet war. Speziell für dieses Künstlerpaar komponierte Britten im Jahr 1965 *The Poet's Echo*. Dies ist kein eigentlicher Liedzyklus, aber es gibt ein übergeordnetes Thema. Britten erklärt: „Im Prinzip handelt es sich um eine Auseinandersetzung des Dichters mit der Verantwortungslosigkeit der natürlichen Welt, die er beschreibt.“ Bedenkt man Rostropowitschs Doppelbegabung als Pianist und Cellist, erscheint es stimmig, dass der Klavierpart in diesen Liedern, die für beide Instrumente arrangiert wurden, eine wichtige Rolle spielt, wobei die Cello praktisch als zweite „Singstimme“ im Duett mit dem Gesangspart steht, der ursprünglich für Galina komponiert wurde.

Daniel Jaffé

Übersetzung: Stefanie Schlatt

Sergei Prokofiev
Three Pushkin Romances Op.73

1 I. Sosny

Vnov ya posetil tot ugolok zemli,
Gde ya provyol izgnannikom dva
goda nezametnykh.
Uzh desyat let ushlo s tekh por,
I mnogo peremenilos v zhizni dlya menya,
I sam, pokornyi obshemu zakonu,
Peremenilsya ya; no zdes opyat
Minuvsheye menya obyemlet zhivo.
I kazhetsya, vechor eshchyo
Brodil ya v etih roshak.

2 II. Rumyanoi zaryoyu pokrylsya vostok

Rumyanoi zaryoyu
Pokrylsya vostok,
V sele za rekoyu
Potukh ogyok.

Rosoi okropilis
Tsvety na polyakh,
Stada probudilis
Na myagkikh lugakh.

Tumany sedye
Plyvut k oblakam,
Pastushki mladye
Speshat k pastukham.

S zhurchanyem stremitsya
Istochnik mezh gor,
Vdali zolotitsya
Vo tme sinii bor.

Pastushka mladaya
Na rynek speshit
I vdal, pripevaya,
Prilezhno glyadit.

Sergei Prokofiev
Three Pushkin Romances Op.73

I. Pine trees

Once again I visited that plot of land,
Where I spent two inconspicuous
years in exile,
Since then ten years have passed,
And much has changed about my life,
And likewise, in accordance with
the universal law,
I too am changed; but here again
The past – still so alive – embraces me.
And it seems it was but yesterday
That I last walked in these groves.

II. The rosy dawn colours the east

The rosy dawn
Has coloured the east,
In the village beyond the river
The lights have grown dim.

The flowers in the fields
Are covered in dew,
The herds have woken
In the soft meadows.

Grey mist
Ascends to the clouds,
Young shepherdesses
Run to their swains.

A gushing spring
Rushes between the hills,
In the distance, a blue pine
Glimmers in the golden light.

A young shepherdess
Runs to the market,
And as she sings,
She stares into the distance.

Rumyanets igrayet
Na polnykh shyokakh,
Nevinnost blistayet
Na robkikh glazakh.

Iskusnoi rukoyu
Kosa ubrana,
I nozhka soboyu
Prelishat sozdana.

Pastushka prikhodit
V vishennik gustoi
I mnogo nakhodit
Plodov pred soboy.

Khot vid ikh prekrasen
Krasotku manit,
No put k nim opasen –
Bednyazhku strashit.

Podumav, reshilas
S ikh vishen poyest,
Za vetv ukhvatilas
Na derevo vlezl.

Uzhe dostigayet
Nagrady svoey
I robko stupayet
Nogoi mezh vetvei.

Beri plod rukoyu –
I vishnya tvoya,
No, akh! chto s toboyu,
Pastushka moyaya?

Vdali usmotrela, –
speshit pastushok;
Noga oslabela,
skolzit bashmachok.

Her full cheeks
Begin to blush,
Innocence shines
From her timid eyes.

Her braid has been fashioned
By an experienced hand,
And her dainty foot
Is made to seduce.

The shepherdess enters
The lush cherry orchard,
Where she finds fruit in abundance
Before her.

The fruit looks so attractive,
And entices the beautiful maid,
But the way is dangerous –
And the poor girl is afraid.

She thinks, and resolves
To eat some cherries,
She grabs at a branch
And clambers up the tree.

Already she reaches
Her prize
And gently steps
Between the branches.

Just reach out
And the cherries are yours.
But oh! What has happened,
My darling shepherdess?

She has looked into the distance –
A shepherd comes running;
She loses her footing
And her shoe slips.

Pastushku neshchastnu
S suchka tikho snyal
I grud svoyu strastnu
K krasotke prizhal.

Vsya krov zakipela
V dvukh pylkikh serdtsakh,
Lyubov priletela
Na bystrykh krylakh.

3 III. V tvoyu svetlitsu

V tvoyu svetlitsu, drug moi neznyi,
Ya prikhozhu v poslednii raz.
Lyubvi schastlivoi, bezmyatezhnoi
Delyu s toboi poslednii chas.

Vperyod odna v nadezhde tomnoi
Ne zhdi menya sred nochi tyomnoi,
Do pervykh utrennikh luchej
Ne zhgi svechei.

Dmitri Shostakovich
Four Pushkin Romances Op.46

8 I. Vozrozhdeniye

Khudozhnik–varvar kistyu sonnoi
Kartinu geniya chernit
I svoi risunok bezzakonnyi
Nad nei bessmyslenno chertit.

No kraski chuzhdye s letami
Spadayut vetkhei cheshuyoi;
Sozdanye geniya pred nami
Vykhodit s prezhnei krasotoi.

Tak ischezayut zabluzhdeniya
S izmuchennoi dushi moyei,
I voznikayut v nei videniya
Pervonachalnykh, chistyykh dnei.

He lifts the unfortunate shepherdess
Gently from the branch
And presses his passionate breast
To the beautiful girl.

Two ardent hearts
Are flushed with blood,
Love arrives
On its quick wings.

III. Into your room

Into your room, my tender friend,
I come for the last time.
I shall share with you
A final hour of serene and happy love.

Never again should you wait for me
In languid hope, in the depth of night,
No longer lighting candles
Until the coming of the morning rays.

Dmitri Shostakovich
Four Pushkin Romances Op.46

I. Rebirth

With his lethargic brush, an artist–barbarian
Scrawls over a painting made by a genius,
Tracing his own illicit sketch
Over it without reason.

But with the years, these alien colours
Fall away like decrepit scales;
And the creation of that genius
Appears before us in its former beauty.

In the same way, delusions disappear
From my anguished soul,
And in their place, visions arise within it,
Visions of pure and primal days.

9 II. Yunoshu, gorko rydaya

Yunoshu, gorko rydaya,
Revniwaya deva branila.
K nei na plecho preklonyon,
Yunosha vdruk zadremal.

Deva totchas umolkla,
Son ego lyogkii leleya,
I ulybalas emu,
Tikhiye slyozy liya.

10 III. Predchuvstviye

Snova tuchi nado mnoy
Sobralisya v tishine;
Rok zavistlivy bedoyu
Ugrozhayet snova mne...

Sokhranyu I k sudbe prezrenye?
Ponesu I navstrechu ei
Nepreklonnost i terpenye
Gordoi yunosti moyei?

Burnoi zhiznyu utomlyonnyi,
Ravnodushno buri zhdu:
Mozhet byt, eshchyo, spasyonnyi,
Snova pristan ya najdu...

No, predchuvstvuya razluku,
Neizbezhnyi, groznyy chas,
Szhat tvoyu, moi angel, ruku
Ya speshu v poslednii raz.

Angel krotkii, bezmyatezhnyi,
Tikho molvi mne: prosti,
Opechalsya: vzor svoi neznyi
Podymi il opusti;

I tvoyo vospominanye
Zamenit dushe moyei
Silu, gordost, upovanye
I otvagu yunyykh dnei.

II. A youth and a maiden

Sobbing bitterly, a jealous maiden
Upbraided a youth.
Leaning on her shoulder,
He suddenly dozed off.

All at once, the maiden fell silent,
Lulling him as he gently slept,
And she smiled at him,
Whilst shedding silent tears.

III. Foreboding

Once again, storm clouds
Have silently gathered above me;
Fate jealously threatens me
With misfortunes once again...

Will I maintain my contempt for destiny?
Will I bring to bear against it
The tenacity and patience
Of my proud youth?

Exhausted by life's stormy course,
I await the storm with equanimity;
Perhaps I will be saved this time too,
Finding safe harbour once again...

But full of forebodings of our parting,
Of the inescapable, awful hour,
I rush to press your hand, my angel,
For one last time.

My serene and timid angel,
I bid you quietly say farewell,
Let sadness fill your soul as you look on me,
Or as you lower your tender gaze;

And the recollection of you
Will fill my soul,
In place of the strength, the pride,
The hope and valour of my youthful days.

11 IV. Stansy

Brozhu li ya vdol ulits shumnykh,
Vkhozhu I vo mnogolyudnyi khram,
Sizhu I mezh yunoshei bezumnykh,
Ya predayus moim mechtam.

Ya govoryu: promchatsya gody,
I skolko zdes ne vidno nas,
My vse soidyom pod vechny svody –
I chei-nibud uzh blizok chas.

Glyazhu I na dub uedinennyi,
Ya myslyu: patriarkh lesov
Perezhiyot moi vek zabvennyi,
Kak perezhil on vek ottsov.

Mladentsa I milogo laskayu,
Uzhe ya dumayu: prosti!
Tebe ya mesto ustupayu:
Mne vremya tlet, tebe tsvesti.

Den kazhdyi, kazhduyu godinu
Privyk ya dumoi provozhdat,
Gryadushchei smerti godovshchinu
Mezh nikh starayas ugadat.

I gde mne smert poshlyot sudbina?
V boyu li, v stranstvii, v volnakh?
Ili sosednyaya dolina
Moi primet okhladelyi prakh?

I khot beschuvstvennomu telu
Ravno povsyudu istlevat,
No blizhe k milomu predelu
Mne vsyo b khotelos pochivat.

I pust u grobovovo vkhoda
Mladaya budet zhizn igrat
I ravnodushnaya priroda
Krasoyu vechnoyu siyat.

IV. Stanzas

Whenever I stroll down noisy streets,
Or enter a crowded church,
Or sit 'midst frenzied youths,
I surrender to my dreams.

I say to myself: the years will rush by,
And however many of us there are still left,
We will all descend through the gates
of eternity –
And for some, the hour is close at hand.

Whenever I stare at a solitary oak tree,
I think to myself: this patriarch of the forests
Will outlive my soon-to-be-forgotten age,
Just as it has already outlived that of
my fathers.

Whenever I embrace a babe-in-arms,
I am already thinking: adieu!
I yield my place to you:
As time bids me decay, it bids you bloom.

I have grown used to contemplating
Every day and every year,
Trying to discern within them
The anniversary of my impending death.

And where will I be when death calls?
In battle, or journeying by land or sea?
Or will some neighbouring valley
Accept my cold ashes?

And whilst the insensible body
Cares not where it is fated to decay,
I'd nonetheless rather find eternal rest
Nearer to my native land.

Where youthful life might play
By the entrance to my tomb,
And indifferent nature might shine
With its eternal beauty.

Benjamin Britten The Poet's Echo Op.76

12 I. Ekho

Revjot li zver' v lesu glukhom,
Trubit li rog, gremit li grom,
Pojut li deva za kholmom –
Na vsjakij zvuk
Svoj otklik v vozdukhe pustom
Rodish' ty vdrug.

Ty vnemlesh' grokhotu gromov,
I glasu buri i valov,
I kriku sel'skikh pastukhov –
I shlesh' otvet;
Tebe zh net otzyva... Takov
I ty, po'et!

13 II. «Ja dumal, serdce pozabylo»

Ja dumal, serdce pozabylo
Sposobnost' legkuju stradat',
Ja govoril: tomu, chto bylo,
Uzh ne byvat'! uzh ne byvat'!
Proshli vostorgi, i pechali,
I legkovernye mechty...
No vot opjat' zatrepetali
Pred moshchnoj vlast'ju krasoty.

14 III. Angel

V dverjakh 'Edema angel nezhnyj
Glavoj poniksheju sijal,
A demon mrachnyj i mjatezhnyj
Nad adskoj bezdnoju letal.

Dukh otrican'ja, dukh somnen'ja
Na dukha chistogo vziral
I zhar nevo'nyj umilen'ja
Vpervye smutno poznaval.

«Prosti,» on rjok, «tebja ja videl,
I ty nedarom mne sijal:
Ne vsjo ja v nebe nenavidel,
Ne vsjo ja v mire preziral.»

Benjamin Britten The Poet's Echo Op.76

I. Echo

From leafy woods the savage howl,
A distant horn, the thunder's roll,
A maiden singing up the hill,
To every sound
Your answering cry the air doth fill
In quick rebound.

You listen for the thunder's voice,
The ocean wave's wild stormy noise,
The distant mountain-shepherd's cries
You answer free;
To you comes no reply. Likewise,
O poet, to thee.

II. My heart...

My heart, I fancied it was over,
That road of suffering and pain,
And I resolved: 'Tis gone for ever,
Never again! Never again!
That ancient rapture and its yearning,
The dreams, the credulous desire...
But now old wounds have started burning
Inflamed by beauty and her fire.

III. Angel

At Eden's gate a gentle angel
With lowered head stood shining bright,
While Satan sullen and rebellious
O'er Hell's abysses took his flight.

Soul of negation, soul of envy,
He gazed at that angelic light,
And warm and tender glowed within him
A strange confusion at the sight.

'Forgive', he said, 'Now I have seen thee,
Not vainly didst thou shine so bright:
Not all in heaven have I hated,
Not all things human learn my spite.'

15 IV. Solovej i roza

V bezmolvii sadov, vesnoj, vo mgle nochej,
 Pojot nad rozozu vostochnyj solovej.
 No roza milaja ne chuvstvujet, ne vnemlet,
 I pod vlyublennyj gimn kolebletsja i dremlet.
 Ne tak li ty pojosh' dlja khladnoj krasoty?
 Opomnis', o po'et, k chemu stremish'sja ty?
 Ona ne slushajet, ne chuvstvujet po'eta;
 Gljadish', ona cvetet; vzyvajesh' – net otveta.

16 V. Epigramma

Polu-milord, polu-kupec,
 Polu-mudrec, polu-nevezhda,
 Polu-podlec, no jest' nadezhda,
 Chto budet polnym nakonec.

IV. The Nightingale and the Rose

The garden's dark and still; 'tis spring;
 no night wind blows.
 He sings! The Nightingale, his love song to
 the rose.
 She does not hearken, his rose beloved,
 disdainful,
 And to his amorous hymn, she dozes,
 nodding and swaying.
 With such words would you melt cold
 beauty into fire?
 O poet, be aware how far you would aspire
 She is not listening, no poems can
 entrance her;
 You gaze; she only flowers; you call her;
 there's no answer.

V. Epigram

Half a milord, half of a boss,
 Half of a sage, half of a baby,
 Half of a cheat; there's hope that maybe
 He'll be a whole one by and by.

*The subject of this epigram was Count
 M.S. Vorontsov, Pushkin's chief in Odessa.
 He was brought up in England ('Half a
 milord') and had financial interests in
 Odessa ('half of a boss').*

17 VI. Stikhi, sochineny nochyu vo vremya vesonitsy

Mne ne spitsja, net ognja;
 Vsjudu mrak i son dokuchnyj.
 Khod chasov lish' odnozvuchnyj
 Razdajotsja bliz menja.
 Parki bab'e lepetan'e,
 Spjashchej nochi trepetan'e,
 Zhizni mysh'ja begotnja...
 Chto trevozhish' ty menja?
 Chto ty znachish', skuchnyj shopot?
 Ukorizna, ili ropot
 Mnoj utrachennogo dnja?
 Ot menja chego ty khochesh'?
 Ty zovjosh' ili prorochish'?
 Ja ponjat' tebja khochu,
 Smysla ja v tebe ishchu...

VI. Lines written during a sleepless night

Sleep forsakes me with the light;
 Shadowy gloom and haunting darkness;
 Time ticks on its way relentless
 And its sound invades the night.
 Fateful crones are at their mumbling,
 Set the sleepy night a-trembling,
 Scurrying mouse-like, life slips by...
 Why do you disturb me, say?
 What's your purpose, tedious whispers?
 Do you breathe reproachful murmurs
 At my lost and wasted day?
 What is this you want to tell me?
 Do you prophesy or call me?
 Answer me, I long to hear!
 Voices, make your meaning clear...

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