

SONGS OF TRAVEL

Saturday 4 September, 11am and 2.30pm
Woolmers Estate, Longford

Samuel Dundas baritone
Jennifer Marten-Smith piano

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS Songs of Travel

The Vagabond
Let Beauty Awake
The Roadside Fire
Youth and Love
In Dreams
The Infinite Shining Heavens
Whither Must I Wander?
Bright is the Ring of Words
I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope

CHOPIN Nocturne in C-sharp minor, Op 27 No 1

MOZART Non più andrai, from The Marriage of Figaro

MOZART Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen, from The Magic Flute

MOZART Deh, vieni alla finestra, from Don Giovanni

The nine poems that make up Songs of Travel by English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) are from a larger collection (full title: Songs of Travel and Other Verses) by Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894). Published posthumously, the poems were found among Stevenson's papers after his death. Vaughan Williams' song cycle dates from 1901-4. In keeping with 19th-century song-cycle conventions (such as Schubert's Winterreise and Schumann's Frauenliebe und -leben), Songs of Travel traces a narrative arc and treats the piano as a crucial element in the musical discourse (notice, for instance, how the piano accompaniment in the first song alludes to the left-right footfalls of the vagabond protagonist). Commencing with a song that romanticises the unshackled freedoms of a life spent on the road, Songs of Travel veers into more ambiguous realms as it progresses, touching upon themes of melancholy, regret and loss. Indeed, death haunts more than a few songs, notably those towards the end of the cycle. Vaughan Williams ties the last song to the first with various motivic references. Listen out in the piano postlude to I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope for the weary hesitancy of the footfalls that were presented with such confidence in the introduction to The Vagabond.

While not the inventor of the piano nocturne – that honour goes to Irish composer John Field – Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849) did more than any other composer to popularise the genre. As the name implies, a nocturne is a 'night piece'. Slow and dreamy (but often with a tempestuous middle section), nocturnes typically spin out a graceful right-hand melody over rippling left-hand arpeggio patterns. The Nocturne in C-sharp minor, which was composed in 1835, is typical of the genre.

Some of the finest baritone roles in all opera are to be found in the works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791). Non più andrai is sung by the wily valet Figaro at the close of Act I of The Marriage of Figaro, thus providing a sparkling curtain. Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen is sung by the lovelorn bird-catcher Papageno in The Magic Flute. He's on the hunt for a life partner! Serial seducer Don Giovanni, on the other hand, is looking for something less long-term in his serenade Deh, vieni alla finestra.

Robert Gibson, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, © 2021

**TWENTY
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