

Departures

Berkeley | Quilter | Swayne | Britten | Vaughan Williams





Benjamin Hulett tenor & Alexander Soddy piano



Standing upon the shore of all we know We linger for a moment doubtfully, Then with a song upon our lips, sail we Across the harbor bar – no chart to show, No light to warn of rocks which lie below But let us put forth courageously.

FROM T.S. ELIOT (1888-1965), DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL

DEPARTURES

Travel is a theme which has long preoccupied creative artists, not least because the sense of transition, evolution and change embodied by journeying finds a parallel in poetic and musical processes. Moving in time and space from one point to another is at once an emotive human experience, and a summary of music itself. The combination of the two, therefore, represents a very natural source of inspiration.

Many of the works on this program share another theme: that of the composer setting texts in a language not his own — a linguistic departure which challenges him to scale new heights of resourcefulness and expression.

As Luciano Berio (1925-2003) said during his *Two Interviews*:

« ... our composer, a creative artist who is eternally a young man, intent upon giving form to the uncreated conscience of his race, is like a navigator passing through the boundaries of his own history to explore unknown archipelagos, and to land on mysterious islands which he thinks he is the first to discover, and which he describes to others in sound. »









Tombeaux Op. 14 (1926) Lennox Berkeley (1903-1989)

- De Sapho Très lent
- II De Socrate Moderato
- III D'un fleuve Con moto
- IV De Narcisse Triste et lent
- V De Don Juan Vif

Words by Jean Cocteau (1889-1963)

It was Ravel who first suggested that his friend Lennox Berkeley study with the great Nadia Boulanger in Paris. The experience was to prove formative; Boulanger's passion for music and disciplined approach to counterpoint had a profound and long lasting effect. Not until Berkeley met Britten in 1936 would a musical figure have such an impact. One of the earliest products of this time in Paris was the song-cycle *Tombeaux*, which, perhaps inevitably, possesses a distinctly French character. In addition to Ravel's friendship and influence, Berkeley came to know Poulenc, whose music, along with that of the other members of 4.es Six. he emulated in these songs.

There are sensual vocal lines, moments of quirky humour – including a Gallic shrug to end *D'un fleuve* – and the use of bitonality and parallel chords, all of which demonstrate both Berkeley's assimilation of the music of 'Les Six', and his already remarkable facility expressing words through music. The texts are abstract poems by Jean Cocteau, a hugely influential figure in the French arts. Cocteau's other collaborators included Stravinsky and Picasso, the latter of whom encapsulated the sense of journey undertaken by creative artists:

«An idea is a point of departure and no more. As soon as you elaborate it, it becomes transformed by thought. »



■ De Sapho - Très lent

Voici, toute en cendres, Sapho. Dont ce fut le moindre défaut D'aimer, Vénus, les coquillages Que vous entr'ouvrez sur les plages.

Le feu qu'elle éteint dans la mer N'était pas la flamme des cierges: Comme fleurs rougissent les vierges. Sapho rougit comme le fer.

Ce feu dont ne reste que poudre. Tua iadis une cité. Mais soyons justes, car la foudre Y tomba d'un autre côté.

Non. Sapho vous apprit à lire. Vierges, dans son propre roman: Elle repose maintenant Entre les jambes de sa lyre.

Sur ce beau corps mélodieux Elle repose chez les dieux: Sapho, déesse médiane Entre Cupidon et Diane.

II De Socrate - Moderato

Ce qui distingue cette tombe Des autres, soit dit en passant. C'est que n'y viennent les colombes. Mais, parfois, deux agneaux paissant. Visiteuse, que ne vous vexe Ce sage victime des sots: C'est la grâce de votre sexe Qu'il aimait chez les jouvenceaux.

III D'un fleuve - Con moto

Aglaé, soeur d'Ophélie, Prise sans en avoir l'air Par son mal, par sa folie. Va se jeter dans la mer.

W De Narcisse - Triste et lent

Celui qui dans cette eau séiourne Démasqué vécut s'intriquant. La mort, pour rire, le retourne À l'envers, comme un doigt de gant.

V De Don Juan - Vif

En Espagne, on orne la rue Avec des loges d'opéra. Quelle est cette belle inconnue? C'est la mort. Don Juan l'aura.

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Four songs of Mirza Schaffy Op. 2 (1903) Roger Quilter (1877-1953) I Neig' Schöne Knospe Dich zu mir

- II Und was die Sonne glüht
- III Ich fühle Deinen Odem
- IV Die helle Sonne leuchtet

Words by Friedrich von Bodenstedt (1819-1892)

Although his style is considered quintessentially English, Quilter followed his time at Eton (which he loathed) with studies at the Hoch conservatory in Frankfurt, and became known as one of the Frankfurt Group, along with Percy Grainger, Balfour Gardiner and Cyril Scott among others, Quilter graduated in 1901, and began to garner acclaim soon afterwards, when Denham Price sang his Four Songs of the Sea at Crystal Palace in March of that year.

The German language would, however, still have been fresh in Quilter's ears when he set to music four poems by Friedrich von Bodenstedt; the songs were published in 1903 In memory of Frankfort days. The poems were originally attributed to Schaffy, one of Bodenstedt's language teachers, whom he nicknamed (Mirza), meaning (man of letters). It is unclear whether it was modesty which led Bodenstedt to retain the attribution, or whether the texts were intended as a tribute to Schaffy. Either way, Quilter's interpretation is full of the nostalgic lyricism and deft word-setting that would come to epitomise his music.





Neig' schöne Knospe Dich zu mir

Neig' schöne Knospe Dich zu mir. Und was ich bitte das tu' mir. Ich will Dich pflegen und halten. Du sollst bei mir erwarmen Und sollst in meinen Armen Zur Blume Dich entfalten.

II Und was die Sonne glüht

Und was die Sonne glüht. Was Wind und Welle singt. Und was die Rose blüht Was auf zum Himmel klingt Und was vom Himmel nieder Das weht durch mein Gemüth Das klingt durch meine Lieder.

III Ich fühle Deinum Odem

Ich fühle deinen Odem Mich überall umwehn Wohin die Augen schweifen Wähn ich Dein Bild zu sehn.

Im Meere meiner Gedanken Kannst Du nur untergehn, Um, wie die Sonne, Morgens Schön wieder aufzustehn.

IV Die helle Sonne leuchtet

Die helle Sonne leuchtet Auf's weite Meer hernieder. Und alle Wellen zittern Von ihrem Glanze wieder.

Du spiegelst Dich, wie die Sonne, Im Meere meiner Lieder! Sie alle glühn und zittern Von Deinem Glanze wieder!

The Joys of Travel Op. 124 (2009)

Giles Swavne (b.1946) I Departures

II In-flight Entertainment

world premiere

III Arrivals

Words by Giles Swavne

Travel has proved integral to Giles Swayne's musical language; after early years in Singapore and Australia, he grew up in the north of England before studying at Cambridge, the Royal Academy of Music and the Paris Conservatoire, where he studied with Olivier Messiaen. Among his teachers in London was Nicholas Maw, who had in turn been taught by Lennox Berkeley. Swayne has researched and recorded the music of the Jola community of southern Senegal, and lived for several years in the Akuapem Hills of Ghana.

Giles Swayne's ironically-titled Joys of Travely – commissioned by Benjamin Hulett – is an uncompromising, haunting, sometimes scathing appraisal of the horrors of package holidays and cheap flights. Using his own poetry, which ranges from humorous observation to sardonic satire, Swayne at once skewers the vulgarities of what he calls «battery-chickened passengers», and makes a more poignant point about the plundering and ruination of beautiful local resources to cater for drunken holidaymakers. The distinction between those who travel for the pursuit of culture and those who hop on a plane with banal intentions is summed up with similar wry humour in a sketch by Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie:

« He is a tourist, you are a sightseer, but I am a traveller. »







Departures

O Muse, I sing of budget flights:
Packaged escapes to package delights . . .

Check-in at dawn: we're walking dead, All wishing we were at home in bed; Haggard and pale, our bowels uneasy, Our armpits moist, our stomachs queasy, We shuffle in line to be X-rayed And searched, and see our underwear displayed. Once through, we drift obedientlee From shopping-mall to Duty Free, Where escalators softly rise and fall, Endlessly going nowhere at all. With time to kill and no escape. We're perfect targets for consumer rape: We order breakfasts we don't need, Buy books and mags we'll never read, And, glumly gazing at a screen, Await the words "PROCEED TO GATE 15".

II In-flight Entertainment

Aboard at last! We're sandwiched in,
Our knees wedged up against our chins.
"Welcome to CheapoJet!" the speakers blare:
"The no-frills airline with rock-bottom fares!
Fasten your belts: Flight 242
Is cleared for take-off to Corfu.
(We are not liable for diagnosis
Of subsequent Deep Vein Thrombosis)".

The aisle vibrates, the cabin throbs
With bloated bodies and foul-mouthed yobs
All tanked up for a hard night's binge.
am I a snob? They make me cringe.
I wonder if it's fair on poor old Greece
To export the mindless and morbidly obese?

III Arrivals

I've been to this island once before, In June, 1964.
The boat from Bari (there were no flights then) Brought me here, and took me back again.
I went into a dockside bar
To get my bearings. A boozy old tar
Told me Nisáki, across the bay,
Would be a friendly place to stay.
I took a boat, and spent four happy weeks:
Fishing, exploring, and loving Greeks.
My room was a tiny white-washed cell
Under the village shop (a bar as well).

Nisáki is gone now, vanished without trace: Hotels have mushroomed in its place. Trippers come in by CheapoJet in hordes; Eat chips, get burnt, get drunk, and say they're bored.

If Nisáki's simple grace has not survived, What else has been destroyed since we arrived?

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Quatre Chansons Françaises (1928) Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) • Nuits de

- I Nuits de juin Words by Victor Hugo (1802 -1885)
- Il Sagesse
 Words by Paul Verlaine (1844 -1896)
- III L'enfance Words by Victor Hugo
- IV Chanson d'automne Words by Paul Verlaine

Benjamin Britten's talent was manifest from an exceptionally early age. The Quatre Chansons Françaises were written when he was just 14 years old, as a gift for his parents on their 27th wedding anniversary. The songs, which eventually received their premiere in 1980, are most frequently heard in their original arrangement for voice and orchestra, but Britten himself transcribed them for voice and piano in 1928, the same year in which they were composed. However, perhaps unsurprisingly given his tender age, Britten's rather gauche piano part presented difficulties for the performer, so Colin Matthews has since reduced the original score for piano with more felicitous results. This is the first recording of an amalgam of the two versions.

Britten had recently begun lessons with Frank Bridge when he embarked on the Chansons; he later recalled the older composer teaching him that you should find yourself and be true to what you found', as well as emphasising 'scrupulous attention to good technique, 'Britten in The Sunday Telegraph, 17 November 1963). Musically, the songs show considerable maturity, with some exquisite vocal lines, albeit demonstrating the influence of German and French composers rather than Britten's later, distinctive style. Wagnerian harmony is permeated by Gallic gestures – a natural fusion considering



Debussy's own fascination with Wagner. But it is in L'enfance, a lament about a boy and his consumptive mother, that Britten's unique, if embryonic, musical language is most apparent: the diatonic, nursery-like melody would become a characteristic device. Britten once described the compositional process in terms of a journey – one with an indefinite starting point but an increasingly clear sense of destination:

« Composing is like driving down a foggy road toward a house. Slowly you see more details of the house – the colour of the slates and bricks, the shape of the windows. The notes are the bricks and the mortar of the house. »







I Nuits de juin

L'été, lorsque le jour a fui, de fleurs couverte La plaine verse au loin un parfum enivrant; Les yeux fermés, l'oreille aux rumeurs entr'ouverte, On ne dort qu'à demi d'un sommeil transparent.

Les astres sont plus purs, l'ombre paraît meilleure; Un vague demi-jour teint le dôme éternel; Et l'aube, douce et pâle, en attendant son heure, Semble toute la nuit errer au bas du ciel.

II Sagesse

Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit, Si bleu, si calme! Un arbre, par-dessus le toit, Berce sa palme.

La cloche, dans le ciel qu'on voit Doucement tinte. Un oiseau sur l'arbre qu'on voit Chante sa plainte.

Mon Dieu, mon Dieu! la vie est là, Simple et tranquille. Cette paisible rumeur-là Vient de la ville.

Qu'as-tu fait, ô toi que voilà Pleurant sans cesse, Dis, qu'as-tu fait, toi que voilà, De ta jeunesse?

III L'enfance

L'enfant chantait; la mère au lit, exténuée, Agonisait, beau front dans l'ombre se penchant; La mort au-dessus d'elle errait dans la nuée; Et j'écoutais ce râle, et j'entendais ce chant.

L'enfant avait cinq ans, et près de la fenêtre Ses rires et ses jeux faisaient un charmant bruit; Et la mère, à côté de ce pauvre doux être Qui chantait tout le jour, toussait toute la nuit.

La mère alla dormir sous les dalles du cloître; Et le petit enfant se remit à chanter... La douleur est un fruit; Dieu ne le fait pas croître Sur la branche trop faible encor pour le porter.

IV Chanson d'automne

Les sanglots longs des violons de l'automne blessent mon coeur d'une langueur monotone.

Tout suffocant
et blême, quand
sonne l'heure.
je me souviens
des jours anciens,
et je pleure...

Et je m'en vais au vent mauvais qui m'emporte de çà, de là, pareil à la feuille morte...

booklet departures def.indd 14-15







Songs of Travel (1904) Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

I The Vagabond

II Let Beauty Awake

III The Roadside Fire

IV Youth and Love

V In Dreams

VI The Infinite Shining Heavens

VII Whither must I wander

VIII Bright is the Ring of Words

IX I have trod the Upward and the Downward Slope

Words by Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)

Just as Berkeley, Britten and Quilter were still finding their voices in the cycles featured on this programme, so Vaughan Williams was also exploring his early style when he wrote the Songs of Travel, which date from the same years as Quilter's Mirza Schaffy songs. What is intriguing is that after a prolific output of songs during these early years, Vaughan Williams never again devoted much attention to writing songs with piano accompaniment. As with Linden Lea (1901), Vaughan Williams's music and choice of texts in the Songs of Travel exhibit his love of invigorating pastoral simplicity. Yet there is a Romanticism, too, which later dissipated amid his use of Elizabethan music and English folk song. Vaughan Williams scholars have suggested that the choice of Stevenson's poems, perhaps especially 'The Infinite Shining Heavens' and 'Bright is the Ring of Words', offer a particular insight into the composer's temperament. Certainly, their wistful gaze in the direction of life's end – that final departure – echo a remark once made by the composer:

«... in the next world I shan't be doing music, with all the striving and disappointments. I shall be being it. »



I The Vagabond

Give to me the life I love, Let the lave go by me, Give the jolly heaven above, And the byway nigh me. Bed in the bush with stars to see, Bread I dip in the river -There's the life for a man like me, There's the life for ever.

Let the blow fall soon or late, Let what will be o'er me; Give the face of earth around, And the road before me. Wealth I seek not, hope nor love, Nor a friend to know me; All I seek, the heaven above, And the road below me.

Or let autumn fall on me Where afield I linger, Silencing the bird on tree, Biting the blue finger. White as meal the frosty field -Warm the fireside haven -Not to autumn will I yield, Not to winter even! Let the blow fall soon or late, Let what will be o'er me; Give the face of earth around, And the road before me. Wealth I ask not, hope nor love, Nor a friend to know me; All I ask, the heaven above, And the road below me.

Let Beauty Awake

Let Beauty awake in the morn from beautiful dreams, Beauty awake from rest! Let Beauty awake For Beauty's sake In the hour when the birds awake in the brake And the stars are bright in the west!

Let Beauty awake in the eve from the slumber of day, Awake in the crimson eve! In the day's dusk end When the shades ascend, Let her wake to the kiss of a tender friend, To render again and receive!

III The Roadside Fire

I will make you brooches and toys for your delight Of bird-song at morning and star-shine at night, I will make a palace fit for you and me Of green days in forests, and blue days at sea.

I will make my kitchen, and you shall keep your room, Where white flows the river and bright blows the broom; And you shall wash your linen and keep your body white In rainfall at morning and dewfall at night.

And this shall be for music when no one else is near, The fine song for singing, the rare song to hear! That only I remember, that only you admire, Of the broad road that stretches and the roadside fire.

IV Youth and Love

To the heart of youth the world is a highwayside. Passing for ever, he fares; and on either hand, Deep in the gardens golden pavilions hide, Nestle in orchard bloom, and far on the level land Call him with lighted lamp in the eventide.

Thick as stars at night when the moon is down, Pleasures assail him. He to his nobler fate Fares; and but waves a hand as he passes on, Cries but a wayside word to her at the garden gate, Sings but a boyish stave and his face is gone.





V In Dreams

In dreams unhappy, I behold you stand As heretofore: The unremember'd tokens in your hand Avail no more.

No more the morning glow, no more the grace, Enshrines, endears. Cold beats the light of time upon your face And shows your tears.

He came and went. Perchance you wept awhile And then forgot.
Ah me! but he that left you with a smile Forgets you not.

VI The Infinite Shining Heavens

The infinite shining heavens Rose, and I saw in the night Uncountable angel stars Showering sorrow and light.

I saw them distant as heaven, Dumb and shining and dead, And the idle stars of the night Were dearer to me than bread.

Night after night in my sorrow The stars look'd over the sea, Till lo! I looked in the dusk And a star had come down to me.

VII Whither must I wander?

Home no more home to me, whither must I wander? Hunger my driver, I go where I must. Cold blows the winter wind over hill and heather: Thick drives the rain and my roof is in the dust. Loved of wise men was the shade of my roof-tree, The true word of welcome was spoken in the door - Dear days of old with the faces in the firelight, Kind folks of old, you come again no more.

Home was home then, my dear, full of kindly faces, Home was home then, my dear, happy for the child. Fire and the windows bright glittered on the moorland; Song, tuneful song, built a palace in the wild. Now when day dawns on the brow of the moorland, Lone stands the house, and the chimney-stone is cold. Lone let it stand, now the friends are all departed, The kind hearts, the true hearts, that loved the place of old.

Spring shall come, come again, calling up the moorfowl,
Spring shall bring the sun and the rain, bring the bees and flowers;
Red shall the heather bloom over hill and valley,
Soft flow the stream through the even-flowing hours.
Fair the day shine as it shone on my childhood Fair shine the day on the house with open door;
Birds come and cry there and twitter in the chimney But I go for ever and come again no more.





VIII Bright is the Ring of Words

Bright is the ring of words
When the right man rings them,
Fair the fall of songs
When the singer sings them,
Still they are carolled and said On wings they are carried After the singer is dead
And the maker buried.

Low as the singer lies In the field of heather, Songs of his fashion bring The swains together. And when the west is red With the sunset embers, The lover lingers and sings And the maid remembers.

IX I have trod the Upward and the Downward Slope

I have trod the upward and the downward slope; I have endured and done in days before; I have longed for all, and bid farewell to hope; And I have lived and loved, and closed the door. Thus, the strands of journeying meet: the progress of a musical thought from one state to another, and the development of a composer's style, become metaphors for the journey of life itself. Hardly surprising, then, that travel has provided such a rich seam of musical inspiration. Britten would revisit the theme in his settings of Rimbaud's poetry, Les Illuminations Op. 18, of which Départ – Operature – seems particularly resonant:

All is seen...

The vision gleams in the air.

All is had...

The distant sound of cities at night, In sunlight, always.

All is known...

Chaos! Disorder!

These are the stuff of life.

Departure while love yet lingers,

And shining sounds.

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Benjamin Hulett

The celebrated young British tenor Benjamin Hulett was a soloist at the Hamburg State Opera from 2005 to 2009 and has achieved great success in lyric roles from Tamino (Die Zauberflöte) and Ferrando (Cosi fan Tutte) to Steuermann (Der Fliegende Holländer) and Novice (Billy Budd). He made his debut at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich in Händel's Alcina, at Theater an der Wien in the world premiere of Johannes Kalitzke's Die Besessenen and has returned to Hamburg as Tamino and Narroboth (Salome). Plans include debuts at the Salzburg

Festival (*Elektra*), Opera North (*The Turn of the Screw*) and Berliner Staatsoper Unter den Linden (*Phaedra*).

As a concert performer he has worked with conductors including Sir Roger Norrington, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Sir Andrew Davis, Philippe Herreweghe, Christopher Hogwood, Markus Stenz, Ivor Bolton, Jeffrey Tate, Simone Young, Frans Brüggen, Jaap van Zweden and Fabio Biondi amonost others at many of the world's leading venues and festivals.

His growing discography includes *Visions Fugitives* (*Les Illuminations* live from the Gergiev Festival, also on Saphrane), *Messiah* (Carus), *Israel in Egypt* (Maulbronn), *The NMC Songbook* (winner of Gramophone Award 2009) and the role of Paris in *The Judgement of Paris* (Chandos). Future releases include songs by Richard Rodney Bennett (NMC) and Britten songs with pianist Malcolm Martineau (Onyx). Ben studied Music as a choral scholar at New College, Oxford and Opera at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London.



Alexander Soddy

The British pianist and conductor Alexander Soddy has quickly established himself at the forefront of young musicians. Born in 1982, he studied as a chorister at Magdalen College, Oxford and conducting and piano at the Junior Royal Academy of Music. He was subsequently awarded a choral scholarship, studying Musicology at Selwyn College, Cambridge University. A position as a repetiteur followed at the National Opera Studio in London where he was supported by the Friends of Covent Garden and the Scottish Opera Endowment Trust.

Alex has worked as a repetiteur for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and as an accompanist at many venues and festivals around the world including Wigmore Hall, performing with many prominent artists including the tenor Michael Schade and prize-winning bassoonist Christian Kunert. Since 2005 Alexander has been engaged at the Hamburg State Opera, first as a repetiteur and then as musical assistant to Simone Young. Quickly promoted to Kapellmeister, Alexander regularly conducts the Hamburg Philharmonic Orchestra at the Hamburg State Opera where he has worked with singers such as Deborah Polaski, Fallk Struckmann, Placido Domingo, Lisa Gasteen, John Treleaven, Franz Grundheber, Wolfgang Koch and Michael Schade. His repertoire at Hamburg includes Die Zauberflöte, L'elisir d'Amore, Il Barbiere di Siviglia, Hänsel und Gretel, Das Gehege, Oscar Strasnoy's new opera Le Bal as well as directing the International Opera Studio in productions of Cavallis La Calisto, contemporary operas by Christian Jost and John Tavener and Rameau's Les Indes Galantes.

Alexander Soddy is increasingly in demand at many of Europe's most important Opera Houses and future engagements include *La Bohème, Rigoletto* and *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Hamburg and *Die Zauberflöte* at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich and Berliner Staatsoper (Unter den Linden).









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Contact: Benjamin Hulett | www.askonasholt.com | www.musicwords.nl

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