

An English Song Winterreise – Song texts

Sunday 3 May 2026, 3pm, St Mary Magdalene, Richmond

Roderick Williams *Baritone*

Christopher Glynn *Piano*

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!

Music Ralph Vaughan Williams 1872-1958

Text Robert Louis Stevenson 1850-94

Blow, blow, thou winter wind

Blow, blow thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen
Although thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude.

Heigh ho! sing heigh ho!
Unto the green holly:
Most friendship is feigning,
Most loving mere folly:
Then, heigh ho! the holly!
This life is most jolly.

Freeze, freeze thou bitter sky,
Thou dost not bite so nigh
As benefits forgot:
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
As friend remember'd not.

Heigh ho! sing heigh ho!
unto the green holly:
Most friendship is feigning,
most loving mere folly
Then, heigh ho! the holly!
This life is most jolly.

Music Roger Quilter 1877-1953

Text William Shakespeare 1564-1616

Weep you no more

Weep you no more, sad fountains;
What need you flow so fast?
Look how the snowy mountains
Heaven's sun doth gently waste!
But my Sun's heavenly eyes
View not your weeping,
That now lies sleeping,
Softly now, softly lies
Sleeping.

Sleep is a reconciling,
A rest that peace begets;
Doth not the sun rise smiling
When fair at even he sets?
Rest you, then, rest, sad eyes!
Melt not in weeping,
While she lies sleeping,
Softly now, softly lies
Sleeping.

Music Madeleine Dring 1923-77
Text Anon.

At Middle-field Gate in February

The bars are thick with drops that show
As they gather themselves from the fog
Like silver buttons ranged in a row,
And as evenly spaced as if measured, although
They fall at the feeblest jog.

They load the leafless hedge hard by,
And the blades of last year's grass,
While the fallow ploughland turned up nigh
In raw rolls clammy and clogging lie—
Too clogging for feet to pass.

How dry it was on a far-back day
When straws hung the hedge and around,
When amid the sheaves in amorous play
In curtained bonnets and light array
Bloomed a bevy now underground!

Music Gerald Finzi 1901-56
Text Thomas Hardy 1840-1928

Linden Lea

Within the woodlands, flow'ry gladed,
By the oak trees' mossy moot,
The shining grass blades, timber-shaded,
Now do quiver underfoot;
And birds do whistle overhead,
And water's bubbling in its bed;
And there, for me, the apple tree
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

When leaves, that lately were a-springing,
Now do fade within the copse,
And painted birds do hush their singing,
Up upon the timber tops;
And brown-leaved fruit's a-turning red,
In cloudless sunshine overhead,
With fruit for me, the apple tree
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

Let other folk make money faster
In the air of dark-room'd towns;
I don't dread a peevish master,
Though no man may heed my frowns.
I be free to go abroad,
Or take again my homeward road
To where, for me, the apple tree
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

Music Vaughan Williams
Text William Barnes 1801-86

Tears, idle tears

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remembered kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.

Music Frank Bridge 1879-1941
Text Alfred, Lord Tennyson 1809-92

On the Downs

Up on the downs the red-eyed kestrels
hover,
Eyeing the grass,
The field-mouse flits like a shadow into
cover
As their shadows pass.

Men are burning the gorse on the
down's shoulder;
A drift of smoke
Glitters with fire and hangs, and the
skies smoulder,
And the lungs choke.

Once the tribe did thus on the
downs, on these downs
burning
Men in the frame,
Crying to the gods of the downs till
their brains were
turning
And the gods came.

And today on the downs, in the
wind, the hawks,
the grasses,
In blood and air,
Something passes me and cries as it
passes,
On the chalk downland bare.

Music Ivor Gurney 1890-1937
Text John Masefield 1878-1967

In the Mind's Eye

That was once her casement,
And the taper nigh,
Shining from within there,
Beckoned, 'Here am I!'

Now, as then, I see her
Moving at the pane;
Ah; 'tis but her phantom
Borne within my brain!—

Foremost in my vision
Everywhere goes she;
Change dissolves the landscapes,
She abides with me.

Shape so sweet and shy, Dear,
Who can say thee nay?
Never once do I, Dear,
Wish thy ghost away.

Music Finzi
Text Hardy

Lights Out

I have come to the borders of sleep,
The unfathomable deep
Forest where all must lose
Their way, however straight
Or winding, soon or late;
They can not choose.

Here love ends –
Despair, ambition ends;
All pleasure and all trouble,
Although most sweet or bitter,
Here ends, in sleep that is sweeter
Than tasks most noble.

There is not any book
Or face of dearest look
That I would not turn from now
To go into the unknown
I must enter, and leave, alone,
I know not how.

Music Gurney
Text Edward Thomas 1878-1917

A Song of Enchantment

A Song of Enchantment I sang me there,
In a green-green wood, by waters fair,
Just as the words came up to me
I sang it under the wild wood tree.

Widdershins turned I, singing it low,
Watching the wild birds come and go;
No cloud in the deep dark blue to be seen
Under the thick-thatched branches green.

Twilight came; silence came; The planet
of Evening's silver flame;
By darkening paths I wandered through
Thickets trembling with drops of dew.

But the music is lost and the words are gone
Of the song I sang as I sat alone,
Ages and ages have fallen on me –
On the wood and the pool and the elder tree.

Music Ina Boyle 1889-1967
Text Walter de la Mare 1873-1956

Midnight on the Great Western

In the third-class seat sat the journeying boy,
And the roof-lamp's oily flame
Played down on his listless form and face,
Bewrapt past knowing to what he was going,
Or whence he came.

In the band of his hat the journeying boy
Had a ticket stuck; and a string
Around his neck bore the key of his box,
That twinkled gleams of the lamp's sad
beams
Like a living thing.

What past can be yours, O journeying boy
Towards a world unknown,
Who calmly, as if incurious quite
On all at stake, can undertake
This plunge alone?

Knows your soul a sphere, O journeying boy,
Our rude realms far above,
Whence with spacious vision you mark and
mete
This region of sin that you find you in,
But are not of?

Music Benjamin Britten 1913-76
Text Hardy

Written on terrestrial things

I leant upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-gray,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
The Century's corpse outleant,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind his death-lament.
The wind his death-lament.
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
And every spirit upon earth

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead,
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled
through
His happy goodnight air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

Music Judith Weir b.1954
Text Hardy

The too short time

Nine leaves a minute
Swim down shakily;
Each one fain would spin it
Straight to earth; but, see,
How the sharp airs win it
Slantwise away!—Here it say,
'Now we have finished our summer show
Of what we knew the way to do:
Alas, not much! But, as things go,
As fair as any. And night-time calls,
And the curtain falls!'

Sunlight goes on shining
As if no frost were here,
Blackbirds seem designing
Where to build next year;
Yet is warmth declining:
And still the day seems to say,
'Saw you how Dame Summer drest?
Of all God taught her she bethought her!
Alas, not much! And yet the best
She could, within the too short time
Granted her prime.'

Music Finzi
Text Hardy

Come unto these yellow sands

Come unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands:
Courtsied when you have and kiss'd
The wild waves whist,
Foot it featly here and there;
And, sweet sprites, the burthen bear.
Hark, hark!
The watch-dogs bark!
Hark, hark! I hear
The strain of strutting chanticleer
Cry, Cock-a-diddle-dow.

Music Michael Tippett 1905-98
Text Shakespeare

The Wind and the Rain

When that I was and a little tiny boy,
With hey, ho, hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
A foolish thing was but a toy,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came to man's estate,
With hey, ho, hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
'Gainst knaves and thieves men shut their gate,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I come, alas! to wive,
With hey, ho, hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
By swaggering could I never thrive,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came unto my beds,
With hey, ho, hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
With toss-pots still had drunken heads,
For the rain it raineth every day.

A great while ago the world begun,
With hey, ho, hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
But that's all one, our play is done,
And we'll strive to please you every day.

Music Elizabeth Maconchy 1907-94

Text Shakespeare

Echo

Seven sweet notes
In the moonlight pale
Warbled a leaf-hidden
Nightingale:
And Echo hiding
By an old green wall
Under the willows
Sighed back them all.

Music Doreen Carwithen 1922-2003

Text de la Mare

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 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.

Music Vaughan Williams

Text Stevenson

The stormy evening

The stormy evening closes now in vain,
Loud wails the wind and beats the driving rain,
While here in sheltered house
With firey-painted walls,
I hear the wind abroad,
I hark the calling squalls –
'Blow, blow,' I cry, 'you burst your cheeks in
vain!
Blow, blow,' I cry, 'my love is home again!'

Yon ship you chase perchance but yesternight
Bore still the precious freight of my delight,
That here in sheltered house
With firey-painted walls,
Now hears the wind abroad,
Now harks the calling squalls.
'Blow, blow,' I cry, 'in vain you rouse the sea,
My rescued sailor shares the fire with me!'

Music Humphrey Proctor-Gregg 1895-1980
Text Stevenson

Peace on Earth

And snow falls down on me.
Peace on earth.
The night is dark and soft.
Peace on earth.
The lights that sparkle in the square,
The smoke that lingers in the air.
Peace on earth.

And grace falls down on me.
Peace on earth.
The dark will turn aside.
Peace on earth.
The fires that burn in every hearth
Do sing our praise of Christmas past.
Peace on earth.

Hear them singing.

Peace on earth.

Music and Text Errollyn Wallen b.1958