

re-sung

re-do. re-learn. re-imagine.

Le jardin enchanté

10 November 2021

7pm - St John the Divine, Kennington

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Dylan Perez, piano

Close your eyes. Imagine your favourite walk outside in nature. Feel the soil under your feet, the crisp air entering your nose. Hear the sounds of the wind in the grass, the rain on the stones, the animal's muffled chorus. This is where we start today's journey - come along with me!

I am in a meadow of flowers. It is spring time and the blossoms have opened. **The Daisies** (Samuel Barber/James Stephens) are at my feet and I am happy to be there with my beloved in the sunshine. Nearby, a small rose reminds me of how lovely my sweetheart is. I want them to know that even if love is short, it is worth it - don't be shy! (**Go, Lovely Rose** Roger Quilter/Edmund Waller). I see an abundance of flowers that are so pretty, but none are on the same level as my own **Two Little Flowers** (Charles Ives). Even though they are fading, I look **To Daffodils** (Frederick Delius/Robert Herrick). They remind me that life itself is fading and to fully take every moment in. To my right, I am overwhelmed by **The Cherry Blooming** (Madeleine Dring/Joseph Ellison). The flowers situated on the branches look like heavenly beings. Well, they must be touched by God to have the power of resurrection each year! Another rose catches my eye (**La Rose** Gabriel Faure/Leconte de Lisle). Roses are so beautiful that when the sea produced Aphrodite, the Earth birthed the rose and all Olympus rejoiced. The ubiquitous daisies around me bring me back to reality as I admire their white silken petals (**Margaritki** Sergei Rachmaninov/Igor Lotaryov).

Just in the distance, I can hear the susurrations of water. The music of the deep water and rolling waves calls me to **Where Corals Lie** (Edward Elgar/Richard Garnett). This mysterious power even pulls me away from my lover - much to their dismay. I can't help but venture over and see what I may find... As soon as I reach the sound of the water, I discover a grotto. It is ancient and perplexing - the waves resting on the pebbles after their arduous journey. This grotto is the place where Narcissus died, falling into the water after his own reflection (**La Grotte** Claude Debussy/Tristan L'hermite). Suddenly, notice the sound of a tiny cricket and the glow-worms in the twilight. Midges swirl around, dancing with the large winged butterflies that make no noise. There is so much commotion, I think I even see Tytania and Oberon. A thousand insects make a frenetic circle and then then flit away into the silent shadow. I am left mystified - there is nothing left but the immense, blue night (**Féerie au clair de la lune** Henri Dutilleux/Raymond Genty).

Am I under a spell? I can't quite understand what I am seeing... are they human girls or flowers? Or both? The cornflowers (*Kornblumen*) are full of peace and gentleness, they don't know how beautiful they are. Poppies (*Mohnblumen*) on the other hand are so fiery, they seem to make fun of the cornflowers. But I can see that they bully others only because they are hiding insecurities. But the ivy (*Epheu*) are those who do not have strength of their own - their life's destiny is complete when they twine around their first love. Looking at the water, I notice a waterlily (*Wasserrose*). It is ethereal, and only opens at the light of the moon. She seems to talk with the stars and when I look at her, I am forced to believe in magic and elves (*Mädchenblumen* Richard Strauss/Felix Dahn).

I shake my head to get rid of the blur and gaze around me. I realise I am wet, the soft rain pattering around me in the garden I am in. The rain wakes up the green in the trees and causes me to think I hear soft footsteps. The garden shudders and the rain seems to join sky and land together in a watercolour. All this rain from the garden is falling into me, into my shadow that I have created (*Le jardin mouillé* Albert Roussel/Henri de Regnier). In the corner of my eye I see a terracotta faun laughing at this moment I find myself in (*Le faune* Claude Debussy/Paul Verlaine). I was so happy a while ago, this dreamworld has taken me into a space I was not prepared for.

What is that gliding over the water like a sledge from cloud to cloud? Ah, it's a swan! (*Le cygne* Maurice Ravel/Jules Renard) He must be hungry for the clouds, he keeps diving in for them. He comes back up, surprised that he has caught nothing. Then he sees another cloud reappearing in the corner of the grotto. He tires himself out by diving, why does he do this? I look closer and realise that, of course he is not diving for clouds but actually he is getting into the mud for worms. He will get fat like a goose!

I am tired and close my eyes. I was contemplative with memories in the daytime, full of opportunity and love, but now night has come and I wander, melancholic, down this dark *Dream Valley* (Roger Quilter/William Blake). I dream of three maidens and my heart blooms uncontrollably. They are asleep under an apple tree in my father's garden (*In meines vaters garten* Alma Mahler/Otto Hartleben). The first one does not wake, only her eyelids flutter; the second wakes to the red morning light and asks me, "Do you hear the drumbeat?". The third, my beloved, joins me on the battlefield and kisses the hem of my uniform. I am victorious in battle!

The wind, God's own wings, rush through the trees around me in the deep cool of the night (*Waldesnacht* Franz Schubert/Friederich von Schlegel). My thoughts rush forth, just like a hero on a horse. The pine trees rustle with the spirit surging through them. The morning light is glorious and red as it flickers up to heaven as if summoned by God. The water I heard earlier turns my sadness into flowers. Even so, I feel waves of depression in my heart and I am taken away by them. The spirit that is flowing around me fills me with love, though, and my urge to struggle and be wild is quieted. My soul is full of creativity and possibility. Free from all restraints, my thoughts flow forward, through the night. I am not afraid of the rushing spirits anymore and I do not know where the forest ends and I begin.