



Australian Government



NATIONAL TRUST

Australian Heritage Festival

Soirées Musicales Quintette

presents

Songs of Love

St Mary's Anglican Church, Main Street Kangaroo Point

4pm Sunday 7 May 2017

Program

Two partsongs

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Lebenslust (Joy of living), D 609

Des Tages Weihe (The Day's Consecration), D 763

Chansons des Bois d'Amaranthe (Songs of the amaranth forest)

Jules Massenet (1842-1912)

O bon printemps (O beautiful spring - trio)

Oiseau des Bois (Bird of the woods - duet)

Chères fleurs (Dear flowers - quartet)

O ruisseau (O little stream - trio)

Chantez! (Sing! - quartet)

Two pieces from *Soirées Musicales Op.6*

Clara Schumann (1819-1896)

Mazurka in G minor

Mazurka in G major

Liebeslieder Walzer (Love song waltzes) Op. 64

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

1. *Rede, Mädchen, allzu liebes* (Speak, maiden whom I love)
2. *Am Gesteine rauscht die Flut* (The stream rushes against the stones)
3. *O die Frauen* (Oh, women)
4. *Wie des Abends schöne Röte* (Like the evening's beautiful red glow)
5. *Die grüne Hopfenranke* (The green hopvine)
6. *Ein kleiner, hübscher Vogel nahm den Flug* (A little pretty bird took flight)
7. *Wohl schön bewandt war es vorehe* (How pleasant it once was)
8. *Wenn so lind dein Aug emir* (When your eyes look at me)
9. *Am Donaustrande, da steht ein Haus* (On the Danube bank stands a house)
10. *O wie sanft die Quelle sich* (Oh, how gently the stream)
11. *Nein, es ist nicht auszukommen mit den Leuten* (No, there's no dealing with people)
12. *Schlosser auf, und mache Schlösser* (Locksmith, come and make locks)
13. *Vögelein durchrauscht die Luft* (The little bird flutters through the air)
14. *Sieh, wie ist die Welle klar* (See how clear the waters are)
15. *Nachtigall, sie singt so schön* (The nightingale sings so beautifully)
16. *Ein dunkler Schlacht ist Liebe* (Love is a dark shaft)
17. *Nicht wandle, mein Licht* (Light of my life, don't walk out there)
18. *Es bebet das Gesträuche* (The bushes are quivering)

Two partsongs

Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868)

I Gondolieri (The gondoliers)

La passeggiata (The promenade)

About the program

Soirées Musicales Quintette is proud to be presenting two concerts at St Mary's Church during 2017. The combination of elegant music with heritage architecture is a perfect blend of elements that is sure to inspire and delight.

The nineteenth century saw a flourishing of domestic music-making, particularly in German-speaking states. All cultured families owned a piano, around which social entertainments focussed, either for the sole delight of participants, or with small audiences. For this burgeoning market much repertoire was composed for solo piano with or without voice(s). Countless settings appeared, either as a free collection or as a cycle forming an integrated whole. Today's program features works from this vast repertoire, with diverse settings in three languages.

Each of the major romantic composers created a large body of song. Skilful text setting is displayed in musical interpretations of contemporary poetry, equally evident in the repertoire for solo quartet and piano. Stunning harmonies are created by the interplay of well-matched voices in four-part ensembles, in juxtaposition to solo, duet and trio combinations. Just as a solo song cycle traces a narrative thread, some quartet sets are also a through-composed entity. Aspects of love and relationships, also life's pleasures and challenges, are brought to life through a medium that is both artistically satisfying for performers, and appealing to audiences.

Franz Schubert needs no introduction as a song composer, but his partsongs are less familiar. **Lebenslust** is a lively setting reminiscent of the Austrian *Ländler*, a waltz-like dance form. The text about youthful revelling is by Johann Karl Unger, a professor at the Ritterakademie in Vienna which was a finishing school for men of noble birth. Unger may have also introduced Schubert to the Esterházy family, so this song was probably composed during his first summers with the family in 1818. In contrast, **Des Tages Weihe**, probably composed in 1822 to the text of an unknown poet, has religious overtones that are set with broad expressive melodies and rich harmonies.

Jules Massenet is best known for his operas, but his output including over 200 songs is not well known today. His music is not directly equivalent to any of his contemporaries such as Fauré and Debussy, but he is credited with some innovations, such as introducing the song cycle to France as early as 1866. However it was not until 1901 that his **Chansons des Bois d'Amaranthe** for vocal quartet was composed. Its internal unity is derived from the poetry, but each song is distinct in style and scoring. The opening trio with its welcome to spring is quite ingratiating, followed by a female duet depicting a light bantering conversation with forest birds. The central quartet recalls the style of a Renaissance unaccompanied madrigal or chanson with floral imagery, while the next trio is in the style of a tenor aria with baroque 'echo' refrains that illustrate a rhetorical dialogue with a flowing stream. The finale is an energetic plea for the birds of spring to rejoice in nature, with all voices in full operatic flight underpinned by a vivacious piano part.

Clara Schumann (née Wieck) was both a virtuoso pianist and accomplished composer. Her **Soirées Musicales** was composed in 1836 at age 17, by which time Robert Schumann had moved into the Wieck household. The set of short pieces brings together various genres made famous by Chopin, whose music was much admired by both the Schumanns. The Polish mazurka can be vigorous or reflective, so interestingly both aspects were represented by her inclusion of two contrasting examples. The **Mazurka in G minor** is limpid and relaxed, while the **Mazurka in G major** is more lively. Clara's future husband used the latter piece as the basis of a large set of dances which was coincidentally, or perhaps deliberately, published as his Opus 6, the *Davidsbündlertänze* (Dances of the band of David).

Johannes Brahms as a chamber music composer *par excellence* was naturally attracted to the vocal quartet and duet medium, and so created a large body of ensemble repertoire. His **Liebeslieder Walzer Op.52** were composed in 1869, soon after settling in Vienna. In addition to paying homage to Schubert who composed many dance forms including the quintessentially Austrian *Ländler*, Brahms acknowledged the popular success of the 'waltz king' Johann Strauss jnr. Both of these pinnacles of creativity in 3/4 time are referenced in Brahms' set of 18 short vocal waltzes, which are highly varied and mostly quite brief. The poetry, which derives from Eastern European folk poetry as translated by Georg Friederich Daumer, is replete with nature imagery including the mighty Danube, rocks and cliffs, moonlight, and in particular various types of birds. Some of the settings flow directly into one another, with continuity of mood and style, while others are stand-alone points of reflection and sometimes the texture is varied with a duet combination or vocal solo. The set of songs proved immensely popular for Brahms, and were followed a few years later by a sequel which was also composed for the combination of vocal quartet with four-hands piano.

Gioacchino Rossini is best known for his operas and some choral works, but his partsongs and duets are less familiar. After several operatic successes in Paris in the 1820s, the composer retreated from the stage and settled there, and spent five years composing little except for his delightful set of songs and duets *Soirées Musicales*, published in 1835. The quartet **I gondolieri** comes from Rossini's final period when he again settled in Paris, from 1855 until his death. It is the first work in Volume 1 of *Péchés de vieillesse*, or 'sins of my old age'. Also from that set is **La passeggiata**, which charmingly represents a leisurely walk outdoors. The voices commence in happy agreement, but the central section with animated vocal counterpoint depicts the rising threat of a storm, after which the opening mood returns leading to an exultant conclusion. While not to be taken too seriously, these ensembles are charming - the famous expatriate Italian was fêted and celebrated in elegant Parisian salons, where these songs were probably first performed.

Soirées Musicales Quintette

presents

Album of Songs

St Mary's Anglican Church,
Main Street Kangaroo Point
4pm Sunday 10 September 2017

Annie Lower – soprano Rachael Griffin – soprano
Mattias Lower – tenor Leon Warnock – baritone
Peter Roennfeldt – piano



Program

Gesang der Geister Op.88 (Song of the spirits)

Carl Loewe (1796-1869)

Frauenliebe und -leben Op.42 (A woman's life and love)

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Seit ich ihn gesehen (Since first meeting him)

Er, der Herrlichste von allen (He, the most wonderful of all)

Ich kann's nicht fassen, nicht glauben (I cannot grasp it, believe it)

Du Ring an meinem Finger (You ring on my finger)

Helft mir, ihr Schwestern (Help me, my sisters)

Süßer Freund, du blickest mich verwundert an (Sweet friend, you look at me in wonder)

An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust (On my heart, at my breast)

Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz getan (Now you have caused me my first pain)

Vier ernste Gesänge Op. 121 (Four serious songs)

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Denn es gehet dem Menschen wie dem Vieh (For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts)

Ich wandte mich und sahe an alle die Unrecht (I returned and considered all the oppressions)

O Tod, wie bitter bist du (O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee)

Wenn ich mit Menschen- und mit Engelnungen redete (Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels)

Italienisches Liederbuch (Italian songbook - selections)

Hugo Wolf (1833-1897)

19. *Auch klein Dinge könne uns entzücken* (Little things can also delight us)

3. *Ihr seid die Allerschönste* (You are the fairest of all)

4. *Gesegnet sei, durch den die Welt entstand* (Blessed be he who created the world)

6. *Wer rief dich den?* (Who called you?)

11. *Wie lange schon war immer mein Verlangen* (How long I have yearned)

8. *Nun lass uns Frieden schliessen* (Now let us make peace)

9. *Dass doch gemalt all' deine Reize wären* (If only a picture were painted of all your charms)

15. *Mein Liebster ist so klein* (My sweetheart is so small)

20. *Mein Liebster singt* (My sweetheart sings)

25. *Mein Liebster hat zu Tische mich geladen* (My sweetheart invited me to dinner)

17. *Und willst du deinen Liebsten sterben* (And if you would see your lover die)

18. *Heb' auf dein blondes Haupt* (Lift up your fair head)

45. *Verschling' der Abgrund meines Liebsten Hütte* (May a chasm swallow up my lover's hut)

38. *Wenn du mich mit den Augen streifst* (When you glance at me)

46. *Ich hab' in Penna einen Liebsten wohnen* (I have one lover living in Penna)

Die Wasserfee Op.21 (The water-sprite)

Josef Gabriel Rheinberger (1839-1901)

About the program

The members of *Soirées Musicales Quintette* are excited to present our second concert for 2017 at St Mary's Church. The combination of elegant music with heritage architecture is a perfect blend that is sure to inspire and delight.

Today's program features the ensemble both as a quartet and also as solo voices, much in the style of a nineteenth-century salon concert at which this repertoire was first heard. Unfortunately, the Lieder (German song) repertoire is not as frequently heard today as it deserves to be. Despite the ready availability of many fine recordings, the artistic pinnacles achieved by German-speaking composers such as Schumann, Brahms and Wolf only fully reveal themselves in the moment of live performance.

A great flowering of romantic poetry supported the huge Lieder output of the nineteenth century. While the miniature forms of text and music particularly suited many composers, there was also the potential to build a larger canvas through the quasi-narrative song cycle, as Schumann ably demonstrated. Others such as Brahms tended to compile sets of Lieder, which only occasionally form a coherent set in terms of their literary origins or musical style. Finally, some composers created large vocal anthologies based on a broad-ranging poetic collection, where recurring themes might exist as a series of vignettes rather than as a development of plot or mood. Today's program features examples of each of these types of Lieder, in what we have called our 'Album of Songs'.

Robert Schumann's 'Year of Song' in 1840 coincided with his marriage to Clara Wieck. Of the more than 120 vocal works within the 18 published collections he produced that year, **Frauenliebe und -leben** cycle is arguably his most empathetic. He set all but the last of Chamisso's nine poems, with the protagonist speaking most often in the first person, but sometimes as an observer to her own life experiences, where dreams and hopes merge with realities.

Graham Johnson, the eminent Lieder accompanist, has argued that rather than portraying a stereotypically submissive lover and wife, this work demonstrates the transformative power of love through the eyes of one who is self-aware. He even suggests that rather than a marriage of people of equal social rank, the woman could well be of lower status, maybe a domestic servant. This theory makes sense of her self-description as a 'niedre Magd' (lowly maid) who retreats to her 'Kämmerlein' (small room) to weep alone, unable to share her great joy with her 'Schwestern' (sisters / work colleagues). She later revels in her married bliss, but even then she claims her inner feelings as her own, with motherhood bringing out new layers of individuality and purpose. The final grief-laden lament is sung as a widow withdrawing into herself. It dissolves into a postlude which recalls the accompaniment, but not full the vocal melody of the opening song - the mood is totally transformed, presenting as Johnson suggests, just 'half a song for half a life'.

There are many charming touches throughout the cycle, including the breathless agitation of the third song which leads to the calmness of the fourth with its circling melody around images of the engagement ring. The fifth song concludes with a brief wedding march after beginning with piano arpeggios that represent either the pealing of church bells or the intertwining of the myrtle flowers in the bride's hair, while the penultimate song lilts joyfully during the act of breast-feeding. Schumann also gives this cycle great musical coherence in his choice of keys. The first five songs are in flat keys, beginning and returning to the tonic of B-flat, representing the woman's journey from the first encounter with her lover to the end of her life as a single person. The next two songs are in sharp keys of G and D, leading to the finale in D minor which through a magical 1-bar transition returns to B-flat for the piano postlude.

The personal and artistic connections between Johannes Brahms and Clara Schumann are never more evident than in his final work, the **Vier ernste Gesänge** of 1896. As he approached his 63rd birthday on May 7 of that year, Brahms had learned of the imminent death after a stroke of Clara, who had been his lifelong muse and professional colleague. Somewhat autobiographically, he later referred to these songs as his 'Schnaderhüpfel', the name of a popular harvest song – Eric Sams suggests Brahms was then contemplating his own 'lifetime's harvest of accomplishment'. Indeed, Brahms would not live to see his next birthday, and these songs were the last work to be published during his lifetime.

In terms of the texts he selected, Brahms continued the practice he adopted with his *German Requiem* in using Luther's German translation of the Bible, and also in focussing on consolation for the bereaved. The vocal writing is a deft combination of declamation and melody, but with the extreme economy that typify the composer's later works. As a motto for death, the melodic interval of a descending third appears frequently, most obviously at the opening of the third song 'O Tod, wie bitter bist du', where these words are declaimed in strong long notes over rather stark piano chords. The first song also uses this motto, but somewhat filled in as part of a scale pattern. Only in the final song does the mood change to a more universally positive tone, most probably inspired by its text from Corinthians 13, which is often described as the 'Love chapter'. It is in the warmer key of E-flat major and has many rising vocal phrases, and even when the text refers to 'seeing through a glass darkly' the very bright key of B major is used. At the climax, the key words 'Glaube, Hoffnung' (faith, hope) are set in long notes, reserving the highest pitch of the entire set for the soaring 'Liebe' (love), which then merges into a brief but broad epilogue for 'is the greatest of all'.

Following these monumental interpretations of romantic and spiritual love, and also issues of life and death, our selections from Hugo Wolf's **Italienisches Liederbuch** take us into other domains. Love as a sensual force, as well as a source of bitterness and resentment when things turn sour, pervades his settings of anonymous poems from Italian sources as translated by Paul Heyse. Dating from the early 1890s and composed in Vienna, they are directly

contemporary with Brahms' final works, but Wolf's musical style seems to be of a totally different time and place. Frequently there are quite angular turns of phrase for the singer to negotiate, as well as rather discordant figurations in the piano, particularly in the more satirical songs. While there are numerous references to locations and social aspects of Italian life, the composer eschews any overt cultural referencing, except for images of the violin and guitar, which suggest the tradition of outdoor serenading. Similarly, the Italian penchant for mingling the secular with the sacred comes through in various songs, where celestial references evoke a more rarified, even sanctified sound-world. This collection, when performed complete by a team of two singers who in turn take the feminine and masculine roles, comprises a full recital in itself. On this occasion we are presenting a selection of about one third of the total number of songs, but we preserve the usual format through a series of alternating monologues. Our grouping offers a sense of beginning and ending in terms of the original set's outer numbers, and also a succession of groupings of two or three songs which go well together. At the centre is a triptych focussing on different aspects of 'Mein Liebster' (my sweetheart) - the comic, the romantic and the satirical. In general, those assigned to the male voice are more typically romantic or adulatory in tone. In contrast the female singer takes on other attributes, culminating with Wolf's final two numbers which express extreme bitterness and finally flirtatiousness, with images of having a lover in every town!

Our ensemble most often performs as a vocal quartet with piano, but today the program is 'bookended' with two stand-alone partsongs. Both of them evince the imagery of water and the spirit world that resides there, as conjured by esteemed poets including Goethe. His texts were frequently set by Carl Loewe, a contemporary of Schubert and Schumann whose career was spent mostly in Stettin, a Baltic German city that is now part of Poland. **Gesang der Geister**, composed in 1840 and therefore around the same time as Schumann's great vocal outpourings, equates mankind's soul with the fluctuations of water, tossed about by life's challenges. Beginning and ending with serene harmonies, three of the voices also take solo passages in contrasting style, before coming back together in a joyous ending. The music of the Munich-based Josef Rheinberger has undergone a major revival in recent decades, revealing him to be of considerable stature as a vocal and ensemble composer. The partsong **Die Wasserfee** of 1869 provides much atmospheric writing for the piano which often plummets into deep registers, while the voices are intermittently inspired to reach upwards as if tempted by a siren's songs, only to return to watery depths at the end.

Soirées Musicales Quintette

presents

A Christmas Songbook

Old Government House Brisbane

7.30pm Saturday 1 December 2017

Program

Prelude

'Die Hirten an der Krippe' (The shepherds at the manger) based on Franz Liszt (1811-56)
'In dulci júbilo' - from *Der Weihnachtsbaum* (Christmas tree suite) S.186

Christmas in Germany and Austria

'Weihnachten' (Christmas) from Johannes Brahms (1833-97)
Volkskinderlieder (Children's folksongs) WoO 31 No.12
'Weihnachtlied' (Christmas song) from Robert Schumann (1810-56)
Lieder-Album für die Jugend (Songbook for the young) Op.79 No.16
'Mariä Wiegenlied' (Mary's lullaby) from Max Reger (1873-1916)
Schlichte Weisen (Simple tunes) Op.76 No.52
'Die Könige' (The magi) from Peter Cornelius (1824-74)
Weihnachtslieder (Christmas songs) Op.8 No.3
'Weihnachtsgefühl' (Christmas feeling) TrV 198 Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Interlude

'Weihnachtstraum' (Christmas dream) based on 'Stille Nacht, heil'ge Nacht' from Max Reger
Aus der Jugendzeit (From childhood) Op.17 No.9

Christmas in Scandinavia

'Sang til juletræet' (Christmas tree song) from Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)
Barnlige Sange (Children's songs) Op.61 No.2
'Jo jouttu ilta' (Outside it is getting dark) from Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)
Fem julsånger (Five Christmas songs) Op.1 No.3
'Barn Jesus' (Baby Jesus) from Niels Gade (1870-90)
Børnenes Juul (Children's Christmas) Op.36 No.2

Interlude

'Jule Klokkerne' (Christmas bells) from Niels Gade
Børnenes Juul (Children's Christmas) Op.36 No.1

Christmas in France

'Il est né le divin enfant' (The divine child is born) arranged by Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)
'Cantique de Noël' (Christmas song – O holy night) Adolphe Adam (1803-56)
'La Nuit de Noël' – Pastorale (Song of Christmas) Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)
'Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maisons'
(Christmas carol for homeless children) Claude Debussy (1862-1918)
'Chantez Noël!' (Sing Merry Christmas) Charles Gounod (1818-93)

Interlude

'Scherzoso' from 'Der Weihnachtsbaum' S.186 from Franz Liszt
Der Weihnachtsbaum (Christmas tree suite) S.186

Christmas in England

'When I view the Mother holding' and arranged by John Stainer (1840-1901)
'The shepherds went their hasty way' from *Christmas Carols Old and New*

Interlude

'Adeste fidelis' (O come, all ye faithful) – March of the Magi from Franz Liszt
Der Weihnachtsbaum (Christmas tree suite) S.186

Christmas in America

'Little star of Bethlehem' Charles Ives (1874-1954)
'I wonder as I wander' arranged by Benjamin Britten (1913-76)

About the program

Concerts of Christmas music are a regular feature throughout the world at this time of year. Whether performed in a church, school or other venue, the spirit of the season imbues the many carols and songs one is likely to hear. While continuing this tradition, today's concert also offers something slightly different. To be sure, some well-known Christmas carols and songs will be heard, either in their original setting or in an arrangement. We also present some music which may not be as familiar, but which is equally interesting.

A concert like this could be themed around the progress of the events of the first Christmas, proceeding from the announcement of the angels, the nativity scene with the shepherds and animals, and through to the arrival of the wise men or 'magi'. Another approach is to sample how various cultural traditions have produced music of the season. *A Christmas Songbook* is such a musical journey of the mind, to many countries and languages. Some are simple children's songs, others are more elaborate pieces. While messages of joy and peace feature often, a few references to the effect of war, and indeed the absence of peace, are also to be found in some of these songs.

After researching Christmas music by composers from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the musical era and repertoire we normally perform, many gems have come to light. As well as artsongs by Reger, Cornelius, Strauss, Debussy and Ives, we present some seasonal children's songs and folksongs by Brahms, Schumann, Grieg, Gade, Sibelius and Britten. A favourite French song by Adam is heard alongside some concert pieces by Rossini and Gounod.

Our journey commences in German-speaking countries, where images of the Christmas tree abound. By way of a prelude, and recurring later as instrumental interludes, are excerpts from Liszt's *Christmas Tree*, a suite for solo piano composed for his family. The long intense winters of Scandinavia have given inspiration to some poignant imagery, including the Christ child also being the Light of the World. The pastoral simplicity of some of the French songs is contrasted by some operatic settings, and these are followed by two examples of Victorian-era domestic music. We finish our journey in North America, with a modern setting of an ancient hills song.

Carols are normally settings of a simple melody across multiple stanzas, and this format will also be heard various selections today. Set piece genres such as the shepherds' pastorale, Mary's lullaby, and the march of the Magi, which give rise to their own distinct musical genres, are also included. With most of the program being performed as works for solo voice or piano, we also present several pieces for full quartet, or solo-refrain settings where different combinations of voices are heard as well. While some of the music is sure to be familiar, at least in the melodic lines, we hope that *A Christmas Songbook* will also take you somewhere new and interesting today.