



**Friday 21 July 2023, 7.30pm**  
**Champs Hill, Coldwaltham**

**Maria Hegele & Friends - Soliloquies**

**Maria Hegele**

*mezzo-soprano*

**Anna Szalucka**

*piano*

**Gabriela Opacka-Boccardo**

*violin*

**Connie Pharoah**

*viola*

**PROGRAMME NOTES**

**Three Songs for voice, viola and piano**

**Frank Bridge (1879-1941)**

Far, far from each other  
Where is it that our Soul doth go?  
Music, when soft Voices Die

In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Frank Bridge established himself variously as composer, conductor and viola player, later achieving recognition when Benjamin Britten became his sole composition pupil. Bridge also secured respect as a song writer, his romantic sensitivity finding musical outlet in texts drawn from various sources, but showing a tendency for Percy Bysshe Shelley, Matthew Arnold and Heinrich Heine. His Three Songs, with their unusual scoring for voice, viola and piano, belong to the years 1906 to 1907 and each demonstrates an innate ear for setting poetic texts. Hints of Fauré and Brahms occupy 'Far, far from each other', Bridge's setting underlining the sense of loss and hoped-for reconciliation within Arnold's 1852 poem. Its questing mood continues in 'Where is it that our soul doth go?', piano and viola providing consolation if not any definitive answer to Heine's question in the song's title. Supported by rippling piano figuration, voice and viola form a haunting partnership in 'Music, when soft Voices Die', Shelley's words and Bridge's setting continuing to 'vibrate in the memory' at the heart-easing close.

**Soliloquies**

**Paul Willot-Förster**

To be introduced from stage

**Song Selection**

**Robert Schumann (1810-1856)**

Im wunderschönen Monat Mai  
Aus meinen Tränen sprießen  
Die Rose, die Lilie, die Taube, die Sonne  
Wenn ich in deine Augen seh'  
Ich will meine Seele tauchen  
Die Lorelei  
Herzeleid  
Mondnacht  
Schöne Fremde

There can be few composers who can claim such a fruitful song-writing year as Robert Schumann, whose *annus mirabilis* of 1840 prompted over 100 settings of poems. To Clara Wieck, his bride to be, he confessed 'What a joy it is to write for the voice', a joy that generated several song cycles. Of these, Heinrich Heine inspired the composer's *Dichterliebe*, its sixteen songs traversing love from its first stirrings in springtime through to its eventual collapse. Typically, love is expressed through the confiding presence of nature and is awakened in 'Im wunderschönen Monat Mai' and 'Aus meinen Tränen sprießen'. As the poet's love develops nature is abandoned in 'Die Rose, die Lilie, die Taube, die Sonne' for the joys of human love in 'Wenn ich in deine Augen sehe' and 'Ich will meine Seele tauchen'.

'Die Lorelei' (another Heine setting) belongs to Schumann's wife Clara, its drama bearing echoes of Schubert's famous *Erlkönig*. Equally intense is her husband's heartrending 'Herzeleid' the first of the *Sechs Lieder* group (Op. 107) from 1851 in which Shakespeare's Ophelia contemplates suicide. Schumann produced two sets of *Liederkreis*, of which the rapt intimacy of 'Mondnacht' and 'Schöne Fremde', belonging to Op. 39, clearly anticipate the composer's own anticipated happiness. 'Widmung' from *Myrthen* (Op. 25) is a joyful setting of an impassioned confessional text by Friedrich Rückert.

### **Chansons Op.15 & 'La capricieuse**

**Edward Elgar (1857-1934)**

Edward Elgar was a master of the short salon piece, and both his *Chanson de Nuit* (Op. 15/1) and *Chanson de Matin* (Op. 15/2) are works of considerable freshness and charm. Reverie and spontaneity are perfectly captured in these examples of Edwardiana, where Elgar's melodic instincts leave an enduring impression. No less ear-catching is *La capricieuse*, a 'morceau de genre' from 1891 which became a favourite of Jascha Heifetz. Like Elgar's *Salut d'amore* it was a financial disappointment, happily not repeated by his Op. 15 Chansons.

### **Quatre Poèmes Op.5**

**Charles Martin Loeffler (1861-1935)**

- 1 La cloche fêlée
- 2 Dansons la gigue
- 3 Le son du cor s'afflige vers les bois
- 4 Sérénade

Elgar's near contemporary the German born composer Charles Martin Loeffler 'was one of the most striking and distinctive figures American music has known'. So read an obituary notice in the New York Times in May 1935. Although a native of Berlin, he completed his studies in Paris before emigrating to the United States in 1881 where for 20 years he served as leader and assistant conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. A highly cultured man, his wide-ranging compositions drew on contemporary French and Russian influences, the former notably in his atmospheric settings of Charles Baudelaire and Paul Verlaine in *Quatre Poèmes* of 1893. To its bittersweet text, 'La cloche fêlée' evokes distant memories prompted by the sound of a cracked bell, while 'Dansons la gigue' brings morbid reminiscences of a departed lover. A sense of loss haunts 'Le son du cor s'afflige vers les bois', and an emotional intensity inhabits the disturbing 'Sérénade'.

David Truslove, 2023

**This event is kindly sponsored by the Bowerman Charitable Trust**