

Alison Wong *soprano*

together with

Choi Hye-Seon *piano*

present a programme of

**George Frideric Handel, Clara Schumann,
and Ernest Chausson** in

From the **Rosy Cup**



THURSDAY

29 APRIL 2021 at 2.30 P.M.

livestreamed from the YST Concert Hall



From the Rosy Cup

Welcome to my junior recital! In this programme of music we explore the theme of the rosy cup. It is the floral chalice, full of love, from which the hummingbird drinks, and it is the goblet of ambrosia, the immortal nectar of the gods. We hear of Hebe, the goddess of youth, and Nike, the goddess of victory, and we hear from a newlywed Clara Schumann, who would one day come to be known among her contemporaries as the “priestess” of her art. Through these figures we glimpse varying notions of love and youth, of which all are colourful and profound.

PROGRAMME

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Nice, che fa? che pensa? HWV 138

Ernest Chausson (1855-1899)

from Sept mélodies, Op. 2

No. 3 *Les Papillons*

No. 6 *Hébé*

No. 7 *Le Colibri*

Clara Schumann (1819-1896)

3 Lieder, Op. 12

No. 1 *Er ist gekommen in Sturm und Regen*

No. 2 *Liebst du um Schönheit*

No. 3 *Warum willst du And're fragen*

Alison Wong Soprano

Choi Hye-Seon Piano

George Frideric Handel *Nice, che fa? che pensa?* HWV 138

During his residence in Rome from 1807 to 1810, Handel's compositional output included close to a hundred secular cantatas, many for his Italian patron, Francesco Maria Ruspoli, of the *Accademia degli Arcadi*. The *Accademia* was a literary circle that sought a return to classical simplicity, in reaction to a perceived corruption of over-ornamentation in contemporary poetry. They drew inspiration from pastoral literature and the romanticisation of Arcadia, and Handel's cantatas centred on the subject of the passionate love of the Arcadian shepherds, with occasional reference to mythological and historical figures.

Nice, che fa? che pensa? is thought to have been written within a year of Handel's departure from Rome. The text invokes Nike, the Greek goddess of victory, to bring him news of his distant beloved whom he longs to see again. In the spirit of fashionable melancholy, the poet sings of being martyred by love, all anguish and desire, but harbours the hope of one last glimpse of his beloved before his final breath. In a spirited aria the poet's delusion is made clear, as he is convinced that the one whom he loves will return to alleviate him of his misery, if only Nike will speak to her.

*Nice, che fá? che pensa?
Rispondi, alato Dio,
Or che solo son io da lei lontano,
So, che dir mi potresti,
Che non l'agita invano
Desio di rivedermi, e che sospira
Dove il suo piè raggira;
Che con dolce favella
Vorebbe la mia bella
Darmi fede maggior di mia costanza,
Che soave speranza
D'esser mia la conforta,
E quasi ascolto
Che ragiona così, ma non è molto.*

*Nice, what is she doing, what is she thinking?
Answer, winged god,
Now that I am alone, far from her,
I know that you could tell me
That the desire to see me again
Does not trouble her in vain, and that she sighs
Where her feet wander;
That with sweet language
My beloved would like
To give me a faith greater than my constance,
That the sweet hope
Of being mine comforts her,
And I almost hear
That she reasons thus, but only faintly.*

*Se pensate che mi moro,
Allor sì che dir potrei,
Nice mia, non pensa poco.
E contento nel martoro,
Forse allora morirei,
Tutto affano e tutto foco.*

*If you think that I am dying,
Then in that case I could indeed say,
My Nice, do not think much [of me].
And content with martyrdom,
I could die strong,
All anguish and desire.*

*Ah! per maggior mio duolo
Lungi da gli occhi suoi
Misero, afflitto, e solo
Mi conduce a morir la pena ria;
E moro quando meno
La bell'anima mia
Pensa che in un baleno
Son da fiero dolor condotto a morte.
Dunque se son già corte
L'ore del viver mio,
Vanne bendato Dio
Al caro ben intorno;
Digli: muore chi t'ama,
E morendo ancor brama
Spirar l'ultimo fiato al tuo ritorno.*

*Ah! For my greater grief,
Far from her eyes,
Miserable, afflicted, and alone,
An evil torment leads me to death;
And I die when less
My beautiful beloved [of me]
Thinks, so that in a flash
I am led to death by fierce grief.
So if they are already brief
The hours of my life,
Go blind god
To be with my dear;
Tell her: he who loves you is dying,
And dying, still longs
To breathe his last breath at you return.*

*Verrà, sì, verrà chi adoro,
Se così gli parlerai,
A dar pace al duolo mio.
Ma so ben ch'il mio Tesoro
Lacrimar poi rivedrai,
Se ridirmi sentirai;
Io ti lascio, io moro, addio.*

*She will come, yes, she will come whom I adore,
If you thus will speak to her,
To give peace to my pain.
But I know well that my treasure
You then will see weeping,
If she hears me say again:
I leave you, I die, farewell.*

Ernest Chausson

from *Sept mélodies*, Op. 2

A pupil of Massenet and Franck at the Paris Conservatoire, and greatly admired by Debussy, Ernest Chausson produced a modest but varied body of work in his twenty-year composing career. His *Sept mélodies* are some of his earliest songs, Chausson having written a number of them while still a student. These songs draw on the rich imagery of nature in their exploration of love, longing, and loss. In *Les Papillons*, snow-white butterflies are emblematic of the soul and its pure love. The vitality of Chausson's piano writing depicts the butterflies' lively motion as they swarm over seas, valleys, and forests. In *Hébé*, Chausson's use of the Phrygian mode, as well as the tempo marking *pas vite*, paint an ethereal picture of an Olympian realm in which Hebe, the cupbearer to the gods, proceeds through a feast with retiring grace—a symbol of vanishing youth and missed opportunity.

Chausson, in his role as secretary of the *Société Nationale de Musique*, promoted and encouraged the talents of Debussy and Satie, and is thought to be a bridge between late Romanticism and Impressionism. This blend of aesthetics can perhaps be heard in *Le Colibri*, in which the hummingbird is a metaphor for consummate love. Chausson's compositional language elucidates the lush vision of the king of hills as he darts through the air and basks in nature, before settling on the golden flower, where he drinks to his death from the rosy cup.

No. 3 *Les Papillons* Text: Théophile Gautier

*Les papillons couleur de neige
Volent par essaims sur la mer;
Beaux papillons blancs, quand pourrai-je
Prendre le bleu chemin de l'air?*

*Snow-coloured butterflies
swarm over the sea;
beautiful white butterflies, when might I
take to the azure path of the air?*

*Savez-vous, ô belle des belles,
Ma bayadère aux yeux de jais,
S'ils me voulaient prêter leurs ailes,
Dites, savez-vous où j'irais?*

*Do you know, O beauty of beauties,
my jet-eyed bayadère—
were they to lend me their wings,
do you know where I would go?*

*Sans prendre un seul baiser aux roses
À travers vallons et forêts,
J'irais à vos lèvres mi-closes,
Fleur de mon âme, et j'y mourrais.*

*Without kissing a single rose,
across valleys and forests
I'd fly to your half-closed lips,
flower of my soul, and there would die.*

No. 6 *Hébé* Text: Louise Ackermann

*Les yeux baissés, rougissante et candide,
Vers leur banquet quand Hébé s'avançait,
Les dieux charmés tendaient leur coupe vide,
Et de nectar l'enfant la remplissait.*

*When Hebe, guileless and with lowered gaze,
Blushingly drew near their feast,
The delighted gods proffered empty goblets
Which the child replenished with nectar.*

*Nous tous aussi, quand passe la jeunesse,
Nous lui tendons notre coupe à l'envi.
Quel est le vin qu'y verse la déesse?
Nous l'ignorons, il enivre et ravit.*

*And we too, when youth fades,
Vie in proffering her our goblets.
What is the wine she dispenses?
We do not know; it elates and enraptures.*

*Ayant souri dans sa grâce immortelle,
Hébé s'éloigne; on la rappelle en vain.
Longtemps encor sur la route éternelle,
Notre œil en pleurs suit l'échanson divin.*

*Having smiled with her immortal grace,
Hebe goes on her way—you summon her in vain.
For a long time still on the eternal path,
We follow the cup-bearer with weeping eyes.*

No. 7 *Le Colibri* Text: Leconte de Lisle

*Le vert colibri, le roi des collines,
Voyant la rosée et le soleil clair
Luire dans son nid tissé d'herbes fines,
Corme Im frais rayon s'échappe dans l'air.*

*The green humming-bird, the king of the hills,
On seeing the dew and gleaming sun
Shine in his nest of fine woven grass,
Darts into the air like a shaft of light.*

*Il se hâte et vole aux sources voisines,
Où les bambous font le bruit de la mer,
Où l'aoka rouge aux odeurs divines
S'ouvre et porte au cœur un humide éclair.*

*He hurries and flies to the nearby springs
Where the bamboos sound like the sea,
Where the red hibiscus with its heavenly scent
Unveils the glint of dew at its heart.*

*Vers la fleur dorée il descend, se pose,
Et boit tant d'amour dans la coupe rose
Qu'il meurt, ne sachant s'il l'a pu tarir.*

*He descends, and settles on the golden flower,
Drinks so much love from the rosy cup
That he dies, not knowing if he'd drunk it dry.*

*Sur ta lèvre pure, o ma bien-aimée,
Telle aussi mon âme eut voulu mourir,
Du premier baiser qui l'a parfumée.*

*On your pure lips, O my beloved,
My own soul too would sooner have died
From that first kiss which scented it!*

Clara Schumann 3 Lieder, Op. 12

Text: Friedrich Rückert

In 1841, Robert Schumann, riding off the compositional spurt of his *Liederjahr*, proposed a collaboration with his new wife. Though a less prolific composer than her husband—she regularly documented her compositional struggles in their marriage diary—the 21-year-old Clara Schumann acquiesced. Together the Schumanns published the *Zwölfe Lieder aus F. Rückerts Liebesfrühling*, with the three songs of Clara Schumann's Op. 12 being her contribution to this joint work. These modified strophic settings encapsulate a sense of simplicity and guilelessness that perhaps provide us a glimpse of young Clara Schumann's bliss in her first year of marriage.

Clara Schumann's career as a pianist on the concert stage spanned some sixty years. The virtuosic piano writing in *Er ist gekommen in Sturm und Regen* reminds us of this, evoking a turbulent storm symbolic of a burgeoning romance. We hear a young maiden's delightful anguish in the music's exaggerated swells, her fervour and agitation escalating before giving way to a sudden calmness, where a welcome shift to the major key heralds the break of spring.

If the first song of the set depicts a woman in her heightened state of passion, then the second and third songs reveal her quieter, innermost sentiments about love. The piano and voice engage in an intimate dialogue in *Liebst du um Schönheit* to bring to life the earnest voice of Rückert's text and the unnamed beloved whom she addresses. Both wait and listen, and answer each other in seamless confluence. *Warum willst du And're fragen* is a song of loving reassurance. With lilting tenderness the woman reminds her beloved that her affections for him are profound and true. She cautions him not to look to words, deeds, or external opinions for proof of her love, for the truth is found in her eyes.

No. 1 *Er ist gekommen in Sturm und Regen*

<i>Er ist gekommen</i>	<i>He came</i>
<i>In Sturm und Regen,</i>	<i>In storm and rain;</i>
<i>Ihm schlug bekloffen</i>	<i>My anxious heart</i>
<i>mein Herz entgegen.</i>	<i>Beat against his.</i>
<i>Wie konnt' ich ahnen,</i>	<i>How could I have known</i>
<i>Dass seine Bahnen</i>	<i>That his path</i>
<i>Sich einen sollten meinen Wegen?</i>	<i>Should unite itself with mine?</i>

<i>Er ist gekommen</i>	<i>He came</i>
<i>In Sturm und Regen,</i>	<i>In storm and rain;</i>
<i>Er hat genommen</i>	<i>Audaciously</i>
<i>Mein Herz verwegen.</i>	<i>He took my heart.</i>
<i>Nahm er das meine?</i>	<i>Did he take mine?</i>
<i>Nahm ich das seine?</i>	<i>Did I take his?</i>
<i>Die beiden kamen sich entgegen.</i>	<i>Both drew near to each other.</i>

<i>Er ist gekommen</i>	<i>He came</i>
<i>In Sturm und Regen,</i>	<i>In storm and rain.</i>
<i>Nun ist gekommen</i>	<i>Now spring's blessing</i>
<i>Des Frühlings Segen.</i>	<i>Has come.</i>
<i>Der Freund zieht weiter,</i>	<i>My friend journeys on,</i>
<i>Ich seh' es heiter,</i>	<i>I watch with good cheer,</i>
<i>Denn er bleibt mein auf allen Wegen.</i>	<i>For he shall be mine wherever he goes.</i>

No. 2 *Liebst du um Schönheit*

<i>Liebst du um Schönheit,</i>	<i>If you love for beauty,</i>
<i>O nicht mich liebe!</i>	<i>O love not me!</i>
<i>Liebe die Sonne,</i>	<i>Love the sun,</i>
<i>Sie trägt ein gold'nes Haar!</i>	<i>She has golden hair!</i>

<i>Liebst du um Jugend,</i>	<i>If you love for youth,</i>
<i>O nicht mich liebe!</i>	<i>O love not me!</i>
<i>Liebe den Frühling,</i>	<i>Love the spring</i>
<i>Der jung ist jedes Jahr!</i>	<i>Who is young each year!</i>

<i>Liebst du um Schätze,</i>	<i>If you love for riches,</i>
<i>O nicht mich liebe!</i>	<i>O love not me!</i>
<i>Liebe die Meerfrau,</i>	<i>Love the mermaid</i>
<i>Sie hat viel Perlen klar!</i>	<i>Who has many shining pearls!</i>

<i>Liebst du um Liebe,</i>	<i>If you love for love,</i>
<i>O ja, mich liebe!</i>	<i>Oh yes, love me!</i>
<i>Liebe mich immer,</i>	<i>Love me always;</i>
<i>Dich lieb' ich immerdar!</i>	<i>I shall love you forever!</i>

No. 3 *Warum willst du And're fragen*

<i>Warum willst du And're fragen,</i>	<i>Why enquire of others,</i>
<i>Die's nicht meinen treu mit dir?</i>	<i>Who are not faithful to you?</i>
<i>Glaube nicht, als was dir sagen</i>	<i>Only believe what these two eyes</i>
<i>Diese beiden Augen hier!</i>	<i>Here tell you!</i>

<i>Glaube nicht den fremden Leuten,</i>	<i>Do not believe what others say,</i>
<i>Glaube nicht dem eignen Wahn;</i>	<i>Do not believe strange fancies;</i>
<i>Nicht mein Tun auch sollst du deuten,</i>	<i>Nor should you interpret my deeds,</i>
<i>Sondern sieh die Augen an!</i>	<i>But instead look at these eyes!</i>

<i>Schweigt die Lippe deinen Fragen,</i>	<i>Are my lips silent to your questions</i>
<i>Oder zeugt sie gegen mich?</i>	<i>Or do they testify against me?</i>
<i>Was auch meine Lippen sagen,</i>	<i>Whatever my lips might say;</i>
<i>Sieh mein Aug', ich liebe dich!</i>	<i>Look at my eyes; I love you!</i>