

LSO ST LUKES

BBC
RADIO 3

LUNCHTIME CONCERTS

Thursday 26 February 1–2.05pm
Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS AND HIS CIRCLE

Kitty Whately & William Vann

A selection of songs by **Ralph Vaughan Williams**,
Rebecca Clarke, **Elizabeth Maconchy** and
Grace Williams

Kitty Whately mezzo-soprano
William Vann piano

Recorded for future broadcast on BBC Radio 3

LSO

Today's Programme

The Hawksmoor Space is open from one hour before the concert, selling hot and cold drinks. Please note, we can accept card payments only. Only cold drinks will be permitted inside the Jerwood Hall.

In accordance with the requirements of Islington Council, persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any gangway.

The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are strictly forbidden without formal consent from LSO St Luke's.

Please make sure that digital watch alarms and mobile phones are switched off during the performance.

Please recycle this programme after use.

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Four Poems by Fredegond Shove:

- 1 Motion and Stillness
- 2 Four Nights
- 3 The New Ghost
- 4 The Water Mill

Rebecca Clarke

Return of Spring

Colour of Life

Tears

Ralph Vaughan Williams

The Sky Above the Roof

Elizabeth Maconchy

In Fountain Court

Ophelia's Song

The Woodspurge

Grace Williams

Black-Eyed Susan from
'The Billows of the Sea'

Rebecca Clarke

The Seal Man

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Four Last Songs:

- 1 Procris
- 2 Menelaus
- 3 Tired
- 4 Hands, Eyes, and Heart

Programme Note

When it came to word-setting, Ralph Vaughan Williams showed a generation of composers how to escape the conventions of traditional 'strophic' song, and to think in terms of a more free-floating lyricism. His own research into British folksong, and his early love for the free verse of the American mystic Walt Whitman, had helped him develop a style of writing for solo voices or chorus that others were able to take and run with.

We begin with the **Four Poems by Fredegond Shove**, settings of texts by Vaughan Williams' highly talented sister-in-law (Shove is pronounced 'Shohve'), in which he found excellent vehicles for his own unconventional religious inclinations. Rather than conventional expressions of Anglican piety, these poems allowed him to explore a more personal and visionary spirituality. This is especially true in the visionary third song, 'The New Ghost', where the boundaries between earthly and spiritual experience seem to dissolve. In the final song, 'The Water Mill', the imagery becomes more intimate and domestic, and there's a reminder that Vaughan Williams was one of music's great cat-lovers.

The programme then turns to **Rebecca Clarke**. Precociously talented as she was, Clarke was prone to depression and self-doubt, not helped by prevailing dismissive ideas about women composers and by her father's refusal to help when she chose music as a

career. In 'Return of Spring', 'Colour of Life' and 'Tears', a richly coloured harmonic palette and supple, speech-inflected vocal writing reveal her acute sensitivity to text, while the piano often carries a restless undercurrent that deepens the emotional atmosphere. Despite encouragement from Vaughan Williams and a few others, she wasn't able to find the steely strength that kept Elizabeth Maconchy going. This is all the more tragic because in her finest works, Clarke found a way to poeticise her troubled nature in a highly personal language, as is evident in these songs.

We return to Vaughan Williams with the Verlaine-based **'The Sky Above the Roof'** (1908). An even more folk-like simplicity pervades this setting.

After studying with Vaughan Williams at the Royal College of Music, **Elizabeth Maconchy** went on to study with the composer Karel Jirák in Prague. There she began to forge her own highly distinctive style, energised by the folk-derived innovations of Béla Bartók and Leoš Janáček, especially in her series of 13 magnificent string quartets. The three songs performed here owe more to Vaughan Williams, but they are far from derivative, and are uniquely haunting, especially the seemingly simple 'Ophelia's Song', a little masterpiece of delicate suggestiveness.

The sea, and particularly the magnificent coast of her native Wales, was a recurring inspiration for Grace Williams. 'Black-Eyed Susan' is one of four songs composed

Programme Note

in 1969 for a cycle entitled ***The Billows of the Sea***. The text laments the loss at sea of a beloved sailor, and the music vividly captures both the drama of the ocean and the anguish of parting.

We then return to **Rebecca Clarke** for 'The Seal Man', which tells of a woman who chooses death by drowning in the arms of a mysterious sea-creature, rather than suffer the pain and tribulations of the 'real' world.

The programme concludes with Vaughan Williams' **Four Last Songs**. These were composed to poems by Vaughan Williams' second wife, Ursula, during the last four years of his life. The pain and joy of deep love are expressed movingly here, especially in 'Hands, Eyes and Heart'; death is faced calmly ('Tired'), while the last song ('Menelaus') hints at transcendence.

Programme Note Writer

Stephen Johnson studied cello at the Northern School of Music, Manchester (later the Royal Northern College), and went on to study composition with Alexander Goehr at Leeds University. He broadcasts frequently for BBC Radio 3, 4 and World Service.

Four Poems by Fredegond Shove

Text

1 Motion and Stillness

The sea shells lie as cold as death
Under the sea,
The clouds move in a wasted wreath
Eternally;
The cows sleep on the tranquil slopes
Above the bay;
The ships like evanescent hopes
Vanish away.

2 Four Nights

O when I shut my eyes in spring
A choir of heaven's swans I see,
They sail on lakes of blue, and sing
Or shelter in a willow tree:
They sing of peace in heart and mind
Such as on earth you may not find.
When I lie down in summertime
I still can hear the scythes that smite
the ripened flowers in their prime,
And still can see the meadows white.
In summertime my rest is small,
If any rest I find at all.

In autumn, when my eyes I close
I see the yellow stars ablaze
Among the tangled winds that rose
At sunset in a circled maze;
Like armoured nights they ride the skies
And prick the closed lids of my eyes.

But when in wintertime I sleep
I nothing see, nor nothing hear;
The angels in my spirit keep
A silent watch, and being there
They cause my soul to lie as dead
A stream enchanted in her bed.

3 The New Ghost

And he cast it down, down,
on the green grass,
Over the young crocuses,
where the dew was.
He cast the garment of his
flesh that was full of death,
And like a sword his spirit showed
out of the cold sheath.

He went a pace or two, he
went to meet his Lord
And, as I said, his spirit looked
like a clean sword,
And seeing him the naked
trees began shivering
And all the birds cried out aloud
as it were late spring.

And the Lord came on,
He came down, and saw
That a soul was waiting there
for Him, one without flaw,
And they embraced in the
churchyard where the robins play,
And the daffodils hang down their
heads, as they burn away.

The Lord held his head fast,
and you could see
That He kissed the unsheathed
ghost that was gone free
As a hot sun, on a March day,
kisses the cold ground;
And the spirit answered, for he knew
well that his peace was found.

The spirit trembled, and sprang
up at the Lord's word,
As on a wild April day, springs a small bird,
So the ghost's feet lifting him up,
he kissed the Lord's cheek,
And for the greatness of their love
neither of them could speak.

But the Lord went then,
to show him the way,
Over the young crocuses,
under the green may
That was not in flower yet,
to a far distant land:
And the ghost followed like a naked
cloud holding the sun's hand.

4 The Water Mill

There is a mill, an ancient one,
Brown with rain, and dry with sun,
The miller's house is joined with it,
And in July the swallows flit
To and fro, in and out,
Round the windows, all about;
The mill wheel whirrs and the waters roar
Out of the dark arch by the door,
The willows toss their silver heads,
And the phloxes in the garden beds
Turn red, turn grey,
With the time of day,
And smell sweet in the rain, then die away.

The miller's cat is a tabby, she
Is as lean as a healthy cat can be,
She plays in the loft where
the sunbeams stroke
The sacks' fat backs, and beetles choke
In the floury dust. The Wheel goes round
And the miller's wife sleeps
fast and sound.

There is a clock inside the house,
Very tall and very bright,
It strikes the hour when shadows drowse,
Or showers make the windows white;
Loud and sweet, in rain and sun,
The clock strikes, and the work is done.
The miller's wife and his eldest girl
Clean and cook, while the
mill wheels whirl.
The children take their meat to school,
And at dusk they play by the twilit pool;
Bare-foot, bare-head,
Till the day is dead,
And their mother calls them in to bed.

The supper stands on the
clean-scrubbed board,
And the miller drinks like a thirsty lord;
The young men come for
his daughter's sake,
But she never knows which one to take;
She drives her needle, and pins her stuff,
While the moon shines gold,
and the lamp shines buff.

Fredegond Cecily Shove (1899–1949)

Return of Spring

Text

A lovely maiden, roaming
The wild dark valley through
Culls from the shining waters
Lilies and lotus blue
With leaves the peach trees are laden
The wind sighs through the haze
And the willows wave their shadows
Down the oriole-haunted ways
As passion-tranced, I follow
I hear the old refrain
Of spring's eternal story
That was old and is young again.

Colour of Life

Text

Would that we might forever stay
The rainbow glories of the world
The blue of the unfathomed sea
The rare azalea late unfurled
The parrot of a greener spring
The willows and the terrace line
The stranger from the night-steeped hills
The roselit brimming cup of wine
Oh, for a life that stretched afar
Where no dead dust of books were rife
Where spring sang clear from star to star
Alas, what hope for such a life?

Tears

Text

High o'er the hill the moon barque steers.
The lantern lights depart.
Dead springs are stirring in my heart;
And there are tears ...
But that which makes my grief more deep
Is that you know not when I weep.
What hast thou done O heart,
With thy spent years?

Settings of ancient Chinese poetry
(translated by H A Giles, 1901)

The Sky Above the Roof

Text

The sky above the roof
Is calm and sweet
A tree above the roof
Bends in the heat

A bell from out the blue
Drowsily rings
A bird from out the blue
Plaintively sings

Ah God! A life is here,
Simple and fair
Murmurs of strife are here
Lost in the air

Why dost thou weep O heart
Poured out in tears?
What hast thou done O heart,
With thy spent years?

Mabel Dearmer (1872–1915)

In Fountain Court

Text

The fountain murmuring of sleep,
A drowsy tune;
The flickering green of leaves that keep
The light of June.
Peace, through a slumbering afternoon,
The peace of June,
A waiting ghost, in the blue sky,
The white curved moon;
June, hushed and breathless, waits, and I
Wait too, with June.
Come, through the lingering afternoon,
Soon, love, come soon.

Arthur Symons (1865–1945)

Ophelia's Song

Text

How should I your true love know
From another one?
By his cockle hat and staff,
And his sandal shoon.

He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone;
At his head a grass green turf,
At his heels a stone.

White his shroud as the mountain snow,
Larded with sweet flowers;
Which bewept to the grave did go
With true-love showers.

Hamlet (Act IV, Scene 5)

The Woodspurge

Text

The wind flapp'd loose, the wind was still,
Shaken out dead from tree and hill:
I had walk'd on at the wind's will,
I sat now, for the wind was still.

Between my knees my forehead was,
My lips, drawn in, said not Alas!
My hair was over in the grass,
My naked ears heard the day pass.

My eyes, wide open, had the run
Of some ten weeds to fix upon;
Among those few, out of the sun,
The woodspurge flower'd,
three cups in one.

From perfect grief there need not be
Wisdom or even memory:
One thing then learnt remains to me,
The woodspurge has a cup of three.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882)

Black-Eyed Susan

Text

All in the Downs the fleet was moored,
The streamers waving in the wind,
When black-eyed Susan came on board:
'O! where shall I my true-love find?
Tell me, ye jovial sailors, tell me true,
If my sweet William sails among the crew?'

William, who high upon the yard
Rocked with the billows to and fro,
Soon as her well-known voice he heard,
He sighted and cast his eyes below:
The cord slides swiftly through
his glowing hands,
And quick as lightning on
the deck he stands.

So the sweet lark, high poised in air,
Shuts close his pinions to his breast.
If chance his mate's shrill call he hear,
And drops at once into her nest.
The noblest captain in the British fleet
Might envy William's lips
those kisses sweet.

'O Susan, Susan, lovely dear,
My vows shall ever true remain;
Let me kiss off that falling tear,
We only part to meet again.
Change as ye list she wins,
my heart shall be
A faithful compass that still points to thee.'

'Believe not what the landmen say,
Who tempt with doubts thy constant mind:
They'll tell thee, sailors, when away,
In ev'ry port a mistress find.
Yes, yes, believe them when
they tell thee so,
For thou art present wheresoe'er I go.'

'If to far India's coast we sail,
Thy eyes are seen in di'monds bright,
Thy breath is Afric's spicy gale,
Thy skin is ivory, so white.
Thus ev'ry beauteous object that I view,
Wakes in my soul some
charm of lovely Sue'.

'Though battle call me from thy arms
Let not my pretty Susan mourn;
Though cannons roar, yet safe from harms,
William shall to his dear return.
Love turns aside the balls
that round me fly,
Lest precious tears should
drop from Susan's eye'.

The bos'n gave the dreadful word,
The sails their swelling bosom spread;
No longer must she stay aboard:
They kiss'd, she sigh'd, he hung his head.
Her lessening boat, unwilling rows to land:
'Adieu!', she cries; and wav'd her lily hand.

John Gay (1685–1732)

The Seal Man

Text

And he came by her cabin to the
west of the road, calling.
There was a strong love
came up in her at that,
and she put down her sewing on
the table, and 'Mother', she says,
'There's no lock, and no key,
and no bolt, and no door.
There's no iron, nor no stone,
nor anything at all
will keep me this night

from the man I love'.
And she went out into the
moonlight to him,
there by the bush where the flow'rs
is pretty, beyond the river.
And he says to her: 'You are all
of the beauty of the world,
will you come where I go, over
the waves of the sea?'
And she says to him: 'My treasure
and my strength', she says,
'I would follow you on the frozen
hills, my feet bleeding'.
Then they went down into
the sea together,
and the moon made a track upon
the sea, and they walked down it;
it was like a flame before them.
There was no fear at all on her;
only a great love like the
love of the Old Ones,
that was stronger than the
touch of the fool.
She had a little white throat,
and little cheeks like flowers,
and she went down into
the sea with her man,
who wasn't a man at all.
She was drowned, of course.
It's like he never thought that she
wouldn't bear the sea like himself.
She was drowned, drowned.

John Masefield (1878–1967)

Four Last Songs

Text

1 Procris

Procris is lying at the waterside,
The yellow flowers show spring,
The grass is green,
Before a gentle wind the
thin trees lean towards
the rushes,
The rushes to the tide.

She will not see the green
spring turn to summer,
Summer go in a long golden
dusk towards the snow,
With eyes so lit by love that
everything burned,
flowed, grew, blossomed
Moved on foot or wing with the
guessed rhythm of eternity.

All her hope and will flowed
from her unavailing
and she knew darkness,
As her eyes know now
shut to the daylight,
And despair prevailing she
saw no way to go.

2 Menelaus

You will come home,
Not to the home you knew
that your thought
remembers,
Going from rose to rose
along the terraces and
staying to gaze at the vines
and reeds and iris
beside the lake in the morning haze.

Forgetting the place you
are in where the cold
seawinds go crying like gulls
on the beach where
the horned sea poppies grow.

Homesick wanderer,
You will come home to a
home more ancient,
waiting your return:
Sea frets the steps that lie
green under waves and
swallows nest below lintel and eaves:
There lamps are kindled for you,
They will burn till you come,
however you come,
Till the west wind's sheltering
wing folds round
your sail and brings you to land.

Stretch out your hand, murmuring,
Lapping sea and the lamps
and the welcome wait
to draw you home to rest.

You shall come home and
love shall fold you in
joy and lay your heart on her breast.

3 Tired

Sleep, and I'll be still as
another sleeper holding
you in my arms,
Glad that you lie so near at last.

This sheltering midnight is
our meeting place,
No passion or despair or
hope divide me from
your side.

I shall remember firelight
on your sleeping face,
I shall remember shadows
growing deeper as the
fire fell to ashes and the minutes passed.

4 Hands, Eyes, and Heart

Hands, give him all the
measure of my love surer
than any word.

Eyes, be deep pools of truth,
where he may see a
thought more whole than constancy.

Heart, in his keeping, be at
rest and live as music
and silence meet, and both are heard.

Ursula Vaughan Williams (1911–2007)

Kitty Whately

mezzo-soprano



© Sara Porter

Kitty Whately is one of the UK's most characterful mezzo sopranos of the operatic stage and concert platform, and a highly acclaimed interpreter, particularly of contemporary opera and art song.

She has performed leading roles in world and UK premieres of operas by Mark-Anthony Turnage, Missy Mazzoli, Mark Adamo and Vasco Mendonça, alongside song cycles written especially for her by Jonathan Dove, Sally Beamish, Steven Hough, Juliana Hall and Tarik O'Regan. She has received critical acclaim for performances of operas by Benjamin Britten and Bernard Herrmann, as well as a huge variety of roles from the core canon of classical opera.

Whately is a regular presence on the UK's chamber music scene, performing in major recital venues with pianists including Simon Lepper, Joseph Middleton and Anna Tilbrook. A frequent guest on BBC Radio 3 – both in concert and in recordings for 'Composer of the Week' – she has released several acclaimed song discs, including three solo albums and collaborations with artists such as Roderick Williams, Mary Bevan and Gareth Brynmor John. A passionate advocate for women composers, another recent release, *Befreit: A Soul Surrendered* with Joseph Middleton, features world premiere recordings of songs by Johanna Müller-Hermann and Margarete Schweikert.

William Vann

piano



© Helena Cooke

A multiple-prize-winning and critically acclaimed choral, orchestral and opera conductor and song accompanist, William Vann is particularly renowned for his revival performances and recordings of vocal and choral music by British composers.

Born in Bedford, he was a chorister at King's College, Cambridge, and a Music Scholar at Bedford School. He subsequently read Law and took up a choral scholarship at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where he was taught piano by Peter Uppard. He also studied piano accompaniment at the Royal Academy of Music with Malcolm Martineau and Colin Stone.

Vann's many prizes for piano accompaniment include the Wigmore Hall's Jean Meikle Prize for a Duo (with Johnny Herford), the Gerald Moore Award, the Royal Overseas League Accompanists' Award, a Geoffrey Parsons Memorial Trust

Award, the Concordia-Serena Nevill Prize, the Association of English Singers and Speakers Accompanist Prize, the Great Elm Awards Accompanist Prize, the Sir Henry Richardson Scholarship, and the Hodgson Fellowship in piano accompaniment at the RAM.

In addition to his performances of standard song repertoire, he has also either commissioned or given the first performances of new songs and song cycles by Christian Alexander, Joseph Atkins, David Power, Martin Eastwood, Ian Venables, David Nield, Graham Ross (the latter two at Wigmore Hall), and many others. He has conducted Roderick Williams and the London Mozart Players performing his own arrangement for chamber orchestra of George Butterworth's *Six Songs from A Shropshire Lad*.

About LSO St Luke's

LSO St Luke's, the London Symphony Orchestra's home on Old Street, has recently reopened following a major transformation that enhances every aspect of our work – from performance and recording to learning and community engagement. The refurbishment has brought renewed acoustic excellence to the Jerwood Hall, new state-of-the-art recording facilities, improved front-of-house areas and step-free access, as well as low-carbon, energy-efficient upgrades throughout the building. Supported by a successful fundraising campaign and designed by Levitt Bernstein, the project marks the next chapter in our 20-year history as a creative hub for musicians, local communities and young people.

lso.co.uk/lsostrlukes

Free Friday Lunchtime Concert

13 March 2026 12.30pm

Our popular Free Friday Lunchtime Concerts are informal, bite-size events to introduce listeners of all ages to classical music.

LSO Helen Hamlyn Panufnik Composers' Scheme Workshops

16 March 2026 10am & 2.30pm

In these free public workshops, witness a pivotal point in the process of writing a new three-minute orchestral piece, as the LSO play works by the latest cohort of Panufnik composers.

Next Generation

22 March 2026 6pm

Join us on a journey of new music performed and composed by the young musicians of LSO Discovery's Next Generation scheme.

SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

At The Barbican

Laura Bowler *The White Book*

with Barbara Hannigan
and Bar Avni

Wednesday 4 March 6.30pm

Thursday 5 March 7pm

Edward Elgar *The Dream of Gerontius*

with Sir Antonio Pappano

Sunday 19 April 7pm

Tuesday 21 April 7pm

Beethoven, Wagner and Strauss

with Nathalie Stutzmann
and Leif Ove Andsnes

Thursday 14 May 7pm

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FUTURE **BBC** **RADIO 3** CONCERTS

Thursday 5 March 2026 1–2.05pm
Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS AND HIS CIRCLE

Geneva Lewis & Sam Armstrong

Maurice Ravel

Violin Sonata No 1 in A minor

Grace Williams

Violin Sonata

Benjamin Britten

Reveille: Concert Study
for Violin and Piano

Ralph Vaughan Williams

The Lark Ascending

Geneva Lewis violin

Sam Armstrong piano

Recorded for future broadcast on BBC Radio 3

Thursday 19 March 2026 1–2.05pm
Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's

SIR ANTONIO PAPPANO AND FRIENDS

Shostakovich with LSO Musicians

Dmitri Shostakovich

Cello Sonata in D minor

Piano Quintet in G minor

Benjamin Marquise Gilmore violin

Julián Gil Rodríguez violin

Gillianne Haddow viola

David Cohen cello

Sir Antonio Pappano piano

Recorded for future broadcast on BBC Radio 3