

## Ralph Vaughan Williams – On Wenlock Edge

**Text: Alfred Edward Housman** (1859–1936)

[ Poems Nos. 31, 32, 27, 18, 21 & 50

from *A Shropshire Lad* ]

### On Wenlock Edge the wood's in trouble;

His forest fleece the Wrekin heaves;  
The gale, it plies the saplings double,  
And thick on Severn snow the leaves.

'Twould blow like this through holt and hanger

When Uricon the city stood:

'Tis the old wind in the old anger,

But then it threshed another wood.

Then, 'twas before my time, the Roman  
At yonder heaving hill would stare:  
The blood that warms an English yeoman,  
The thoughts that hurt him, they were there.

There, like the wind through woods in riot,  
Through him the gale of life blew high;  
The tree of man was never quiet:  
Then 'twas the Roman, now 'tis I.

The gale, it plies the saplings double,  
It blows so hard, 'twill soon be gone:  
To-day the Roman and his trouble  
Are ashes under Uricon.

### From far, from eve and morning

And yon twelve-winded sky,  
The stuff of life to knit me  
Blew hither: here am I.

Now - for a breath I tarry

Nor yet disperse apart -

Take my hand quick and tell me,

What have you in your heart.

Speak now, and I will answer;

How shall I help you, say;

Ere to the wind's twelve quarters

I take my endless way.

### "Is my team ploughing,

That I was used to drive  
And hear the harness jingle  
When I was man alive?"

Ay, the horses trample,

The harness jingles now;

No change though you lie under

The land you used to plough.

"Is football playing

Along the river-shore,

With lads to chase the leather,

Now I stand up no more?"

Ay, the ball is flying,

The lads play heart and soul;

The goal stands up, the keeper

Stands up to keep the goal.

"Is my girl happy,

That I thought hard to leave,

And has she tired of weeping

As she lies down at eve?"

Ay, she lies down lightly,

She lies not down to weep:

Your girl is well contented.

Be still, my lad, and sleep.

"Is my friend hearty,

Now I am thin and pine,

And has he found to sleep in

A better bed than mine?"

Yes, lad, I lie easy,

I lie as lads would choose;

I cheer a dead man's sweetheart,

Never ask me whose.

### Oh, when I was in love with you,

Then I was clean and brave,

And miles around the wonder grew

How well did I behave.

And now the fancy passes by,

And nothing will remain,

And miles around they'll say that I

Am quite myself again.

### In summertime on Bredon

The bells they sound so clear;

Round both the shires they ring them

In steeples far and near,

A happy noise to hear.

Here of a Sunday morning

My love and I would lie,

And see the coloured counties,

And hear the larks so high

About us in the sky.

The bells would ring to call her

In valleys miles away;

"Come all to church, good people;

Good people come and pray."

But here my love would stay.

And I would turn and answer

Among the springing thyme,

"Oh, peal upon our wedding,

And we will hear the chime,

And come to church in time."

But when the snows at Christmas

On Bredon top were strown,

My love rose up so early

And stole out unbeknown

And went to church alone.

They tolled the one bell only,

Groom there was none to see,

The mourners followed after,

And so to church went she,

And would not wait for me.

The bells they sound on Bredon,

And still the steeples hum,

"Come all to church, good people." -

O noisy bells, be dumb;

I hear you, I will come.

*Clunton and Clunbury, Clungunford and Clun,*

*Are the quietest places under the sun.*

### In valleys of springs of rivers,

By Ony and Teme and Clun,

The country for easy livers,

The quietest under the sun,

We still had sorrows to lighten,

One could not be always glad,

And lads knew trouble at Knighton,

When I was a Knighton lad.

By bridges that Thames runs under,

In London, the town built ill,

'Tis sure small matter for wonder

If sorrow is with one still.

And if as a lad grows older

The troubles he bears are more,

He carries his griefs on a shoulder

That handselled them long before.

Where shall one halt to deliver

This luggage I'd lief set down?

Not Thames, not Teme is the river,

Nor London nor Knighton the town:

'Tis a long way further than Knighton,

A quieter place than Clun,

Where doomsday may thunder and lighten

And little 'twill matter to one.

## Next Concert

### 8 January 2012

**Hall One 6.30pm**

**Sacconi Quartet**

**10th Anniversary Concert**

**Haydn** String Quartet in G Op77 No. 1 [Hob III:81] *Lobkowitz*

**Bartók** String Quartet No. 3

**Schubert** String Quartet in D minor *Death and the Maiden*

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## LONDON CHAMBER MUSIC SERIES

## Turner Ensemble with

## Robert Anthony Gardiner (tenor)

## Presented in partnership with the

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## LONDON CHAMBER MUSIC SERIES

### Turner Ensemble with Robert Anthony Gardiner (tenor) Hall One 6.30pm

<b>Jan Schmolck</b>	violin
<b>Ania Safonova</b>	violin
<b>Fiona Bonds</b>	viola
<b>Naomi Williams</b>	cello
<b>Sophie Rahman</b>	piano

### PROGRAMME

**Ralph Vaughan Williams** (1872–1958)

**‘On Wenlock Edge’ (after Housman) for tenor, strings and piano**

**Antonín Dvořák** (1841–1904)  
**Terzetto in C for two violins and viola, Op. 74**

### INTERVAL (20 minutes)

**Johannes Brahms** (1833–1897)  
**Piano Quintet in F minor, Op. 34**

### PROGRAMME

The **Turner Ensemble** is the brainchild of a group of distinguished principal players from the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden (ROH), as well as the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Philharmonia Orchestra and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. The Ensemble has a five-concert residency for the LCMS at Kings Place. The Ensemble chose the name of the artist JMW Turner for his universal lyricism of colour, light and space and for the inspirational way in which his work is rooted simultaneously in the past and the present. Future plans include the commissioning of a trilogy of compositions inspired by Turner’s paintings, the first of which is by Peter Fribbins, the artistic director of the LCMS.

**Jan Schmolck** (violin) is leader of the Orchestra of St John’s as well as principal second violinist at the ROH. As a member of the Angell Trio and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble, he has undertaken regular tours to the USA, as well as throughout Europe and Japan. In the UK, Jan regularly performs as soloist with OSJ, and his chamber music performances have included regular concerts at the South Bank Centre and Wigmore Hall.

**Ania Safonova** (violin) started playing the violin at the age of five, and is associate leader at the ROH. Between 2001 and 2006 she was associate leader of the Hallé Orchesta and has performed at many international festivals and as guest leader with the BBCSO among others. She plays on a violin by Gennara Gagliano, generously on loan from the Tate Tompkin Trust.

**Fiona Bonds** (viola) enjoys a busy and varied career as viola player in the Emperor String Quartet. She is co-principal viola in the Academy of St Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble, plays in the Wakeford Ensemble and combines all this with playing guest principal with many of the London chamber orchestras.

**Naomi Williams** (cello) became a member of the Orchestra of the ROH in 2006 and has worked as principal and associate principal cellist and with the Soloists of the ROH. She has given recitals throughout Britain and Europe, benefiting from the generous support of the Park Lane Group and the Countess of Munster Scheme.

**Sophie Rahman** (piano) is a founder member of the Plane-Dukes-Rahman Trio. She has appeared with the chamber ensembles of the English Chamber Orchestra, Northern Sinfonia, London Mozart Players, and with the Soloists of the ROH. She has played at recital halls all over Europe and has toured South America, China and the Indian sub-continent among others. Sophia’s radio broadcasts include Radios 3 and 4, Classic FM and the national radio networks of Portugal, Estonia, Sweden and the Netherlands.

**Robert Anthony Gardiner** (tenor) studied at the Royal Northern College of Music, Frankfurt Opera School and the National Opera Studio and has been the recipient of many awards. He was a member of the Jette Parker Young Artists Programme from 2008-2010 and has appeared in a wide number of roles at the ROH and at festivals, including Wexford and Ryedale. He has given several solo recitals and sung with choirs and choral societies all over the UK.

### PROGRAMME

**Ralph Vaughan Williams – On Wenlock Edge (A.E. Housman) for tenor, strings and piano** (1909)

- On Wenlock Edge
- From far, from eve and morning
- Is my team ploughing?
- Oh, when I was in love with you
- Bredon Hill
- Clun

For reinventing the styles of his late 19th-century predecessors, especially those of his compatriots, Vaughan Williams was acclaimed as the most important British composer of his generation. Today, we are likelier to recognise the broader stimuli behind his music, from the dynamism of the Beethovenian symphonic tradition, to its impassioned, goal-directed momentum. Setting six of Housman’s poems from *A Shropshire Lad*, the seminal *On Wenlock Edge* skilfully brought together the seemingly disparate interests of its composer at the time: folksong, a Brahmsian style of composition, and the new influence of French mannerisms. (Tellingly, the composer spent three months in Paris, befriending Maurice Ravel, in 1908.)

Still, Vaughan Williams’s dramatic style, even in this chamber song medium, is quite different from the approach of, say, Ivor Gurney, whose *Ludlow and Teme* 10 years later also set Housman—hence Vaughan Williams’s ‘symphonic’ strings quiver to introduce the opening, eponymous poem, simulating the wind raging across Wenlock’s woods. French styles are ever clearer in ‘From far, from eve and morning’, as Debussyan chains of piano chords ripple beneath the recitative-like voice. This operatic concept is extended in the poignant third number, which in alternate verses sets a fraught dialogue between the dead, written plainsong-like with folksy affectations, and the living. A pithier fourth song offers some relief before ‘Bredon Hill’, by far the longest number, unfurls its bell-like accompaniment to capture the poem’s air of nostalgia. The heat of summer is transformed first into the icy cold of Christmas then into death—the haunting, muted strings now voicing their funereal bells. A calmer optimism is restored in the final verse, as the piano’s broken chords herald the return of a more pentatonic texture, which survives in the instrumental epilogue. ‘Clun’ brings solace, though its minor-inflected major mode is an apt setting for Housman’s vision of an afterlife ‘where doomsday may thunder and lighten... and little ‘twill matter to one.’

**Antonín Dvořák – Terzetto in C for two violins and viola, Op. 74** (1887)

I. Introduzione: Allegro, ma non troppo

II. Larghetto

II. Scherzo: Vivace

III. Tema con variazioni: Poco adagio – Molto allegro

– Moderato (quasi Recit.) – Moderato e risoluto – Molto allegro

Very little music existed for the unconventional trio of two violins and viola before 1900. The early 20th century was a different story, with various figures—Sergei Taneyev (Trio in D major, 1907), Zoltán Kodály (*Serenade*, 1919-20), Frank Bridge (*Trio Rhapsody*, 1928), Bohuslav Martinů (Serenade No. 2, 1932)—adding to its repertory. But we have Dvořák’s fondness for, and inventiveness in, string chamber music to thank for kick-starting the medium. His *Terzetto*, Op. 74 was intended for a tenant, Josef Kruis, who resided in the same Prague house as the composer. An amateur, Kruis struggled with his part, so Dvořák wrote the plainer *Miniatures*, also known simply as *Bagatelles*, Op. 75a, for the same line-up. (Its rearrangement for violin and piano also spawned the more celebrated *Four Romantic Pieces*, Op. 75.)

The Terzetto, then, is the more ambitious work, as evidenced from the outset with the idiosyncratic, Bohemian hue of its *Allegro, ma non troppo* introduction. The restrained beauty of its dominant theme is contrasted with a virtuosic development in which each instrument plays a full part. A slower modulating passage links to the E major *Larghetto*, serene and pastoral in the outer sections, more angular and spirited in its central episode. The *Vivace* scherzo is a characterful *furiant*—a common scheme of Dvořák’s—in which the *pizzicato* viola accompanies a forceful dance above, leading to a sanguine trio by way of contrast. The finale is cast in the form of a theme, dramatic and suspenseful in its original guise, followed by a series of variations that lead us, in their final seconds, us towards C major.

### PROGRAMME

**Johannes Brahms – Piano Quintet in F minor, Op. 34** (1862–64)

I. Allegro non troppo

II. Andante, un poco adagio

III. Scherzo: Allegro

IV. Finale: Poco sostenuto – Allegro non troppo – Presto, non troppo

The core of Brahms’s chamber music centres not on string quartets (he wrote just three), but on trios, quintets and sextets. Indeed, his Op. 34 piano quintet began life as a string quintet—one unusually scored with two cellos in the manner of Schubert’s D. 956 quintet. The celebrated violinist Joseph Joachim, a close friend of and collaborator with Brahms, advised against this medium and so the work was rapidly re-spun as a piano duet. Ever the perfectionist, Brahms listened next to Clara Schumann, who in 1864 suggested the work be recast a second time. The Piano Quintet, Op. 34 was published the following year.

Its *Allegro non troppo* is a densely woven sonata-form movement that begins with a bold unison statement of the principal theme. After some adventurous exploration of this melodic material, the music unusually relocates to C sharp minor—enharmonically a major third lower—to unfurl a more subdued second subject. The recapitulation of the same theme at the end of the movement is in F sharp minor, setting up a conflict with the ‘home’ key, F minor. The A flat major slow movement, marked *Andante, un poco adagio*, is calmer and repeats the relationship between its melodic themes as a second subject, with its characteristic octave leap, is heard in E major. The first theme returns to complete the movement’s ternary form.

The third movement, an *Allegro* scherzo and trio, begins with a syncopated theme that shifts from A flat major to C minor. But its elements—a prominent dotted figure, an optimistic flash of C major (looking to the tonality of the trio ahead), a chordal march-like passage (again related to the trio), and a fugue—mean that motivic variety and juxtaposition outdo any semblance of thematic unity. Brahms’s remarkable finale begins with a pensive, chromatic introduction before the cello is entrusted with the buoyant opening theme of the main body of the music, the *Allegro non troppo*. When the first violin-led second subject enters the fray, the rhythmic and textural intricacy more than compensates for the movement’s lack of a typical central development. *A Presto, non troppo* coda is instead left to reiterate the quintet’s thematic unity and tragic sensibility.