
CONCERTS AT THE UNIVERSITY

Spring - Summer 2019

Friday 8 March 2019

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall

Rachel Beckles Willson · vocals, oud

Ciro Montanari · tabla

Kostas Tsarouchis · double bass

Evgenios Voulgaris · yayli tanbur

'Sing no Sad Songs for Me'

Programme of works by RACHEL BECKLES WILLSON.



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art



Co-funded by the Centre for Theology and Public Issues.

Sing no Sad Songs for Me

Music: Rachel Beckles Willson

Song texts and titles are adapted from poems by Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

1. A Pause of Thought

2. Sing no Sad Songs for Me

When I am dead, my love,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on, as if in pain:
And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.

3. Fata Morgana

4. Meeting Mother

I rose at the dead of night
And went to the lattice alone
To look for my Mother's ghost
Where the ghostly moonlight shone.

I looked and I saw the ghosts
They stood in the blank moonlight
But no shadow lay on the ground;
They spoke without a voice
And they leapt without a sound.

My Mother raised her eyes,
They were blank and could not see;
Yet they held me with their stare
While they seemed to look at me.

She opened her mouth and spoke,
I could not hear a word
While my flesh crept on my bones
And every hair was stirred.

I strained to catch her words
And she strained to make me hear,
But never a sound of words
Fell on my straining ear.

From midnight to the cockcrow
I kept my watch in pain
While the subtle ghosts grew subtler
In the sad night on the wane.

From midnight to the cockcrow
I watched till all were gone,
Some to sleep in the shifting sea
And some under turf and stone:
Living had failed and dead had failed
And I was indeed alone.

5. Yet a While

6. Echo

Come to me in the silence of the night;
Come in the speaking silence of a dream;
Come with soft rounded cheeks and eyes as bright
As sunlight on a stream;
Come back in tears,
O memory, hope, love of finished years.

Oh dream how sweet, too sweet, too bitter sweet,
Whose wakening should have been in Paradise,
Where souls brimfull of love abide and meet;
Where thirsting longing eyes
Watch the slow door
That opening, letting in, lets out no more.

Yet come to me in dreams, that I may live
My very life again tho' cold in death:
Come back to me in dreams, that I may give
Pulse for pulse, breath for breath:
Speak low, lean low,
As long ago, my love, how long ago.

7. After the Echoes have Passed

8. Smile and Forget

'Sing no Sad Songs for Me' connects the modal musical traditions of the Mediterranean at the time of the Ottomans with the poetry of Christina Rossetti, child of Italian exile in 19th-century London. Shaped by a musical language idiom inspired by the avant-garde movements of 20th-century Europe, the combination is unique, conjuring up a kaleidoscope of sounds.

Christina Rossetti, daughter of notable exile Gabriele Rossetti, is considered one of the most important poets of 19th-century England. Her verses, vivid and at the same time other-worldly, are extended here in a serpentine melodies, enveloped in uncustomary sonorities and timbres. The delicate phrases of the oud, and the other-worldly resonance of the yayli tanbur weave into the rhythmic carpet of the Indian tabla and double bass, connecting spaces of Europe and Asia all too often held apart.

Research for 'Sing no Sad Songs for Me' was developed at Labyrinth Musical Seminars (Crete) and in Istanbul, supported by the Leverhulme Trust and Royal Holloway, University of London.

Rachel Beckles Willson is a composer, multi-instrumentalist and researcher, Professor of Music at Royal Holloway, University of London. As a pianist she studied with Ferenc Rados and György Kurtág at the Liszt Academy, Budapest, in ensuing years becoming an international authority in the music of late 20th-century Hungary and publishing two monographs on the subject. She performed internationally as a pianist, but later turned to the oud and voice, making a study of Ottoman and Arab traditions, particularly at Labyrinth Musical Seminars, Crete, where she worked with Ross Daly and Yurdal Tokcan, among many others. She studied saxophone at the Royal Academy of Music, London and privately with Steven Trier, and is currently drawing her experience into educational projects with asylum-seekers that she has spearheaded in Sicily. Her research on the oud, which led to 'Sing no Sad Songs for Me', is also being developed as a concert series in Rome in 2018-19, in collaboration with L'Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente.

Ciro Montanari has emerged as one of the most significant European tabla players, following his studies with Pandit Sankha Chatterjee in India and with Federico Senesi at the Conservatorio di Vicenza. Since 2012 Montanari has played regularly with the foremost Afghan musician Daud Khan Sadozai at a range of international venues, including Labyrinth Musical Seminars in Crete, and the ensemble of Jordi Savall. He has contributed to numerous cross-cultural music projects in Europe and India, ranging from traditional Turkish and Hindustani through to Blues and Irish folk, working with ensembles such as Rasa Seyir, Samvad, Nagma, and Los Pajarillos. He has also played regularly with leading instrumentalists such as Sougata Roy Chowdhury, Kumar Barot, Ross M. Daly, Hooshang Farani (Iran), Efrèn Lopez Sanz, and Giuseppe Frana.

Kostas Tsarouchis was born in Patras, Greece, where in 2004 he began learning oud with Evgenios Voulgaris at the Conservatory of Patras. He studied Byzantine music and makam theory with Christos Tsiamoulis, Evgenios Voulgaris and Spyros Psachos and he is a member of the orchestra of traditional instruments at the Municipal Conservatory of Patras. He attended seminars in oud with Yurdal Tokcan (2005, 2008, 2013) and Haig Yazdjian (2009), also developing a specialism in double bass through studies with Vilen Karapetyan. He has collaborated with Ross Daly, Evgenios Voulgaris, Ourania Lambropoulou, Senix Udeger, Harris Lambrakis, Nikos Paroulakis, and others. He is performing with a variety of bands and projects as an oud and double bass player in festivals in Greece and abroad, and is currently working in Athens.

Evgenios Voulgaris is one of Europe's leading multi-instrumentalists in traditional repertoires of the Mediterranean, and acknowledged as a leading exponent of the yayli tanbur, the bowed long-necked lute of Turkey. Following his studies of Byzantine music, Voulgaris developed the potential of this instrument both in classical Ottoman repertoire and in contemporary music, realised in concerts, recordings, TV productions and in collaboration with leading composers and musicians internationally. He taught oud, yayli tanbur, organology and makam (the modal system of the region's musical traditions) in several institutions, including the Conservatory in Patras, the Department of Traditional Music at the Technological Educational Institute in Epirus, Labyrinth Musical Seminars in Crete, and Music Village in Mount Pelio, Greece.

FORTHCOMING CONCERTS:

Friday 8, Saturday 9, Sunday 10 and Tuesday 12 March
Harpsichord Festival hosted by St Cecilia's Hall and the French Institute.
For details of performances and presentations see:
<http://www.ifecosse.org.uk/Harpsichord-en-fete.html>

Tuesday 12 March
1.10pm
Performances by students from the Reid School of Music, including the winner of the Tovey Memorial Prize Competition 2019, Ed Birchinall.
Admission Free

Tuesday 12, Thursday 14 and Friday 15 March
7.30pm
Assembly Roxy, Roxburgh Place
Edinburgh Studio Opera
William Conway (musical director)
TCHAIKOVSKY Eugene Onegin
£15 / £12 / £6.50 tickets available from www.edinburghstudioopera.org
A limited number of tickets will be available on the door

Friday 15 March
1.10pm
Reid Concert Hall
Phillip Leslie (piano)
HAYDN Variations in F minor Hob.XVI:6
SCHUMANN Humoreske Op.20
Admission Free

Tuesday 19 March
1.10pm
The Edinburgh Quartet
DVOŘÁK String Quartet in E flat major plus the premiere of a new student composition
Admission Free