



THROUGH LIFE AND LOVE

Richard Strauss

Louise Alder *soprano*
Joseph Middleton *piano*



ORCHID CLASSICS

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

THROUGH LIFE AND LOVE

Youth: Das Mädchen

1	Nichts	1.40
2	Leises Lied	3.13
3	Ständchen	2.42
4	Schlagende Herzen	2.29
5	Heimliche Aufforderung	3.16

Longing: Sehnsucht

6	Sehnsucht	4.27
7	Waldseligkeit	2.54
8	Ach was Kummer, Qual und Schmerzen	2.04
9	Breit' über mein Haupt	1.47

Passions: Leidenschaft

10	Wie sollten wir geheim sie halten	1.54
11	Das Rosenband	3.15
12	Ich schwebe	2.03

Partnership: Liebe

13	Nachtgang	3.01
14	Einerlei	2.53
15	Rote Rosen	2.19

Motherhood: Mutterschaft

16	Muttertänderlei	2.27
17	Meinem Kinde	2.52

Loss: Verlust

18	Die Nacht	3.02
19	Befreit	4.54
20	Ruhe, meine Seele!	3.54

Release: Befreiung

21	Zueignung	1.49
22	Weihnachtsgefühl	2.26
23	Allerseelen	3.22

Total time

64.48

Louise Alder *soprano*

Joseph Middleton *piano*

Singing Strauss

Coming from a household filled with lush baroque music as a child, I found Strauss a little later in my musical journey and vividly remember how hard I fell in love with a recording of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf singing *Vier Letzte Lieder*, aged about 16. I couldn't believe from the beginning of the first song it could possibly get any more ecstatic and full of emotion, and yet it did. It was a short step from there to Strauss opera for me, and with the birth of YouTube I sat until the early hours of many a morning in my tiny room at Edinburgh University, listening to, watching and obsessing over *Der Rosenkavalier*'s final trio and presentation of the rose. So when Glyndebourne Festival Opera asked me to cover Sophie in Richard Jones' new production of *Der Rosenkavalier* in 2014, I leapt at the chance, even though at that stage I had only sung a relatively small handful of Strauss songs while a master's student at the Royal College of Music. And as luck would have it, and every cover's dream, I was offered the chance to jump in and sing the BBC Proms performance that year.

That evening I made my Glyndebourne, role, BBC Proms, London Philharmonic Orchestra and BBC Radio 3 débuts simultaneously and it was during the final trio looking out to the packed audience full of friends and family, and to the magnificent Royal Albert Hall in my hometown, that my personal passionate love affair with the great man was cemented. Since then, I have joyfully added many of his Lieder to my repertoire. Strauss' vocal writing is second to none, so descriptive and imaginative. He writes every modicum of emotion and humour into the word setting, the vocal line, tessitura, the harmony and piano part. As a singing actor his songs are a dream to perform, so full of character and chances to colour and play with the text, and purely as an instrument he writes as if the voice has no end and no beginning, at the same time aware of limitations, yet always pushing it to extremes. When I was asked what I would like to sing for my debut album, it was clear that his songs spoke most to me, because in singing

them I feel free, musically uplifted and utterly able to express myself. It was a real pleasure to record this album with the incomparable Joseph Middleton.

Louise Alder, 2017

Richard Strauss Lieder

“Musical ideas have been prepared in me – God knows why – and when, as it were, the barrel is full, a song appears in the twinkling of an eye as soon as I come across a poem more or less corresponding to the subject of the imaginary song... If I find no poem corresponding to the subject which exists in my subconscious mind, then the creative urge has to be re-channelled to the setting of some other poem which I think lends itself to the music. It goes slowly, though... I resort to artifice.”

There are few composers who have achieved more in the field of song than Richard Strauss; and few who would be as frank and unromantic about the nature of their inspiration. Strauss' natural affinity with the contours of the voice, and its capacity to express the nuances of a text, was enriched through working with his wife, soprano Pauline de Ahna, who inspired many of his works and with whom he regularly toured and performed. Indeed, although his songs are often grouped together under an opus number, Strauss rarely regarded them as interrelated song cycles, freely mixing them together in his lieder recitals with Pauline. His choice of texts has come under fire for their sometimes twee or unrefined qualities. Yet Strauss recognised that a brilliant poem does not always lend itself to music – may even be diminished by it, as he explained: “a perfect Goethe poem does not need any music, because precisely in the case of Goethe, music weakens and flattens out every word”.

By 1885 Strauss had produced the remarkably mature Op.10, comprising eight settings of poetry by Hermann von Gilm. After this pivotal achievement he would produce a new opus of songs every year until 1891. *Nichts* boasts a spontaneous

vocal line which rapidly ascends at “Königin” (“My queen”). In the second stanza the poet waxes lyrical about “her eyes... her voice...”, set to music of ravishing richness, and Strauss illustrates the phrase, “Ist die Sonne” with music in the distant and radiant key of C-sharp major.

Leises Lied, Op.39 No.1 (not to be confused with *Leise Lieder*, Op.41 No.5), was composed by Strauss in 1898, alongside two other songs setting poetry by the expressionist poet Richard Dehmel: *Wiegenlied* and *Befreit*. *Leises Lied* is remarkable for its lack of bass, which is supplanted by a left-hand piano part that matches the voice. The right hand, meanwhile, plays delicate chords suffused with enigmatic, whole-tone harmonies which anticipate Debussy.

Although Strauss acknowledged that musical inspiration often preceded his choice of text, *Ständchen*, Op.17 No.2, is a great example of his close attention to the text's rhythmic nuances, which are subtly reflected in the music's metrical devices. There is a continuous shift between two beats and, for longer syllables, three, extended to an alternation of two and three-bar phrases in the final stanza. In the postlude, the last lines from the first two verses are reprised to beautiful effect; this is a justly famous song, so much so in the composer's lifetime that he became dismissive of it, tiring of its many, sometimes questionable, arrangements.

Dating from 1895, *Schlagende Herzen*, Op.29 No.2 is a great instance of Strauss' ability to transform lightweight poetry into rapturous music, aided by the orchestral scale of the piano writing, and a gloriously passionate vocal climax at “Oh wenn er bei mir nur”. In 1891, after an astonishing period of productivity, Strauss had begun what would become a three-year break from song-writing. He then returned to the genre with renewed vigour, presenting Pauline with a priceless wedding gift: his Four Songs, Op.27, of which *Heimliche Aufforderung* is the third. The poem by John Henry Mackay (who also wrote *Morgen!*) is highly charged, its burgeoning eroticism accentuated by the use of a shortened

second line in each verse, only four syllables long, creating a sense of surging forward momentum. Strauss, of course, relishes every chance to mirror the text with electrifying musical equivalents, including thrilling excursions into remote keys, culminating in a powerful climax at “O komm”.

Also dedicated to Pauline, the Five Songs, Op.32 (1896) include the extraordinary *Sehnsucht* (No.2), the first setting by Strauss of the poet Detlev von Liliencron. The work's spare, seductive melancholy anticipates the early songs of Alban Berg. Pauline was the dedicatee, too, of *Waldseligkeit*, Op.49 No.1 (1901), in which the creamy serenity of the vocal line captures the particular aspects of her voice that Strauss so loved, while the text, the last by Dehmel that Strauss would set, concludes with a sense of profound love: “Utterly my own: / Utterly and only yours”. Strauss illustrates these lines with a wide gap between the voice at “Ganz” and the piano's low left-hand D flat, creating a sense of deep contentment.

Taken from a folk song from Alsace, the text to *Ach, was Kummer, Qual und Schmerzen* is humorously ambiguous, the repeated, “Hm, hm” allowing great scope for the singer to imply its hidden meanings through the subtleties of the performance. *Breit' über mein Haupt*, Op.19 No.2 (1885-8) is one of many songs by Strauss to the poetry of Adolf Friedrich von Schack, whose texts Strauss chose for the entirety of Op.19, as well as for Opp.15 and 17. Flowing hair is conjured up by the voice's soaring phrases, the intensity of the poem further accentuated by the piano's noble harmonies. *Wie sollten wir geheim sie halten*, Op.19 No.4, exudes a distinctly operatic quality, from the orchestral, Wagnerian piano part, with its left-hand horn-calls representing Nature, to the voice's descending portamenti.

Das Rosenband, Op.36 No.1 (1897-8) was conceived first as an orchestral song, before Strauss made his own transcription for voice and piano. Any detail lost in the transition is made up for by the intimacy of the relationship between the two, especially when they intertwine during the final bars. This is preceded

by a moment of wonderment at “Und um ins”, rounding off a song in which Klopstock’s blissful account of love is perfectly matched by Strauss’ almost Rococo vision of loveliness.

The second of Strauss’ Five Songs, Op.48 (1900), *Ich schwebe* is to a poem by Karl Friedrich Henckell that must have cried out for musical treatment by Strauss, its very title, “I float”, a description of the composer’s characteristic vocal style. Indeed, musical imagery pervades the poem, in which a lament is heard, the echoes of its melody becoming a lullaby. The exquisite *Nachtgang* is the third song from Strauss’ Op.29 (1895), to a fluidly-structured poem by Otto Julius Bierbaum. The bittersweet tears portrayed in the poem are evoked with flowing triplets, and the song is an outstanding example of the composer’s ability to bring out the meaning of the text with deft, beautifully-judged harmonic shifts.

Einerlei dates from 1918, the second of Strauss’ five ‘Kleine Lieder’, Op.69. The poem, by Ludwig Achim von Arnim, is a concise tribute to the joys of long-term love and its blend of constancy and variety. Even within this brief space, Strauss takes the music in wide-ranging harmonic directions via light, animated piano textures and an agile, rather “singular” vocal line. *Rote Rosen*, to a text by Karl Stieler, is a charming early song dating from 1883. It is one of three dedicated to Lotti Speyer, a singer with whom Strauss was infatuated at the time, and with whom he would correspond for years to come. The song was eventually published in 1958.

Dating from 1899 and orchestrated in the following year, *Muttertänderlei*, Op.43 No.2 is a bustling, witty song to Gottfried August Bürger’s parody of boastful mothers. This is in stark contrast to the tenderness of both poem (by Gustav Falke) and music in *Meinem Kinde*, Op.37 No.3 (1897-98).

In *Die Nacht*, Op.10, the piano's continuous quavers recall Schumann's *Mondnacht*, while its dark-hued harmonies reflect a text in which the protagonist fears that the night, which conceals so much, will also steal his lover. *Befreit*, Op.39 No.4 (1898) is one of Strauss' finest achievements, although Dehmel, whose poetry Strauss used for the song, was, bafflingly, unhappy with the musical interpretation of his ambiguous text, which may be about bereavement or the end of a relationship. This is lied-writing on a grand scale, with orchestral sonorities abounding in the piano part and magnificent, operatic vocal phrases, especially at the song's climax.

The first of the wedding gift songs, Op.27, is the wonderful *Ruhe, meine Seele!* The voice floats mysteriously above a piano part which consists almost entirely of semibreve chords. A "dark veil" of leaves overshadows the song and is never quite evaded, even during an apparently tranquil conclusion. Strauss returned to this song in 1948, revising and orchestrating it soon after he finished *Im Abendrot*, the first of his *Vier letzte Lieder* to be completed.

The first of the Op.10 songs, *Zueignung* immediately established the hallmarks of Strauss' mature style: flexible, captivating vocal writing and a mesmerising sense of harmonic colour, articulated by a piano part of orchestral ambitions. The serenely beautiful *Weihnachtsgefühl* was written on 8 December 1899 but was never published during the composer's lifetime; the song was eventually issued in 1964. *Allerseelen* (Op.10 No.8) glows with a similar radiance, its spine-tingling harmonic shifts and impassioned soprano line making this an irresistible and justly famous Strauss song: "Come to my heart and so be mine again..."

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Louise Alder

Louise Alder studied at the Royal College of Music's International Opera School where she was the inaugural Kiri Te Kanawa Scholar. She was awarded 2nd Prize in the 2013 Kathleen Ferrier Competition, is the recipient of Glyndebourne's 2014 John Christie Award, the 2015 inaugural Young British Soloists' Competition and represented England in Cardiff Singer of the World 2017.

As a member of the ensemble at Oper Frankfurt her roles have included Susanna *Le nozze di Figaro*, Despina *Così fan Tutte*, Gilda *Rigoletto*, Cleopatra *Giulio Cesare*, Atalanta *Xerxes*, Sophie *Der Rosenkavalier*, Gretel *Hänsel und Gretel* and the title role in *The Cunning Little Vixen*. Elsewhere she has sung Sophie *Der Rosenkavalier*, Zerlina *Don Giovanni* and Lucia *The Rape of Lucretia* for Glyndebourne; Sophie *Der Rosenkavalier* for Welsh National Opera; Ilia *Idomeneo* for Garsington Opera; Rapunzel *Into the Woods* for Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris and Euridice in Luigi Rossi's *Orpheus* for the Royal Opera.

Concert performances have taken her to the Aldeburgh, Enescu, Edinburgh, St Magnus, Graz Styriarte and London Handel Festivals and to the BBC Proms. Particular highlights include appearances with the LSO/Elder, Academy of Ancient Music/Egarr, OAE/Bolton, Hallé Orchestra/Macelaru, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Volkov, BBC Philharmonic/Mena and the Royal Northern Sinfonia/Bicket.

Louise is also a passionate recitalist, appearing at the Musikverein in Graz, Wigmore Hall, Opera Frankfurt, Birmingham's Barber Institute, Purcell Room and the Brighton and Leeds Lieder Festivals with pianists Joseph Middleton, Helmut Deutsch, Gary Matthewman and John Paul Ekins.

Joseph Middleton

Highly acclaimed pianist Joseph Middleton specialises in the art of song accompaniment and chamber music. He is Director of Leeds Lieder, Musician in Residence at Pembroke College Cambridge and a Professor at his alma mater, the Royal Academy of Music.

Joseph collaborates with many of the world's finest singers in major venues worldwide, and has an award-winning and fast-growing discography. He is a regular guest at New York's Alice Tully Hall, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Vienna Konzerthaus, Zürich Tonhalle, Köln Philharmonie, Luxembourg Philharmonie, Musée d'Orsay in Paris and London's Wigmore Hall. Recent seasons have also taken him to the Aldeburgh, Aix-en-Provence, Edinburgh, Ravinia, and Stuttgart Festivals.



Joseph collaborates with internationally established singers including Sir Thomas Allen, Ian Bostridge, Sarah Connolly, Lucy Crowe, Iestyn Davies, Wolfgang Holzmair, Christiane Karg, Katarina Karnéus, Simon Keenlyside, Dame Felicity Lott, Christopher Maltman, John Mark Ainsley, Kate Royal, Carolyn Sampson and Roderick Williams. His critically acclaimed discography includes discs with Carolyn Sampson (Radio France's Disc of the Month & nominated for a Gramophone Award), Ruby Hughes (BBC Music Magazine's Recording of the Month), Dame Felicity Lott, Amanda Roocroft, Clara Mouriz, Matthew Rose and Allan Clayton. Joseph made his BBC Proms debut in 2016 with Iestyn Davies and Carolyn Sampson, and won the Young Artists Award at the 2017 RPS Awards.



Cover photo: Gerard Collett

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Orchid Classics and Louise Alder would like to extend a great personal thanks to Benjamin Hebbert Violins for making this recording possible.

Produced and engineered by Patrick Allen, Opera Omnia Productions

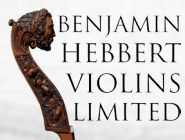
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Benjamin Hebbert Violins Limited congratulates Louise Alder on her musical career and particularly on her success as winner of the Young British Soloist Competition, 2015. It is with great pleasure and delight that we are able to support this solo recording as part of the competition prize. We look forward to playing a role in supporting many incredible artists, including future Young British Soloists in years to come.

Benjamin Hebbert has developed an enviable reputation as an expert and dealer in fine stringed instruments combining his training as an instrument maker and musician with a career as an academic, writer, auction specialist for Christie's, museum curator and university lecturer on musical instruments spanning twenty-years. In 2013 Benjamin established his studio in the historic surroundings of Somerset House in Central London and has gained distinction for sourcing violins, violas, cellos and bows backed by uncompromising expertise on value, condition, authenticity and musical potential. Instruments at his studio range from expertly selected examples priced around £1,000 for progressing youngsters to fine specimens of professional and investment grade, including masterpieces of Northern Italian workmanship. Guided by an ethos of supporting musicians he is committed to providing fair and open guidance for buyers and sellers at every level.

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