

**FRIDAY 29 MARCH | 5PM
PŪAWAI, TE ATAMIRA
FRANKTON, QUEENSTOWN**

SONGS

OF HOPE

**MADELEINE PIERARD, SOPRANO
RHIANNON COOPER, SOPRANO
CAROLINE DOWDLE, PIANO**

Programme

PIANIST - CAROLINE DOWDLE

Richard Wagner: *Wesendonck Lieder* WWV91 - 1858

1. 'Der Engel'
2. 'Stehe still!'
3. 'Im Treibhaus'
4. 'Schmerzen'
5. 'Träume'

Short introduction to Te Pae Kōkako - The Aotearoa New Zealand Opera Studio

Director, Madeleine Pierard

Richard Strauss: *Vier Letzte Lieder*

1. 'Frühling'
2. 'September'
3. 'Beim Schafengehen'
4. 'Im Abendrot'

Programme Notes

***Wesendonck Lieder*, WWV91**

Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

Poes by Mathilde Wesendonck (1828 - 1902)

Following the 1849 Uprising in Dresden, Wagner fled initially to Weimar and then onto the safety of Switzerland. Here he found financial support from a successful silk merchant named Otto Wesendonck. Otto's wife Mathilde, both gifted and attractive, caught his eye and they embarked on a tumultuous affair. Though things didn't end well, without their relationship we would not have the *Wesendonck Lieder*. Mathilde had shared with Wagner some of her poetry, and his five settings perfectly match the intensity of the texts. Mathilde later recalled in her memoirs the way Wagner's music lent them 'a supreme transfiguration and consecration'. The five poems personify the profound nature of the couple's relationship and intrigue in the work of philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer - the 'philosopher of pessimism'. There are glimpses of *Tristan und Isolde*, and two of the songs, 'Träume' and 'Im Treibhaus' were compositional studies for the Act Two Love Duet and Act Three prelude, respectively. Wagner's intense relationship with Mathilde Wesendonck transformed his personal and artistic philosophies.

1. Der Engel | The angel

In the early days of childhood
I often heard tell of angels
Who exchange heaven's pure bliss
For the sun of earth,

So that, when a sorrowful heart
Hides its yearning from the world
And would silently bleed away
And dissolve in streams of tears,

And when its fervent prayer
Begs only for deliverance,
That angel will fly down
And gently raise the heart to heaven.

And to me too an angel descended,
And now on shining wings
Bear my spirit, free from all pain,
Towards heaven!

2. Stehe still! | Stand still!

Rushing, roaring wheel of time,
You that measure eternity;
Gleaming spheres in the vast universe,
You that surround our earthly sphere;
Eternaal creation - cease:
Enough of becoming, let me be!

Hold yourselves back, generative powers,
Primal Thought that always creates!
Stop your breath, still your urge,
Be silent for a single moment!
Swelling pulses, restrain your beating;
Eternal day of the Will - end!
That in blessed, sweet oblivion
I might measure all my bliss!

When eye gazes blissfully into eye,
When soul drowns utterly in soul;
When being finds itself in being,
And the goal of every hope is near,
When lips are mute in silent wonder,
When the soul wishes for nothing more:
Then man perceives Eternity's footprint,
And solves your riddle, holy Nature!

3. Im Treibhaus | In the greenhouse

High-arching leafy crowns,
Canopies of emerald,
You children who dwell in distant climes,
Tell me, why do you lament?

Silently you bend your branches,
Inscribe your symbols on the air,
And a sweet fragrance rises,
As silent witness to your sorrows.

With longing and desire
You open wide your arms,
And embrace in your delusion
Desolation's awful void.

I am well aware, poor plant;
We both share a single fate,
Though bathed in gleaming light,
Our homeland is not here!

And just as the sun is glad to leave
The empty gleam of day,
The true sufferer veils himself
In the darkness of silence.

It grows quiet, a whirring whisper
Fills the dark room uneasily:
I see heavy droplets hanging
From the green edge of the leaves.

4. Schmerzen | Agonies

Every evening, sun, you redden
Your lovely eyes with weeping,
When, bathing in the sea,
You die an early death;

Yet you rise in your old splendour,
The glory of the dark world,
When you wake in the morning
As a proud and conquering hero!

Ah, why should I complain,
Why should I see you, my heart, so
depressed,
If the sun itself must despair,
If the sun itself must set?

If only death gives birth to life,
If only agony brings bliss:
O how I give thanks to Nature
For giving me such agony!

5. Träume | Dreams

Say, what wondrous dreams are these
Embracing all my senses,
That they have not, like bubbles,
Vanished to a barren void?

Dreams, that with every hour
Bloom more lovely every day,
And with their heavenly tidings
Float blissfully through the mind!

Dreams, that with glorious rays
Penetrate the soul,
There to paint an eternal picture:
Forgetting all, remembering one!

Dreams, as when the Spring sun
Kisses blossoms from the snow,
So the new day might welcome them
In unimagined bliss,

So that they grow and flower,
Bestow their scent as in a dream,
Fade softly away on your breast
And sink into their grave.

Vier Letzte Lieder

Richard Strauss (1813-1883)
Poes by Mathilde Wesendonck (1828 - 1902)

It was a year before his death, in 1948, when Richard Strauss composed this unique contribution to the repertoire. The title was chosen posthumously by the publisher, as Strauss himself was unaware that these would, indeed, be his last songs. But the choice was a respectful one, as the songs do express a calm acceptance of the inevitable, meditating on life, death, and the transition into “the magic circle of the night.” Two years earlier, Strauss had discovered Eichendorff’s poem “Im Abendrot” (“At Sunset”), which depicts an old couple contemplating the end of life together. Perhaps this reminded Strauss of his own long and happy marriage to the soprano Pauline de Anha, whom he had accompanied many times on the piano. In fact, it is more than likely that Strauss had Pauline’s voice in his head when he composed the bewitchingly sensuous and achingly nostalgic Four Last Songs.

Lyricaly, each song features exquisite word painting. In the first, “Frühling” (“Spring”), the soprano’s voice rises up as she dreams of trees and sky, while the flute line (played by piano here, of course!) evokes birdsong. “September” paints a picture of a fading summer garden, and sinuous vocal phrases depict the rain soaking into the grateful earth. Towards the end, the soprano lingers on the word “Augen” (“eyes”), paralleling a slow drifting into unconsciousness. In “In Beim Schlafengehen” (“When Going to Sleep”), as the soprano yearns to forget all thoughts in slumber, the melody seems to lead us into the heavens. “Im Abendrot” begins with a vivid orchestral depiction of sunset, as two trilling flutes represent the poem’s pair of larks ascending into the sky (a metaphor for the souls of the old couple). The light fades as the song unfolds, until the soprano asks, “Ist dies etwa der Tod?” (“Is this perhaps death?”), which is followed by the “transfiguration” theme from Strauss’s *Death and Transfiguration*, written some 60 years before. Strauss says goodbye wistfully, but not tragically.

1. Im Frühling | In Spring
(Herman Hesse)

In dusky vaults
I have long dreamt
of your trees and blue skies,
of your scents and the songs of birds.

Now you lie revealed
in glistening splendour,
flushed with light,
like a wonder before me.

You know me again,
you beckon tenderly to me;
all of my limbs quiver
from your blissful presence!

2. September | September
(Herman Hesse)

The garden is mourning,
the rain sinks coolly into the flowers.
Summer shudders
as it meets its end.

Leaf upon leaf drops golden
down from the lofty acacia.
Summer smiles, astonished and
weak,
in the dying garden dream.

For a while still by the roses
it remains standing, yearning for
peace.
Slowly it closes its large
eyes grown weary.

3. Beim Schlafengehen | While Going to Sleep
(Herman Hesse)

Now that the day has made me so tired,
my dearest longings shall
be accepted kindly by the starry night
like a weary child.

Hands, cease your activity,
head, forget all of your thoughts;
all my senses now
will sink into slumber.

And my soul, unobserved,
will float about on untrammelled wings
in the enchanted circle of the night,
living a thousandfold more deeply.

4. Im Abendrot | At Sunset
(Herman Hesse)

Through adversity and joy
We've gone hand in hand;
We rest now from our wanderings
Upon this quiet land.

Around us slope the valleys,
The skies grow dark;
Two larks alone are just climbing,
As if after a dream, into the scented air.

Come here and let them whirl past,
For it will soon be time to rest;
We do not wish to get lost
In this solitude.

O wide, quiet peace,
So deep in the red dusk...
How weary we are of our travels --
Is this perhaps - Death? --

Artists

Caroline Dowdle - Piano

Caroline Dowdle is the Head of Opera at the Verbier Festival Atelier Lyrique. Much in demand as a pianist and vocal coach, she works regularly with singers on the Jette Parker Artists Programme at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and is a member of the vocal faculty at the Royal College of Music in London. She has also been a guest coach on the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Programme, at the Estonian National Opera and in Beijing, together with regular visits to Berlin as a faculty member of the annual summer Dramatic Lyric Voices course. In the UK, she has a long association with Samling Institute, where she is a leader in its masterclass weeks, alongside her role as Music Director of the Samling Academy, a masterclass programme for young singers aged 14-21.

Born in Cape Town, Caroline's performing career began at an early age. She studied at the University of Cape Town, before moving to England to study solo piano at the Royal Northern College of Music. After two years as a Junior Fellow in Manchester, she moved to London to pursue a freelance career and has been based there ever since. She has performed widely in the UK and Europe, giving recitals with singers and instrumentalists at the Royal Opera House, the South Bank and Wigmore Hall in London, at New York's Carnegie Hall, and in Paris (for Radio France), Madrid, Valencia and Moscow. Amongst her many musical collaborations are long-standing partnerships with baritones Sir Thomas Allen and Sir Simon Keenlyside.

Madeleine Pierard - Soprano

Award-winning soprano, Madeleine Pierard was a Jette Parker Artist with The Royal Opera, Covent Garden and has sung numerous roles for The Royal Opera and internationally since. Madeleine's roles for The Royal Opera include Contessa di Folleville (*Il Viaggio a Reims*), Musetta (*La Boheme* - London/Istanbul), Lisa (*La Sonnambula*), Berta (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*), Sacerdotessa (*Aida*), Noémie (*Cendrillon*), and Costanza in Haydn's *L'isola disabitata* in Hobart, Tasmania. Other roles include Lady Macbeth (*Macbeth*) with English Touring Opera; Violetta, Pat Nixon (*Nixon in China*), Miss Jessel (*Turn of the Screw*) and Musetta with New Zealand Opera; Musetta in Francesca Zambello's *La Boheme* at the Royal Albert Hall; Louise (*Louise*), Elettra (*Idomeneo*) and Cecilio (*Lucio Silla*) for The Buxton Festival; Empress Arianna in Legrenzi's *Giustino* with Pinchgut Opera in Australia; Marie (*Wozzeck*) in New Zealand and the title role of Régine in Rufus Wainwright's *Prima Donna*. Madeleine recently made her Sydney Opera House debut as Leonore in Beethoven's *Fidelio* with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra under Simone Young and will cover the same role at The Royal Opera in 2024.

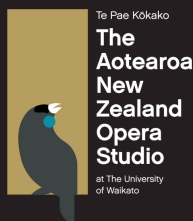
Madeleine's recent concert highlights as soloist include Beethoven's *9th Symphony* and Poulenc's *Stabat Mater* with the London Philharmonia at the Royal Festival Hall and Barbican; numerous appearances and recordings with the NZ Symphony Orchestra with conductors, Nicholas McGegan, Edo de Waart and Gemma New; and Ross Harris' *Symphony No. 2* with the Orchestre Symphonique de Strasbourg, NZSO and APO. A noted recitalist, she has appeared alongside Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, and at the Wigmore and Cadogan Halls and has toured New Zealand in recital. Madeleine has also sung numerous recitals at The Royal Opera House.

Recent performance highlights include singing Strauss' *Four Last Songs* in London with English National Ballet, and a tour of Sibelius' *Luonnotar* with the NZSO. The 2023/24 season includes the title role in *Tosca* with Wellington Opera and the role of Gerhilde in *Die Walküre* in Sydney with the SSO / Simone Young.

Rhiannon Cooper - Soprano

Born and raised in Whangārei, soprano Rhiannon Cooper began her vocal journey with the late Joan Kennaway. In 2022, Rhiannon competed in the Christchurch Competition Society's Annual Senior Vocal Competitions, placing in all classes entered and first in the Canterbury Opera Foundation Aria. In 2023 she was awarded first place in the Dame Malvina Major Waikato Aria Competition and third place in the Auckland Opera Studio competition. Rhiannon was awarded the Merle Higgie Memorial Award (2022), the Spirit of the School Award (2023), and the Dame Malvina Major Award (2023) at the New Zealand Opera School. Rhiannon was a Te Pae Kōkako TANZOS Artist in 2023 and has been awarded a residency at Stimme, Leib und Seele in Austria later this year.

About Te Pae Kōkako TANZOS



Te Pae Kōkako - The Aotearoa New Zealand Opera Studio (TANZOS) is an immersive MMus programme which provides full-time training at an international level for exceptionally promising opera singers, regardless of circumstances: Each place is funded by a donor-gifted scholarship.

Based at The University of Waikato, our students receive coaching from national and international guest tutors and engage in professional residencies with companies in New Zealand and abroad, including an annual two-week residency with Opera Australia. TANZOS is the only full-time full-time programme in Aotearoa New Zealand offering this breadth of opera training and is open to a maximum of six singers per year, encompassing the support required to give singers the best possible start on the global stage.

tanzos.org

Alfred Fonoti-Fuimaono
2023 TANZOS Artist

Help us launch the opera stars of the future

Places on the TANZOS programme are awarded on a scholarship-only basis to Aotearoa's most promising and dedicated young singers. There are currently opportunities available to provide \$35,000 scholarship packages to support a place for individual students or smaller contributions towards delivering the programme at an international level. To become a Te Pae Kōkako donor, visit tanzos.org/support or talk to Te Pou Taunaki - The University of Waikato Foundation at foundation@waikato.ac.nz or +64 7 8384446

In presenting this recital, we would particularly like to thank the following for their support:

Te Atamira

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