Schumann and the English Romantics

A series of three recitals with James Gilchrist and Anna Tilbrook.

The German *Lied* came out of a delightful flowering of two art forms happily coinciding in time and place. Poetry and music of the highest order blossomed together in the German-speaking world. Today the masterpieces of the form still give us fruit for thought and move audiences throughout the world.

In the English-speaking world, it seems that the musical tree was less fecund. But we certainly had poets. A huge outpouring of poetry came at this time from the British isles. We have works here of the greatest depth and insight, and art forms that have since been recognised to be of great importance. And the themes of the romantic spirit seem to infuse both traditions, German and English: the wandering “I”, separation, the quest, a recognition of the reflection of humanity in nature and nature in humanity, a reconnection of our place in the line of history, a revisiting of the literature and thought of classical Greece and Rome. Further, it is quite clear that the two traditions were well aware of each other. Schubert, Schumann and Loewe all set works of the English Romantics.

Our aim in these recitals is to look again at this connection. Three of Schumann’s great cycles are paired with three new works by British composers, each setting words of the English Romantics. Heine’s *Liederkreis* (op24) is paired by **Julian Philips** with the work of John Clare, exploring especially man’s connection with the natural world. Both Clare and Schumann suffered in the mind. The Scottish composer **Sally Beamish** will be looking to the Gothic and a reflection of Eichendorff’s mist-shrouded *Liederkreis* (op 39). And the journeying protagonist of Heine’s *Dichterliebe* will find echo in a new work of **Jonathan Dove**.

Three new major commissions from three outstanding writers for voice and piano. How much will the new music be inspired by the old? Is the Romantic spirit able to span two hundred years? Can we find in the glories of the English Romantic poets an echo of what it was that inspired Schumann to such heights?

These works will be presented together with the Schumann cycles in three separate performances. They will receive their world premieres in the **Wigmore Hall** in London in 2016. James Gilchrist and Anna Tilbrook’s recording of the cycles of Schumann was released by Linn Records in 2015.