

# Songs for Life

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scottish  
ensemble

with Karen Cargill

A special intimate filmed performance  
Premieres 13 November 2020



Programme

## A virtual welcome!



Musicians need to communicate with their audience, because the alchemy that binds us - listener, performer and composer - through sound, within a specific time and place, lies at the core of our craft and art form. Our last concert was in March, and since then much of our energy has gone into finding ways to adapt to a world where this vital act is not possible for the time being. This film is our first attempt to share with you an hour-long performance, exclusively online.

When Karen Cargill and I first discussed ideas for this programme (in pre-Covid times), she was determined to explore a wide range of universal themes: love, death, childhood, community. Quite a lot to pack into an hour of music! I am grateful to Karen for bringing her wonderful choice of songs into the programme, around which I have woven a selection of short pieces which I hope will extend, amplify, echo, or preview the various thematic threads.

I very much hope that you will be able to immerse yourself in this online performance, and most importantly that you will enjoy it. We were keen for this experience to have an intimate and personal quality, and we have tried our best to achieve this within this new format. No doubt we still have much to learn, but I'd like to think that this new way of communicating with you might reveal unexpected and beautiful insights into the music - which remains, more than ever in these challenging times, a precious and essential part of our individual and collective stories.

**Jonathan Morton**  
Artistic Director

As Jon says, this programme takes in a huge sweep of emotions and themes. It was a bit of an emotional rollercoaster to prepare for and perform! As we put the ideas together, we were searching for those common moments that connect us all – the memories and experiences we can all hang onto when everything else shifts around us. Some songs in this concert, like those by Purcell or Mahler, try to capture the full weight of our most intense emotions, while others, like those by Britten, are more focused around a tiny personal moment.

For me singing is all about a personal connection. Whether I'm singing on an opera stage or at home in my kitchen, I'm trying to speak to the person listening really directly – I'm sharing a moment, telling a story that has my history in it, in the hope that they can see theirs in it too.

And even though we were all metres apart, there is something cosy and personal in the way Scottish Ensemble make music, and I really hope it comes across on screen how much we all enjoyed creating that atmosphere together.

There is no denying that this is not the same as being in the same room together, feeling the stillness, the breathing, the adrenalin of a live performance, but I hope it sweeps you away in a different way. It can be very hard just now to predict when you might have a good or bad day, or when you might feel like your emotions are right at the surface; if we let it, music can unlock the deepest feelings within us, and it can feel good to let them out.

**Karen Cargill**  
Mezzo-Soprano

*PS. A little extra note from us both...if you can, we would suggest listening to the performance via headphones, as it will make for a more immersive experience – you'll hopefully feel like you're right there amongst us!*

# Programme

Walton  
Sonata for String Orchestra (IV)

Mahler (arr. Iain Farrington)  
'Wer hat dies Liedlein erdacht?' ('Who made up this little song?') from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*

Mahler (arr. Iain Farrington)  
Rheinlegendchen (Little Rhine legend) from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*

Britten  
*Funeral March* from Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge

Purcell  
*Dido's Lament* ('When I am laid in earth') from *Dido & Aeneas*

Walker  
Lyric for Strings

György Kurtág  
Virág az ember, Mijakónak (*Flowers We Are - for Miyako*) from *Signs, Games and Messages*

Britten (arr. Colin Matthews)  
*The Nurse's Song* from *A Charm of Lullabies*

Britten (arr. Colin Matthews)  
*The Highland Balou* from *A Charm of Lullabies*

Chick Corea  
(arr. James Manson)  
Children's Song No. 7

Beethoven  
String Quartet No. 13 in B flat major (II)

Janáček  
(arr. Jarmil Burghauser)  
*Sýček neodletěl* (*The barn owl hasn't flown away!*) from *On an Overgrown Path*

Dvořák  
(arr. David Matthews)  
'So many hearts are as though dead' from Love Songs Op.83

Dvořák  
(arr. David Matthews)  
'Oh dear soul, the only one' from Love Songs Op.83

Caroline Shaw  
*Entr'acte*

Trad.  
*Auld Lang Syne*

## notes on the music

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We had to begin, after months of not being able to play together, with a burst to life. Our first notes, impossible to ignore, are a call-to-attention - and then off we go, swept along in a tide of frantic, urgent exuberance, flecked with hints of Beethoven, of Bartók, even Gershwin's easy swing, bounding with energy until the last. We hope you'll be able to feel what a joy it is to make music together, in the same room.

No celebration of the distillation of life in song could be complete without Mahler - but where to start? Whilst all the major German composers took a stab at *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, an enormous volume of folk poetry, Mahler's same-titled collection of songs is arguably the most tenderly nuanced, the most deeply shaded; a collection of personalities, stories and tableaux through which the more complex emotion of what could often be treated as a two-dimensional range of characters was beckoned out, and given space to feel.

Above all, the passion and intensity contained within these short songs reminds us of the symbiosis between the stories stitched deep into our history - passed down through generations, and used to make sense of our existence - and the age-old, universal human compulsion to honour the emotions of these stories through song.

Suddenly - the splayed wail of grief that opens Britten's *Funeral March* signals our shift from love, and nature, to death. Whilst Britten's cinematic, over-saturated lushness seems to pin us up somewhere high, forcing us to feel our grief, with the opening notes of Purcell's famous aria, we are led down, down to the very bottom of the well of grief where *Dido's Lament* resides - bare, sparse, final. The aching simplicity of Purcell's melody and Dido's words combine to remind us, in this quite perfect song of despair, of the truly transformative power of combining words and music.

Finally, Walker's *Lyric for Strings*, dedicated to his late grandmother and, as you may be able to hear, openly inspired by Barber's *Adagio for Strings*. In capturing that same sheer, flowing quality of the piece he so admired, Walker conjures the feeling of looking back at our emotions through the shifting gauze of time, memory, recollection.

With Kurtág's strange, scalic wisps, appearing from and dissolving into nothing, we invite you to join us at a point of stillness.

Tiny fragments of life: breathing, blooming, fading.

Silence.

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Can the specific feel and shape of childhood be captured through song, through music? The deeply complex emotions of childhood have long fascinated artists, writers and poets, but song is, in some way, deeply and inextricably connected with this precious - and strange, dream-like - time.

Britten explores this in his *Charm of Lullabies* song cycle, gently pulling at our notion of the traditional lullaby. *The Nurse's Song* almost gives us one - but it refuses to settle between soothing, conventional resolutions and that eerie, chromatic melancholy. *The Highland Balou* plays with half-rocking the child between two notes - but also has our mezzo-soprano leaping around in a rousing adventure across the Highlands, sending no-one to sleep.

Stepping into the daylight, the seventh song from jazz pianist Chick Corea's *Children's Songs* captures not only the hopeful buoyancy unique to childhood, but the way in which the innocent, wide-eyed wonder of a child morphs and expands. It's followed by the breathless chase of the Presto from Beethoven's 13th string quartet - can you feel the heart-racing, limb-tangling energy and fizz of childhood games?

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From the confines of childhood, we expand onwards and outwards with a contemplation of all that life goes on to offer.

In the final piece from Janáček's *On an Overgrown Path*, we seem to find a microcosm of life itself; of warm humanity, and impassive nature, sitting side by side. Slices of rich chorale - which the composer called an "intimate song of life" - resonate

with a feeling of congregation, of unity, its organ-like hum suggestive of the communal shelter of the church. But the feeling is undone by episodes of cold, haunting disquiet, pierced by the call of the owl - persistent and ambivalent as fate.

Dvořák's *Love Songs* are an edited version - published 23 years later - of a clutch of love songs written by the 24-year-old composer, thick in the flush of unrequited love. Set to the heady, intense poetry of Czech writer Pflieger-Moravský ("their texts are above all lyrical—think of a boy in love," said Dvořák), the songs are a heartbreakingly beautiful paean to the depth of feeling that we may, if we are fortunate enough, get to experience as human beings.

The penultimate stop on our journey, Caroline Shaw's *Entr'acte*, celebrates transition, guiding us between landscapes and making us think about where we've arrived, and how we got there - which felt particularly important, in a world in which we are all, for this moment, poised in the in-between. ("I love the way some music suddenly takes you to the other side of Alice's looking glass, in a kind of absurd, subtle, technicolor transition", said Shaw).

And so, we arrive at the end. We've chosen to part company tonight on a traditional song of farewell - and an invitation to join us in singing it, from wherever you are, whatever memories you may find within the notes or the ritual. Whilst song has the extraordinary effect of translating emotions into sound, singing together has a similar invaluable effect of connecting our spirits. We hope this simple act might help us transcend our physical barriers tonight.

Programme note written by Rosie Davies

## Mahler

### Wer hat dies Liedlein erdacht?

*Anon.*

Dort oben in dem hohen Haus,  
Da gucket ein fein's, lieb's Mäd'el heraus,  
Es ist nicht dort daheime,  
Es ist des Wirts sein Töchterlein,  
Es wohnt auf grüner Heide.

Mein Herze ist wund,  
Komm, Schätzel, machs gesund.  
Dein schwarzbraune Äuglein,  
Die haben mich verwundet.  
Dein rosiger Mund  
Macht Herzen gesund.  
Macht Jugend verständig,  
Macht Tote lebendig,  
Macht Kranke gesund.

Wer hat denn das schöne Liedlein erdacht?  
Es haben's drei Gäns übers Wasser gebracht,  
Zwei graue und eine weiße;  
Und wer das Liedlein nicht singen kann,  
Dem wollen sie es pfeifen. Ja!

### Who made up this little song?

High in the mountain stands a house,  
From it a sweet pretty maid looks out,  
But that is not her home,  
She's the innkeeper's young daughter.  
She lives on the green moor.

My heart is sick,  
Come, my love, and cure it.  
Your dark brown eyes  
Have wounded me.  
Your rosy lips  
Can cure sick hearts,  
Make young men wise,  
Make dead men live,  
Can cure the sick.

Who made up this pretty little song?  
Three geese brought it across the water.  
Two grey ones and a white one;  
And for those who can't sing this song,  
They will pipe it to them. They will!

# Mahler

## Rheinlegendchen

*Anon.*

Bald gras ich am Neckar,  
Bald gras ich am Rhein,  
Bald hab ich ein Schätzle,  
Bald bin ich allein.

Was hilft mir das Grasen,  
Wenn d'Sichel nicht schneidt,  
Was hilft mir ein Schätzle,  
Wenn's bei mir nicht bleibt.

So soll ich denn grasen  
Am Neckar, am Rhein,  
So werf ich mein goldenes  
Ringlein hinein.

Es fließet im Neckar  
Und fließet im Rhein,  
Soll schwimmen hinunter  
Ins Meer tief hinein.

Und schwimmt es das Ringlein,  
So frißt es ein Fisch,  
Das Fischlein soll kommen  
Aufs Königs sein Tisch!

Der König tät fragen,  
Wems Ringlein sollt sein?  
Da tät mein Schatz sagen,  
Das Ringlein g'hört mein.

Mein Schätzlein tät springen,  
Berg auf und Berg ein,  
Tät mir wiedrum bringen  
Das Goldringlein fein.

Kannst grasen am Neckar,  
Kannst grasen am Rhein,  
Wirf du mir nur immer  
Dein Ringlein hinein.

## Little Rhine Legend

I mow by the Neckar,  
I mow by the Rhine;  
At times I've a sweetheart,  
At times I'm alone.

What use is mowing,  
If the sickle won't cut,  
What use is a sweetheart,  
If she'll not stay.

So if I'm to mow  
By the Neckar, and Rhine,  
I'll throw in their waters  
My little gold ring.

It'll flow in the Neckar  
And flow in the Rhine,  
And float right away  
To the depths of the sea.

And floating, the ring  
Will be gulped by a fish,  
The fish will be served  
At the King's own table.

The King will enquire  
Whose ring it might be;  
My sweetheart will say  
The ring belongs to me.

My sweetheart will bound  
Over hill, over dale,  
And bring back to me  
My little gold ring.

You can mow by the Neckar  
And mow by the Rhine,  
If you'll always keep throwing  
Your ring in for me.

## Purcell

### Dido's Lament (When I am laid in earth)

*Nahum Tate*

Thy hand, Belinda, darkness shades me,  
 On thy bosom let me rest,  
 More I would, but Death invades me;  
 Death is now a welcome guest.  
 When I am laid, am laid in earth,  
 May my wrongs create  
 No trouble, no trouble in thy breast;  
 Remember me, remember me, but ah! forget my fate.  
 Remember me, but ah! forget my fate.

Text provided courtesy of Oxford  
 Lieder ([www.oxfordlieder.co.uk](http://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk))

## Britten

### The Nurse's Song

*John Phillip 1559*

Lullaby baby,  
 Lullaby baby,  
 Thy nurse will tend thee as duly as may be.  
 Lullaby baby!

Be still, my sweett sweeting, no longer do cry;  
 Sing lullaby baby, lullaby baby.  
 Let dolours be fleeting, I fancy thee, I ...  
 To rock and to lull thee I will not delay me.

Lullaby baby,  
 Lullabylabylaby baby,  
 Thy nurse will tend thee as duly as may be  
 Lullabylabylaby baby

The gods be thy shield and comfort in need!  
 The gods be thy shield and comfort in need!  
 Sing Lullaby baby,  
 Lullabylaby baby

They give thee good fortune and well for to speed,  
 And this to desire ... I will not delay me.  
 This to desire ... I will not delay me.

Lullaby lullaby  
 Lullaby baby,  
 Thy nurse will tend thee as duly as may be.  
 Lullabylabylabylaby baby.

Text provided courtesy of Oxford  
 Lieder ([www.oxfordlieder.co.uk](http://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk))

## Britten

### The Highland Balou

*Robert Burns 1792*

Hee Balou, my sweet wee Donald,  
Picture o' the great Clanronald!  
Brawlie kens our wanton Chief  
What gat my young Highland thief.

Leeze me on thy bonnie craigie!  
And thou live, thou'll steal a naigie,  
Travel the country thro' and thro',  
and bring hame a Carlisle cow!

Thro' the Lawlands, o'er the Border,  
Weel, my babie, may thou funder!  
Herry the louns o' the laigh Countrie,  
Syne to the Highlands hame to me!

## Dvořák

### II. V tak mnohém srdci mrtvo jest

*Gustav Pflieger-Moravský*

V tak mnohém srdci mrtvo jest,  
jak v temné pustině,  
v něm na žalost a na bolest,  
ba, místa jedině.

Tu klamy lásky horoucí  
v to srdce vstupuje,  
a srdce žalem prahnoucí,  
to mní, že miluje.

A v tomto sladkém domnění  
se ještě jednou v ráj  
to srdce mrtvé promění  
a zpívá, zpívá, starou báj!

### VIII. Ó, duše drahá, jedinká

Ó, duše drahá, jedinká,  
jež v srdci žiješ dosud:  
má oblétá tě myšlenka,  
ač nás dělí zlý osud.

Ó, kéž jsem zpěvnou labutí,  
já zaletěl bych k tobě;  
a v posledním bych vzdechnutí  
ti vypěl srdce v mdlobě.

### II. So many a heart is as though dead

So many a heart is as though dead,  
as in a dark wasteland;  
yea, only for grief and for pain  
does it have room.

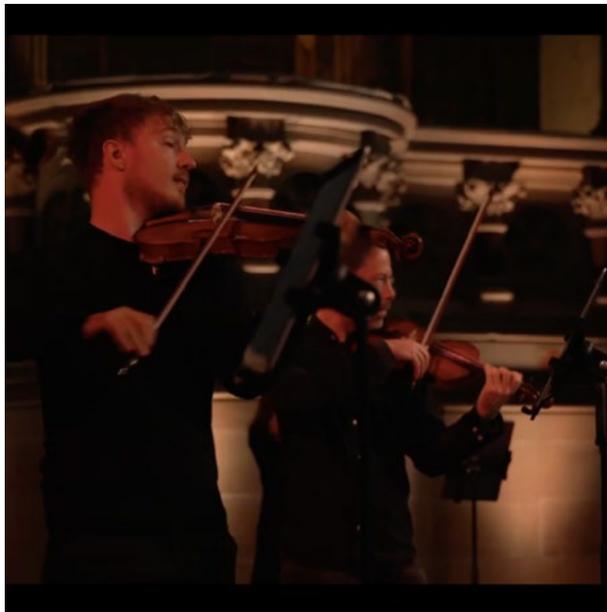
Then delusions of burning love  
enter into that heart,  
and the heart, yearning in misery,  
believes that it loves.

And in this sweet belief  
the dead heart once again  
transforms itself into a paradise  
and sings the old tale!

### VIII. Oh dear soul, the only one

Oh dear soul, the only one  
that still lives in my heart:  
my thought hovers about you,  
though evil fate separates us.

Oh, were I a singing swan,  
I'd fly to you  
and in my final sighing would  
sing out my heart to you, swooning.

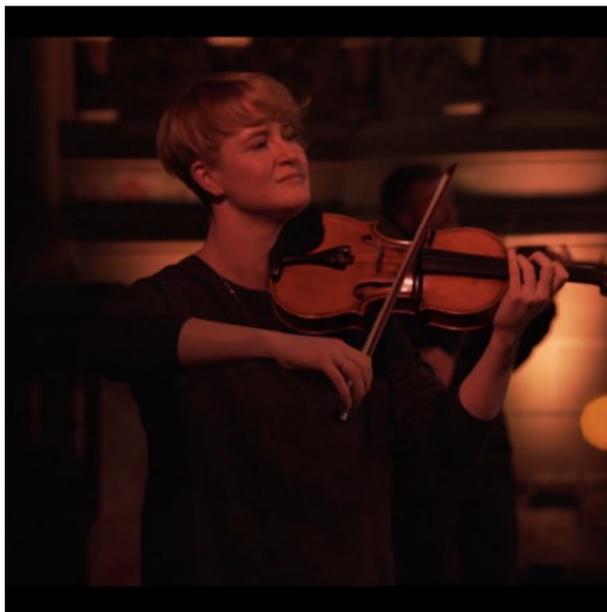


## Performers

*Mezzo-soprano*  
Karen Cargill

*Director/Violin*  
Jonathan Morton

*Violin*  
Daniel Piro  
Liza Johnson  
Kate Suthers  
Tristan Gurney  
Laura Ghio  
George Smith



*Viola*  
Jane Atkins  
Felix Tanner

*Cello*  
Alison Lawrance  
Naomi Pavri

*Bass*  
Diane Clark

## Film credits

*Director*  
Miranda Stern

*Director of Photography*  
Julyan Sinclair

*Music Director*  
Jonathan Morton

*Recording Engineer*  
Jonathan Green

Filmed at Cottiers Theatre,  
Glasgow



## The performers



### Karen Cargill

Scottish mezzo-soprano Karen Cargill studied at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and was the winner of the 2002 Kathleen Ferrier Award.

Recent highlights include *La Damnation de Faust* for DSO Berlin and Robin Ticciati; Elgar Sea Pictures with Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra and Thomas Sondergard; Bach *B minor Mass* for Philadelphia Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin; and Judith *Bluebeard's Castle* for both Opera North and Sian Edwards, and London Symphony Orchestra and Sir Simon Rattle.

Future plans include appearances with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Deutsches Sinfonie-Orchester Berlin, the Orquestra de la Comunitat Valenciana, and Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. On the opera stage, Karen will be returning to Scottish Opera and Glyndebourne Festival.

Karen regularly sings with the Boston, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Chicago, Rotterdam and Berlin Philharmonic Orchestras, Dresden Staatskapelle, London Symphony and Philharmonic Orchestras, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra working with conductors including Donald Runnicles, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Bernard Haitink, Sir Simon Rattle, Daniele Gatti, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Daniel Harding, Robin Ticciati, Edward Gardner, Mariss Jansons and Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla. Opera highlights have included appearances at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Metropolitan Opera, New York; Deutsche Oper Berlin; Montpellier Opera; Glyndebourne Festival and Edinburgh Festival, with roles including Waltraute *Götterdämmerung*; Erda *Das Rheingold and Siegfried*; Brangaene *Tristan and Isolde*; Mère Marie *Dialogues of the Carmelites* and Judith *Bluebeard's Castle*.

Karen appears regularly at the BBC Proms and the Edinburgh International Festival.

Highlights with her regular recital partner Simon Lepper include appearances at Wigmore Hall London, the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Kennedy Centre Washington and Carnegie Hall, as well as regular recitals for BBC Radio 3. With Simon she recently recorded a critically acclaimed recital of lieder by Alma and Gustav Mahler for Linn Records, for whom she has also recorded Berlioz's *Les nuits d'été* and *La mort de Cléopâtre* with Robin Ticciati and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

In July 2018 Karen was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. She is also Patron of the National Girls' Choir of Scotland.



## Scottish Ensemble

Scottish Ensemble is a pioneering string orchestra based in Glasgow and regularly performing across Scotland, the UK and the globe. A constellation of exceptional musicians led by Artistic Director Jonathan Morton, SE champions music for strings, promoting the rich diversity of the string repertoire, exploring adventurous ways through which it can be presented and shared, and seeking out thoughtful ways of connecting it to contemporary life.

SE is becoming increasingly known for changing how classical music is portrayed on stage, and expanding the role of the classical performer.

Whether through imaginative concert programmes and work with soloists (including violinists Nicola Benedetti, Patricia Kopatchinskaja and Pekka Kuusisto, pianist Gabriela Montero, trumpeter Alison Balsom, percussionist Colin Currie, bassist Edgar Meyer, and many more) or cross-artform collaborations (with the likes of Swedish contemporary dance company Andersson Dance, composer/producer Anna Meredith, theatre companies Vanishing Point and Untitled Projects and visual artist Toby Paterson), SE presents well-known pieces alongside newly commissioned or more rarely performed works with the aim of introducing audiences to inspiring music which may challenge, surprise or inspire them, focusing on compelling musical story-telling and visually-striking production.

This ethos of connecting music with contemporary life is extended through SE's year-round programme of creative learning and community activities, which incorporates collaborations with schools, charities and healthcare organisations to share the well-being benefits of engaging with live music amongst a diverse audience.

## The filmmakers

BAFTA and film festival award winners Julian Sinclair and Miranda Stern make creative and observational documentaries that tackle social issues through an intimate lens. They've worked for major broadcasters (BBC, Ch4, Ch5) and a range of charities and NGOs, as well as partnering with entities like Modern Films, UK Says No More, British Red Cross and the Home Office for campaigns around ending gender-based violence and International Human Rights Day. They are passionate about finding the remarkable in the everyday, and have had two films screened at the Film4 Cinema.

Both will be edit-producing the project, in collaboration with John Ferguson at Suite-Sixteen.

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