

Fri 17 Jun 2016
Hall One, 7.30pm

James Gilchrist & Anna Tilbrook

Beethoven & Schubert in Vienna
1816 – The Year Without a Summer

James Gilchrist tenor

Anna Tilbrook piano

Programme

Franz Schubert *Frühlingslied* (Hölty)

(1797 – 1828) *Erntelied* (Hölty)

Winterlied (Hölty)

Seligkeit (Hölty)

Piano Sonata in E, D459

Allegro moderato

Am Bach im Frühling (Schobart)

Der Wanderer (Lübeck)

Litanei (Jacobi)

Geheimnis (Mayrhofer)

Piano Sonata in E, D459

Adagio

Gesänge des Harfners (Goethe):

i. 'Wer sich der Einsamkeit ergibt'

iii. 'An die Türen will ich schleichen'

An Schwager Kronos (Goethe)

INTERVAL 20 minutes

Ludwig van Beethoven *Der Mann von Wort* (Kleinschmid)

(1770 – 1827) *Sehnsucht* (Goethe)

Ruf vom Berge (Treitschke)

Piano Sonata No. 28 in A, Op. 101

Allegretto, ma non troppo

An die ferne Geliebte (Jeitteles):

i. 'Auf dem Hügel sitz' ich'

ii. 'Wo die Berge so blau'

iii. 'Leichte Segler in den Höhen'

iv. 'Diese Wolken in den Höhen'

v. 'Es kehret der Maien'

vi. 'Nimm sie hinn denn,

diese Lieder'

Programme Notes

1816, known as 'The Year Without a Summer', was extraordinary and extreme in many ways. The story began in April 1815, just weeks before Napoleon was finally defeated at Waterloo, with the catastrophic eruptions of Mount Tambora in what is now Indonesia: it was the world's largest volcanic incident for thousands of years. By the following year, a huge and dense dust cloud had entered the atmosphere and was moving across much of the globe, causing major disruptions to the weather systems of the northern hemisphere, in particular, during 1816 and the three years that followed.

The sun's frequent disappearances will have caused countless people to suffer the psychological effects of darkness as well as the physical consequences of extremely low temperatures during the 'volcanic winter' which replaced the summer of 1816. It was the second coldest year on record since the Middle Ages and the 1810s were the coldest decade ever. The change in climate also gave rise to exceptional rainstorms and the crops failed repeatedly not only across Europe but also in North America, India and China. Famine, disease, poverty, civil unrest and mass migration ensued, giving rise to social and political upheavals around the world.

Contemporary descriptions and depictions of these climatic events are revealed in the writings of Lord Byron and Mary Shelley, and in the paintings of Turner and Constable, for example, but they are not so explicitly evident in the music, even the songs, of 1816. Nevertheless our ears can tell us something about the states of mind of the world's two greatest composers of the day, Beethoven and the younger Schubert, who were living in Vienna and probably affected in different ways during 'the year without a summer'. We know that life was not easy for either of them: Beethoven had been caught up in a lengthy legal battle with his widowed sister-in-law over the custody of his nephew, which he won in the end;



Schubert was upsettingly ignored by Goethe when he sent the great poet a beautiful present of his song-settings and, later in the year, his hopes for a regularly-paid teaching post and his prospects of marriage were simultaneously dashed.

In 1816 the 19-year-old Schubert's output was nonetheless prodigious, including two symphonies, choral music, chamber works and more than a hundred Lieder: almost all of these songs reflected not only the wandering, wondering and passionate romanticism of the age but also the coldness and darkness of this mysterious period. The concert begins with settings of Hölty, the gifted 18th-century poet, whose love of folk-song, delight in nature and the strain of melancholy running through his lyrics will have resonated with the composer at that time.

The groups of Lieder are punctuated by movements from Schubert's Piano Sonata of 1816: the *Adagio* is the work's heart and reveals a new-found pathos in his piano writing. Schubert was strongly drawn to Goethe, whose poetry captured the zeitgeist, and the group that concludes the first half includes two of the Harper's Songs (a foretaste of what was yet to come in *Winterreise*).

It was not until ten years later, after the contemporary poet Müller had captured the frozen landscapes and strange atmospheric effects of that uniquely cold decade in his *Winterreise* poems, that Schubert found the texts he needed for the song-cycle that became perhaps his greatest masterpiece. The part played in this creative process by the devastating self-destruction of Mount Tambora has never previously been recognised or acknowledged.

Beethoven had been going through a relatively fallow period in 1815-16 but, during the summer that never was, he produced the first great song-cycle in western music, the perfectly-formed and sublimely romantic *An die ferne Geliebte*, and then embarked upon his fabled 'late period' of composition with his Piano Sonata No. 28, Op. 101. Programme notes © Ian Ritchie



Biographies

James Gilchrist is one of the UK's leading tenors and has performed in major concert halls throughout the world. Recognised as 'the finest Evangelist of his generation' his extensive repertoire embraces works spanning many centuries. He is an enthusiastic and prolific exponent of Lieder and enjoys nothing better than putting together interesting and challenging recital programmes. His impressive discography includes the Schubert and Schumann song cycles, Finzi, Vaughan Williams and Britten.

Anna Tilbrook performs regularly in major venues at home and abroad. She collaborates with leading singers and instrumentalists, including James Gilchrist, Lucy Crowe, Willard White, Mark Padmore, Stephan Loges, Christopher Maltman, Ian Bostridge, Andrew Staples, Christine Rice, Iestyn Davies, Natalie Clein, Nicholas Daniel, Philip Dukes, Adrian Brendel and the Fitzwilliam, Elias, Sacconi and Doelen string quartets. With the distinguished tenor James Gilchrist she has made acclaimed recordings of 20th-century English song and the song-cycles of Schubert, Beethoven and Schumann.

1816 – The Year Without a Summer

Conceived and curated by Ian Ritchie (ianritchie.org)

17 & 18 June 2016

A two-day programme of concerts and talks, with leading musicians and expert speakers, which offers an original and enlightening framework for exploring the full context and consequences of extraordinary natural events which occurred exactly 200 years ago.

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Sat 18 Jun

Study Day: 1816 – The Year Without a Summer (aka The Poverty Year)

St Pancras Room, 11.30am – 5.30pm

200 years ago, the world's biggest volcanic eruption caused severe climate change. Four leading experts, from the various fields of science, medicine, neurology, culture and history, explore the complete context of this extraordinary year.

Byron in Switzerland

Hall One, 7.30pm

A concert reflecting Byron's extraordinary journey from London to Switzerland, fleeing debt, divorce and scandal.

Foyer Exhibition

Fri 17 Jun, 6–10pm & Sat 18 Jun, 10am–10pm

Die Jungfrau: She Walks in Beauty – An exhibition of projected photography by Alberto Venzago, capturing the awesome beauty of one of Switzerland's most iconic mountains.



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