

Jewish Music Institute – Central Synagogue
Autumn/Spring Series

A Yiddishe Winterreise

Mark Glanville - bass baritone
Alexander Knapp – piano

A concert to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day
In the presence of Mr Raban Richter of the Cultural Department, German Embassy

Sunday 28 January 2007, 7.30pm
Wix Hall, Central Synagogue, 40 Hallam Street, W1N 6NW
Presented by the Jewish Music Institute and Central Synagogue

This is the première of a specially devised programme of songs from the Yiddish repertoire to replicate the emotional and physical journey through a bleak landscape undertaken by the hero of Schubert's original cycle. The specific context is the Holocaust; the performer, a former badkhn (wedding singer), is first heard a capella, singing a traditional Yiddish wedding song off-stage. He is in flight from his shtetl, which has recently been destroyed, together with his family. In the course of the cycle he reflects on his life, loves, work and religion there. Central to the performance will be a rendition of 'Der Lindenbaum' one of the best-loved songs of the Schubertian original, translated into Yiddish. The cycle will end with the Kaddish (Mourners Prayer) sung in Ashkenazi pronunciation. This concert emphasises a paradox - the deep affection and respect so many Jews felt and still feel for the culture of the people who were ultimately to turn on them with such devastating consequences, a culture to which they have also made such an important contribution.

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Mark Glanville's personal journey to the Yiddishe Winterreise

My mother left Berlin in 1932. It was nothing to do with the Nazis, just that fortunately, my grandfather happened to have been offered a journalistic position in London. In England my mother was teased for her German accent. Now people joke that she sounds like the Queen. She claimed, oddly I always felt, to have forgotten most of her German. One thing she remembered was *Heidenröslein*, Schubert's exquisite setting of the Goethe poem, proof that the people who had murdered her cousin Theo, and whose crimes formed the substance of the Holocaust litany my father recited at meal times, had a better side. The simple musical setting of a text that describes the plucking of a rose blinded me - perhaps my mother too - to the fact that this was actually a poem about defloration or worse.

The first classical vocal album I bought was a collection of Schubert settings of Goethe poems that included *Heidenröslein*. The sublimely beautiful musical versions of the great writer's romantic verse were a palliative against my frustrated adolescent yearnings. I started to acquire more Schubert Lieder, including *Die Winterreise*, the song cycle widely held to be the greatest ever written. It was this music that inspired me to become a singer in the first place. I began to take lessons with Mark Raphael, a recitalist of international repute who had had to queue for soup in the East End before a discerning synagogue decided it would be a good idea to send him to study voice in Milan. He assured me that my hero was not, as I claimed, the composer closest to God; rather the one nearest to earth.

Mark's death became the catalyst for my first ever visit to a synagogue at the age of 22, the West London Reform for which he had composed a great deal of music, and where his memorial service was held. It would be inaccurate to say that I had lapsed, since my family had given me nothing to lapse from, but if a warden had not grabbed my arm and thrust a paper *kippah* (skull cap) into my hand, I would have walked into the temple with my head uncovered, in blissful ignorance. Once inside I experienced an almost tangible sense of tranquillity. It was as if I had finally returned to the place I belonged, even though I had never been there before.

At the time I was working with Mark, I was also studying Classics and Philosophy at Oxford, giving recitals of predominantly romantic repertoire that allowed me to indulge myself and the audience enough to make us all forget that I had no vocal technique. My only concern was to communicate the repertoire I had carefully chosen to suit my passionate youthful sensibility. I was able to move audiences more readily than in later times, when, after five years of obsessing over technique at music college, I had a highly trained bass-baritone at my disposal. Professionally, at first, my star blazed brightly, but, as often with such phenomena, its descent into the ocean was rapid. I eventually found myself performing on cruise ships. It was there that I began to introduce Yiddish and Hebrew songs as spice for the plain fare of our classical programmes, and at last found myself able to reach audiences as I had done before learning how to sing. In the ancestral echoes of the music I rediscovered the joy that had led me to become a singer in the first place.

A *Yiddishe Winterreise* is the child of my love not only for Yiddish music but for its language. My relish and enjoyment of *mamaloshn* (mother tongue) is equalled only by my discomfort with German, the language of its and my own mother, which I have often tried to learn, but never with success. The spirit of Yiddish is gentle, the *tsarfn gayst* of a playful child that revels in a life which has often proved so painful, its view of the world clear and undimmed by the darkening vision of adulthood. It is as if the ancient dialect of Yiddish stayed fresh and young through the centuries while its parent grew middle-aged and introspective. There is a directness and simplicity in Yiddish language and music that makes its songs instantly appealing, but the depth and honesty of their feeling haunt one, making one want to return to them again and again.

A *Yiddishe Winterreise* reminds me that the culture of the people I was encouraged to reject is also part of who they are, that for every Goering who would reach for his revolver when he heard the word culture, there is a Schubert who set a Hebrew psalm for the Jewish friend who sang his Lied. I have had *Der Lindenbaum*, one of the central songs of Schubert's *Die Winterreise*,

translated into Yiddish for the recital, where it now appears as *Di Lipe* but can still be understood, almost in its entirety, by a German speaker. It describes the plight of a lonely wanderer looking for a place of rest, much as the Zionist song *Jeruscholajim*, which precedes it in my programme. I have a recording of the latter, made in Berlin in 1930, sung by the cantor Sigismund Torday and accompanied by his wife, Thea. Thanks to the internet, I was also able to track down the music in an anthology of Yiddish songs collected by Janot Roskin, and produced, like the record itself, in 1930s Berlin. The pages are now so brittle that the corners snap off as you turn them, no matter how carefully, as if one were picking through the bones of the dead. I wonder if my grandfather ever heard it.

Thanks

This journey has been made exciting and rewarding for me through working with such sympathetic and skilled colleagues. I would specially like to express my grateful thanks to Heather Valencia of Sterling University (translator of the famous Yiddish play *The King of Lampedusa* into English) for translating Schubert's famous song *Der Lindenbaum* into Yiddish for me and to Khayele Beer, Head of the Yiddish programme at University College for further help and coaching in Yiddish. The pianist Alex Knapp formerly the Joe Loss Lecturer in Jewish Music, SOAS, University of London has been the most sensitive and knowledgeable musical colleague and we have so enjoyed developing this programme together. John Hill has added much to the atmosphere by his subtle and helpful lighting. Steven Leas and the staff and Music Society at Central Synagogue have been warm and welcoming. I would like to add my thanks to Geraldine Auerbach and her colleagues especially Yvonne Glass at the Jewish Music Institute, for believing in this project. Without any of these people this concert would have been neither viable nor possible.

Mark Glanville January 2007

A Yiddishe Winterreise

World première

Songs from the Yiddish repertoire to replicate the emotional and physical journey through a bleak landscape undertaken by the hero of Schubert's original cycle

devised by

Mark Glanville bass baritone

with

Alexander Knapp piano

Sunday 28 January 2007

This programme (approximately 75 minutes) will be performed without an interval

1. Khosn Bazingsns (Song for the Groom)

Trad. as sung by Majer Bogdanski

Please listen good people. When a *badkhn* (wedding singer) speaks one should listen to him carefully. A bridegroom is a king on his wedding day. Today the gates of all the heavens are open for you. Remember that to sanctify a wife is one of the holiest commandments of the Torah. In return for fulfilling this task, the Almighty will help you.

2. S'brent (It's Burning)

Mordechai Gebirtig, arr. Alexander Knapp

Our *shtetl* (village) is burning my brothers. And you stand still and watch with your hands together. The moment has come. Our *shtetl* is being burned to ash. Only we can help ourselves. If you care about your *shtetl*, take up arms and put out the fire with your own blood. Don't stand their with your hands folded. Our village is burning!

3. A Zemer (A Song)

Samuel Bugatch

Rabbi Moteniu says 'Good Morning, Lord. Remove your anger from us and make us live according to Thy Law. Good Health to you, Lord. The day is hot and the war is terrible. Men won't put down their arms. Good Evening, Lord. The day is hot and I've done all I have to. Give me a peaceful night. – The good will rise and the wicked will fall'

4. Vilne (Vilna)

Alexander Olshanetsky, arr. Alexander Knapp

Vilna, city of spirit, innocence and Jewish ways; my homeplace, my desire. Your name brings a tear to my eye. Something gnaws at me, and makes me long for the times that have gone.

5. Oyfn Pripetshik (By the fireplace)

M Warschafsky arr. Alexander Knapp with Chani Haran-Smith

A fire is burning in the hearth. The rabbi is teaching children the Hebrew alphabet. 'Learn the letters with great desire. They contain much wisdom. As you grow older you will understand the tears and suffering buried in them. When you start to endure the persecution of exile, look into them again. They will give you strength.'

6. Vos Vet Zayn az Moshiach vet Kumen (What will happen when the Messiah comes?) **Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev arr. M. Persin**

‘Tell us Rabbi, what will happen when the Messiah comes?’ ‘When the Messiah comes we will have a big banquet. We will eat of the pious bull and the leviathan, and drink marvellous wine. Moses will read the Torah, and David will play for us.’

7. Der Rebe hot Geheysen Freylech Zayn (The Rabbi has told us to be merry) **Traditional arr. Janot Roskin**

The rabbi has instructed us to drink and be merry! Mount the horse, let us gallop. If he stops we won't buy him.

8. Rozhinkes mit Mandlen (Raisins and Almonds) **Abraham Goldfaden arr. Alexander Knapp**

In a corner of the Temple, the widowed daughter of Zion sits and sings her son to sleep. She sings to him of a pure white kid that has been to market. That will be her son's fate too – trading in raisins and almonds. In a corner of a religious school in the Lithuanian ghetto, an old beadle writes his testament. ‘When you become free, dear Jews, tell your children of your pain and suffering. Show them the graves and inscriptions.’

9. Jerusholayim (Jerusalem) **arr. Janot Roskin**

A cold wind blows on a bitter January night. An old man is sitting in his cell weeping for Zion. ‘Jerusalem, my dear home.’ I was my father's only son. He drove me out for my sins. I became old, wandering from one place to another. Jerusalem, you are my dear home.

10. Di Lipe (Der Lindenbaum - The Lime Tree) **Schubert (translated from German to Yiddish by Heather Valencia and Khaye Beer)**

At the well by the gate stands a lime tree. I've often dreamt in its shadow, and carved words of love into its bark. I yearn to be by it in joy and in sadness. Today I wandered by it at midnight with my eyes closed and heard its branches whisper, ‘Come here, dear friend. My rest is yours.’ The cold wind blew into my face and knocked my hat off. Now I am in a strange land, but I still hear the lime tree whisper, ‘You will find rest here.’

11. Tumbalayka (Play balalaika) **Traditional arr. Alexander Knapp**

A young man stood thinking all night about which girl to approach without embarrassing himself. ‘Maiden, what can grow without rain? What can burn eternally? What can yearn and weep without tears?’ ‘Silly young man! A stone can grow without rain. Love can burn eternally. A heart can yearn and weep without tears.’

12. Moyshela Mayn Fraynd (Moyshela my friend) **Mordechai Gebirtig arr. Harry Anik**

How are things with you, Moyshela? You were my friend many years ago. We went to *cheder* (religious school) together. Do you remember the horrid Rabbi with the cane? He used to beat

you for smiling at him, but to his fury, you kept on smiling. How is your beautiful sister Rochele? I adored her but she preferred Berelen and hated me for no reason, making a wound in my heart that has never healed. How are all our old friends now? I often think of them, dream of them as youngsters but they're all old Jews now. How swiftly life goes by. My heart yearns now for all those youthful ills.

13. Hot a Yid a Vaybele (A Jew has a Wife)
Morris Goldstein arr. Jack Kammen

A Jew had a little wife. Men made merry at my wedding. Sorenu my wife cooked the *kiegel* (pudding) in the oven from Monday to Friday, but when it came to *shabbes* (Sabbath) she forgot all about it. A Jew had a wife, a great sorrow to him. If she doesn't bear a child, she's useless.

14. Unter Dayne Vayse Shtern (Under your White Stars)
Abraham Budno (poem by Abraham Sutzkever) arr. Alexander Knapp

Stretch Your white hand towards me beneath Your white stars. My words are tears that would rest in your hand. See how they have lost their gleam in my cellar. I don't even have a corner in which to pray to You. Yet, dear Lord, I would entrust all I have to you. A fire burns within me and consumes my days. Only in pits and cellars do I find a tortured peace. I run across rooftops looking for You. Where are You? Evil spirits hunt me. I sing this song to You, accompanying myself on a broken string.

15. Chazkele (Chazkele - a boy's name)
arr. Janot Roskin

Chazkele, play me a Cossack dance. Even if we're poor at least we're brave. We shouldn't be embarrassed by our own relatives.

16. Habet Mishomayim (Look down from Heaven)
S Gozinsky

Look down, Lord, from above, and see how we are persecuted by the gentiles, how we are led like sheep to be slaughtered.

17. Habein Yakir Li Efrayim (My Son Ephraim is Dear to Me)
Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev

My father spoke of an old woman who came to him weeping, frightened that her children would not be found worthy in the eyes of the Lord. My father told her that the Lord is merciful and would probably show Himself so to her children, especially such dear ones, as is written in the scripture: 'Efrayim is dear to me. I delight in him. Even though I may sometimes speak against him, yet I remember him still. I shall have mercy on him.'

18. Az der Rebe Elimelekh (when Rabbi Elimelech)
Moshe Nadir arr. Alexander Knapp

When Rabbi Elimelech becomes merry he throws off his prayer shawl, puts on his glad rags, and calls for his musicians: two fiddlers, two drummers and two cimbalom (hammered dulcimer) players.

19. Der Zeyger (The Clock)
Trad. arr. Janot Roskin

Tell me gilded clock, what is making you ill? You're dressed in gold and diamonds and we're taking precautions to make sure you don't blacken. What makes you tick?

20. Kinder Yorn (Childhood Years)

Mordechai Gebirtig arr. Jack Kammen

Sweet childhood years. You remain in my heart forever. When I think of you I become sad. How quickly I have grown old. Your beauty has been replaced by colder, crueller times. Each old memory stays with me always. I see the place where I was born, the cradle I lay in, then it all disappears like a dream.

21. Kleyner Yosem (Little Orphan)

Mordechai Gebirtig arr. Alexander Knapp

Do not cry, little orphan, even though you want to. It's horrid not to be able to weep when your heart is full of sorrow. Save your tears like diamonds. When your heart is overflowing you will need them. In sleep you will feel better. Sleep forever, next to me, your father. '

22. Shlof Mayn Feygele (Sleep my Darling)

Lermontov arr. Janot Roskin (words by Abraham Goldfaden) .

Sleep my little one. Close your eyes. A good angel will be your guardian. He will spread his wings over your cradle. Sleep in peace. May no harm befall you.

23. A Malekh vert Geboyrn (An Angel is Born)

Mordechai Gebirtig arr. Alexander Knapp

Is it true what grandpa said, mummy, that with each Kaddish I recite an angel is born, and that daddy is playing with the angels in the Garden of Eden, just as he once used to play with me? I'll never forget to say Kaddish ever again.

24. Kaddish (Mourner's Prayer)

Traditional

This ancient text, used to pray for and honour the departed, is traditionally recited in Aramaic (the secular everyday language of the Jews in Temple times) at the graveside, in memorial services and at numerous times in Daily, Sabbath and Festival services. You will notice that 'death' is not mentioned in this prayer – it is rather paeon of praise to the Lord.

'Magnified and sanctified is the great Name of The Lord throughout the world that he has created according to His will. May He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and in the life of all Israel, speedily and before long. And say Amen. May His great name be blessed forever and for all eternity? Blessed, praised, glorified, exalted, extolled and honoured, esteemed and lauded be the Name of the Holy One. Blessed be He above all blessings and hymns, praises and consoling words that are uttered in this world. And say Amen'. (It will be sung in Ashkenazi pronunciation as it would have been throughout Eastern Europe until the State of Israel adopted Sephardi pronunciation which was then taken up by Synagogues across the world).

The Performers

Mark Glanville bass baritone

Mark studied singing at the RNCM and the National Opera Studio before making his debut with Opera North. Roles for that company include The King of Clubs (Love for Three Oranges), the King (Aida), Nourabad (Pearl Fishers) and Father (The Jewel Box). For Scottish Opera he has sung Commendatore (Don Giovanni), for Lisbon Opera, New Israeli Opera and Opera Zuid The King of Clubs, and for Opera Omaha Ferrando (Il Trovatore.) On the concert platform he has performed as bass soloist with Lord Menuhin, Daniele Gatti, Pascal Tortelier, Sir David Willcocks and Stanislaw Skrowaczewski. Recordings include Donizetti's *L'Assedio di Calais* and *Anna Bolena* and Schubert Mass in G. His memoir *The Goldberg Variations* was shortlisted for the Wingate Prize for Jewish Literature and the National Sporting Club Award. He is a regular contributor to The Jewish Chronicle, The Jewish Quarterly, Opera Now and The Singer Magazine.



Alexander Knapp piano

Alex graduated from Selwyn College, Cambridge, with MA, MusB, and PhD degrees in music, and he has also been awarded ARCM, LRAM and HonARAM diplomas. Over a period of more than 35 years, he has published and lectured on the subject of Jewish music in the UK, Ireland, Holland, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Hungary, Romania, Greece, Israel, USA, Russia, and China. As well as composing, arranging, conducting, broadcasting,



and performing as pianist in the UK, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Russia and USA, Alexander Knapp has been involved as consultant and accompanist to cantors and choirs on several commercial recordings of Jewish music. His set of *Four Sephardi Songs* (arranged for voice and piano) was published in New York in 1992, and his *Elegy for String Orchestra* in Jerusalem in 1997. In 1998, his anthology of essays on Jewish music was brought out in Chinese by the Music Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Arts in Beijing under the title *Youtai Yinyue Lunwenji*. Among numerous other articles, he has contributed entries on aspects of Jewish music to *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (second edition). He has been appointed to academic and administrative posts at Wolfson College, Cambridge; at London's Goldsmiths' College, Royal College of Music, City University; and most recently (1999-2006) to the Joe Loss Lectureship in Jewish Music at SOAS.