

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA
FACULTY
CONCERT SERIES

Alexander Dunn, guitar

With

Anne Grimm, soprano

Saturday, March 29, 2014, 8:00 p.m.

Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

MacLaurin Building, University of Victoria

Adults: \$17.50 / Students & seniors: \$13.50

PROGRAM

Études 'L'indispensable' Op. 40*

Allegro maestoso
Andante
Moderato
Grave
Andante
Allegro
Andante

Leonard Schulz
(1814–1860)

Nocturnal after John Dowland, Op. 70

Musingly
Very agitated
Restless
Uneasy
March-like
Dreaming
Gently rocking
Passacaglia
Slow and quiet

Benjamin Britten
(1913–1976)

Intermission

(Beverages and snacks available at the
concession located in the lounge)

Under Milkwood Songs*

Polly Garter
Lily Smalls
Rosie Probert and Captain Cat
Oh what'll the neighbours say, what'll the neighbours...
Pretty Polly hums and longs

Stephen Goss
(b. 1954)

Studies for Guitar*

Weeping Willows
A Summer Breeze
Still Waters
Le Gibet de Ravel
Children playing
Frost and Dew
Reflections
Choral
The Bells of Notre Dame
A Gale is blowing

Allan Willcocks
(1869–1956)

*Canadian premiere

Guitar by Stephen Connor, Boston, USA

PROGRAM NOTES

Tonight's program feature landmark works from Great Britain, important in the guitar repertoire from their inception or from recent rediscovery. German-born Leonard Schulz was based in London during the height of the Victorian era, British composer Allan Willcocks imported French impressionistic color from across the channel into his aesthetic, Benjamin Britten applied his exacting technique into a moody reflection on Elizabethan composer John Dowland (1563-1626), and Stephen Goss explores the perennial delight and naughtiness of Welshman Dylan Thomas' *Under Milkwood*.

Leonard Schulz – *Études* – two of England's most prominent 19th century guitar virtuosos were almost exact contemporaries: the extraordinary Jules Regondi has enjoyed a deserved revival from concert artists but Leonard Schulz, whose studies were only published in 2011, is awaiting recognition. Brothers Leonard and pianist Edward were dual child prodigies, taken by their father on interminable concert tours across Europe. Leonard's performance of a Giuliani concerto at age thirteen, prompted a London reviewer to term him the 'Ajax of the Guitar'. Indeed, his prowess was such that he played in the company of Moscheles, Maria Malibran, Thalberg, Liszt, Sir George Smart, and many other musical luminaries in England, France, and Germany. In 1850, a Russian nobleman, visiting London for the exact purpose of calling on Schulz, wrote that: 'He was a tall, well-dressed man... handsome and of excellent manners. He played... to my indescribable delight... His playing embodied all that I could hope for – and extraordinary rapidity, clearness, forcefulness, taste, suavity of touch, brilliance, expression... I noticed, moreover, a decided self-assurance during the performance. It seemed, in fact, that playing the instrument was but a light diversion for him, for he showed himself heedless of the tremendous difficulties in which his own compositions abounded'. Due to the decline of the guitar during the Victorian era, Schulz's concert music, too difficult for the amateur market, was lost. A number of his surviving works are in a disappointing popular style. Edward Schulz said of his brother that 'he has the greatest talent, but is the worst drunkard in London', and a less than reputable lifestyle may have hastened, along with Jules Regondi, a drawn-out and painful illness and premature death.

The *Studies* are intended to develop tonal balance, control and a singing style. They often feature repeated notes, where both a Schubertian lyricism and Schulz's unique voice are heard.

Benjamin Britten – *Nocturnal after John Dowland* – the magnificent *Nocturnal* has assumed a place in the guitar lexicon as a watermark of the twentieth century. Commissioned by Julian Bream, the *Nocturnal* is a broad rumination on John Dowland's air *Come Heavy Sleep* (First Booke of Aires, 1597) for voices and lute, quoted at the end. The song text is as follows:

Come, heavy Sleep, the image of true Death,
And close up these my weary weeping eyes,
Whose spring of tears doth stop my vital breath,
And tears my heart with Sorrow's sigh-swoll'n cries.
Come and possess my tired through-worn soul,
That living dies till thou on me be stole.

Britten manipulates elements of the Dowland air into a fantastical set of variations in reverse order where the theme is presented, in its entirety, at the close. Themes of sleep and death, dream vs. waking reality, and the transmutation of ideas across time form its basis and structure. The splintering of the Dowland melody into independent variations allows Britten to portray varying dream attitudes which range across a nightscape - now irritated, now singing, now marching, toward repose - but not before the *Passacaglia*, a large and insistent utterance, itself based on a recognizable element of the Dowland, is aggressively asserted. After the *Passacaglia* subsides, the beautiful Dowland air reassembles itself from the fractured night-dream of the variations, waning into doleful silence.

Stephen Goss – *Under Milkwood Songs* – British composer Stephen Goss, Professor of Music at the University of Surrey, and Visiting Professor at the Royal Academy of Music in London, enjoys worldwide recognition for his orchestral, chamber, and guitar works. Captivated by Dylan Thomas' 1954 radio play *Under Milkwood*, Goss produced a song cycle and later a setting for guitar quartet and narration based on the Thomas text. The play, set in the imaginary Welsh fishing village of *Llareggub* (spell it backwards), explores the seamy underside of rural life with sexual undercurrents, catty wives, pitched gossip, powerful longing, and a recall of intimacy set on the romantic high seas. *Polly Garter's* wistful lost-love memory begins and ends the work. *Lily Smalls* yearns for a fantasy life full of love, but is only bored with her small existence. *Rosie Probert* is *Captain Cat's* deceased lover who only appears in his dreams; the Captain is an old blind sailor who, like Tiresias of Thebes – the blind clairvoyant transformed into a woman - intuitively senses the goings on in the village. Sharp-tongued gossip pervades the neighborhood while Lily Smalls' melancholic remembrance of Little Willy Wee, her only true love, ends the cycle on a pensive tone. 2014 marks the centenary of Dylan Thomas' birth. The entire text for *Under Milkwood Songs* appears at the end of these program notes.

Andrew Allan Willcocks – *Studies* – Willcocks hailed from Canterbury where as a child he was encouraged to study the guitar with Giulia Pelzer, sister to the most important female guitarist of the nineteenth century. He later devoted his attention to piano, organ and composition. Study in Paris under Paul Dukas exposed him to the French style and it was there he formed deep friendships with Manuel Ponce, Cyril Scott, and other notable musicians. Indeed these influences and especially Ravel, can be discerned in his blending of Impressionist syntax with expert instrumental writing. *12 Miniature Preludes* for guitar also date from his Paris years alongside the *Studies*, which were discovered and published in 2012. The first, *Weeping Willows*, dedicated to the Mexican composer Ponce, is largely based on the whole-tone scale, moodily ranging across the instrument, and marked 'dreary'. *A Summer Breeze* is a fluid arpeggio study, lightly dispelling any mood of gravity. Inspired by Charles J. Pahlmie's *Silent Water* – a darkly hued oil on canvas landscape in which the partially obscured moon is reflected in a deep, placid lake – *Still Waters* is a calm, unruffled meditation on beautiful sonorities, dedicated to the Spanish virtuoso Miguel Llobet. The expressive centerpiece of the cycle, *Le Gibet de Ravel*, is a stark re-imagining of the second movement of Ravel's monumental *Gaspard de la Nuit*. It is a monotonous tableau on Alois Bertrand's poem *Le gibet* (The Gallows), whose translation of the first and last couplet read:

Ah! What do I hear, was it the north wind that screeches in the night,
or the hanged one who utters a sigh on the fork of the gibbet?

...

It is the bell that tolls from the walls of a city, under the horizon,
and the corpse of the hanged one that is reddened by the setting sun.

Willcocks begins with a direct quote of the Ravel, slowly evolving into original music, but somehow combining elegance with utter dread. The frolicsome *Children Playing* scatters the hex with echoes of Mussorsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Debussy; hurried musical motives scamper across its pages. *Frost and Dew* also draws its inspiration from a painting – Peter Scott Purvil's *Frost and Dew* – contrasting a snow-covered lakeside with the slow thaw of early spring. In this study, Willcocks begins with frigid major seconds, slowly expanding into a radiant conclusion. *Reflections* recalls Debussy's piano work *Images* (Vol. I) with its sumptuous harmonies. It begins with a sense of breathless urgency, soon relaxing into spacious octaves and a drooping, expressive motive. In *Choral*, we are invited to the fleeting memory of a Ravelian waltz emerging from bell-like harmonics. The clamorous *The Bells of Notre Dame's* emerge from and retreat into a fog and in its expanse recalls *Frost and Dew*, but with the weighty and imperious tolling of cathedral bells. This set of Willcocks Studies ends with *A Gale is blowing*, its oppressive gusts subside only at its very conclusion.

~ Program notes by Alexander Dunn

Under Milkwood Songs

Adapted from *Under Milkwood* by Dylan Thomas (1914-1953)

1. Polly Garter

I loved a man whose name was Tom
He was strong as a bear and two yards long
I loved a man whose name was Dick
He was big as a barrel and three feet thick
And I loved a man whose name was Harry
Six feet tall and sweet as a cherry
But the one I loved best awake or asleep
Was little Willy Wee and he's six feet deep.

O Tom Dick and Harry were three fine men
And I'll never have such loving again
But little Willy Wee who took me on his knee
Little Willy Wee was the man for me.

Look at your complexion!
Oh no, you look.
Needs a bit of make-up.
Needs a veil.
Oh there's glamour!

Where you get that smile,
Lil? Never you mind, girl.
Nobody loves you.
That's what you think.

Who is it loves you?
Shan't tell.
Come on, Lily.
Cross your heart then?
Cross my heart.

2. Lily Smalls

Oh there's a face!
Where you get that hair from?
Got it from a old tom cat.
Give it back then, love.
Oh there's a perm!

Where you get that nose from, Lily?
Got it from my father, silly.
You've got it on upside down!
Oh there's a conk!

3. Rosie Probert and Captain Cat

ROSIE PROBERT:
What seas did you see,
Tom Cat, Tom Cat,
In your sailing days
Long long ago?
What sea beasts were
In the wavery green
When you were my master?

CAPTAIN CAT:

I'll tell you the truth.
Seas barking like seals,
Blue seas and green,
Seas covered with eels
And mermen and whales.

ROSIE PROBERT:

What seas did you sail
Old whaler when
On the blubbery waves
Between Frisco and Wales
You were my bosun?

CAPTAIN CAT:

As true as I'm here
Dear you Tom Cat's tart
You landlubber Rosie
You cosy love
My easy as easy
My true sweetheart,
Seas green as a bean
Seas gliding with swans
In the seal-barking moon.

ROSIE PROBERT:

What seas were rocking
My little deck hand
My favourite husband
In your seaboots and hunger
My duck my whaler
My honey my daddy
My pretty sugar sailor:
With my name on your belly
When you were a boy
Long long ago?

CAPTAIN CAT:

I'll tell you no lies.
The only sea I saw
Was the seesaw sea
With you riding on it.
Lie down, lie easy.
Let me shipwreck in your thighs.

4. Oh what'll the neighbours say, what'll the neighbours...

Poor Mrs Waldo
What she puts up with
Never should of married
If she didn't had to
Same as her mother
There's a husband for you
Bad as his father
And you know where he ended
Up in the asylum
Crying for his ma
Every Saturday
He hasn't got a leg
And carrying on
With that Mrs Beattie Morris
Up in the quarry
And seen her baby
It's got his nose
Oh it makes my heart bleed
What he'll do for drink
He sold the pianola
And her sewing machine
Falling in the gutter
Talking to the lamp-post
Using language
Singing in the w
Poor Mrs Waldo

Black as a chimbley
Ringing doorbells
Breaking windows
Making mudpies
Stealing currants
Chalking words
Saw him in the bushes
Playing mwchins
Send him to bed without any supper
Give him sennapods and lock him in the dark
Off to the reformatory
Off to the reformatory
Learn him with a slipper on his b.t.m.

5. Pretty Polly hums and longs

Now when farmers' boys on the first fair day
Come down from the hills to drink and be gay,
Before the sun sinks I'll lie there in their arms
For they're good bad boys from the lonely farms,

But I always think as we tumble into bed
Of little Willy Wee who is dead, dead, dead...

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, March 30, 2:00 p.m. (Admission by donation)

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA CHAMBER SINGERS: *Wine, Water & Roses*

Garry Froese, conductor
Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

Thursday, April 3, 12:00 p.m. (Admission by donation)

AFRICAN PERCUSSION CONCERT

The thirty-member percussion ensemble from the African Hand Drumming class perform a repertoire of rhythms on djembe, balafon and dundun.

Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

Thursday, April 3, 8:00 p.m. (Free admission)

COMPUTER MUSIC CONCERT

Featuring original works for digital media by students in Computer Music Seminar: Expect delays: experiments in progress!

Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

Thursday, April 3, 8:00 p.m. (\$14 & \$10)

DON WRIGHT SYMPHONIC WINDS: *A Trip to the Zoo!*

Michael Keddy, conductor
University Centre Farquhar Auditorium

Saturday, April 5, 8:00 p.m. (\$17.50 & \$13.50)

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA CHORUS & ORCHESTRA: *Bees*

Ajtony Csaba, conductor
Susan Young, chorus director
Berlioz – *Symphonie Fantastique, Op. 14*
Bruckner – *Mass No. 3 in F minor, WAB 28*
University Centre Farquhar Auditorium

Sunday, April 6, 2:30 p.m. (\$12 advance / \$15 at the door)

PHILOMELA WOMEN'S CHOIR: *A Potpourri for Spring*

Mary Kennedy, director
Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

Tickets available at the UVic Ticket Centre (250-721-8480),
online (www.tickets.uvic.ca) and at the door.

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