

2026
YORK
EARLY
MUSIC
FESTIVAL

Love from Afar

Music from the courts of medieval France

Holy Trinity Church, Goodramgate

Thursday 9 July 9.00pm

Love From Afar
Music from the courts of medieval France

Hannah Ely *soprano*

Rebekah Nießer-Jones *mezzo soprano*

Paul Bentley-Angell *tenor*

with

Emma Dillon *speaker*

Patrick Allies *musical director, Siglo de Oro*

Constance Des Marais *theatre director*

Alone & Afar

Lan qant li jor sont lonc en ma
(Now that the days are long in May)

Jaufre Rudel *fl.* 1120-1147

Love in the Air

Qant li rosignols s'escrie
(When the nightingale calls)

Anonymous 13th century

En dous tans et en bone heure
(In the lovely weather and at the
opportune moment)

Gace Brulé *fl.* 1190-1220

Bridging Distance

Bele Yolanz en ses chambres seoit
(Fair Yolanda was sitting in her bedchamber)

Anonymous 13th century

Hui main, au doz mois de mai
(This morning in the sweet month of May)

Anonymous 13th century

Hec dies
(This is the day)

*Molt ai esté longuement esbahiz/
que je n'osai chançon a faire reprendre*
(I have long been so terrified that I dare
not make a song)

?**Châtelain de Coucy** c.1160-1203

Enchanted Evenings

Gaite de la tor
(Watchman of the tower)

Anonymous 13th century

La douce voiz du louseignol sauvage
(The sweet voice of the wild nightingale)

Châtelain de Coucy

Together Forever

Onques n'ama loialment
(No-one every loved loyally)

Anonymous 13th century

Molt m'abelist l'amorous pensament
(The thought of love has delighted me)

Flos filius eius
(The flower is her son)

Amis, Amis, trop me laissez en etrange païs
(Beloved, Beloved, you leave me too long in this
strange land!)

Anonymous 13th century

Texts and translations will be available at the concert

Sources, texts and translations

Songs in tonight's programme are versions found in two of the oldest surviving chansonniers (songbooks): Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, français 20050 and français 844. The translations were undertaken collaboratively by the MUSLIVE Translation Collective: Fiona Barsoum, Professor Emma Dillon, Dr. Sebastian Dows-Miller, Professor Mary Franklin-Brown, Professor Jane Gilbert, Dr. Alice Hazard, Professor Ruth Harvey, Dr. Liam Lewis and Dr. Geneviève Young. Old French texts from français 20050 are taken from Madeleine Tyssens, *Le chansonnier français U, publié d'après le manuscrit Paris, BNF, fr. 20050*, vol. 1 (Paris: Société des anciens textes français, 2015). MUSLIVE translators maintained Tyssens' editorial conventions but have occasionally made minor emendations where they feel it is necessary for sense, including to punctuation. Emma Dillon created new editions of all the songs along with an experimental collaborative score used by singers and scholars. The two-part motet used the edition and translation by Hans Tischler. The three-part motet was selected by Dr. Sean Curran and used an edition and translation by Gordon Anderson. The MUSLIVE project is especially indebted to Mary Franklin-Brown, Jane Gilbert and Ruth Harvey for generously giving their time, expertise and support in leading the work of the Translation Collective.

Love From Afar

Tonight's concert features new performances of songs from a tradition of medieval French song, known as *trouvère* song. Taking root in the courts of Northern France in the twelfth century, the songs are precious to history for being the among the earliest love songs to survive with their melodies, written into songbooks from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Offering glimpses into the lives, relationships and encounters of medieval people, the songs also give voice to feelings of universal appeal – the longing for connection. **Love From Afar** calls them back across time, to sing again, in a programme including songs that in some cases have not sounded for many centuries. Our programme invites you to step out of time and into a world of *trouvère* song, as Siglo de Oro singers Paul Bentley-Angell, Hannah Ely and Rebekah Nießer-Jones, narrator Emma Dillon and theatre-director Constance Des Marais transform Holy Trinity into an intimate, summery songscape. Together, they take you on a very human journey, tracing a path from separation and longing, to playful encounter, to eternal connection.

We begin **Alone and Afar**, with the song in tonight's programme that has travelled furthest in time: *Lan qant li jorn*, attributed to the twelfth-century troubadour Jaufrè Rudel. The troubadour tradition, which flourished in the region of Occitania (modern-day Southern France) was the precursor to the Northern French songs heard elsewhere tonight. The version we hear was copied over 100 years after Jaufrè's death, its language a muddled mix of Old French and Occitan. Yet its melody speaks direct – its suspenseful, meandering lines casting us swiftly under its spell. It is *the* classic formation of song's power to reach across unbridgeable distances. As the summer days lengthen, the protagonist, alone, remembers birdsong he heard from a distant land. They remind him of a love he left across an ocean – his 'faraway love' ('amor de lohn'), the refrain that echoes throughout the song (and across centuries of love songs that follow).

Songs in the Air traces voices on the move, prompting action and conveying messages. In the anonymous *trouvère* song, *Qant li rosignols d'escrìe*, silence is broken by a voice on the wing: a nightingale. Its melody sets a lover's heart a-flutter for a lovely, yet inaccessible, lady. Feelings burst forth, like the nightingale's ditty, taking shape as the song we hear. It's a declaration of love, loyalty – and patience: the protagonist is willing to wait a thousand years for his love. Thoughts of summer return in the next song, *En dous tans et en bone eure*. It is attributed to the most prolific of *trouvères*, a twelfth-century nobleman, Gace Brulé. Little is known about

Gace, but the personalities of his songs are vividly portrayed and emotionally charged. In this song, lovely weather prompts a forlorn lover to sing. He's turned upside down by feelings of unrequited love which then unfold as a catalogue of longing, desire, and denial. *Singing* of love's trials is evidently a soothing balm and the song's warm-hearted melody is an antidote to the gloom. It also ensures Gace won't always be alone. And in the song's final lines, Gace instructs his song to go forth, like a messenger, to tell his story to his friend, Odin, in France.

Bridging Distance explores how relationships are made – and unmade – through songs. The anonymous *Bel Yolanz en ses chambres seoit* is from a French tradition of weaving songs, imagined as a story shared by women who worked together. It is a sweet, light-hearted version of the classic trouvère love song. It tells the story of beautiful Yolanda, alone in her chamber, sewing sparkling cloth to send to her lover. She sings as she wonders whether she'll see him again: 'Deus, tant est douz li nons d'amors! Ja n'en cuidai sentir dolors!' God, how sweet is the name of love! I never thought to feel sorrow from it'. (Her song is heard again with each passing verse.) Yolanda is seemingly heard when – joy! – her lover appears, and the pair happily reunite. The next piece, *Hui main, au doz mois de mai/Hec dies* is a two-part motet, combining a line of trouvère song with a new voice, from the tradition of Latin chant. The French text is all about broken connections. A knight approaches a lady, singing to herself, but is cut off in no uncertain terms. Melodies, though, join forces, to coordinate voices in perfect harmony. Our next song, *Molt ai esté longuement esbahiz*, is attributed in some sources to the trouvère-knight Gui, Châtelain de Coucy. Too terrified to sing, the protagonist now finds their voice again. And what a voice! This is a love anthem of such intensity that it almost wills the beloved into being. Though the conjuring trick fails, the song ends with a determined and hopeful forwarding-address: the final stanza is a mini-mailing list, naming friends and allies, and eventually, hopes of reaching a beloved lady 'Helisant'.

As sun sets around us in Holy Trinity Church, **Enchanted Evenings** invites you into a world of nocturnal mystery and play. The anonymous *Gaite de la tor* takes place at a medieval castle tower at night. There we encounter courtly lovers up to their amorous affairs, while a night watchman keeps lookout, shouting out to ward off thieves who lurk around the tower's edge. His call, 'hue et hue!' is heard across the song, so catchy that it is almost impossible not to join in. In the next song, *La douce voiz du lousignol sauvage*, attributed to Gui, Châtelain de Coucy, the communal antics of the tower give way to the quiet of the night. The magical song of the

nightingale is heard again, provoking one of the best-known songs of the tradition. It is a darkly passionate, deeply-felt outpouring of love and longing. Gui's final comfort is that, like the nightingale, it can be sent out into the world and unknown future, to carry his feelings and fears.

Together Forever brings our journey to a close in two pieces exploring songs' powers to bring people together. *Onques n'ama loialment/Molt m'abelist l'amorous pensament/Flos filius eius* is an anonymous three-part motet, each voice singing a different text at the same time – in this case, a heady mix of three languages (French, gallicised Occitan and Latin). When the three voices combine in performance, meaning falls away, in favour of a shimmering sound-effect. The programme ends with a voice that seems to answer the Jaufre Rudel's opening longing for a 'faraway love'. In the anonymous *Amis, Amis, trop me laissez en estrange pais!*, we encounter a woman, calling for her beloved across a great distance: 'My love, my love, why have you left me in a strange land'. Her cry is heard as a refrain across the song. She eventually reveals herself as a soul on her final journey, from life to death. Her entreaty to her beloved is finally answered. As the song draws to a close, day ends and night begins, and she passes through the mists of life to join her love for all eternity.

Musical Lives and Siglo de Oro: research in practice

Tonight's programme is part of an innovative collaboration between scholars connected to the UKRI-funded project, *Musical Lives: Towards an Historical Anthropology of French Song, 1100-1330* (MUSLIVE) and members of the vocal ensemble Siglo de Oro. *Musical Lives* is a five-year interdisciplinary research project, led by musicologist and medievalist Emma Dillon, hosted in the Music Department at King's College London. The project's core inquiry concerns the power of songs to shape human lives. What can a deeper understanding of the lives of the people who composed and performed songs add to our understanding of human history? What would it mean to develop a model for song-centred histories? *Musical Lives* takes up those questions through one of the earliest written European vernacular (non-Latin) song traditions – the French *trouvère* songs you will hear in tonight's programme. Through interdisciplinary approaches and collaboration, a scholarly team investigates the lives and networks of medieval song-makers and their music, tracing human and musical connections throughout Europe and the Mediterranean.

Since 2023, *Musical Lives* has enjoyed partnership with singers from *Siglo de Oro*, led by their director, Patrick Allies. Described by *Gramophone* as ‘confident, sonorous and full of character’, Siglo de Oro is an adventurous vocal ensemble based in London, known for its golden tone, fresh interpretations, and innovative programming. In recent seasons, highlights have included a three-concert residency at Wigmore Hall, a collaboration with composer Caroline Shaw, concerts tours of the US and Canada, and appearances at festivals across the UK and in Sweden, Finland, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Together, *Musical Lives* and Siglo have developed a new model for co-created performances of medieval French songs. The approach combines research and practical expertise from singers and scholars (of literature, history and music). The *Musical Lives*-Siglo collaboration now comprises a collective of 20 scholars and performers, together also committed to developing accessible performances and methods for learning and teaching medieval songs and poetry. They include members of Siglo de Oro: Patrick Allies, Paul Bentley-Angell, Hannah Ely, Fiona Fraser, Rebekah Nießer-Jones and Jonathan Pratt; members of the *Musical Lives* team: Fiona Barsoum, Professor Emma Dillon, Dr. Alice Hicklin, Dr. Betty Rosen and Dr. Geneviève Young; and an extended community of ‘compaignons’ including Dr Sean Curran, Dr. Sebastian Dows-Miller, Dr Donald Greig, Professor Mary Franklin-Brown, Professor Jane Gilbert, Professor Ruth Harvey, Dr. Alice Hazard, Dr. Liam Lewis and Professor Yolanda Plumley. In 2024, theatre-maker Constance Des Marais joined the collaboration, bringing her vision for how the songs and singers can interact creatively with the spaces of performances, as well as how story-telling might breathe atmosphere and feeling into the silences between the notes.

For more information please see <http://muslive.kcl.ac.uk> and for more about Siglo de Oro and upcoming performances see <http://siglodeoro.co.uk>

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Patrick Allies *musical director, Siglo de Oro*

Patrick Allies is a conductor and musicologist based in London. He began his musical education as a chorister at the Temple Church and sang in Gloucester Cathedral Choir before taking up a choral scholarship to study music at King's College London. Patrick went on to postgraduate study at the University of Cambridge where he was a member of Jesus College Choir. He is currently artistic director of Siglo de Oro, as well as conductor of Imperial College Chamber Choir. Patrick is also a doctoral student in music at the University of Oxford. Patrick's research, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, involves fifteenth-century choirs and their performance spaces. Patrick is a musical advisor for Musical Lives and Visiting Artist and Scholar in the King's College London Music Department.

Paul Bentley-Angell *tenor*

Australian-born and Sussex-based tenor Paul Bentley-Angell, of Siglo de Oro, is in increasing demand as a concert soloist and consort singer throughout the UK and Europe. Paul has worked with many of the world's leading ensembles and directors, including Ars Nova Copenhagen and Theatre of Voices in Denmark, the Huelgas Ensemble, Collegium Vocale Gent, Polyphony, The Gabrieli Consort and Ex Cathedra. With these groups, and others, Paul has travelled to and performed in some of the most famous musical venues in the world, including the Lincoln Centre and Carnegie Hall in New York City, the Teatro Real in Madrid, the Palais Garnier in Paris, the Sydney Opera House, the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg and the He Luting Concert Hall in Shanghai. Paul joined the collaboration between Siglo de Oro and the Musical Lives project in 2023.

Hannah Ely *soprano*

Siglo de Oro soprano Hannah Ely completed her Masters in Advanced Vocal Ensemble Studies at the Schola Cantorum Basel after her studies at Manchester University and Trinity Laban. Based in Brussels, Hannah has performed as a soloist in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland and the UK with Collegium Vocale Gent, Il Gardellino and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, among others. Hannah is the founder and artistic director of Fieri Consort and also sings regularly with Collegium Vocale Gent, Huelgas Ensemble, In Vocare and Vox Luminis. Hannah is the co-Artistic Director of Brighton Early Music Festival and Music Director of the Purbeck Art Weeks Festival. Hannah joined the collaboration between Siglo de Oro and the Musical Lives project in 2023.

Rebekah Nießer-Jones *mezzo soprano*

Siglo de Oro mezzo soprano Rebekah Nießer-Jones read Music at King's College London and gained a Distinction in her Masters in Performance at the Royal College of Music. She is an experienced soloist and choral singer, as well as a teacher and educator with Gabrieli ROAR, the National Youth Choirs, Rodolphus Foundation, Cambridge University, James Allen's Girls' School and the Voces 8 Foundation. As a soloist, Rebekah has appeared as the Angel in Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, Handel's *Solomon*, and with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Rebekah sings regularly with the Monteverdi Choir and The Sixteen and, in 2026, joined the prestigious BBC Singers. Rebekah joined the collaboration between Siglo de Oro and the Musical Lives project in 2023.

Constance Des Marais *theatre director*

Constance Des Marais is a theatre-maker and composer specialising in devised and collaborative processes. She was trained at Rose Bruford College and the National Theater Institute (US). Recent productions include *pour un oui ou pour un non* (Etcetera Theatre), *four touch, three touch* (The Space), *Snowflakes* in SoCal (Pandit & Warner) and *Tangerines* (King's Head Theatre). Constance has also worked with The Big Funk Company (Paris) and done American tours with Bread & Puppet Theater and The Glass Attic Collective. Her upcoming composition work *Flightsuits* and *Hamlet: A Polyphony* explore historical figures and the use of music and ritual to process grief. Constance has worked with the Musical Lives project since 2024.

Emma Dillon *narrator/principal investigator of Musical Lives*

Emma Dillon is a musicologist (BA and DPhil from Oxford University) with expertise in medieval European music and sound culture. She is the Thurston Dart Professor of Music and Medieval Cultures at King's College London and the Principal Investigator of the UKRI-funded Musical Lives project (2023-2028). Her research and publications range widely in terms of repertoires, sources, and methodological approach, and broadly speaking falls at the intersection of musicology, sound studies, medieval studies, and the history of material texts. As part of her scholarly work, Emma has also worked extensively with performers and public partners to bring the musical past to life for a wider public.

YORK EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL

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