

for James Gilchrist and Anna Tilbrook

# West Wind

Percy Bysshe Shelley

I

Sally Beamish

**Allegretto malevole** ♩ = 104  
*tenor begins offstage*

Tenor Solo

Piano

*pp* *mf* *pp* *f* *pp* *f*

*p* *mf* *pp* *f* *pp*

## III

Adagio semplice ♩ = 84

*pp* Thou \_\_\_\_\_ who didst

10 *mp* wa-ken\_\_ from his sum-mer dreams The *mf* blue\_\_\_\_ Me-di-ter-ra-nean, *p* The

20 *mp* blue\_\_\_\_ *mf* Me-di te - ra - nean, where he lay, Lull'd by the coil of his cry - stal-line

## PROGRAMME NOTE

Text: Ode to the West Wind by Percy Bysshe Shelley 1792–1822

James Gilchrist approached me in 2014 about his series 'Schumann and the English Romantics', his idea being to pair three British composers (myself, Julian Philips and Jonathan Dove) with three great Schumann song cycles, using British texts from Schumann's time.

James assigned me Schumann's Eichendorff settings Liederkreis Op. 39, and I chose to set Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*. The poem reflects on the powerlessness of the poet when compared to the wind, and expresses a longing to harness the wind to disseminate his words. It is in five stanzas, and I have created a five-section work, made up of five 'songs'. On comparing the Eichendorff with the Shelley, I found common themes, and have highlighted these in the choice of material.

I began by creating a short improvisation on each of the Schumann songs and used these as starting points for my own music. Some of them are very loosely related, representing a free meditation on the Schumann. Others are more easily identified, by rhythmic or thematic ideas. The central third part, for instance, echoes the stillness of *Mondnacht*, and this returns at the end of the piece as a gentle reflection. The piano begins with a swirling cadenza-like passage, and often represents the wind, with the voice of the poet being drawn in and stepping back by turns; sometimes overwhelmed and silenced by the piano, sometimes equally powerful.

West Wind was commissioned by Wigmore Hall with the support of André Hoffmann, president of the Fondation Hoffmann, a Swiss grant-making foundation. It was premiered by James Gilchrist and Anna Tilbrook at Wigmore Hall on 22nd June 2016.

Sally Beamish 2016