



A NEW DAY

THE DAMON SINGERS SPRING CONCERT 2023

With Special Guests: Quintessential Brass Quintet

At Amersham Free Church

Sat 25th March 2023 at 7.30pm



The Damon Singers

Hail, Gladdening Light

Charles Wood (1866 - 1926)

Charles Wood hailed from Ulster, but spent most of his career at Cambridge, where he became Professor of Music in 1924. *Hail, gladdening Light* was written in 1912, and sets John Keble's translation of the ancient Greek evening hymn *Phos Hilaron* for two four-part choirs.

Ave, Virgo Sanctissima

Francisco Guerrero (1528 - 1599)

Guerrero was a Spanish catholic priest who worked for much of his life in Seville. He is perhaps unique amongst composers to have been captured by pirates – on his return from a trip to the Holy Land. The required ransom was, fortunately, paid. *Ave, Virgo Sanctissima* was particularly popular in his lifetime, regarded as the perfect Marian motet and serving as inspiration for many other composers. In this intensely emotional setting, the two soprano parts echo each other throughout at an eight-beat interval. Peter Phillips, the director of the Tallis Scholars, has described the phrase at '*Margarita preciosa*' (*precious pearl*) as one of the loveliest in all Renaissance music. '*Hail, Holy Virgin, most blessed Mother of God, bright star of the sea. Hail, ever glorious, precious pearl, lovely as the lily, beautiful and perfumed as the rose*'.

Ave, Virgo Sanctissima (from Three Motets) *Howard Skempton (b. 1947)*

Howard Skempton's roots as a composer are in a particularly British school of experimental music emphasising a 'back to basics' economy of expression together with, in his case, a particular concentration on sonority and melody. His setting of *Ave, Virgo Sanctissima* exemplifies this and contrasts with Guerrero's more overtly expressive motet.

Reading: 'Annunciation' by Rainer Maria Rilke

Translated by Simon Beattie

Read by Marianne Michael

Ave Maria

Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887 - 1959)

The great Brazilian composer Villa-Lobos wrote numerous orchestral, chamber, instrumental and vocal works - over 2,000 in total. His music was

influenced by both Brazilian folk music and the European classical tradition. He composed his setting of Gabriel's words to the Virgin Mary in 1918 while he was still in search of a style of his own. The first section is influenced by ancient church modes, the livelier second part – '*Sancta Maria, Mater Dei*' – is inspired by the Italian Renaissance, and the final '*Amen*' points back to Gregorian chant. '*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you*'.



Quintessential Brass

During summer 2020, Tim Pocock arranged songs and played for his neighbours after the nation's "Clap for NHS" sessions on Thursday evenings. When meeting restrictions eased, he and Simon Davie set out to form a brass quintet. After encouraging rehearsals, and several gigs later, here they are!

Quintessential Brass will introduce their music from the stage.

Die Bänkelsängerlieder *Anon./Daniel Speer (1636 - 1707) ed. Robert King*

Sortie (in Eb) *Louis Lefébure-Wély (1817 - 1869) arr. Tim Pocock*



The Damon Singers

Christus Factus Est *Anton Bruckner (1824 - 1896)*

Bruckner was deeply religious and his unaccompanied settings of sacred texts are an important part of his output. Their musical language combines elements of 16th century Renaissance polyphony with the chromaticism of contemporaries such as Wagner and Liszt. His second setting of the gradual

Christus factus est (1884) was dedicated to the Benedictine Father Otto Loidol of Kremsmünster. Marked *moderato misterioso*, the four-part setting opens quietly but eventually rises to a dramatic climax followed by an equally dramatic whispered conclusion. ‘*Christ became obedient for us unto death, even to the death, death on the cross. Therefore God exalted Him and gave Him a name which is above all names*’.

Tantum ergo

Anton Bruckner

This setting of the Benediction hymn, with text attributed to St Thomas Aquinas, is the first of eight by Bruckner. Composed in 1845, it is a much plainer, more chorale-like, setting than *Christus factus est*, eminently suited to its liturgical context in a service devoted to adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. *Therefore, the great Sacrament let us reverence, prostrate: and let the old Covenant give way to a new rite. Let faith stand forth as substitute for defect of the senses.*



Interval



The Damon Singers

Pilgrims' Hymn

Stephen Paulus (1949 - 2014)

Stephen Paulus was a Grammy-winning American composer perhaps best known for his operas and choral music – with over 150 works for chorus to his name. The poignant eight-part *Pilgrims' Hymn*, which was sung at the funerals of both Ronald Reagan and Gerald Ford, comes from his ‘church opera’ *The Three Hermits* (based on a story by Tolstoy), commissioned by the House of Hope Presbyterian Church of St. Paul, Minnesota, where it premiered in 1997.

Reading: ‘Peter Maxwell Davies: 60’ by George Mackay Brown

Read by Ann Crisp

Lullabye for Lucy

Peter Maxwell Davies (1934 - 2016)

After several years as a leading ‘enfant terrible’ of contemporary British music, Max moved to the island of Hoy in Orkney in the early 70s and subsequently pursued a less immediately provocative, but musically substantial, path composing, for example, ten symphonies and as many string quartets. He served as Master of the Queen’s Music for a decade from 2004. ‘Lullabye’ was written to words by his long-time friend and collaborator the poet, George Mackay Brown, to celebrate the birth of Lucy Rendall, the first child to be born in Rackwick, Hoy for 32 years. Uncharacteristically it uses only the ‘white’ notes (as on the piano), excluding all chromatic ‘black’ notes.

Wade in the Water

Spiritual, arr. Sigrud Schultz-Kokerbeck (b.1957)

This song from the African-American tradition was first published in 1901 in *New Jubilee Songs* as sung by the Fisk Jubilee Singers (of Nashville, Tennessee). The text refers to the Israelites’ journey out of Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea, reflecting the slaves’ hope of freedom from oppression in the New World.



Quintessential Brass

Just a Closer Walk

Trad. arr. Don Gillis

Just The Way You Are

Billy Joel (b. 1949) arr. Tim Pockock



The Damon Singers

You are the New Day

John David (b. 1946)

This song first appeared, performed *a capella*, in a 1978 album by the group Airwaves founded by the Welsh musician John David. It was subsequently arranged by Peter Knight (1917-1985) for the Kings Singers, so creating one of their best-loved numbers.

And So It Goes

Billy Joel, arr. Bob Chilcott

(Solos: Martin Cunningham, Rachel Meldrum)

A beautiful Billy Joel ballad, from the album *Storm Front* (1989), inspired by his doomed relationship with the model Elle Macpherson. The arrangement was made for the King's Singers.

The Girl from Ipanema *Antônio Carlos Jobim (1927 - 1994) arr. Berty Rice*

Garota de Ipanema, the 1962 hit bossa nova song, originally sung by Astrud Gilberto, is one of the most recorded hits of all time. Ipanema is a fashionable seaside neighbourhood in Rio de Janeiro and the song was inspired by the seventeen-year-old Heloísa Eneida Menezes Paes Pinto (now Helô Pinheiro), spotted by the composer and fellow musicians on her way to buy cigarettes for her mother. She is now a celebrity in Brazil and beyond.



Quintessential Brass and The Damon Singers

Basse Danse

Tielman Susato (c. 1510 – c. 1570) arr Iveson

Il est bel et bon

Pierre Passereau (fl. 1509 - 1547)

Passereau is remembered for his lively chansons, often with unsophisticated texts and indelicate subject matter. *Il est bel et bon* ('He's a good chap'), from 1536, is one of his most famous. 'There were two women from the same region, asking each other "What's your husband like?" He's a good chap, my husband, I tell you, neighbour. He doesn't annoy me or beat me, he does the housework and feeds the chickens while I enjoy myself. I tell you, it's a laugh when the chickens cluck: "Little coquette, cock-a-doodledoo. What's all this?"' Listen out for the chickens!

Domine exaudi orationem meam à 10 *Giovanni Gabrieli (c. 1554 - 1612)*

We conclude today's programme with another piece for two choirs by the late Renaissance composer, Giovanni Gabrieli, organist and composer at St Mark's, Venice whose music often took great advantage of the spatial separation of two or more distinct choirs. Published in his *Sacrae Symphoniae* (1598), it is a setting of verses from Psalm 101 used during the Offertory for Wednesday during Holy Week: *Hear my prayer, O Lord: and let my crying come unto thee. Hide not thy face from me in the time of my trouble. Incline thine ear unto me when I call; O hear me, and that right soon.* In our version, Quintessential Brass constitute one five-part choir and the Damons the other.



Quintessential Brass

Simon Davie – Trumpet
David Richards – Tuba
Alison Davidson – Trumpet

Tim Pocock – Horn
Ian Cox – Trombone

The Damon Singers

Musical Director David Cooke

Soprano

Helen Cooke
Ann Crisp
Susanna Davies
Sophie Hamilton
Sarah How
Claire Hunter
Alex King
Rachel Meldrum

Alto

Caroline Greenwood
Marianne Michael
Neta Morrag
Louise Pearce
Liz Sheppard
Karen van Oostrum
Uli Wright

Tenor

Simon Beattie
David Freedman
Duncan Passey
Chris Turner

Bass

Keith Armstrong
Stephen Axford
Martin Cunningham
Andrew Scott