

PROGRAMME 'Holly and Ivy'

Get Ivy and Hullarr. Charles Wood (1866–1926)
Wood is the best known composer you've never heard of: this lively piece, using the tune 'Bannocks o' Barley Meal', was first published in 1924 in *The Cambridge Carol Book*, just a few pages away from Wood's most famous Christmas carol, '*Ding! dong! merrily on high*'. The words here are 16th-century ('hull' is an old word for 'holly'), written by Thomas Tusser (c.1524–1580), an Essex-born poet who served as a musician to the Tudor statesman William Paget, before setting up as a farmer in Suffolk.

Carol for All: *Deck the hall*

'*Im Advent*' (from *Sechs Sprüche*)

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

Hodie Christus natus est

Giovanni Gabrieli (c.1554–1612)

Two works for double choir: 'Im Advent' is the fifth of Mendelssohn's six sentences for the church year, composed in 1846, only a year before his untimely death. 'Let us rejoice: the Saviour whom God has promised us draws near. The name of the Lord be praised for ever. Alleluia!' Gabrieli's setting of the Christmas Day antiphon ('Today Christ is born. Today the Saviour appeared. Today on Earth the Angels sing, Archangels rejoice. Today the righteous rejoice, saying: Glory to God in the highest. Alleluia.') is in fact a contrafactum—one song to the tune of another—of the secular canzone '*O che felice giorno*' which he wrote in 1585, the year he became organist of St Mark's, Venice.

Mary's lullaby to the Christ child

Max Reger 1873 - 1916

Helen Baker (soprano)

A classical romanticist in his sympathies. Very talented and prolific composer and held the position of Director at the Leipzig conservatoire amongst other appointments. *Mary's lullaby to the Christ child* was composed in 1912 and is a simple but beautiful sentimental tune which seemed to run through most of his song writings.

Poem: *Nay Ivy Nay* – in slightly modernised English by David Cooke - read by Patrick Lunt

Nay Ivy Nay Stef Conner (b.1983)

Stef Conner is an exciting young composer, singer and pianist whose career has so far encompassed folk, jazz and classical idioms. Her website, www.stefconner.com, is well worth a visit. Stef's vocal compositions are strongly rooted in the sounds of language and natural speech melody and in '*Nay, Ivy, Nay*' she applies this to a 15th century carol written, and performed tonight, in middle English. The contest of the holly and the ivy was a popular theme at this time with ivy frequently representing the feminine and holly the masculine. In this piece the holly clearly has the upper hand, though we hope the subsequent reading will redress the balance...

Poem: *Ivy chief of trees, it is* – in slightly modernised English by David Cooke - read by Ann Crisp

Allon, gay bergères

Guillaume Costeley (c.1531–1606)

Dormi, Jesu! Edmund Rubbra (1901–1986)

Two songs for the Infant Jesus. Costeley, famous for his numerous chansons, was court organist to Charles IX of France. This spritely Christmas song dates from c.1570: 'Let's go gaily, Shepherdesses, Let's go gaily, be light, follow me. Let's go see the King, Who from heaven is born on Earth. I'll make him an attractive present, of what? This tin whistle that I have, so gay. I will give him a cake. And me, I'll offer him a full drinking cup. Oh, oh, hush! I see him; He's nursing well, not with his thumb, the little King! Let's go gaily, Shepherdesses, Let us go gaily, be light, the King is drinking!'

The words of *Dormi, Jesu!*, or '*The Virgin's Cradle Hymn*' as it is also known, come from a late-medieval hymn addressed to baby Jesus, and were translated by Coleridge c.1798: 'Sleep, sweet babe! my cares beguiling: Mother sits beside thee smiling; Sleep, my darling,

tenderly! If thou sleep not, mother mourneth, Singing as her wheel she turneth: Come, soft slumber, balmily!' This is probably how Rubbra encountered the text for his 1925 setting, an early work written while he was living at Highwood Bottom, near Speen.

Reading: Patrick Lunt

Guest solo: Clive Pearce (guitar)

Hush! my dear, lie still and slumber

French melody, arr. Sir David Willcocks

Known in England as the hymn tune 'Picardy' (used by Vaughan Williams to set the words 'Let all mortal flesh keep silence' in *The English Hymnal*, 1906), this carol dates back to the 17th century and the French folk-song 'Jésus-Christ s'habille en pauvre'. The words, Isaac Watts' 'Cradle-Hymn', are taken from his *Moral Songs* (1706).

Carol for All: *The Holly and the ivy* edition by David Cooke

Winter Wonderland

Felix Barnard (1897–1944), arr. Peter Gritton

This much-recorded song was written in 1934. Though it never actually mentions Christmas, it quickly became a seasonal favourite.

Appeal on behalf of Chiltern Music Therapy

INTERVAL

Fum, fum, fum

Spanish trad, arr. Alice Parker and Robert Shaw
The most popular of all Spanish carols in the English-speaking world, 'Veinticinco de diciembre' ('The 25th of December') is a dance song, the 'fum, fum, fum' in imitation of a drum or the strumming of a guitar.

Carol for All: *Christ was born on Christmas Day*

Trio: Maddy Symes, Simon Beattie,

Martin Cunningham

Green groweth th'Holly Anon, c.1515

Though sometimes attributed to Henry VIII, it is unlikely he actually wrote this, a three-part winter love song.

Reading: Ann Crisp

Il est né le divin enfant

French tradition, arr. Sir David Willcocks

A popular traditional French carol, arranged here for The King's Singers, possibly based on an 18th-century hunting song: 'He is born, the divine child, Play the oboe, sound the musette [a kind of bagpipe], He is born the divine child, Let us all sing his coming. For more than four thousand years the prophets have promised us, For more than four thousand years We have been waiting for this happy time. A stable is his lodging, A little hay is his bed, A stable is his lodging, For a god such a humble thing. O Jesus, O all-powerful king, Such a little child you are, O Jesus, O all-powerful king, Rule over us completely.'

Guest solo: Clive Pearce (guitar)

Stille Nacht! heilige Nacht!

Franz Xavier Gruber (1787–1863)

The story of how Gruber saved the day when the church organ broke down in 1818 by dashing off 'Silent Night' is probably fictitious, but does not detract from the piece's Schubertian charm. Tonight we perform it in its original version, for two tenors and guitar.

The Twelve Days of Christmas

arr. Andrew Carter

The song derives from a traditional forfeits game which was played on Twelfth Night: each player would have to remember and recite the objects named by the previous players and then add one more. This arrangement, by popular English composer Andrew Carter (and with help from Saint-Saëns, Strauss, Tchaikovsky, the Song of the Volga Boatmen, and a certain Scottish instrument) is new to us, and receives its Damons premiere tonight.

Carol for All: *Once in royal*

Welcome, Yule! Sir C. Hubert H. Parry (1848–1918)

Setting words from the 15th century, this rousing piece which in turn welcomes the various saint's days etc. which follow Christmas itself, was composed for the Royal Choral Society, directed by Sir Frederick Bridge, and first performed with 'great spirit', according to the composer, at the Royal Albert Hall on 17 December 1917.

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THE DAMON SINGERS

Soprano: Coral Ash, Helen Baker, Helen Cooke, Ann Crisp, Jane Featherstone-Witty,
Penny Fray, Bell King, Rachel Meldrum, Janine Page

Alto: Alison Davidson, Cleone Goddard, Liz Martine,
Louise Pearce, Maddy Symes, Uli Wright

Tenor: Simon Beattie, Alan Power, Windsor Thomas, Chris Turner

Bass: Martin Cunningham, Roderick Holburn, Patrick Lunt, John Reuter, Andy Scott

David Cooke BA (hons), BMus (hons), ALCM

David studied music at Liverpool and Oxford Universities. He specialised first in the early 16th Century keyboard repertoire, and then in the music of the later Middle Ages.

As an instrumentalist, David studied the trombone, piano and harpsichord. He has also performed widely as a player of several early wind instruments.

In recent years David has conducted productions of several operas including *The Magic Flute*, *La Bohème*, and *Handel's Semele*. He is presently also Musical Director of the Wycombe Philharmonic Choir & Orchestra, the Chiltern Hundreds Bach Choir and the Chorleywood Chamber Orchestra.

Have you got what it takes?

The Damon Singers are always on the lookout for new recruits... Not that we plan to grow much larger than we currently are, but from time to time members move away from the area, or their circumstances change...

If you would like to talk to us, and join us for an evening, please contact the Secretary, Patrick Lunt.

Phone: 01494 712583
Mobile: 07768 566588
email: patrick@patricklunt.com

Read more about The Damon Singers on our Facebook page; and, by the way, we would love you to like us!

The Damon Singers

directed by David Cooke

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

All proceeds to



CHILTERN MUSIC THERAPY

Sunday 15th December 2013
7.30pm, White Hill Centre, Chesham
7.30 p.m.