

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

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

As well as the Damon Singers, David is presently also Musical Director of the Wycombe Philharmonic Choir & Orchestra, the Chiltern Hundreds Bach Choir and the Chorleywood Chamber Orchestra.

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THE DAMON SINGERS

Soprano: Helen Baker, Helen Cooke, Ann Crisp, Jane Featherstone-Witty, Penny Fray, Barbara McGillivray, Rachel Meldrum, Marianne Michael

Alto: Eleanor Greenhalgh, Madeleine Greenhalgh, Malavika Legge, Anne MacDowell, Louise Pearce, Madeleine Symes, Uli Wright

Tenor: Simon Beattie, Duncan Passey, Andy Scott, Chris Turner

Baritone: Martin Cunningham, Sebastian Gibbs, John Reuter

Bass: Patrick Lunt, Patrick Martin

THE DAMON SINGERS CHILDREN'S CHORUS

George Bancroft
Sally Bonner
Katie Meldrum
Emily Pegg
Sebastian Pegg

Emily Pentney
Fearna Scott
Tamsin Scott
Rosie Thompson

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

Dates for your diary

9 th July	"Pudding concert"	United Reformed Church, Chesham
16 th July	Summer Concert	St. Faith's Church, Newton Longville
11 th December	Christmas concert	White Hill Centre, Chesham

The Damon Singers

directed by David Cooke

OF FLOWERS AND FAERIES

All proceeds to



Saturday 23rd April 2016
The White Hill Centre, Chesham
7.30 p.m.

OF FLOWERS AND FAERIES

Many Years *Dmitry Bortniansky (1751–1825)*

Bortniansky was in charge of the music at the Imperial Chapel in St Petersburg for over 40 years, and a prolific composer of church music. The acclamation ‘Many Years’ is traditionally sung at the end of a service to mark a special day (e.g. a parishioner’s birthday). For his setting, Bortniansky has harmonised a traditional Russian chant.

Pilgrims’ Hymn *Stephen Paulus (1949–2014)*
I sat down under his shadow *Sir Edward Bairstow (1874–1946)*
Bogoroditse Devo *Arvo Pärt (b.1935)*
Hymn to the Eternal Flame *Stephen Paulus*
(with The Damon Singers Children’s Chorus)
Solo: Rachel Meldrum

Stephen Paulus was a Grammy-winning American composer who sadly died two years ago, aged only 65. Tonight we perform two pieces taken from larger works: 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 a story by Tolstoy), and ‘*Hymn to the Eternal Flame*’ is a movement from the Holocaust oratorio, **To be Certain of the Dawn**. In contrast, when Edward Bairstow, the famously blunt organist of York Minster, was asked if he might like to work in America, he replied he would rather ‘go to the devil’. Fortunately his compositions, such as this 1925 setting of two verses from the Song of Songs, are much less gruff and are still enjoyed by many church choirs today. The third piece here, by the contemporary Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, is the *Ave Maria* in Church Slavonic, commissioned by the Choir of King’s College, Cambridge for Christmas Eve, 1990.

Damons Diminished:
The Fairies Daunce *Thomas Ravenscroft*
(c.1588–1635)

Thomas Ravenscroft was a notable composer of rounds and catches and one of the first compilers of English folksongs. Here he sets anonymous words which recall the final act of **The Merry Wives of Windsor** in describing the well-known tendency of fairies to pinch unwanted trespassers black and blue...

Poem read by Malavika Legge: **I Stood Against**

the Window by *Rose Fyleman*

Damons Diminished:
The Fairies Daunce (reprise)

O Lord, make thy servant Elizabeth *William Byrd (1543–1623)*
Though Amaryllis dance in green *William Byrd*

Byrd’s six-part anthem draws on two verses from Psalm 21 (‘**The King shall rejoice in thy strength, O Lord**’). While it would most probably have been written to seek favour with the Queen, it is also a movingly affectionate tribute, particularly in the lyrically expansive final *Amen*. It is followed by a dance-like madrigal, in five parts, from Byrd’s **Psalmes, Sonets, & Songs of Sadnes and Pietie** (1588), one of the earliest books of English songs ever published. As a preface to the collection, Byrd set down some ‘Reasons to perswade every one to learne to sing’, among them that ‘there is not any Musicke of Instruments comparable to that which is made of the voyces of Men.’ He concluded: ‘Since singing is so good a thing, I wish all men would learne to sing.’

Poem read by Malavika Legge: **A Fairy Song** by *William Percy French*

Damons Diminished:
Mark the Merry Elves *John Wall Callcott*
(1766–1821)

Callcott, whose 250th anniversary is celebrated this year, is mainly remembered today for his catches and glees but throughout the nineteenth century his *Musical Grammar* (1806) was the standard work of musical instruction. He was a founder member of the “Glee Club” in London in 1787 and in this glee he sets the fifth stanza of ‘*On Shakespeare*’ by the priest, poet and critic, William Lisle Bowles (1762–1850), in which the elves, clearly much better behaved than fairies, dance a morris by the moonlight then beat a hasty but merry retreat at the first sign of dawn.

Tu es Petrus *Robert Pearsall (1795–1856)*
Hail, gladdening Light *Charles Wood (1866–1926)*

These are two wonderful eight-part pieces: the first is an adaptation by Pearsall himself

of his sumptuous ‘madrigal’ *Lay a garland* into an antiphon for St Peter, and which amazingly remained unpublished until only a few years ago. Charles Wood, whose 150th birthday we mark this year, 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.

Appeal on behalf of *Hearing Dogs for Deaf People*

INTERVAL

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 hens!’

The Hills *John Ireland (1879–1962)*
Over hill, over dale *Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)*
Full Fathom Five *Charles Wood*
This have I done for my true love *Gustav Holst (1874–1934)*

Ireland, Vaughan Williams, and Holst were contemporaries at the Royal College of Music, and Wood had studied there a decade before. The first two pieces here are more mature works: Ireland’s setting of a poem by James Kirkup (1918–2009) was composed to mark the Coronation in 1953, while Vaughan Williams’s *Three Shakespeare Songs* date from just two years earlier, 1951. ‘Over Hill, over dale’ is the last of them, the words spoken by a Fairy in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, in response to Puck’s question ‘How now, spirit! whither wander you?’ The words Vaughan Williams chose for the first of his three songs, ‘Full fathom five’ (from *The Tempest*), was also the choice of a young Charles Wood, back in

1891, preceding his arguably more famous ‘*Ding, dong [merrily on high]*’ by over thirty years. The text for the final piece in this section was first collected in 1833, in William Sandys’ *Christmas Carols, Ancient and Modern* and has been set by a number of composers. Holst wrote his version in 1916, for the Whitsun Festival at Thaxted in Essex. The text traces the life of Christ from birth to death to resurrection and Holst’s setting evokes the ancient mystical notion of dance and religious worship being one.

A Midsummer Night’s Dream – An Explanation
written and read by Ann Crisp

Damons Diminished:
Fairies Dance *John Wall Callcott*

We continue our Callcott-fest (of which even more later this year...) with his setting of the same text as Ravenscroft. It is from a collection of glees, including dances for Fairies, Elves, Sylvans and Urchins, ‘composed and inscribed by permission to the Right Hon Lord Viscount Dudley and Ward’. Watch out for those bruises...

Bushes and Briars *arr. Donald James*
Soloists: Helen Baker, Martin Cunningham
Among the leaves so green, O *arr. John Byrt*
Marianne *arr. Philip Wilby*
Sourwood Mountain *arr. John Rutter*
Soloists: Simon Beattie, Patrick Lunt

Four folksongs: the first was collected by Vaughan Williams in 1903, the second (‘Hey down, ho down!’) by Cecil Sharp in 1909. The third, Marianne, appeared in nineteenth-century broadsides, was subsequently collected in the North Country, Canada and the US, and tells of a sailor’s sadness at leaving his true love ashore as he sets sail. The fourth song treats us to another kind of ‘hoedown’, from Tennessee.

Goodnight Sweetheart *Calvin Carter (b.1925)*
& *James Hudson (1934–2007)*, *arr. Kirby Shaw*

‘Pookie’ Hudson was the lead singer with The Spaniels, one of the best doo-wop groups of the Fifties, with whom he recorded Goodnight, Sweetheart in 1954. It rose up the charts at the time and has remained popular, in endless cover versions, ever since.

Programme notes by Simon Beattie & Martin Cunningham