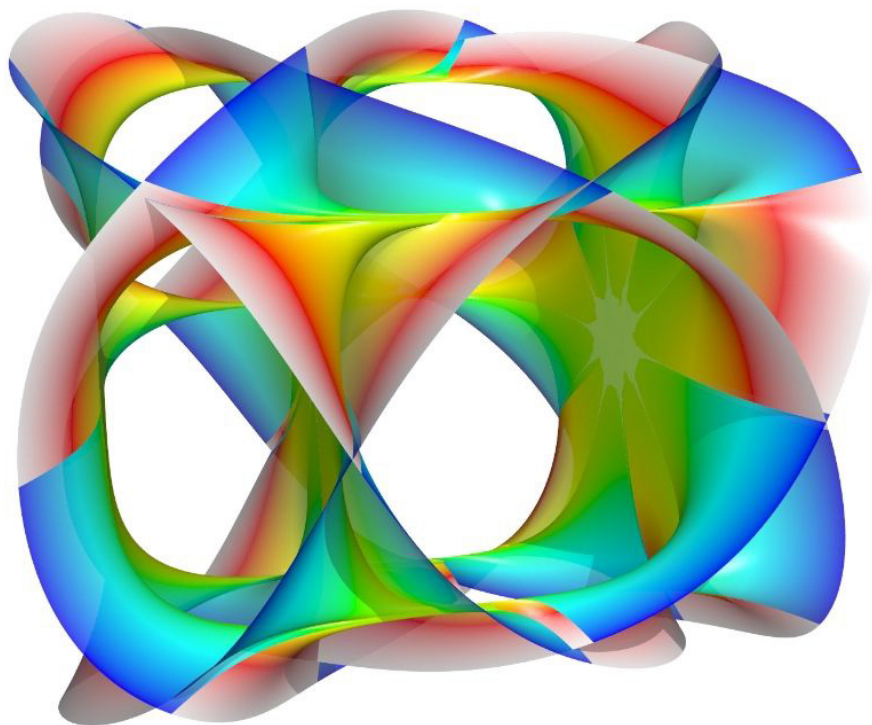


ICONS



Choral music from the 20th century and beyond



**The
Damon
Singers**

7.30 pm, Saturday 27 April 2019

St Mary's Church
Chesham

A choir for Chesham since 1957

Tonight's programme ranges from Russian sacred music with its trademark use of rich *basso profundo* sonorities to the light jazz of George Gershwin and Cole Porter, embracing also folk songs, a Spiritual, and contemporary compositions we have not performed before. We hope you enjoy the rich variety of tonight's programme.

Mnogaya lyeta

Dmitry Bortniansky (1751-1825)

Tenor solo: Simon Beattie

Blagodyenstvyennoye i mirnoye zhitye,
zdравиye i spaseniye, i vo vseym blagoye
pospyesheniye podazhd', Gospodi,
rabam tvoim i sokhrani ikh na mnogaya
lyeta! Mnogaya lyeta!

*Grant unto thy servants, O Lord,
a long and peaceful life, health, salvation, and
prosperity in all things,
and preserve them for many years!
Many years!*

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 short acclamation 'Many Years' (*Mnogaya lyeta*) 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.

Khvalitye imya Gospodnye Aleksandr Grechaninov (1864-1956)

Khvalite imia Gospodne,
Khvalite, rabi Gospoda. Alliluiia.
Blagosloven Gospod' ot Siona,
zhivyi vo Ierusalime. Alliluiia.
Ispovedaitesia Gospedevi, iako blag,
iako v vek milost' Ego. Alliluiia.
Ispovedaitesia Bogu Nebesnomu,
iako v vek milost' Ego. Alliluiia.

*Praise ye the Name of the Lord,
O ye servants of the Lord. Alleluia.
Praised be the Lord out of Zion,
who dwelleth at Jerusalem. Alleluia.
O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is gracious,
for his mercy endureth forever. Alleluia.
O give thanks unto the God of heaven;
for his mercy endureth forever. Alleluia.*

O sanctissima Maria

Paul Mealor (b.1975)

O sanctissima, o piissima,
dulcis Virgo Maria.
Mater amata, intemerata,
ora pro nobis. Amen.

*O most holy, o most loving,
sweet Virgin Mary.
Beloved Mother, undefiled,
pray for us. Amen.*

A favourite of Nicholas II, Grechaninov wrote much for the Orthodox Church, before finally leaving Russia after the Revolution for France, then America. His setting of Psalms 135–6, from the Orthodox All-night Vigil, was written in 1900. Paul Mealor also enjoys royal favour, being commissioned to write the anthem for the marriage of Prince William and Kate Middleton in 2011, the same year he wrote this motet for the Chapel Choir of King's College, Aberdeen.

Reading

Beati quorum via (from Three Motets) Howard Skempton (b.1947)

Beati quorum via integra est:
qui ambulat in lege Domini.

*Blessed are they of upright conduct, who
walk in the law of the Lord.*

Benedicimus Deum caeli

James MacMillan (b.1959)

Benedicimus Deum caeli, et coram
omnibus viventibus confitebimur ei:
quia fecit nobiscum misericordiam suam.

*Let us bless the God of heaven
and utter his praises before all who live;
for he has dealt with us according to his mercy.*

Ave Maria

Paweł Łukaszewski (b.1968)

These three Latin settings are by contemporary composers, from England, Scotland, and Poland, and all of them are new to us. Skempton's setting of Psalm 119: 1 ('Blessed are the undefiled: who walk in the law of the Lord') was commissioned by the Exon Singers in 2007. The 'ecstatic' six-part communion motet ('Let us bless the God of Heaven and utter his praises before all who live') by James MacMillan, who celebrates his 60th birthday this year, was written for the Strathclyde University Chamber Choir in 2010. Łukaszewski wrote his double-choir *Ave Maria*, a setting of just two words ('Hail Mary'), when he was only 24, dedicating it to his mother.

Reading

Otche Nash

Nikolay Kedrov (1871-1940)

Otche Nash, Izhe esi na nebesekh,
da sviatitsia imia Tvoe,
da priidet Tsarstvie Tvoe:
da budet volia Tvoia,
iako na nebesi i na zemli.
Khleb nash nasushchnyi dazhd' nam
dnes';
i ostavi nam dolgi nasha,
iako zhe i my ostavliaem dolzchnikom
nashim;
i ne vvedi nas vo iskushenie,
no izbavi nas ot lukavago.
Iako Tvoe est' Tsarstvo, i sila, i slava
Ottsa, i Syna, i Sviatago Dukha,
nyne i prisno i vo veki vekov. Amin'.

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
But deliver us from the Evil One: For thine is the
kingdom, the power, and the glory
of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy
Spirit,
now, and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

Northern lights

Ola Gjeilo (b.1948)

Pulchra es, amica mea,
suavis et decora sicut Jerusalem,
terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata.
Averte oculos tuos a me
quia ipsi me avolare fecerunt.

*Thou art beautiful, o my love,
sweet and comely as Jerusalem,
terrible as an army set in array.
Turn away thine eyes from me,
for they have made me flee away.*

A Jubilant Song

René Clausen (b.1953)

Soprano solo: Claire Hunter

O to make the most jubilant song.
The joy of our spirit is uncaged,
It darts like lightning,
My soul it darts like lightning.
We sing to the joys of youth
And the joy of a glad light-beaming day.

Our spirit sings of a life full of music,
of concord, of harmony.
O to have life, a poem of new joys;
O to have joy!
To shout, to leap and dance, to be of the sky,
To be of the sun and moon, flying clouds as
one with them.

Kedrov was an operatic baritone in Russia in the 1890s, and later taught at the St Petersburg Conservatoire but, like Grechaninov, emigrated after the Revolution, to Berlin, then Paris. His restful five-part setting of the Lord's Prayer is one of the best known in the Orthodox repertoire. Ola Gjeilo is another émigré composer, based in New York. *Northern Lights* was inspired by the 'terrible, powerful beauty' of the *Aurora borealis* in his native Norway and sets part of the Song of Songs: 'Thou art beautiful, O my love, sweet and comely as Jerusalem ... Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have made me flee away.' Our last piece in this half is also from the USA, which this year celebrates the bicentenary of the birth of the great American poet, Walt Whitman. 'Our spirit sings of a life full of music, of concord, of harmony' - what could be more jubilant than Clausen's setting of words from his poem *A Song of Joys*?

INTERVAL [20 minutes]

During the interval drinks will be served and there will be a collection to enable the choir to buy music for the future.

Drinks (both alcoholic and non-alcoholic) are provided free of charge, but donations will be gratefully appreciated.

Let's do it!

Cole Porter (1891-1964) arr. David Blackwell

When the little bluebird,
Who has never said a word,
Starts to sing: 'Spring, spring';
When the little Bluebell,
In the bottom of the dell,
Starts to ring: 'Ding, ding';
When the little blue clerk,
In the middle of his work,
Starts a tune to the moon up above,
It is nature, that's all,
Simply telling us to fall in love.
And that's why birds do it, bees do it,
Even educated fleas do it,
Let's do it, let's fall in love.
In Spain, the best upper sets do it,
Lithuanians and Letts do it,
Let's do it, let's fall in love.
The Dutch in old Amsterdam do it,
Not to mention the Finns.

Folks in Siam do it,
Think of Siamese twins.
Some Argentines, without means, do it,
People say, in Boston, even beans do it,
Let's do it, let's fall in love.
Romantic sponges, they say, do it,
Oysters, down in Oyster Bay, do it,
Let's do it, let's fall in love.
Cold Cape Cod clams,
'gainst their wish, do it,
Even lazy jellyfish do it,
Let's do it, let's fall in love.
Electric eels, I might add, do it,
Though it shocks 'em I know.
Why ask if shad do it?
Waiter, bring me shad roe.
In shallow shoals, English soles do it,
Goldfish, in the privacy of bowls, do it,
Let's do it, let's fall in love.

This Marriage

Eric Whitacre (b.1970)

May these vows and this marriage be blessed.
May it be sweet milk, like wine and halvah.
May this marriage offer fruit and shade like the date palm.
May this marriage be full of laughter, our every day a day in paradise.
May this marriage be a sign of compassion, a seal of happiness here and hereafter.
May this marriage have a fair face and a good name,
an omen as welcomes the moon in a clear blue sky.
I am out of words to describe how spirit mingles in this marriage.

The amours of impoverished Argentinians and cold Cape Cod clams: an iconic favourite ever since it helped Cole Porter achieve his first Broadway success, *Paris*, in 1928. The second piece is also one of love – Whitacre explains it as 'just a small and simple gift to my wife on the occasion of our seventh wedding anniversary.' This touching miniature sets words by the 13th-century Persian poet–mystic Jalal ad-Din Rumi in a homophonic, chant-like texture. Surely this piece delivers on the composer's philosophy: 'Most of all, I want the music to be relevant, and honest, and pure.'

Reading

The Song of the Blacksmith arr. Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

Kang, kang, kang ki ki kang kang!
For the blacksmith courted me, nine months and better;
And first he won my heart, till he wrote me a letter.
With his hammer in his hand, for he strikes so mighty and clever,
He makes the sparks to fly all around his middle.
Kang, kang, kang ki ki kang kang!

Ae Fond Kiss

arr. Paul Mealor

| | |
|---|---|
| Ae fond kiss, and then we sever; | Fare-thee-weel, thou first and fairest! |
| Ae fareweel, alas, for ever! | Fare-thee-weel, thou best and dearest! |
| Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee, | Thine be ilka joy and treasure, |
| Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee. | Peace, Enjoyment, Love and Pleasure! |
| Had we never lov'd sae kindly, | Ae fond kiss, and then we sever! |
| Had we never lov'd sae blindly, | Ae fareweel, alas, for ever! |
| Never met—or never parted, | Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee, |
| We had ne'er been broken-hearted. | Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee. |

The Keel Row

arr. John Byrt (b.1939)

As I came thro' Sandgate, I heard a lassie sing:
Weel may the keel row that my laddie's in.
Oh wha's like ma Johnnie, sa leish, sae blithe, sae bonny?
He's foremost 'mong the mony keel lads o' coaly Tyne;
He'll set and row sae tightly or, in the dance sae sprightly,
He'll cut and shuffle slightly, 'tis true were he not mine.
He wears a blue bonnet, a dimple in his chin.
And weel may the keel row that my laddie's in.

Songs from Hampshire, Kilmarnock, and Tyneside: Holst published his collection of *6 Choral Folksongs* in 1916. In this, the first of the set and dedicated to the great folksong collector Cecil Sharp, Holst takes just the first verse of a longer song about a faithless lover to create a vivid musical portrait of a blacksmith in his forge. *Ae Fond Kiss* is Mealor's contribution to a series of new settings of Robert Burns poems, to raise money for the Ballater Flood Appeal

in 2016. *The Keel Row* evokes the life and work of Newcastle's keelmen, who worked on large, shallow boats ferrying coal along the river. The keelmen lived in the Sandgate area, one of the poorest and most overcrowded parts of the city, and were described by John Wesley as much given to drunkenness and swearing...

Reading

I got rhythm George Gershwin (1898-1937) arr. Chris Clapham

Tenor solo: Andy Scott, Soprano solo: Helen Baker

I got rhythm, I got music,

I got my man.

Who could ask for anything more?

I got daisies in green pastures,

I got my man.

Who could ask for anything more?

Old Man Trouble, I don't mind him,

You won't find him 'round my door.

I got starlight, I got sweet dreams,

I got my man.

Who could ask for anything more?

Woke up this morning

arr. Jeffrey Douma (b.1972)

Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on freedom. Hallelujah!

Walk this morning with my mind stayed on freedom. Hallelujah!

Gershwin wrote *Girl Crazy* in 1930, in which Ethel Merman made her stage debut with this song, which she ultimately reprised nearly fifty years later in the *Ethel Merman Disco Album!* In the intervening period it retained its iconic status, perhaps most memorably delivered by Gene Kelly while tap dancing in the 1951 movie *An American in Paris*. The spiritual *Woke up this Morning* became a freedom song in 1960s America, with its words (originally '... with my mind stayed on Jesus') adapted to project the goals of the civil rights movement. This arrangement, premiered only in 2015, was made for the Yale Glee Club by its Director.

Programme notes: Simon Beattie, Martin Cunningham

Programme layout: Patrick Lunt

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

David studied music at Liverpool and Oxford Universities. As an instrumentalist, he studied 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 currently also Musical Director of the Wycombe Philharmonic Choir & Orchestra.

Soprano

Helen Baker

Helen Cooke

Ann Crisp

Jane Featherstone-Witty

Dorothy Freedman

Sophie Hamilton

Claire Hunter

Barbara McGillivray

Rachel Meldrum

Kate Pickup

Alto

Katie Francis

Sheila Jalland

Anne MacDowell

Marianne Michael

Louise Pearce

Liz Sheppard

Madeleine Symes

Karen van Oostrum

Uli Wright

Baritone

Martin Cunningham

Sebastian Gibbs

Paul Sheppard

Bass

David Harmer

Patrick Lunt

Phil Ogley

Dates for your diary:

6 July 2019

Summer Pudding
Concert

7.30pm

United Reformed
Church,

The Broadway,

High St,

Chesham HP5 1BX

15 December 2019

Christmas Concert

'A Rose in Winter'

7.30pm

White Hill Centre,

White Hill,

Chesham HP5 1AG

The Damon Singers

Chesham's local choir since 1957, the Damon Singers were founded "To sing for pleasure, for others and ourselves". We now have over 30 members, from different musical and professional backgrounds, who enjoy coming together every Wednesday evening to rehearse for the concert you are attending this evening. We sing a varied repertoire of a *cappella* choral music, ranging from medieval polyphony to pop songs and pretty much anything in between!