



## THE DAMON SINGERS SUMMER PUDDING CONCERT 2022

At Christ Church, Waterside, Chesham on July 2nd at 7.30pm



### Choir: *My Spirit sang all day*

Gerald Finzi (1901 – 1956)

Today's programme celebrates the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Ralph Vaughan Williams. Gerald Finzi was one of his many friends and collaborators, seen as a natural successor until his early death. This exuberant piece is the third of his *Seven Unaccompanied Part Songs* (1934–7), all setting words by Robert Bridges. Here, the late Poet Laureate finds joy, in music.

### *Three settings from 'Five English Folk Songs'*

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 – 1958)

The set of *Five English Folk Songs* was 'freely arranged' from the originals by RVW in 1912, though they could equally be regarded as compositions in their own right, such is the skill and complexity involved in their adaptation.

III. *Just as the Tide was Flowing*: Several folk song collectors, including both Cecil Sharp and Vaughan Williams himself, came across this tale of love at first sight at the turn of the last century, though it dates from an earlier, and bawdier, broadside ballad. With the cascade of notes on the word 'flowing' Vaughan Williams perfectly captures both the flowing of the tide and the exhilaration of the lovers.

IV. *The Lover's Ghost*: Although partly derived from ballads known variously as 'The Lover's Ghost' and 'The Daemon Lover', there are no overt supernatural references in the verses arranged by Vaughan Williams. In a setting of radiant intensity, with a passionate climax, the poet declares his love, describes the glorious and golden ships in which his beloved will sail and reveals how he has refused a king's daughter 'all for the sake, my love, of thee'.

I. *The Dark Eyed Sailor*: This folk song was noted by Vaughan Williams on his first collecting trip to Ingrave, Essex in 1903. It has since been found with surprisingly little variation as far afield as Newfoundland as well as across Britain and Ireland and has subsequently been traced to a printed broadside ballad published only about seventy years before Vaughan Williams collected it. He clearly regarded the piece with great affection, as can be heard in this wonderfully affirmative setting.

**Guest Artists: *The GillyBillies*** with their irresistible arrangements of folk music

### Choir: *Geographical Fugue*

Ernst Toch (1887 – 1964)

Toch was an Austrian composer and pianist who wrote a wide variety of music in both avant-garde and traditional styles. Following his exile from Germany in 1933, he eventually settled in California where he lectured, wrote music for films and composed seven richly romantic symphonies. It is perhaps strange that this *Geographical Fugue* is his most performed piece. In his own words it "is the last movement of a suite, *Gesprochene Musik* (Spoken Music), which tries to produce musical effects through speech". Though he himself regarded it as something of a diversion, it is undeniably effective, causing a sensation on its first performance and, despite its lack of notes, is probably the most difficult piece in tonight's concert...

### *Insbruch ich muss dich lassen*

Heinrich Isaac (c1450 – 1517)

### *Adieu! my native shore*

Robert Lucas Pearsall (1795 – 1856)

Like Vaughan Williams, Pearsall was strongly influenced by music of the Tudor and earlier periods. Isaac's farewell to Innsbruck and to his beloved was one of the most popular songs of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. *Innsbruck, I must leave you. I will go my way to foreign land(s). My joy has been taken away from me.* Three centuries later Pearsall effectively recomposed the song, employing a lyric by Byron, to lament his own frequent departures from the white cliffs of Dover for his home in Switzerland.

## **The Hills**

John Ireland (1879 – 1962)

We conclude this short geography lesson with a late composition by John Ireland, a contemporary of Vaughan Williams at the Royal College of Music (RCM). Written for the Coronation in 1953, it sets words by the poet and travel writer James Kirkup (1918 – 2009) and finds beauty, and an almost religious serenity, in nature.

**Reading:** 'Oh, I wish I'd looked after me teeth' by Pam Ayres

Read by Ann Crisp

## **Choir: Three Elizabethan Partsongs**

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 – 1958)

Images of Vaughan Williams usually portray him in somewhat corpulent old age, often in ill-fitting tweeds, occasionally brandishing an ear trumpet... However, these three songs date from the other end of his career, composed during his years at the RCM in his late teens and early twenties (1891 and 1895, though not published until 1913) when he cut a far more dashing figure. Even at this stage, the directness and simplicity of the harmonic language used in these short songs, influenced by much earlier composers, stands in stark contrast to the rich chromaticism of most music of the 1890s and already suggests a very different musical future.

Sweet Day: A setting of words by George Herbert (1593 – 1633) who was in fact only nine when the Elizabethan age ended... The poem contrasts the fleeting nature of a day or even a season with the immortality of the 'sweet and virtuous soul'.

The Willow Song: Desdemona's prophetically sad song from Shakespeare's *Othello*.

O Mistress Mine: Feste's song from *Twelfth Night* urges his mistress to kiss him while youth lasts.

## **Tequila Samba**

Guy Turner (b. 1955)

Guy Turner is a freelance composer and performer, as well as a lay clerk at Southwell Minster. He has written a range of choral music, both silly and serious. We leave you to judge which category this falls under.

**Guest Artists:** *The GillyBillies* return with more great music

## **Choir: The Mermaid**

Arr. John Whitworth (1921 – 2013)

In *The Dark Eyed Sailor* the basses briefly visited the bottom of the sea. Now they revisit it (a tone lower...) in this lively arrangement of a sailors' ballad in which an unfortunate mariner falls overboard but finds possibly bigamous marital bliss with a mermaid to the strains of a favourite from the Last Night of the Proms.

## **Ching-a-Ring Chaw** (with Helen Cooke, piano)

Aaron Copland (1900 – 1990)

This song, adapted for voice and piano by Copland in his second set of *Old American Songs* (1952), was subsequently arranged for chorus and piano by Irving Fine (1914 – 1962). Although not itself a spiritual, it captures some of their spirit of exuberant joy.

## **Conclusion... and pudding instructions!**

### The Damon Singers

#### **Soprano**

Ann Crisp  
Jane Featherstone-Witty  
Dorothy Freedman  
Sophie Hamilton  
Sarah How  
Claire Hunter  
Rachel Meldrum

#### **Musical Director**

David Cooke

#### **Alto**

Caroline Greenwood  
Malavika Legge  
Marianne Michael  
Louise Pearce  
Liz Sheppard  
Madeleine Symes  
Karen van Oostrum  
Uli Wright

#### **Tenor**

Simon Beattie  
David Freedman  
Duncan Passey  
Chris Turner

#### **Bass**

Keith Armstrong  
Martin Cunningham  
Sebastian Gibbs



