

## HILL AND VALE, LIGHT AND SHADE: THE DAMON SINGERS SPRING CONCERT 2026

At The United Reformed Church, Chesham on Saturday Apr 25<sup>th</sup> 7.30pm

### **Missa Pro Defunctis (Requiem Mass): Kyrie and Gradual**

**Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548 - 1611)**

Under David Cooke's inspired direction we have, over the years, enjoyed singing many pieces by Victoria, perhaps the greatest composer of the Spanish Renaissance. His setting of the Requiem Mass for the Dead of 1603 was the culmination of a life's work, written for the funeral of his recently deceased, and much-loved employer, the dowager Empress Maria. Sections of polyphony by Victoria are generally preceded by, and may alternate with, plainchant. Our selections from the longer service are separated by readings and music by later English composers.

*Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.*

Lord have mercy upon us. Christ have mercy upon us. Lord have mercy upon us.

*Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis. In memoria aeterna erit iustus: ab auditione mala non timebit.*

Grant them eternal rest, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them. The just man shall remain in memory everlasting: of ill report he shall not be afraid.

### **Reading: Out in the Dark**

**Edward Thomas (1878 - 1917)**  
*(read by Caroline Greenwood)*

### **I Sat Down**

**Edward Bairstow (1874 - 1946)**

A proud Yorkshireman, Bairstow was born in Huddersfield 150 years ago and spent much of his career as organist of York Minster. His compositions, mainly for the church, included 29 anthems of which this 1925 setting of two verses from the Song of Songs, is a particularly beautiful example.

### **Missa Pro Defunctis (Requiem Mass): Offertory**

**Tomás Luis de Victoria**

*Domine lesu Christe, Rex gloriae, libera animas omnium fidelium defunctorum de poenis inferni, et de profundo lacu. Libera eas de ore leonis, ne absorbeat eas tartarus, ne cadant in obscurum: sed signifer Sanctus Michael repraesentet eas in lucem sanctam: Quam olim Abrahae promisisti et semini eius.*

Lord Jesus Christ, King of glory, deliver the souls of all who died in the faith from the pains of hell and from the deep pit. Deliver them from the lion's mouth, lest the jaws of hell swallow them, lest they fall into everlasting darkness. But let Saint Michael, the leader of hosts, bring them forth into Thy holy light, as Thou promised before to Abraham and to his seed. We offer sacrifice and prayers of praise unto Thee, O Lord: receive them on behalf of those souls whom we remember this day: grant them, O Lord, to pass over from death to life, as Thou promised before to Abraham and to his seed.

*Hostias et preces tibi, Domine, laudis offerimus: tu suscipe pro animabus illis, quarum hodie memoriam facimus: fac eas, Domine, de morte transire ad vitam, Quam olim Abrahae promisisti et semini eius.*

### **Reading: In Time of Cloudburst**

**Robert Frost (1874 - 1963)**  
*(read by Sebastian Gibbs)*

### **The Hills**

**John Ireland (1879 - 1962)**

Ireland's setting of a poem by James Kirkup (1918-2009) was composed to mark the Coronation in 1953. Words and music find beauty, and an almost religious serenity, in nature.

**Missa Pro Defunctis (Requiem Mass): Sanctus and Agnus Dei****Tomás Luis de Victoria**

*Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus  
Sabaoth, pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.  
Osanna in excelsis. Benedictus qui venit in  
nomine Domini. Osanna in excelsis.  
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.  
Osanna in excelsis.*

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, the  
heavens and the earth are full of Thy glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the  
Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

*Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona eis  
requiem. Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,  
dona eis requiem. Agnus Dei, qui tollis  
peccata mundi, dona eis requiem  
sempiternam.*

Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the  
world, grant them rest. Lamb of God, that  
takest away the sins of the world, grant them  
rest. Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of  
the world, grant them eternal rest.

**Duo: Ecco la primavera****Francesco Landini (c. 1325/1335 - 1397)  
(Simon Beattie, Martin Cunningham)**

This joyful celebration of spring by the blind organist and composer Francesco Landini is presented as a small tribute to the human dynamo that was David Munrow (1942 - 1976) who did so much to popularise the music of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. After a career lasting scarcely ten years, Munrow died tragically young - in Chesham Bois. *Ecco la primavera* was the title track of the first recording his group, *The Early Music Consort of London*, made for a major record label.

*Ecco la primavera,  
Che'l cor fa rallegrare,  
Temp'è d'annamorare  
E star con lieta cera.*

Spring has come apace  
To waken hearts to gladness;  
Time for lovers' madness  
And to wear a happy face.

*Noi vegiam l'aria e'l tempo  
Che pur chiam' allegria  
In questo vago tempo  
Ogni cosa vagheça.*

The elements together  
Are beckoning to mirth;  
In this delightful weather,  
Delight pervades the earth.

*L'erbe con gran frescheça  
E fior' coprono i prati,  
E gli albori adornati  
Sono in simil manera.*

The grass in fresh rebirth  
Helps meadows come a-flower,  
And every branch and bower,  
Is decked with kindred grace.

*Ecco la primavera  
Che'l cor fa rallegrare  
Temp'è d'annamorare  
E star con lieta cera.*

Spring has come apace  
To waken hearts to gladness;  
Time for lovers' madness  
And to wear a happy face.

**Reading: A Botanical Scandal****Written and read by Karen van Oostrum****Though Amaryllis Dance in Green****William Byrd (c. 1540 - 1623)**

This lively part-song is from Byrd's *Psalmes, Sonets, & Songs of Sadnes and Pietie* (1588). Its five very independent voices - except for the top line probably originally for viols rather than singers - are full of darting syncopations and cross-rhythms. The sentiment is roughly - *well, you can endure the pains of love if you want but, heigh-ho, I'm certainly not going to love anymore!* To hasten your interval refreshments, we sing just two of the five verses...

**INTERVAL**

**Two for the Price of One****arr. Andrew Carter (1939 - 2026)**

A clever and irreverent conflation of two instantly recognisable songs presented here as a tribute to the much-missed composer, arranger and conductor, Andrew Carter, who died earlier this year. As a student, one of his tutors at Leeds University was Philip Wilby, whose arrangement of *Marianne* can be heard a little later.

**Reading: Shirley****Joyce Grenfell (1910 - 1979)****(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 nevertheless musically substantial, path. 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).

**The Coolin****Samuel Barber (1910 - 1981)**

The Irish poet and novelist James Stephens published a collection entitled 'Reincarnations' in 1918 which drew in part on Irish mythology and folklore to explore the concept of the soul's journey through different lives. Three poems from the collection were subsequently set for choir by the American composer Samuel Barber in 1942. *The Coolin* (Irish for 'the fair-headed one') is the third of these and describes a romantic tryst on a hillside.

**Reading: At the Grey Round of the Hill****William Butler Yeats (1865 - 1939)****(read by Andrew Scott)****Northern Lights****Ola Gjeilo (b. 1978)**

Ola Gjeilo is a Norwegian composer, now based in New York. *Northern Lights* was inspired by the 'terrible, powerful beauty' of the aurora borealis in his native Norway and sets verses from the Song of Songs.

*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.

**Solo: Ol' Man River****Jerome Kern (1885 - 1945)****(Keith Armstrong, David Cooke)**

A show tune from the 1927 musical *Show Boat* with music by Jerome Kern and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II (1895 - 1960) contrasting the struggles and hardships of African Americans with the endless, uncaring flow of the Mississippi River.

**Blue Moon****Richard Rodgers (1902 - 1979) arr. David Blackwell (b. 1961)**

A classic song - much-loved by the Damons - written in 1934 when Rodgers was still working with the lyricist Lorenz Hart (1895 - 1943). Before arriving at the now familiar lyrics Hart had written three others during that summer: 'Oh Lord, make me a movie star', 'You gulp your coffee and run' and 'I could be good to a lover, but then I always discover, the bad in ev'ry man'... Fourth time lucky!

**Marianne****arr. Philip Wilby (b. 1949)**

Appropriately, three of our final group of folk song arrangements concern departures. This song appeared in nineteenth-century broadsides and was subsequently collected in the North Country, Canada and the US. It tells of a sailor's sadness at leaving his true love ashore as he sets sail.

**The Keel Row****Traditional, arr. John Byrt (1940 - 2021)**

The Keel Row evokes the life and work of the keelmen of Newcastle upon Tyne who worked on large, shallow-draughted boats ferrying coal along the river to waiting collier ships. It was first published in 1770, but may be considerably older. The keelmen lived in the Sandgate area, one of the poorest and most overcrowded parts of the city. John Wesley, after visiting Newcastle, described them as much given to drunkenness and swearing, vices we carefully avoid - at least during the concert...!

**Ae Fond Kiss****arr. Paul Mealor (b. 1975)**

*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 following the disastrous Deeside flooding at New Year 2016. Burns wrote this heartfelt poem after his final parting from Agnes Maclehose in 1791.

**Quick! We have but a second****Charles Villiers Stanford (1852 - 1924)**

Stanford is one of the greatest composers to have been born in Ireland. Although he only spent his childhood there, he wrote a number of works which honoured his roots, such as this lively arrangement of an Irish air, written about 1895. It is the briefest of farewells.

**The Damon Singers****Musical Director:** David Cooke**Soprano**

Ann Crisp  
Sarah How  
Claire Hunter  
Rebecca Lee  
Rachel Meldrum\*  
Emma Summers  
Monica Yao

**Alto**

Caroline Greenwood  
Erika Lukács  
Louise Pearce  
Madeleine Symes  
Karen van Oostrum  
Uli Wright

**Tenor**

Simon Beattie\*  
David Freedman  
Simon Hunter  
Chris Turner

**Baritone/Bass**

Keith Armstrong\*  
Stephen Axford  
Martin Cunningham\*  
Sebastian Gibbs  
Andrew Scott

**\*Soloist***Notes compiled by Martin Cunningham*