

The Esterházy Chamber Choir



Sandy Chenery Director

*A Cappella Choral Music for a
Summer's Evening*
Madrigals, Motets & Partsongs
from France and England

St John's Church, Piddinghoe
Saturday 20 June 2009, 7.30 pm

The Choir

Sopranos: Sarah Bridgland, Cesca Eaton, Fran du Corbier, Dilys Goggins, Jancis Ham, Alison Jeffery, Elaine King, Judy Mackerras, Lucy Morgan-Jones, Andrea Thomas, Francoise Towler

Altos: Maria Birch, Sarah Jarvis, Denise Jones, Janet Ormerod, Joyce Philips, Grainne Sinclair, Liz Webb, Karen Zeff

Tenors: Michael Bulman, Timothy Burt, John Carroll, Robert Carpenter, John Crossman, Charles King, Thomas Whalley

Basses: John Astbury, Chris Dixon, Derek Froud, Mike Lodge, James Pitman, Matthew Spencer, David Thomas

About The Esterházy Chamber Choir

The Esterházy Chamber Choir was founded in 1993 and is based in Lewes, East Sussex. Comprising up to 34 singers from a wide variety of backgrounds, the choir aims to perform to a professional standard whilst remaining firmly rooted in the fine English tradition of amateur music making. The choir's repertoire spans four centuries of sacred and secular music with an emphasis on a *cappella* singing.

New singers are welcomed. Entry is by audition, usually held following one of our regular rehearsals on a Wednesday evening. There is currently a vacancy for a soprano and a tenor.

To contact the Choir

To support the choir, to audition or to enquire about hiring the choir for weddings and other special events, please email choir@esterhazy.org.uk. To prevent your email from being identified as spam, please include the word **choir** in the subject box.

The Esterházy Chamber Choir is grateful to Sussex Community Foundation for funding provided through the Government's Grassroots Grants Programme'

**Sussex
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INSPIRING LOCAL GIVING • MEETING LOCAL NEEDS

Programme

Three English Madrigals

Sing we and chant it

The Silver Swan

Hark all ye lovely saints above

Thomas Morley (1557-1602)

Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)

Thomas Weelkes (1576-1623)

Le Chant des Oiseaux

Clément Janequin (1485-1588)

Four Songs of Farewell

My soul, there is a country

I know my soul hath power

Never weather beaten sail

There is an old belief

C. Hubert H. Parry

(1848-1918)

Deux motets pour un temps de pénitence

Timor et tremor

Vinea mea electa

Francis Poulenc

(1899-1963)

Two Partsongs

Lay a garland

Who shall win my lady fair?

Robert Pearsall

(1795-1856)

INTERVAL

Three Partsongs

Diaphenia

When Mary thro' the garden went

The blue bird

Charles Villiers Stanford

(1852-1924)

Trois Chansons

Dieu qui'il la fait bon regarder

Quand j'ai oui le tabourin (*Janet Ormerod solo alto*)

Hiver, vous n'etes qu'un villain

Claude Debussy

(1862-1918)

Three Shakespeare Songs

Full fathom five

The cloud-capped towers

Over hill, over dale

Ralph Vaughan Williams

(1872-1958)

This evening's programme draws together a diverse group of unaccompanied choral music from England and France. Both secular and sacred music is represented, and we will range in style from the late Sixteenth to the early Twentieth Century.

The English madrigal flourished in the latter part of the Sixteenth Century. Inspired by the Italians who had a long tradition of secular choral music which incorporated lively dance rhythms, saucy texts and fa la la refrains many of the English choral composers, perhaps more associated with church music, took to composing madrigals. Morley and Weelkes both published volumes of madrigals both of those which are in the opening section of the programme are typical of the style, taking classical themes such as the goddess Diana and setting them to exuberant music full of rhythmic vitality. The refrains, setting nonsense syllables such as fa la la, allow the composers to fully develop musical ideas without fear of the meaning of the text becoming lost. Orlando Gibbons' *The Silver Swan* is a lament for a dying bird. Composed at a time when these pieces were becoming far less popular, it is often thought to be Gibbons' lament for the death of the madrigal itself.

Janequin was a native of Bordeaux and, while many of his contemporaries established careers for themselves in other musical centres in Europe, he remained in France for most of his life. His chansons are particularly celebrated for their descriptive characteristics; often incorporating bird calls, street cries or battle noises.

It is said of many composers that towards the end of their life their music becomes more introspective. But few pieces can be as representative of this as Parry's *Songs of Farewell*. Written between 1916 and 1918 they reflect the mood of a private man who was aware that his life was drawing to a close. Frequently, the sentiments are personal – 'I know my soul hath power' – but always there is a firm expression of faith and belief. Musically, the pieces are a *tour de force* of choral writing, taking full advantage of a variety of scorings, textures and choral sonorities. *My soul, there is a country* harks back to the madrigalists with its changes of metre and tempo to express the text, and *There is an old belief* uses a more traditional contrapuntal



development coupled with quotations from the plainchant Creed intonation to express a deeply held faith.

Poulenc was a key member of Les Six, a group of French composers who rejected romanticism and impressionism and endeavoured to find a more original voice; Poulenc was undoubtedly one of the most successful. Much of his other music is a blend of great technical assurance and moments of daring quirkiness incorporating elements of jazz and vaudeville. The Motets for a time of Penitence, however, date from a period when Poulenc had rediscovered his catholic faith after the sudden loss of a friend. The music contains the gravitas appropriate for its subject. *Timor et tremor* speaks of despair and darkness and Poulenc responds to this with rich choral sonorities and pleading outbursts. *Vinea mea electa* likens the betrayal of Jesus to the sweetness of a vine withering and turning bitter. Again, the music contrasts lush textures with harsh, angry dissonance.

Robert Pearsall grew up in Bristol and trained as a Barrister, but after a mild stroke at the age of 30 he moved to Germany to convalesce and never returned to England. He was fascinated by the music of the madrigalists, particularly Thomas Morley, and wrote many pieces in imitation of their style. *Lay a Garland* is perhaps his best known part-song. It sets a text from *The Maid's Tragedy* a play by Beaumont and Fletcher in which Aspasia laments the loss of her betrothed who has been forced into a marriage of convenience with the king's mistress. *Who shall win my lady fair* returns to the less musically complex but rhythmically lively madrigals with a refrain; here the fa la las become dandily dans!

Of Irish descent, Stanford was a contemporary of Parry's on the staff of the Royal College of Music. He is best known for his choral works, particularly anthems and settings of the evening canticles. He also directed the Bach Choir in London and it was through this connection that he became acquainted with the poetry of Mary Coleridge. *When Mary thro' the garden went* and *The blue bird* are both settings of her poems, *Diaphenia* is an Elizabethan text. Again, using madrigalian word painting techniques, Stanford sets these strophic texts with great imagination employing a broad palette of textures and choral colours.

Debussy, much better known for his exotic works for orchestra and piano solo, was at one time director of a small choir in Passy, and it was for this group that the first and third of his *Trois Chansons* were composed (he added the second

ten years later). He was drawn to the poetry of Charles d'Orleans by the musical nature of the sounds of the words and he uses the choir in a manner which expresses this. Much of the music has elements, both harmonic and textural, which hark back to the fifteenth-century origins of the poems. But this is infused with the lush harmonic writing that we expect in Debussy's orchestral music. In no 2 the altos, tenors and basses produce an evocation of the distant drums in a May Day procession while a languorous solo weaves melodiously above it.



Prospero and Miranda watch the shipwreck. By Heinrich Hoffman

There can be few composers so inextricably linked with the pastoral movement in early twentieth-century music as Vaughan Williams, and the *Three Shakespeare Songs* are probably the best known of the English partsongs from this period. Taken from *The Tempest*, *Full fathom five* portrays with strange hypnotic harmonies the eerie subterranean bells tolling their requiem for those lost at sea. The *Cloud-capp'd towers* sets part of Prospero's great speech, using almost static, floating chords to conjure images of tall towers and temples. *Over hill, over dale* is a gossamer light scherzo as nimble as puck himself!

Texts and Translations

Sing we and chant it

Sing we and chant it, while love doth grant it,
fa la la, etc.

Not long youth lasteth, and old age hasteth;
now is best leisure to take our pleasure,
fa la la, etc.

All things invite us, now to delight us,
fa la la, etc.

Hence, care, be packing! no mirth be lacking!
Let spare no treasure to live in pleasure,
fa la la, etc.

The Silver Swan

The Silver Swan who, living, had no note,
When death approach'd, unlock'd her silent throat.
Leaning her breast against the reedy shore,
Thus sung her first and last, And sung no more:
"Farewell all joys, O death come close mine eyes.
More geese than swans now live, more fools than wise."

Hark all ye lovely saints above

Hark, all ye lovely saints above
Diana hath agreed with Love,
His fiery weapon to remove,
Fa la la
Do you not see
How they agree?
Then cease fair ladies;
why weep ye?
Fa la la

See, see, your mistress bids you cease
And welcome Love, with love's increase,
Diana hath procured your peace,
Fa la la
Cupid hath sworn
His bow forlorn
To break and burn,
ere ladies mourn.
Fa la la

Le Chant des Oiseaux

Réveillez vous, cœurs endormis,
Le dieu d'amours vous sonne.
A ce premier jour de Mai,
Oiseaux feront merveilles
Pour vous metre hor d'esmay
Détoupez vos oreilles.
Vous serez tous en joie mis
Car la saison est bonne.
Vous orrez, a mon advis,
Une douce musique
Que fera le roi mauvis
D'une voix authentique
Le merle aussi l'estournel sera parmi
Toi, que dis tu ?
Le petit sansonnet de Paris,
Le petit mignon: (q'est là bas ?
Passe villain. Sainte tête Dieu,
Il est temps d'aller boire)
Sage, courtois et bien apris.
A sermon, ma maitresse.
Sus madame à la messe.
A Saint Trotin voir Saint Robin
Montrer le tétin, le doux musequin.
Rire et gaudir, c'est mon advis
Chacun s'i habandonne
Rossignol du bois joli,
A qui la voix resonance,
Pour vous mettre hors d'ennui
Vostre gorge jargonne.
Fuyez regrets, pleurs et souci
Car la saison l'ordonne.
Ariere maitre Coucou,
Sortez de no chapitre
Chacun vous est mal tenu
Car vour n'etes q'un traître.
Par trahison en chacun nid,
Pondez sans qu'on vous sonne.
Réveillez vous, etc..

Rouse yourselves, sleeping hearts,
The god of love calls you.
On this first day of May
The birds will work miracles
To rouse you from your stupor,
Clear you ears,
You should all be joyful
For the season is fair.
At my command you will give forth
A sweet music
Pitched in the true voice
Of the royal thrush.
The starling also will be among you.
You, what are you saying?
The little starling of Paris,
The little thing: (who's there?
Pass, knave. By the holy head of God
It is time to go drinking)
Wise, courteous and well versed.
Go to the sermon, my mistress.
Get thee to Mass, Madam.
To St. Trotin to see St Robin
Bare your breast, the sweet minstrel.
To laugh and be merry is my command;
Let each one join in heartily.
Pretty nightingale,
Whose voice resounds,
To set aside boredom
Your throat utters gibberish.
Away regrets, tears and cares
For the season commands it.
Away master Cuckoo,
Get out of our company.
All hold you in contempt
For you are nothing but a traitor.
Traacherously, in every nest
You lay without being called.
Rouse yourselves, etc..

Four Songs of Farewell

My Soul there is a country

My soul, there is a country
Far beyond the stars,
Where stands a winged sentry
All skilful in the wars:
There, above noise and danger,
Sweet peace sits crown'd with smiles,
And one born in a manger
Commands the beauteous files.
He is thy gracious friend,
And (O my soul, awake!)
Did in pure love descend
To die here for thy sake.
If thou canst get but thither,
There grows the flower of peace,
The rose that cannot wither,
Thy fortress, and thy ease.
Leave then thy foolish ranges;
For none can thee secure
But One who never changes -
Thy God, thy life, thy cure.
Henry Vaughan (1622-1695)

I know my soul hath power to know all things

I know my soul hath power to know all things
Yet she is blind and ignorant in all:
I know I am one of Nature's little kings,
Yet to the least and vilest things am thrall.
I know my life's a pain and but a span;
I know my sense is mock'd in everything;
And, to conclude, I know myself a Man,
Which is a proud and yet a wretched thing.
John Davies (1669-1626)

Never weather-beaten sail

Never weather-beaten sail more willing bent to
shore.
Never tired pilgrim's limbs affected slumber more,
Than my wearied sprite now longs to fly out of my
troubled breast:
O come quickly, sweetest Lord, and take my soul
to rest.

Ever blooming are the joys of Heaven's high
Paradise.
Cold age deafeads not there our ears nor vapour dims
our eyes:
Glory there the sun outshines whose beams the
blessed only see:
O come quickly, glorious Lord, and raise my sprite
to thee.

There is an old belief

There is an old belief,
That on some solemn shore,
Beyond the sphere of grief
Dear friends shall meet once more.
Beyond the sphere of Time and Sin
And Fate's control,
Serene in changeless prime
Of body and of soul.
That creed I fain would keep
That hope I'll ne'er forgo,
Eternal be the sleep,
If not to waken so.
John Gibson Lockhart (1794-1854)

Motets pour un Temps de Pénitence

Timor et tremor

Timor et tremor venerunt super me,
et caligo cecidit super me:
miserere mei, Domine, miserere mei,
quoniam in te confidit anima mea.
Exaudi, Deus, deprecationem meam,
quia refugium meum es tu et adjutor fortis.
Domine, invocavi te, non confundar.

Fear and trembling came over me,
and darkness fell over me:
have mercy on me, O Lord, have mercy on me,
for my soul trusts in you.
Hear, O God, my prayer,
for you are my refuge and my strong helper.
Lord, I have called upon you, I shall not be
confounded.

Vinea mea electa

Vinea mea electa, ego te plantavi:
quomodo conversa es in amaritudinem,
ut me crucifigeres et Barrabam dimitteres.
Sepivi te, et lapides elegi ex te,
et ædificavi turrim.

My chosen vineyard, I planted thee.
How is thy sweetness turned into bitterness,
to crucify me and take Barrabas in my place?
I protected thee; I took the hard stones away from
thy path, and built a tower in thy defence.

Three Partsongs

Diaphenia

Damelus' song to his Diaphenia

Diaphenia, like the daffadowndilly,
White as the sun, fair as the lilly
Heigh-ho, how I do love thee!
I do love thee as my lambs
Are beloved of their dams,
How blest were I if thou would'st prove me!

Diaphenia, like the spreading roses,
That in thy sweets all love encloses,
Fair sweet, how I do love thee!
I do love thee as each flower
Loves the sun's life-giving power;
For dead, thy breath to life might move me.

Diaphenia, like to all things blessed,
When all thy praises are expressed,
Dear joy, how I do love thee!
As the birds do love the spring,
Or the bees their careful king:
Then in requite, sweet virgin, love me.

The blue bird

The lake lay blue below the hill,
O'er it, as I looked, there flew
Across the waters, cold and still,
A bird whose wings were palest blue.

The sky above was blue at last,
The sky beneath me blue in blue,
A moment, ere the bird had passed,
It caught his image as he flew.
Mary E Coleridge (1861-1907)

When Mary thro' the garden went

When Mary thro' the garden went,
There was no sound of any bird,
And yet, because the night was spent,
The little grasses lightly stirred,
The flowers awoke, the lilies heard.

When Mary thro' the garden went,
The dew lay still on flower and grass,
The waving palms above her sent
Their fragrance out as she did pass.
No light upon their branches was.

When Mary thro' the garden went,
Her eyes were dim.
The grass beneath her footsteps bent,
The solemn lilies, white and slim,
These also stood and wept for him.

When Mary thro' the garden went,
She sought within the garden ground,
One for whom her heart was rent,
One who for her sake was bound,
One who sought, and she was found.
Mary E Coleridge (1861-1907)

Two Partsongs

Lay a garland

Lay a garland on her hearse,
Of dismal yew,
Maidens, willow branches wear
Say she died true.

Her love was false, but she was firm
Upon her buried body lie
Lightly, thou gentle earth.
*Francis Beaumont (1584-1616) &
John Fletcher (1579-1625)*

Who shall win my lady fair?

Who shall win my lady fair,
When the leaves are green?
Who but I should win my lady fair,
When the leaves are green?
Who shall win my lady,
When the leaves are green?
Not you, no, no,
The bravest man that best love can
Shall win my lady fair.
Dandirly, dandirly, dandirly dan,
He shall marry her, he's the man;
Dandirly, dandirly, dandirly dan,
When the leaves are green,
He shall marry my lady,
When the leaves are green.

Will you bury my lady fair,
When the leaves are green?
No, not I; I won't bury my lady fair,
When the leaves are green.
Will you bury my lady,
When the leaves are green?
Will you? Why so?
I'd rather marry my lady fair,
E'en though the trees were bare.
Dandirly, dandirly, dandirly dan,
She shall marry a proper man;
Dandirly, dandirly, dandirly dan,
When the leaves are green,
He shall marry my lady,
When the leaves are green.

Trois Chansons

1. Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder

Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder
La gracieuse bonne et belle;

Pour les grans biens que sont en elle
Chascun est prest de la louer.
Qui se pourroit d'elle lasser?
Tousjours sa beauté renouvelle.

Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder
La gracieuse bonne et belle!

Par de ça ne de là, la mer
Ne scay dame ne damoiselle
Qui soit en tous bien parfaits telle.
C'est ung songe que d'i penser:
Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder!

God! But she is fair,
graceful, good and beautiful.
All are ready to praise
her excellent qualities.
Who could tire of her?
Her beauty is ever new.
God! but she is fair,
graceful, good and beautiful!
Nowhere does the sea look on
so fair and perfect
a lady or maiden.
Thinking on her is but a dream.
God! but she is fair!