

Saturday, 27 April 2024
7:30 p.m.

Biemesderfer Concert Hall
Winter Center of Visual and Performing Arts



presents

English Choral Gems and Mystical Songs

Dr. Jeffrey S. Gemmell, conductor
Professor Brandon Martinez, baritone

I. Choral Union

I was glad when they said unto me.....C. Hubert H. Parry (1848-1918)

Our concert this evening was inspired by the coronation of King Charles III last year, especially when he processed into Westminster Abbey accompanied by this dramatic anthem by Parry. Composed originally for the coronation of King Edward VII in 1902, a 1911 revision added the introduction and antiphonal choir effects.

I was glad when they said unto me, we will into the house of the Lord.

Our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is builded as a city that is at unity in itself.

O pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee.

Peace be within thy walls, and plenteousness within thy palaces.

Psalm cxxii, 1-3, 6, 7

Dr. Robert Horton, organ

II. Cantilena Choir

“Sound the Trumpet” from *Come Ye Sons of Art*.....Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

This work is from the last of six Odes written in honor of the birthday of Queen Mary II of England in 1694. Unfortunately, though, she died soon thereafter. Originally a countertenor duet, Purcell chose to have singers imitate trumpets over a two-bar modulating ground bass. We offer on our finest Baroque choral performance practice to authentically sing the vocal lines over the continuo part realized with harpsichord and cello.

Sound the trumpet! Sound the trumpet till around you make the listening shores rebound.

On the sprightly hautboy play. All the instruments of joy, that skillful numbers can employ,

To celebrate the glories of this day.

Dr. Robert Horton, harpsichord • Dr. Ai-Lin Hsieh, cello

From *Ceremony of Carols*.....**Benjamin Britten** (1913-1976)

Our programming here reflects the belief of many that Britten is the finest English composer since Purcell. This extended choral composition for Christmas is a setting of poems principally in Middle English, with some Latin and modern English, as published in Gerald Bullett's (ed.) *The English Galaxy of Shorter Poems* (1942). Carols #3 and #11 are *macaronic*, with words in vernacular (English) and Latin. Structured in eleven movements and originally scored for three-part treble chorus, solo voices, and harp, the complete work was composed in 1942 on Britten's return sea voyage to England from the U.S.

2. Wolcum Yole!

*Wolcum be thou hevenè king, Wolcum Yole!
Wolcum, born in one morning, Wolcum for whom we sall sing!
Wolcum be ye, Stevene and Jon, Wolcum, Innocentes every one,
Wolcum, Thomas marter one, Wolcum be ye, good Newe Yere,
Wolcum, Twelfthe Day both in fere, Wolcum, seintes lefe and dare,
Candelmesse, Quene of Bliss, Wolcum bothe to more and lesse.
Wolcum be ye that are here, Wolcum Yole,
Wolcum alle and make good cheer. Wolcum alle another yere,
Wolcum Yole. Wolcum!*

Text written in Middle English

3. There is no rose

*There is no rose of such vertu as is the rose that bare Jesu. Alleluia, Alleluia,
For in this rose containèd was heaven and earth in litel space, Res miranda.
By that rose we may well see there be one God in persons three, Pares forma.
The aungels sungen the shepherds to: Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gaudeamus.
Leave we all this werldly mirth, and follow we this joyful birth. Transeamus.
Alleluia, Res miranda, Pares forma, Gaudeamus, Transeamus.*

Text kept at Trinity College (MS 0.3.58), early 15th cent.

5. Balulalow

*O my deare hert, young Jesu sweit, prepare thy creddil in my spreit,
And I sall rock thee to my hert, and never mair from thee depart.
But I sall praise thee evermoir with sangës sweit unto thy gloir;
The knees of my hert sall I bow, And sing that richt Balulalow!*

Brothers Wedderburn, c. 1548

Melissa Reeder, solo

6. As Dew in Aprille

*I sing of a maiden that is makèles: King of all kings to her son she ches.
He came al so stille there his moder was, as dew in Aprille that falleth on the grass.
He came al so stille to his moder's bour, as dew in Aprille that falleth on the flour.
He came al so stille there his moder lay, as dew in Aprille that falleth on the spray.
Moder and mayden was never none but she; well may such a lady Goddes mother be.*

Sloane, first quarter of 15th cent.

7. This Little Babe

*This little Babe so few days old, is come to rifle Satan's fold;
All hell doth at his presence quake, though he himself for cold do shake;
For in this weak unarmèd wise the gates of hell he will surprise.
With tears he fights and wins the field, his naked breast stands for a shield;
His battering shot are babish cries, his arrows looks of weeping eyes,
His martial ensigns Cold and Need, and feeble Flesh his warrior's steed.*

*His camp is pitchèd in a stall, his bulwark but a broken wall;
 The crib his trench, haystalks his stakes; of shepherds he his muster makes;
 And thus, as sure his foe to wound, the angels' trumps alarum sound.
 My soul, with Christ join thou in fight; stick to the tents that he hath pight.
 Within his crib is surest ward; this little Babe will be thy guard.
 If thou wilt foil thy foes with joy; then flit not from this heavenly Boy!*

From Robert Southwell's *Newe Heaven, Newe Warre*, 1595

11. Deo gracias – Adam lay i-bounden

*Deo gracias! Deo gracias! Adam lay i-bounden, bounden in a bond;
 Four thousand winter thought he not too long.
 Deo gracias! Deo gracias! And all was for an appil, an appil that he tok,
 As clerkès finden written in their book.
 Deo gracias! Deo gracias! Ne had the appil takè ben, the appil takè ben.
 Ne haddè never our lady a ben hevenè quene.
 Blessèd be the time that appil takè was. Therefore we moun singen. Deo gracias!*

Rebecca Kaufmann, harp

III. Chorale

Two Madrigals

The most famous madrigal by Gibbons, *The Silver Swan*, is set for five voices (SSATB). The legend is told that swans are largely silent in life (or at least unmusical) and sing beautifully only just before their deaths, i.e., “swan song.” The last line may be a comment on the demise of the English madrigal form or, more generally, on the loss of the late Elizabethan musical tradition. The English Madrigal School flourished from the late 1580s and lasted into the 1620s, long after it had become unfashionable in the rest of Europe. Things were already in decline by the time this madrigal was published in 1612. The last line could be taken as a biting condemnation of contemporary madrigal composers, though Gibbons himself was only in his thirties. Morley's *My Bonny Lass* displays familiar style characteristics of a genre that was enjoyed by amateurs as secular entertainment in the period (and today): humanistic texts; melodically conceived writing that is musically accessible; a *cappella* setting predominantly light in style and substance; homorhythmic verses alongside polyphonic “fa la la's.”

The Silver Swan.....Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)

*The silver swan who, living, had no note, when death approached unlocked her silent throat:
 Leaning her breast against the reedy shore, thus sang her first and last, and sang no more.
 Farewell, all joys, O death come close mine eyes:
 More geese than swans now live, more fools than wise.*

My Bonny Lass.....Thomas Morley (1557-1603)

*My bonnie lass she smileth, when she my heart beguileth.
 Smile less, dear love, therefore, and you shall love me more.,
 When she her sweet eye turneth, O how my heart it burneth.
 Dear love, call in their light, or else you burn me quite.*

The Turtle Dove.....Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Fare Thee Well, also known as the title above, is an 18th-century English folk ballad where a lover bids farewell and dialogues with his dear before setting off on a journey. The first published version of the song, *The True Lovers Farewell*, was sung to different tunes. In 1907, composer and folk-song scholar Vaughan Williams recorded an innkeeper from Ruspur, Sussex singing *Turtle Dove*. In 1919, he wrote an arrangement of the song for Baritone solo, later arranging it as heard this evening for solo and SATB choir.

*Fare you well, my dear, I must be gone, and leave you for a while;
If I roam away I'll come back again, though I roam ten thousand miles, my dear....
So fair thou art my bonny lass, so deep in love am I;
But I never will prove false to the bonny lass I love,
Till the stars fall from the sky, my dear, till the stars fall from the sky.
The sea will never run dry, nor the rocks never melt with the sun,
But I never will prove false to the bonny lass I love,
Till all these things be done, my dear, till all these things be done.
O yonder doth sit that little turtle dove, he doth sit on yonder high tree,
A-making a moan for the loss of his love, as I will do for thee, my dear, as I will do for thee.*

Cesar Rangel Muñoz, baritone

“Sing, Sing Ye Muses” from *Amphion Anglicus*.....John Blow (1649-1708)

English composer and organist of the Baroque period, Blow was appointed organist of Westminster Abby in late 1668. His pupils included William Croft, Jeremiah Clarke, and Henry Purcell. In 1685 he was named a private musician to James II. In 1687, he became choirmaster at St. Paul's Cathedral, where many of his compositions were performed. In 1699 he was appointed to the newly created post of composer to the Chapel Royal. *A SONG for Four Voices and Two VIOLINS, as an Entertainment of MUSICK in York Buildings* was published in 1700. Blow wrote fourteen services and 30 odes for royal celebrations, 50 secular song-like pieces, and more than 100 anthems.

*Sing, sing ye Muses, and revere, the Constellation of this Sphere;
You have not seen a brighter Sky: Musick may satisfie the Ear; but beauty charms regales the eye.
I-O, I-O triumph, sing, sing Muses and sound: Do you but please the fair, and your banquet is crowned.*

MaryLee Yerger, Betsy Swartz, violins • Dr. Ai-Lin Hsieh, cello

Dr. Robert Horton, harpsichord

IV. University Choir

God is gone up.....Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)

Finzi is considered one of the most characteristically English composers of his generation and composed this anthem, with lyrics by Edward Taylor and the jubilant *Psalm 47*, for Ascension Day. Despite his being an agnostic of Jewish descent, several of Finzi's choral works incorporate Christian texts. He never felt at home in London and married artist Joyce Black, settling with her in Aldbourne, Wiltshire. He devoted himself to composing and apple growing, saving rare English apple varieties from extinction. He also amassed a large library of some 3,000 volumes of English poetry, philosophy, and literature. His collection of 18th-century English music (some 700 volumes including books, manuscripts, and printed scores) is now held by the University of St. Andrews. In December 1940 he founded the Newbury String Players, mainly an amateur group which performed in local churches, schools, and village halls. This orchestra became his instrument. Through it he provided public exposure to young performers and composers; he also fiercely involved himself in reviving 18th-century English works. His scholarly and practical research resulted in published editions. Melodically and harmonically, Finzi owed something to Elgar and Vaughan Williams, as well as occasional flashes of Bliss and Walton. Finzi's love and knowledge of Parry can also be discerned. Simply put, his music is a joy to sing!

*God is gone up with a triumphant shout: The Lord with sounding Trumpet's melodies:
Sing praise, sing Praises out unto our King sing praise seraphic-wise!
Lift up your Heads, ye lasting Doors, they sing, and let the King of Glory enter in.
Me-thinks I see Heaven's sparkling courtiers fly, in flakes of Glory down him to attend.
And hear Heart-cramping notes of Melody surround his Chariot as it did ascend.
Mixing their Music, making every string more to enravish as they this tune sing.*

Words by Edward Taylor (1646?-1729) from *Sacramental Meditations*

Dr. Robert Horton, organ

The Blue Bird, Op. 119, No. 3.....Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)

Stanford was an Anglo-Irish composer, music teacher, and conductor of the late Romantic era. He was educated at the University of Cambridge before studying music in Leipzig and Berlin. In 1882, he was one of the founding professors at the Royal College of Music, where he taught composition for the rest of his life. As a teacher, he was skeptical about modernism and based his instruction chiefly on classical principles as exemplified in the music of Brahms. Among his students were those whose fame went on to surpass his own, including Gustav Holst and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Stanford composed a substantial number of concert works, including seven symphonies, but his best remembered pieces are his choral works, which contributed to the repertoire of English choral music in the 19th century. In an address at Stanford's centenary, the composer Herbert Howells remarked how *The Blue Bird* was widely performed among choral societies across the country, and how it formed an "essential beauty in the hearts of unnumbered singers." Musicologist Jeremy Dibble, who specializes in Stanford and his works, describes this work as "perhaps one of the greatest English part-songs ever written."

*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. The lake lay blue below the hill.*

Words by Mary E. Coleridge (1861-1902)

Solo Quartet: Megan Keeley, Cassidy McNew, Lillyan Steinberg, Elsa Thomas

“Finale” from The Gondoliers.....Sir Arthur Seymour Sullivan (1842-1900)

The Gondoliers or *The King of Barataria* is a Savoy Opera. It premiered at the Savoy Theater on 7 December 1889 and ran for a very successful 554 performances which, at the time, was the fifth longest-running piece of the musical theater in history, closing on 30 June 1891. This was the twelfth comic opera collaboration of fourteen between Gilbert and Sullivan.

*Dance a cachuca, fandango, bolero, Xeres we'll drink, Manzanilla, Montero,
Wine when it runs in abundance enhances the reckless delight of that wildest of dances!
To the pretty, pitter, pitter, patter, and the clitter, clitter, clitter clatter....We'll dance!
Once more, gondolieri, both skillful and wary, free from this quandary, contented are we.
From Royalty flying, our gondolas plying, and merrily crying our "preme," "stali!"
So goodbye, cachuca, fandango, bolero, We'll dance a farewell to that measure;
Old Xeres, adieu, Manzanilla, Montero, we leave you with feelings of pleasure!*

Words by William Schwenk Gilbert (1836-1911)

Dr. Xun Pan & Dr. Robert Horton, piano

Brief Intermission

V. Choral Union

Five Mystical Songs.....Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) Poems by George Herbert (1593-1633)

Following the death of Purcell in 1695, English music went into a long period of decline that was not reversed until the late 19th century with the emergence of Elgar, followed by a whole new generation of composers. The leading figure of this group was Ralph Vaughan Williams, who for nearly sixty years remained one of the most influential figures in English music, his nine symphonies and succession of major choral works being widely regarded as his greatest achievements. Like Elgar, Vaughan Williams was a late developer, reaching his mid-thirties before attracting serious attention as a composer. He eventually developed his own unique musical style, which was profoundly influenced by his love of Tudor music and his immensely important work in collecting English folksongs.

In 1908, Vaughan Williams studied with Ravel for a brief three months, and shortly afterward produced a series of major works, including *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* and, in 1911, *Sea Symphony* and *Five Mystical Songs*. Despite his declared atheism, which in later years mellowed into what his wife Ursula described as a “cheerful agnosticism,” Vaughan Williams was inspired throughout his life by much of the liturgy and music of the Anglican Church, the language of the *King James Bible*, and the visionary qualities of religious verse such as George Herbert’s.

The baritone soloist is prominent in the first four of the *Mystical Songs*, with the chorus taking a subsidiary role. In the opening song, the lute and its music are used as a metaphor for the poet’s emotions at Easter. The second song features a simple by moving melody for the baritone soloist, who is joined by the chorus for the third verse. In the third song the choir can be heard intoning the ancient plainsong antiphon, *O sacrum convivium*, whilst the fourth movement, *The Call*, is for baritone solo. An accompaniment suggestive of pealing bells introduces the triumphant final song of praise, in which the chorus is heard in full effect. (John Bawden).

1. Easter

*Rise heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise without delays,
Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise with him may'st rise;
That, as his death calcined thee to dust, his life may make thee gold, and much more, just.
Awake, my lute, and struggle for thy part with all thy art.
The crosse taught all wood to resound his name, who bore the same.
His stretched sinews taught all strings, what key is the best to celebrate this most high day.
Consort both heart and lute, and twist a song pleasant and long;
Or since all musick is but three parts vied and multiplied.
O let thy blessed Spirit bear a part, and make up our defects with his sweet art*

2. I Got Me Flowers

*I got me flowers to strew thy way; I got me boughs off many a tree:
But thou wast up by break of day, And brought'st thy sweets along with thee.
The Sunne arising in the East. Though he give light, and the East perfume;
If they should offer to contest with thy arising, they presume.
Can there be any day but this, though many sunnes to shine endeavour?
We count three hundred, but we misse: there is but one, and that one ever.*

3. Love Bade Me Welcome

*Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back. Guiltie of dust and sinne.
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack from my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning if I lack'd anything.
A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here: Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkinde, ungrateful? Ah, my deare, I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply, Who made the eyes but I?
Truth Lord, but I have marr'd them: let my shame go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, sayes Love, who bore the blame? My deare, then I will serve.
You must sit down, sayes Love, and taste my meat: so I did sit and eat.*

4. The Call

*Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life: such a Way, as gives us breath:
Such a Truth, as ends all strife: such a Life, as killeth death.
Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength: such a Light, as shows a feast:
Such a Feast, as mends in length: such a Strength, as makes his guest.
Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart: such a Joy, as none can move:
Such a Love, as none can part: such a Heart, as joyes in love.*

5. Antiphon

*Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing: my God and King.
The heavens are not too high, his praise may thither flie;
The earth is not too low, his praises there may grow.
Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing: my God and King.
The Church with psalms must shout, no doore can keep them out;
But above all, the heart must bear the longest part.
Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing: my God and King.*

Professor Brandon Martinez, baritone

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Cello

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