

1/94

THE CHERWELL SINGERS  
conducted by Alasdair Jamieson  
with  
Penelope Martin-Smith - Soprano  
Robert Sherlaw-Johnson - Piano

The texts of the choral music for this evening's programme all derive from stage works. The first half has Shakespearian connections while the second ranges more widely from Monteverdi's *Arianna* to Gilbert and Sullivan. We are indebted to Robert Sherlaw-Johnson for composing his *Three Shakespearian Character Studies* (piano) especially for this concert.

Shakespeare's lyrics were often sung in the plays by minor characters such as clowns or pages, e.g. respectively 'O mistress mine' from *Twelfth Night* or 'It was a lover and his lass' from *Measure for Measure*. Occasionally main characters are required to sing: Ariel in *The Tempest* has several songs - he greets the survivors of the shipwreck with 'Full fathom five' and when he is finally promised his longed-for freedom, he expresses his joy in 'Where the bee sucks'. These and other lyrics have become so ingrained in our collective literary consciousness that composers set them completely out of context as free-standing poems.

THREE SHAKESPEARE SONGS

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS  
(1872-1958)

Full fathom five [*The Tempest* Act I:ii]

The cloud-capp'd towers [*The Tempest* Act IV:i]

Over hill, over dale [*A Midsummer Night's Dream* Act II:i]

Composed for The British Federation of Music Festivals National Competitive  
Festival held in June 1951

COME AWAY DEATH  
[*Twelfth Night* Act I:iv]

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

'A madrigalian part-song'

THREE SONGS FOR SOPRANO AND PIANO

ROGER QUILTER  
(1877-1953)

Come away death

O mistress mine [*Twelfth Night* Act II:iii]

Blow, blow, thou Winter wind [*As you like it* Act II:vii]

From SONGS OF ARIEL

FRANK MARTIN  
(1890-1974)

Before you can say 'come and go' [*The Tempest* Act IV:i]  
Full fathom five  
Where the bee sucks [*The Tempest* Act V:i]

Extracted from Martin's 3-act opera *Der Sturm* (1952-5 after Shakespeare) these pieces - there are five in all - were given their first performance by the Netherlands Chamber Choir under Felix de Nobel. The outer songs are mercurial whereas 'Full Fathom Five' is more substantial, using bitonality and close juxtaposition of unrelated chords.

THREE SHAKESPEAREAN CHARACTER STUDIES (1994)

FIRST PERFORMANCE

ROBERT SHERLAW-JOHNSON  
(b.1932)

*Lady Macbeth* - She is forthright, and determined; her ambition leads to her own destruction and that of others.

*Hamlet* - An indecisive character, whose inability to make up his mind prevents him from accomplishing anything positive.

*Puck* - The mischievous character who pokes fun at others - in this case Lady Macbeth and Hamlet.

The pieces are based on a twelve-note series, which is gradually destroyed in *Lady Macbeth* and left incomplete. *Hamlet* uses a transformed version of the series, which passes through all twelve transpositions and arrives back where it started. It is possible (in theory) for the piece to be repeated *ad infinitum* (but this is not recommended in performance). *Puck* is a four-part fugue. Lady Macbeth and Hamlet appear again in the episodes only to be satirised by Puck.

FULL FATHOM FIVE

CHARLES WOOD  
(1866-1926)

WHEN DAISIES PIED  
[*Love's Labour's Lost* Act V:ii]

GEORGE MCFARREN  
(1813-1887)

IT WAS A LOVER AND HIS LASS  
[*As you like it* Act V:iii]

JOHN RUTTER  
(b.1942)

\*\*\*\*\* INTERVAL - 20 MINUTES \*\*\*\*\*

## LAMENTO D'ARIANNA

CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI  
(1567-1643)

Monteverdi's opera *Arianna* was written to celebrate a ducal marriage at Mantua in 1608: only the wonderful 'Lamento' survives. This choral version - of which we sing the first part - appeared in the 6th Book of Madrigals (1614).

INNO MATUTINO DEI CATECUMENI  
[*La Nave* by D'Annunzio]

ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI  
(1880-1968)

INNO A COLONO  
[*Oedipus at Colonus* by Sophocles]

Pizzetti was part of that group of Italian composers born in the last two decades of the 19th century who reacted against verismo opera and sought to raise their country's music back to the level it had achieved in the so-called Golden Age of the Late Renaissance and Baroque. This group - the 'Generation of the 1880s' - tried to effect this revival by advocating the re-introduction of rhythmic vitality, melodic litheness, textural clarity and counterpoint into music. Pizzetti's large output of choral music - beginning with his incidental music for d'Annunzio's play *La Nave* (1905) - has often been labelled 'neo-madrigalian' in its treatment of voices. 'The Morning Hymn of Converts awaiting Baptism' proposes a non-dissonant, limpid texture and contrasts the key of F major (upper voices) with that of A major (lower voices). 'The Hymn to Colonus' sets an opulently pastoral text in three sections i) the chorus sing over a descending ostinato; ii) a soprano solo takes flight over piano arabesques; iii) the soprano decorates a series of eloquent harmonic shifts.

CHORAL DANCES FROM *GLORIANA*  
Words by William Plomer

BENJAMIN BRITTEN  
(1913-1976)

Time  
Concord  
Time and concord  
Country girls (soprano/alto)  
Rustics and fishermen (tenor/bass)  
Final dance of homage

*Gloriana* was written for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. It excited a lot of non-musical hostility, chiefly on account of the libretto, but recent revivals have shown it to be a fine work ripe for reassessment. The 'Choral Dances' are various acts of homage to Elizabeth I summed-up in the words of No.6.

These tokens of our love receiving,  
O take them Princess great and dear,  
From Norwich city you are leaving,  
That you afar may feel us near.

## SIX CHORUSES

Words by W. S. Gilbert

ARTHUR SULLIVAN

(1842-1900)

Eagle high in cloudland soaring [*Utopia Limited*]

Tho' p'raps I may incur your blame [*Iolanthe*]

I rejoice that it's decided [*The Sorcerer*]

I hear the soft note [*Patience*]

Strange adventure [*The Yeomen of the Guard*]

Brightly dawns our wedding day [*The Mikado*]

THE CHERWELL SINGERS - Musical Director Alasdair Jamieson

SOPRANO: I - Julia Craig-McFeely, Sarah Franks, Louise Locock,  
Joanna Tucker; II - Jane Carlton-Smith, Sue Dillon, Jenny Jonas,  
Kipper Walker

ALTO: I - Rosemary Keavy, Clare Singleton, Sharon Washington;  
II - Gol Caird, Liz Healing, Janet Jeffs

TENOR: I - Paul Cann, Derek Fowler, Martin Price, David Sutton;  
II - Bill Johnston, Guy Peskett, John Tucker

BASS: I - Stephen Dunstone, Christopher Franks, Anthony Headlam;  
II - Richard Coleridge, Peter Jones, Paul Mayhook

The Cherwell Singers was founded in 1978 by a group of friends who wanted to perform the extensive choral chamber repertory to a high standard. The choir undertakes three or more major concerts each year, and has a full diary of private functions. Recent concerts of music by composers from 1500-1990 have included performances of Tallis *Lamentations*, J. S. Bach *Magnificat*, Scarlatti *Stabat Mater*, Duruflé *Requiem*, Monteverdi *Vespers*, Britten *St Nicolas*, and Langlais *Messe Solennelle* and music by White, Marenzio, Purcell, Elgar, Bononcini, Berlioz and Tippett. If you would like to engage the choir for a private function or would like further information, please contact the Secretary, Richard Coleridge on Oxford 62882, or the Conference Secretary, Christopher Franks on Oxford 273056.

## NEXT CONCERT

Unaccompanied Renaissance polyphony for eight voices by Palestrina, Lassus  
and Spanish composers

26th March  
Merton College Chapel