

Billericay Choral Society



John Rutter's

*The
Sprig of
thyme*



Conductor
Accompanist

Jamie Wright
Ashley Thompson

Saturday 20th July 2019 7.30 pm
United Reformed Church, Billerica
Programme £1

Tonight's concert

Tonight we feature choral settings and solo items of traditional folk songs including John Rutter's song cycle *The Sprig of Thyme*.

Tonight's solos

Carissima was composed in December 1913 by Edward Elgar. It was composed for small orchestra and Elgar also arranged a solo piano version. It was Elgar's first recorded work. The first public performance was at the Royal Albert Hall on 15 February 1914, conducted by Landon Ronald.

O Waly, Waly (also known as *The Water Is Wide*) is a song of Scottish origin dating to the 1600s. Cecil Sharp collected many versions and produced a consolidated version in his 1906 *Folk Songs From Somerset*. So verses in current versions derive from different songs. The original song referred to the unhappy marriage of James Douglas, 2nd Marquis of Douglas to Lady Barbara Erskine. The imagery of the lyrics describes the challenges of love: "Love is handsome, love is kind" during the novel honeymoon phase of a relationship. However, as time progresses, "love grows old, and waxes cold."

Different versions of the song include: *Gin Love Be Bonny* (1724), *Arthur's Seat Shall Be My Bed* (1701), and the Scottish scandal ballad *Jamie Douglas* (1776).

Foggy, Foggy Dew is a sad ballad describing an affair between a weaver and a girl he courted. She initially comes to his bed because she is afraid of the "foggy, foggy dew" and she often returned. It was first published around 1815, although there are very many versions. The tune is a revision of *When I First Came to Court* written in 1689. Cecil Sharp collected eight versions. Burl Ives popularised the song in the United States in the 1940s claiming it dated to colonial America. Because it was considered risqué BBC Radio restricted broadcast of the song to programmes covering folk tunes or the works of Benjamin Britten.

Love Bade Me Welcome is one of the Five Mystical Songs composed by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958), written between 1906 and 1911. The work is a setting of poems by seventeenth-century Welsh-born poet and Anglican priest George Herbert (1593–1633), from his collection *The Temple: Sacred Poems*. While Herbert was a priest, Vaughan Williams himself was an atheist at the time (he later settled into a "cheerful agnosticism"), though this did not prevent his setting of verse of an overtly religious inspiration. The work was premiered at the Three Choirs Festival in Worcester in 1911 with Vaughan Williams conducting.

Blow Away the Morning Dew originally ***The Baffled Knight*** was first published in 1609. It is one of few early ballads for which original music still exists.

A knight or, a shepherd's son, meets a maid away from town and proposes intimacy. She suggests that they will be more comfortable upon her bed. Or if he brings her to her father's house, she will marry him and bring a rich dowry. When they arrive at her home she goes in first and locks him out; in most variants, once inside she taunts him for his gullibility.

The ballad often includes advice to young men not be put off by maidenly protests when they meet defenceless women.

Fair Phyllis I Saw Sitting All Alone is by John Farmer published in 1599.

The madrigal describes a person who saw a young shepherdess sitting alone feeding her sheep near a mountain. Her lover, Amyntas, goes looking for her and wanders through the hills playing hide and seek. Eventually he finds her, and when he does, they fall down and start kissing. Like many English madrigals it uses double entendre to carry a ribald subtext.

I Love My Love is a Cornish folk song that tells the story of a woman whose lover is sent off to sea by his parents in an attempt to end the relationship. She is so distraught and is sent to a mental hospital. When her lover finds out he rushes to her and they live happily ever after. Holst uses text painting to vary the mood, changing the dynamics, voicing, and harmonies of the singers to relate them closely to the mood and feelings of the text. So in verse 4 the lyrics tell of the women crying in a hospital and the lover coming back from sea to get her, Holst shows the intensity and passion of the moment by increasing tempo and dynamics. In the beginning versus the female voices are more disjointed to indicate her distraught emotions, while near the end of the piece when the story ends happily the harmonies become richer.

I Would Be True is a setting of the traditional *Londonderry Air* with words by Howard Walter (1906). Walter was an American Congregationalist assistant minister, hymn writer and author from Connecticut. In 1913, Walter joined the staff of the YMCA and left for Lahore. He died at the age of 35 in Lahore during the 1918 flu pandemic outbreak in the British Raj.

Linden Lea Ralph Vaughn Williams composed great works such as the *Dream of Gerontius* and devoted much time exploring folk songs. *Linden Lea* is his setting of the poem by the Dorset dialect poet William Barnes (1801-1886).

Gustav Holst and Folk Music

Two of tonight's arrangements were arranged by Holst. How did he become involved with folk music? Holst (1874– 934) was born in Cheltenham of mixed descent. His father was of mixed Swedish, Latvian and German ancestry, and his mother of mostly British descent.

Holst's father, Adolph von Holst, was an organist and choirmaster in Cheltenham. His wife, Clara, was a pupil and a talented singer and pianist.

In 1895, Holst met Vaughan Williams, who became a lifelong friend and his music was influenced by that of his friend. Other early influences included Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss, and William Morris, Bernard Shaw on his philosophy/politics.

Towards the end of the 1800's there was a revival of folk music. Composers, such as Parry, Stanford, Stainer were founding members of the Folk-Song Society. Parry considered that by recovering English folk song, English composers would find an authentic national voice

Vaughan Williams enthusiastically travelled round the English countryside collecting folk songs. These influenced Holst. Though not as passionate on the subject as his friend, he incorporated a number of folk melodies in his own compositions and made several arrangements of folk songs collected by others. Holst's *The Somerset Rhapsody* (1906–07), was written at the suggestion of the folk-song collector Cecil Sharp and made use of tunes that Sharp had noted down. Holst described its performance at the Queen's Hall in 1910 as "my first real success". A few years later Holst became excited by another musical renaissance—the rediscovery of English madrigal composers. Weelkes was his favourite of all the Tudor composers, but Byrd also meant much to him.

Holst's absorption of folksong, not only in the melodic sense but in terms of its simplicity and economy of expression, helped to develop a style that many of his contemporaries, even admirers, found austere and cerebral. Many of the characteristics that Holst employed such as unconventional time signatures had their origins in folk songs.

Holst also took an interest in Sanskrit texts, particularly the Rig Veda hymns. He found the existing English versions of the texts unconvincing, and decided to make his own translations and he composed several settings of Indian texts in the years 1900 to 1914.

Part One

- 1 **Pastime with Good Company**Choir
Henry 8th (1491-1547)
- 2 **Blow Away the Morning Dew**Choir
Somerset Folk Song arranged by R. O Morris
- 3 **Carrissima**Solo Ashley
Edward Elgar
- 4 **Tourdion (Quand Je Bois Du Vin Clairet)**Choir
Music Anon; Words César Geoffray
- 5 **Linden Lea**Choir
Somerset Folk Song arranged by R. O Morris
- 6 **Fair Phyllis I Saw Sitting**Choir
John Farmer (1570-1605)
- 7 **O Waly Waly**Jamie & Ashley
Arranged by Benjamin Britten
- 8 **Foggy Foggy Dew**Jamie & Ashley
Arranged by Benjamin Britten
- 9 **I Would be True**Choir
Tune Londonderry Air; Words by Howard Walter (1883 – 1918)
- 10 **Love Bade Me Welcome**Jamie & Ashley
Vaughan Williams
- 11 **Love my Love**Choir
Cornish Folk Song collected by G.B Gardiner; arranged by Gustav Holst
- 12 **Swansea Town**Choir
Folk Song collected by G.B Gardiner; arranged by Gustav Holst

Interval

Part Two

The Sprig Of Thyme John Rutter

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| 1 | The Bold Grenadier | Choir
English traditional |
| 2 | The Keel Row | Choir
Northumbrian folk song |
| 3 | The Willow Tree | Choir
English traditional |
| 4 | The Sprig of Thyme | Women-folk
Lincolnshire folk song |
| 5 | Down by the Sally Gardens | Men-folk
Irish traditional tune; words by W B Yeats |
| 6 | The Cuckoo | Choir
English traditional folk song |
| 7 | I Know Where I'm going | Women-folk
Irish folk song |
| 8 | Willow Song | Choir
16th century melody and words |
| 9 | O Can Ye Sew Cushions? | Women-folk
Scottish folk song |
| 10 | The Miller of Dee | Men-folk
English traditional |
| 11 | Afton Water | Choir
Scottish folk song |

Pastime With Good Company

Henry 8th was held in high regard as a composer. A manuscript, known as the Henry VIII Songbook, was compiled around 1518, and includes 20 songs and 13 instrumental pieces ascribed to him.

Some of the King's pieces are musical arrangements, but there are also many original compositions. It is most likely that he composed this music while still a prince, though some pieces may date from the early years of his reign.

Pastyme with good companye, extols all the virtues of the princely life, including hunting, singing and dancing. The manuscript was produced for someone close to the court, possibly Sir Henry Guildford (1489–1532), the Controller of the Household and Master of the Revels

Swansea Town

This song was originally a windlass and capstan shanty. Although it refers to Swansea Town, it was collected in Hampshire in 1905 by G. B. Gardiner from William Randall of Hursley, Hampshire. There were many other variations and sets of lyrics to this tune. It's not clear whether the sailor wants to see Swansea because his girlfriend lives there, or for its own sake. It mostly seems like the latter. That would be pretty tactless, given that he's addressing his girlfriend, but then the last verse is pretty tactless too. Nancy is just a girl's name; nothing to do with the French town.

This tune was chosen by Gustav Holst for use in his famous Second Suite.

Tourdion

The tourdion is a type of late-Medieval dance popular in the Burgundian court. This particular tourdion derives from a song first published by Pierre Attaignant in 1530 as *La Magdalena*, which was later re-arranged by an anonymous musician.

The tourdion, from the French verb "tordre" / to twist, is a lively dance, similar in nature to the galliard, but the tourdion was more rapid. Pierre Attaignant published several tourdions in his first publication of collected dances in 1530. The lyrics were added in 1949 by César Geoffray.

John Rutter The Sprig of Thyme

John Rutter is a well known in current choral music. He has composed many choral works, orchestral pieces, two children's operas and specialist writing for groups such as the King's Singers and he has been honoured world-wide.

The Sprig of Thyme is a tribute to the writers who composed traditional songs which formed a part of Rutter's childhood. It features 11 UK and Irish songs.

The Bold Grenadier warns that young girls should beware of falling for dashing soldiers, who will surely love them and leave them.

The Keel Row is a Geordie lassie's love song. She praises her handsome Johnny and hopes that the boat he sails in will be seaworthy.

The Willow Tree is a young man's lament – for lost wealth, a false friend, lost love and lost hope.

The Sprig of Thyme warns young girls of the dangers of falling in love. In folk lore, thyme is a symbol of innocence; once stolen, it is lost for ever. In this song, first documented in 1689, a false young man steals a maiden's love, then deserts her. She waits for time to pass and for the thyme in her garden to grow again, but cannot forget her love.

Down By The Sally Gardens is a mature man's lament for lost love and lost youth. He regrets that he could not be carefree and light-hearted in his youth, as his sweetheart advised him; now it's too late.

The Cuckoo tells of the joy of falling in love and the pain of betrayal. A girl wishes she could tell all men of the pain and grief their lies cause.

I Know Where I'm Going is about another 'handsome, winsome Johnny', this time sung by a rich girl whose family don't approve of her choice. She is prepared to give up all her wealth for Johnny, but knows that her future is uncertain.

Willow Song is a sorrowful lament in which the willow tree and willow garland symbolise lost love.

O Can You Sew Cushions? expresses tender maternal love in a gentle lullaby.

The Miller of Dee is an energetic masculine celebration of life, work, youth and making merry, ending in a toast to the king!

Afton Water tells of happy mutual love; a faithful couple live an idyllic rural life, accompanied by the sound of the sweetly-flowing river.

Jamie Wright Conductor

Jamie is a singer and conductor, trained at the Royal Academy of Music. He has worked as an arranger and vocal coach in television, performed at the BBC proms, and was recently the soloist in *All the Angel's* at Shakespeare's Globe. Jamie works closely with the National and London Youth Choirs, Welsh National Opera and The Sixteen as a workshop leader and conductor.

As part of the Lord Mayor's project this year, Jamie is currently working with Garsington Opera as Vocal Animateur. As well as being the musical director of Billericay Choral Society he is also a chorister of the Chapel Royal, Tower of London.

Twitter: @jamiewdwright Web-site: www.jamie-wright.co.uk

Ashley Thompson Accompanist

Ashley is currently accompanist to Maldon Choral Society, under Dr. Gillian Ward Russell, Anglia Singers, under Professor Chris Green OBE, Gale Singers, under Colin Fowler, and Billericay Choral Society.

He is also Director of Music to The Parish Church of Holy Trinity Rayleigh, The Ordinariate at St John Fisher, Prittlewell; and the Evensong Organist for The Parish Church of St. Alban The Protomartyr, Romford.

Away from his piano and organ accompaniment portfolio he is the founder and Director of Music to The Triple H Community Choir, covering the three neighbouring South Essex villages of Hockley, Hawkwell and Hullbridge. He also teaches singing, organ, piano and music theory.

Outside of music he is the Chairman of Southend East Liberal Democrats.

For more information, visit www.ashleythompsonmusic.com

Billericay Choral Society

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Would you like to join us?

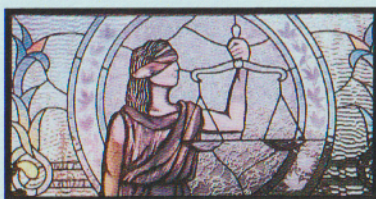
We always welcome new singers. No audition is required.

We practise on Tuesday evenings from 8pm until 10pm
in the Mayflower Hall in Chapel Street.

Phone or e-mail Lorraine Douglas for details or
just turn up to a rehearsal.

Our next concert.....

30th November 2019 Faure Requiem
Vaughn Williams Fantasia on Christmas Carols



We would like to thank:

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