



Billericay
Choral Society



Elgar's

Spirit of England

and patriotic songs....

Conductor

Ellie Parsons

Soprano

Laura Wolk-Lewanowicz

Accompanist

Ashley Thompson

Saturday 21st April 2018 7.30 pm
United Reformed Church, Billericay
Programme £1

Tonight's programme

The words to **I Vow to Thee, My Country** describe how Christians owe loyalty to their country and heaven. They were written by Cecil Spring-Rice (1859-1918) who, as UK ambassador to the USA, during WW 1, was responsible for persuading America to join the allies in fighting.

The tune is *Thaxted* is named after the Essex village, by Gustav Holst, taken from the *Jupiter, Bringer of Jollity* movement of his orchestral suite *The Planets*.

There'll Always Be An England was written by Ross Parker and Hughie Charles, shortly before WW2. Parker and Charles also wrote *We'll Meet Again*. Both were recorded by Vera Lynn, and many other artists. During the war years, Charles wrote many songs, embracing the mood of the country, in collaboration with Parker, Noel Gay and others.

After the war, Charles joined the Jack Hylton organization, becoming its general manager. He played an important role in the London presentations of US musicals such as *Kiss Me, Kate* and *Call Me Madam* as well as the Crazy Gang shows.

Rose Of England, refers to the Tudor Rose. It was written by Ivor Novello in 1937 for his musical *Crest Of The Wave*. The lyrics were written by Christopher Hassall. *Crest Of The Wave* ran for 203 performances at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane from September 1937 and starred Novello as both the hero and villain.

During WW2, Novello served four weeks in prison for the misuse of petrol coupons. An admiring fan had stolen the coupons from her employer, but the court found that Novello was also culpable.

Linden Lea is a setting, by Ralph Vaughan Williams, of the poem *My Orcha'd in Lindèn Lea*, which was written by William Barnes in Dorset dialect in 1859. Barnes was a Dorset priest, poet and philologist. *Linden Lea* has become a folk standard and has been recorded by many folk singers. The original opening words are:

'Ithin the woodlands, flow'ry gleäded, By the woak tree's mossy moot, The sheenèn grass-bleädes, timber sheäded, Now do quiver under voot.

Land of Hope and Glory was written in 1902, with words by poet and essayist Arthur Christopher Benson and music by Edward Elgar. The music is taken from Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1*. The words were fitted to the melody at the suggestion of Edward 7th for use in the Coronation Ode that Elgar wrote.

At the same time of Cecil Rhode's will was published, and that reflected much of the song's theme. He bequeathed some of his wealth to extending British (specifically Anglo-Saxon) rule to many countries, with the aim of avoiding future wars. Recently, the British Empire had been extended following victory in the Boer War.

Home Sweet Home is a song with words by American actor and dramatist John Howard Payne and music by Englishman Sir Henry Bishop. It first featured in Payne's 1823 opera *Clari, or the Maid of Milan*. When the song was published, it was very popular and the publishers made a huge profit from it. Payne, however, did not profit by its success as he was extravagant and had little business sense.

In 1852 Bishop re-launched the song as a parlour ballad, which proved popular during the United States Civil War. The song was reputedly banned from being played in Union Army camps for being too redolent of hearth and home and likely to incite desertion.

Jerusalem is based on a poem by William Blake, from the preface to his epic *Milton: A Poem in Two Books*, published in 1808. Hubert Parry set this to music in 1916.

The poem was inspired by the apocryphal story that Jesus, accompanied by Joseph of Arimathea, visited Glastonbury during his unknown years. In one interpretation of the poem, Blake implies that a visit by Jesus would briefly create heaven in England, in contrast to the bleakness of the Industrial Revolution. Blake saw the cotton mills and collieries of the period as a mechanism for the enslavement of millions.

Alternatively, the "dark Satanic mills" may refer to the churches of the Church of England. Blake was hostile to the Church of England and to almost all forms of organised religion, although he revered the Bible. But he objected to the church doctrine of conformity to the establishment.

Spirit of England - Edward Elgar and Laurence Binyon

Laurence Binyon was a noted war poet, who worked at the British Museum. In late 1914, he published a collection of 12 war poems under the title of *The Winnowing Fan*. Sir Edward Elgar (1857–1934) felt the need to write pieces that might inspire and console the nation. Binyon's head of department Sir Sidney Colvin, suggested to Elgar, composing a piece which captured the spirit of Binyon's poems.

Elgar set three of Binyon's poems, *The Fourth of August*, *To Women*, and *For the Fallen* to music in what was his last major orchestra/choral work.

Initially it proved hugely popular. But as the war progressed, emotional needs changed. By 1917, the emphasis was far more on a piece that would express people's grief, and serve as a memorial to the dead.

Although written at a time when the nation might have expected some rousing patriotic tunes, Elgar demonstrated remarkable restraint, capturing the sadness and desolation of war.

Elgar found it hard to set some of the harsher words in *The Fourth of August* as he felt a lingering debt of gratitude to the German nation for championing his early works, notably *The Dream of Gerontius*. This led to the second and third parts being completed early when the first part was still some way from completion. Elgar completed the work in 1917 and the premiere was in Birmingham on 4 October 1917, conducted by Appleby Matthews, who later founded the orchestra that became the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

In 1915, despite being too old to enlist, Binyon volunteered at a British hospital for French soldiers, in Haute-Marne, France, working as a hospital orderly. He returned in the summer of 1916 and took care of soldiers taken in from the Verdun battlefield. He wrote about his experiences in *For Dauntless France* (1918) and his poems, *Fetching the Wounded* and *The Distant Guns*.

For the Fallen, is often recited at Remembrance Sunday services in the UK; is an integral part of Anzac Day services in Australia and New Zealand and at Remembrance Day services in Canada. The *Ode of Remembrance* has thus been claimed as a tribute to all casualties of war, regardless of nation.

Part One

- 1 **I Vow to Thee, My Country** Choir
Words: Cecil Spring-Rice
Music: Gustav Holst arranged by Paul Hayward
- 2 **There'll Always Be an England** Choir and soprano
Ross Parker and Hughie Charles
- 3 **Rose of England** Choir
Words: Christopher Hassall, Music: Ivor Novello
- 4 **England** Laura Wolk-Lewanowicz
Words: Shakespeare paraphrased by Sir Esme Howard
Music C. Hubert H. Parry
- 5 **Linden Lea** Choir
Words: William Barnes
Music: Ralph Vaughan Williams arranged by Arthur Somervell
- 6 **The British Grenadiers** Men
Traditional
- 7 **Spanish Ladies** Men
Traditional
- 8 **Rule Britannia** Laura Wolk-Lewanowicz and Choir
Words: James Thomson and David Mallet
Music: Thomas Arne
- 9 **Land of Hope and Glory** Choir
Words; Arthur C. Benson
Music: Edward Elgar, arranged by Arthur Fagge
- 10 **Home Sweet Home** Women
Words: John Howard Payne
Music: Henry Bishop
- 11 **Jerusalem** Choir
Words: William Blake
Music: C. Hubert H. Parry, arranged by Arthur Fagge

Part Two

Spirit of England

Music: Edward Elgar Words: Laurence Binyon

1 The Fourth of August

2 To Women

3 For the Fallen

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.

National Anthems

1 Flower of Scotland

Words and music Roy Williamson (1936-1990) of The Corries

2 Land of my Fathers (Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau)

Words: Evan James, Music: James James 1856

3 God Save The Queen

Traditional, arranged by: Benjamin Britten

Ellie Parsons Conductor

Ellie is a Welsh soprano who graduated with 1st class honours from Birmingham Conservatoire and continued her studies at the Guildhall school of Music and Drama. Whilst studying she had the opportunity to work with some of the most accomplished names of the industry, and has performed in public masterclasses with Roderick Williams and Catherine Foster.

She has won several competitions including the Mario Lanza Opera Prize, the Edward Brookes Prizes for both English Song and German Lied, the Somerset Song Prize, and placed second in the Andrew Downes performance prize. She has also appeared in the finals of the Ambache Prize for the Performance of Women's Music, the Cecil Drew Oratorio Prize, the John Ireland Song Prize, the Delius Prize, and the Llangollen International Eisteddfods Voice of the Future.

On the stage, Ellie has performed several roles including Lady Macbeth and Violetta from Verdi's operas *Macbeth* and *La Traviata*, Madame Larina from Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, Madam Lidoin from Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmelites*, and received accolades for her performance of Poulenc's *La Voix Humaine*. Eleanor also enjoys working with composers in new operas and projects, creating the title role in Michael Wolters *Ava's Wedding* and Queen Aethelfreda in Sophy Smith's *Tigress*. She works closely with composers writing vocal film music and opera, and takes great pleasure in being part of the entire process right through to premiering the work.

Ellie was appointed Musical Director of Billericay Choral Society in 2016, and has since led performances of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, *The Messiah*, Hayden's *Nelson Mass*, Mozart's *Requiem*, and Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury*. Ellie has also worked as a stage manager and director, recently directing *The Beautiful Galatea* by Franz Von Suppe performed by the Imperial Vienna Orchestra with soloists from around the country.

She is also keenly interested in how music is introduced and taught to young children and particularly to babies and toddlers. Over the summer she will be working on a project with children's theatre Hullabaloo, devising, and later performing shows incorporating complex musical and theatrical ideas for under twos.

Tonight's soloist: Laura Wolk-Lewanowicz, soprano,

Laura grew up in Australia and has called London home for several years. After initial studies at the Canberra School of Music, Laura attended the Australian Opera Studio and ENO's Opera Works.

Her major roles have included:

Lady Macbeth, *Macbeth* (Kentish Opera, Guildford Opera);

Tosca (St Albans Chamber Opera);

Title roles in *Aida* (Kentish Opera) and *Madama Butterfly* (Concert Performance);

Soprano solo in *Verdi's Requiem* (Oriflamme Ensemble and staged with the Merry Opera Company);

Amelia, *Un ballo in maschera*, (InterOpera/North East Brass Ensemble);

Santuzza, *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Opera Seria);

Miss Jessel, *The Turn of the Screw* (Seastar Opera);

Mother, *Hansel and Gretel* (Sinfonia d'Amici);

Donna Anna, *Don Giovanni* (Sinfonia d'Amici, #OperaCo).

Laura also works as an accompanist and coach. You can find out more by visiting her web-site at <https://wolksoprano.weebly.com>.

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, please visit www.ashleythompsonmusic.com

Spirit of England - Sir Edward Elgar and Laurence Binyon

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Billericay Choral Society

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Web site: www.essexinfo.net/billericaychoral



And you can follow us on Facebook.

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 Scott Gobeille for details or
just turn up to a rehearsal.

Our next concert.....

14th July 2018 Summer Concert

Gospel, jazz and other American inspired music.

Watch our web-site and our Facebook page for more details.

We would like to thank:

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