

Believe It Or Not

Welcome to “Believe It Or Not”, **Serendipity: the choir’s** May 2014 concert featuring the *fantastic*, the *fanciful*, and the *fabled*. We are sure you will delight in this afternoon’s *feast of fancy*. The programme today suggests that you focus on the text of the songs and ask yourself, just as Ripley did in that well-remembered TV show, “Do I believe this? Or not!” The songs themselves are drawn largely from more contemporary styles – pop, rock, film and television themes - but also include classical and romantic genres.

As Flanders and Swann once remarked, if God had meant us to fly, He would not have given us the railways. And so, we present *I’m a Train*, a fanciful look at the last days of a steam locomotive. But, since the earliest of times, flight has always been a human fancy, and we often look on those who fly as supermen. It seems appropriate therefore to include *Can You Read My Mind*, the love theme from the classic movie, “Superman”, a song by cinema’s most prolific composer, John Williams. And from one flying hero to another, we come to the title theme for today’s concert (also the theme from the television show, “The Greatest American Hero”) *Believe It Or Not*.

In what may be considered a flight of fancy (**Serendipity:the choir** singing Queen?!), we present that greatest of rock and roll’s fantasy stories – *Bohemian Rhapsody*, a true masterwork that fuses rock and roll with classical music’s rhapsodic structure and literary illusion. Arguably another rhapsody – certainly a work with a romantic, mythological theme – is Blake’s *Jerusalem*, famously set to music by C.H.H. Parry. “Jeeves, bring me my chariot of fire!” We move from this great English poem to another – Lewis Carroll’s “brillig” *Jabberwocky*. Sharp-eared listeners may also recognise it as the theme to “Lovejoy”, once seen on television. And no poetic fantasy would be complete without at least one reference to Shakespeare, and from “The Tempest” comes Ralph Vaughan William’s exquisite eight-part setting of “The Cloud-capp’d Towers – you will be transported!

Shakespeare’s Hamlet said, “To sleep, perchance to dream” - a state where fantasy and reality collide. As many a parent will attest, the sight of a sleeping child is such a collision – the fantasy of a peaceful night’s sleep contrasting with the sometimes harsh reality of many a sleepless night. If only all children slept as peacefully as they do in *Wynken, Blynken and Nod!* Some may think it *The Impossible Dream*, and fully concur with those thoughts from the musical “Man of La Mancha”! From “Les Misérables” comes *I Dreamed a Dream*, a song that expresses the sorrow of dashed hopes, here sung in a sumptuous, six-part *a cappella* arrangement. And in what some say is a dream, Ezekiel’s vision of life reborn is displayed in *Dry Bones*. Can you get all the bones in order?

Opera is frequently the home of the fantastic – after all, where else does the soprano sing after dying? Henry Purcell wrote what is possibly the greatest and most succinct opera, the magnificent miniature “Dido and Aeneas”. With a text by Poet Laureate, Nahum Tate (more famous today for writing “While shepherds watched their flocks by night”), his portrayal of the role of witches in Dido’s downfall gave Purcell the impetus for some of his cleverest compositions, including his ingenious echo response to *In Our Deep-vaulted Cell*. From opera, it is but a short journey to musical theatre, a place where the fantastic comes alive. Sondheim’s *The Ballad of Sweeney Todd* is such an example – the telling of Sweeney Todd’s dark ambition to seek redress for wrongs suffered. You will need a vivid imagination to see Sweeney baking pies made from... ..don’t go there! More cheerful is *Make Believe* from Jerome Kern’s “Showboat”, where Magnolia and Gaylord Ravenal imagine falling in love with each other. The reality of

falling in love can feel like being in Paradise – so from “Kismet” comes *Stranger in Paradise*, which explores that notion.

And what could be more fantastic than performing cats – from Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musical “Cats” comes *Mr Mistoffelees*, a tale of a truly magical cat. And, of course, no arctophile would dare forgive an exploration of the fantastic without **Serendipity:the Choir** considering *The Teddy Bears’ Picnic*, where every bear that ever there was will gather and play – believe it or not!

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Believe It Or Not Repertoire

Believe It Or Not (from: The Greatest American Hero)	Post arr.Clipsham
The Impossible Dream (from: Man of La Mancha)	Leigh arr.Frank
Dry Bones	trad. spiritual arr.Hayes
The Teddy Bears’ Picnic	Bratton arr.Carter
The Cloud-capp’d Towers	R.Vaughan-Williams
Make Believe (from: Showboat)	Kern/Stickles arr.Clipsham
Mr Mistoffelees (from: Cats)	Lloyd-Webber arr.Arch/Clipsham
Can You Read My Mind? (from: Superman)	Williams arr.Billingsley
Jerusalem	C.Hubert H.Parry
Extracts from ‘Dido and Aeneas’	Purcell
a. “Wayward sisters” – Sorceress – Jean Long Sorceress’s apprentice – Louise Cassidy	
b. “Destruction’s our delight” – chorus	
c. “But ere we this perform” – witches – Fran Bosly-Craft Erica Steer	
d. “In our deep-vaulted cell”- chorus	
e. “The Queen of Carthage” – Sorceress	
f. “Ho, ho, ho”- chorus	
Bohemian Rhapsody	Mercury arr.Brymer
Stranger in Paradise (from: Kismet)	Wright and Forrest after Borodin
The Ballad of Sweeney Todd (from: Sweeney Todd)	Sondheim arr.Beck
Wynken, Blynken and Nod	Schultz
I’m a Train	Hammond & Hazelwood arr.Knight
I Dreamed a Dream (from: Les Misérables)	Schönberg arr.Lawson
Jabberwocky	Pottle