

Darling Buds of May

In the 17th Century ballets and madrigals formed the basis of corporate singing, with many households meeting around a table to enjoy the pleasure of singing together. Here we present three examples of ballets by the English master of the form, Thomas Morley (1557/8-1602). Deceptively difficult, the complex 'fa la las' that distinguish ballets from madrigals often begin with syncopated entries. The urgency of '*Fyer Fyer*' contrasts with the lightness and gaiety of '*My Bonny Lass She Smileth*'. The best known of Morley's large output of ballets and madrigals, '*Now is the Month of Maying*', continues to delight us with the joys of spring. Dating from the same period is the madrigal '*Lasciatemi Morire*' by Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) from his Sixth Book of Madrigals. Also known as '*Lamento d' Arianna*' (*Arianna's Lament*), this madrigal, through its clever use of tension, perfectly illustrates the heart-rending nature of lost love.

Earliest in this concert's exploration of song is '*Ah Robin*', by the early 16th Century English composer, William Cornysh (d. 1523). For men's voices in three parts, it is written in a canonic form (similar to a round) and is thought to incorporate elements of a pre-existing melody. Composed three centuries later, but still retaining a keen appreciation of earlier compositional styles, is '*O Süsßer Mai*' (*O Sweet May*) by Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), a delightful hymn to May, spring and the herald of a glorious summer.

Folksong has played an important role in vocal music and, until recently, has relied on performance for the transmission of songs from one generation to the next. Here we present three examples – two well known and one less well known. '*O Danny Boy*' (*The Londonderry Air*) arguably needs no introduction, being one of the most popular folksongs to originate from the British Isles. '*Shenandoah*' meanwhile originates firmly from North America, a folksong from that region that is uniquely American, unlike many which are derived from folksongs imported from other countries. Distinctly South American is '*Machai Puito*', an Argentinean folksong. Possibly new to many, we hope that its presentation in this concert will continue this beautiful folksong's journey of discovery by audiences and singers alike.

Beautiful poems have often inspired beautiful settings to match. Shakespeare has always been a rich seam for composers to mine and here we present a delightful setting of '*Blow, Blow Thou Winter Wind*' by the modern English composer, John Rutter. Gifted in writing music that is sympathetic to the text and that singers enjoy performing, Rutter's setting of '*Blow, Blow Thou Winter Wind*' is an eloquent demonstration of his talent. '*A Red, Red Rose*' is a similarly popular text by Burns and is set here in a four-part male chorus in a simple yet tender way by Emily Crocker. Based on the less familiar poem ('*Solitude*' by A Lampman), '*In the Woods*' by Eugene Butler is an evocative sound picture. Taking the listener on a journey through the changing landscape of an American wood, Butler uses musical form to create the palette of seasonal change in the forest.

Popular songs of the 1930's were the first cross-over works, with composers like George Gershwin writing for both popular and mainstream audiences with equal facility. '*Autumn Leaves*', by Joseph Kosma and with lyrics by Johnny Mercer and Geoffrey Parsons, has become a modern classic and its setting here by Andrew Carter is a hauntingly beautiful arrangement embodying the onset of Winter. More cheerfully, Jerome Kern's '*All the Things You Are*' looks forward to the delights of Spring – with a hint of swing.

Not all songs have to be serious and our programme today features four songs in which tongues are – at least figuratively – firmly inserted in cheeks. *'The Mermaid'* and *'The Goslings'* share similar musical backgrounds, with the musical in-jokes aplenty, while the intriguingly-titled *'Pack She Back To She Ma'* and *'Tequila Samba'* round out our offerings with the musical equivalent of a Latin-American fiesta. *Ole!*

GJO

Programme Repertoire

Morley	Fyer Fyer
POEM	Shakespeare: Sonnet 18
Morley	Now is the Month of Maying
Monteverdi	Lasciatemi Morire
POEM	Come Slowly Eden
Morley	My Bonny Lass
Kosma	Autumn Leaves
POEM	May Woods: 1-3
Butler	In The Woods
Crocker	A Red Red Rose
POEM	Merry Month of May: 1
Brahms	O Süsßer Mai
Cornysh	Ah! Robin
POEM	Merry Month of May: 2
Kern arr.	All The Things You Are
Whitworth	The Mermaid
Spevacek	Shenandoah
Bridge	The Goslings
POEM	May Woods: 4 & 5
Rutter	Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind
Argentinean	Manchai Puito
POEM	Merry Month of May: 3
Parduss	Pack She Back To She Ma
arr. Knowles	Danny Boy
Turner	Tequila Samba