

Flights of Fancy

Welcome to the first concert for 2011 from *Serendipity: the choir*, a concert that is strictly for the birds! And since birds do it and bees do it, what better song to include than Cole Porter's *Let's Do It?* We are sure this is a concert you will love!

The nightingale has traditionally provided much musical inspiration and today we present two songs celebrating this greatest of songbirds. Mendelssohn's *Die Nachtigall* is a piece of haunting beauty, whilst *A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square* – in an arrangement made famous by Manhattan Transfer – will keep that magic abroad in the air.

Folksong and birdsong seem to go hand in hand and this programme includes three contrasting examples. From Newfoundland comes *She's Like the Swallow*, a beautiful song which compares one's love to other beautiful things in nature. Also from Newfoundland but in a very different vein is *The Old Carrion Crow* which, in its sea shanty-like form, reflects that island's nautical heritage. Still in the Americas, but from much further south, comes *Manchai Puito*, the heart-wrenching tale of two sorrowful doves betrayed.

Birds come in all colours; today we concentrate on but two. In *Yellow Bird*, made famous by Harry Belafonte, we learn the sad tale of a bird in a banana plantation deserted by his mate. Less colourful but more famous for its song, *Blackbird* by the Beatles is here skilfully arranged so that the choir is both singer and rhythmic accompaniment.

Whilst not having feathers, no flight of fancy would be complete without the composer William Byrd. Today we include three pieces that neatly summarise Byrd's compositional life. *Ave Verum Corpus* was probably written for secret Catholic family masses; for the Anglican Chapel Royal of Queen Elizabeth I Byrd composed *Sing Joyfully*, arguably one of his greatest works. Indeed it is music such as this that undoubtedly saved his life and earned him Elizabeth's favour. Completing this trio is *This Sweet and Merry Month of May*, a madrigal that proves Byrd was as skilled a secular composer as he was sacred.

Also not having feathers, but still capable of flight and song is the cricket. In *El Grillo* by the 15th century Flemish composer Josquin des Pres we learn about the cricket's night song. And what better place to find birds and crickets than *In the Woods?* This beautiful song, presented by the ladies of *Serendipity: the Choir*, cleverly captures the ethereal stillness of an English wood in a sound-painting of stunning beauty.

Birdsong has often inspired composers to imitation and today we share two examples. *Of All the Birds* tells the story of Philip the sparrow, though whether Philip is as pure as he appears is still open for debate. Earliest of the programmed works is Janequin's *Le Chant des Oiseaux*, in which the singers imitate a myriad of cacophonous birdcalls in the piece's central section – and French birds at that!

The freedom of birds in flight has often inspired humans to want to fly. In *Wings*, we muse on what it would be like to soar like eagles and the freedom it brings while in *Those Magnificent Men*, our Magnificent Men are frightfully keen to tell you about the miracles and joys of powered flight.

Finally, we present the tale of *The Goose and the Swan*. Beautifully set by Bob Chilcott of 'The King's Singers' fame, this story summarises for the choir the reason why we sing – listen and learn....

Flights of Fancy Repertoire

Let's Do It

She's Like the Swallow

This Sweet and Merry Month

Ave Verum Corpus

Le Chant des Oiseaux

Manchai Puito

Of All the Birds

Die Nachtigall

Those Magnificent Men

Yellow Bird

Blackbird

A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square

Sing Joyfully

In the Woods

The Old Carrion Crow

El Grill

The Goose and the Swan

Wings

Porter arr.Blackwell

Newfoundland folk arr.Strommen

Byrd

Byrd

Janequin

Argentine folk arr.Escalda

Bartlet

Mendelssohn

Goodwin arr.Arch

Luboff arr.Frank

Lennon & McCartney

Sherwin arr.Billingsley

Byrd

Butler

Nova Scotian folk arr.Goetz

Josquin de Prez

Chilcott

Strommen

Translations

Ave Verum Corpus

Hail true body, born of the Virgin Mary.
Who truly suffering, was sacrificed on the cross for humankind,
from whose pierced side flowed blood.
Be for us a foretaste of the final judgement.
O sweet, O merciful, O Jesus Son of Mary, have mercy on me. Amen.

Le Chant des Oiseaux

Rouse yourselves, you sleeping hearts, the god of love is calling you.
On this first day of spring birds are performing marvels;
to put yourself out of discontent, open up your ears. And *farirariron* -
you will all be put in a joyful mood, for the season is good.

You will hear, I think, a sweet music that the king redwing will make
in a true voice; the blackbird too, and the starling will be among them:
<chirping> What do you say, little songbird, sweet little one?

By God's head! Who's down there? Pass, knave.
It's time, girls, to go drinking.
To the sermon, my lady, to St. Troitin to see Saint Robin,
the sweet musician, show off his chest!
Coo, sweet little one, quick, to the sermon. Get up, my lady,
to the Mass, St. Clucky who gossips.

Little starling of Paris, wise, courteous, and well-versed; laughter and rejoicing is my motto, let everyone
give themselves up to them.
Nightingale of the lovely wood, whose voice chimes, to free yourself from frustration your throat warbles:
<chirps of many birds>
and flee, sorrows, tears, and cares, for the season commands it.
Get back, mister cuckoo, get away from our company;
everyone gives you to the owl, for you are nothing but a traitor.
Cuckoo!
Traacherously, in every nest, you lay eggs without being invited.
Rouse yourselves, you sleeping hearts, the god of love is calling you.

Manchai Puito

Two little doves were wailing and crying.
They consoled each other by saying:
"Who has cut your beautiful wings, dove?
Or has some false person caught you by surprise while you were flying?"
Alas! Poor doves.

Die Nachtigall

The nightingale had flown far away,
but Spring lured her back.
In her time away she has learned nothing new;
she still sings the same, well-loved song.

El Grillo

The cricket is a good singer.
He can sing for a very long time,
and he sings all the time!
But he doesn't act like the birds.
If they've sung a little bit they go somewhere else;
the cricket remains where he is....
if the month of May is warm,
because he sings out of love.

