

'TIMES PAST - A CHORAL RETROSPECTIVE'

This concert marks a first for *Serendipity: the choir* – it is the first concert in which the choir has chosen the music. The choir's returning officer, Kerith Fowles, reports that voting was enthusiastic and it must be said that there were cries of delight at the choir's first rehearsal when the successful songs were revealed. (It must also be said that there were cries of despair and, "Who voted for THAT?" – such is the price of democracy!) We are sure you will find much to enjoy in this concert selection, and appreciate why all the works featured today have become firm favourites with *Serendipity: the choir*. We are also pleased to welcome Mark Williamson, a long-time friend of *Serendipity: the choir*, as an associate artist. His accomplished guitar-playing will add even more delights to today's programme.

Our concert opens with Gerald Finzi's *My Spirit Sang All Day*. It is hard to imagine a better sentiment to open a concert – *Serendipity: the choir* firmly believe in the uplifting power of song and agree with the Robert Bridges, the writer of the text, that music came from heaven for our joy. Following it is *Yesterday*, the Beatles' classic, which needs no introduction. This work dates to the very earliest days of *Serendipity: the choir* and reminds us all of the choir's beginnings – though unlike Lennon and McCartney, the choir find it hard to believe our troubles are here to stay!

One piece that the choir remembers well – and not always for the same reasons – is *I'm a Train*. It does prove, though, that trains are always popular, even if the choir is only pretending to be one. That said, it is a piece hard to sing and even harder to classify: how can a train going to the breaker's yard be so happy? Following it is *In Flanders' Fields*, a haunting piece whose sentiment should all remember as we approach next month's Anzac commemorations.

The first half concludes with four works that draw on African roots. The first two, *Siyahamba* and *Tsotsolosa*, are South African songs, testing the choir's Swahili skills to the limit. *Tsotsolosa* is of particular note, sung by work gangs from the Robin Island prison, who dream of the train from Zimbabwe that will take them home. *Deep River*, a Negro spiritual, is rendered here in eight parts, a sumptuous harmonisation that made the successful list of piece for this concert no doubt on the sheer pleasure it is to sing. Everyone has a skeleton in the closet, and we conclude the first half with ours, the dramatic *Dry Bones*. Now, which bone follows what?

Serendipity: the choir opens the second half with *Adiemus*, a piece written in the modern, minimalist style. Minimalist it may be, but never boring! Following it is the haunting Joseph Korma and Johnny Mercer song, *Autumn Leaves*. It has become a modern classic and in this version is a rewarding but heart-wrenching sing. Similarly heart-wrenching is the early 17th century work, *Lasciatemi Morire* by Claudio Monteverdi. Also known as Arianna's Lament, this five-part work is the sole-surviving fragment of a larger work. How lucky we are then to have this sliver of indescribable gorgeousness!

Tonight's concert concludes with three modern works. Most recent is the coupling of Abba's *Money, Money, Money* and *Summer Lovin'* from the movie and stage show *Grease*. And yes, we will tell you more! From another popular stage show, *Les Misérables*, comes the climactic *Bring Him Home*, where the main character, Jean Valjean, prays for the safety of Marius, whom Valjean has come to regard as a son. Finally, *Serendipity: the choir* presents the Gershwin classic *Stairway to Paradise*, made famous by Georges Guetary in the classic Gene Kelly film, *An American in Paris*. Stand aside, *Serendipity: the choir* is on its way!

Repertoire

My Spirit Sang All Day	<i>Finzi</i>
Yesterday	<i>Lennon & McCartney</i>
I'm a Train	<i>Hammond & Hazelwood</i>
In Flanders' Fields	<i>Jacobson & Emerson</i>
Tshotsholoza from 'South African Suite'	<i>arr.Leck</i>
Siyahamba from 'South African Suite'	<i>arr.Leck</i>
Deep River	<i>arr.Luboff</i>
Dry Bones	<i>Spiritual arr.Hayes</i>
Adiemus from 'Songs of Sanctuary'	<i>Jenkins arr.Clipsham</i>
Autumn Leaves	<i>Kosma arr.Carter</i>
Lasciatemi Morire	<i>Monteverdi</i>
Money Money & Summer Nights	<i>ABBA arr.Clipsham</i>
Bring Him Home	<i>Schönberg arr.Brymer</i>
I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise	<i>Gershwin arr.Brymer</i>