

The Chantry Singers

present

A Summer Soirée

Conductor : Timothy Venvell

Great School, Royal Grammar School,

Guildford

Saturday 27th June 1992
at 7.30 p.m.

PROGRAMME

1. Blow away the morning dew Trad. arr. Archer
2. "To be sung of a summer night on the water" Delius
3. Two Madrigals:
Care for thy soul Pilkington
Come again, sweet love doth now invite Dowland
4. Interlude
5. From *Five English Folk Songs* arr. Vaughan Williams
 1. The dark-eyed sailor
 2. The spring time of the year
 3. Just as the tide was flowing

Short Interval

(in which your ticket may be exchanged for a drink)

6. Dance to your Daddy Trad. arr. Stone
It was a lover and his lass Rutter
7. A nightingale sang in Berkeley Square Sherwin arr. Mabley
The way we were Hamlich arr. Mabley
The mermaid Trad. arr. Whitworth

Supper

This evening's summer soirée features a variety of styles, with a particular emphasis on English folksong. We begin with an upbeat arrangement of *Blow away the morning dew* by Malcolm Archer, formerly organist at Bristol Cathedral, and a very fine counter-tenor. The arrangement has its roots in the close harmony style, so popular in the wake of the King Singers at Oxford and Cambridge light entertainments. This is followed by another piece with varsity associations. Although written in 1917 for Kennedy Scott and the Oriana Choir, generations of Cambridge undergraduates have enjoyed the singing of the University Chamber Choir on Trinity College 'backs' each summer, and since the choir sing from punts on the Cam, Delius's *To be sung of a summer night on the water* has been a popular and almost automatic choice. The piece is unusual in that it is purely atmospheric, without any text at all, leaving the six part choir to sing a continuous *ah*. It is typical Delius, with a dense, chromatic texture.

The first of the two madrigals in tonight's programme is unusual for the serious subject matter of its text. Rarely do madrigals make serious mention of God, coming as they mostly do from the pastoral tradition, where lighthearted references to nymphs, satyrs, gods and goddesses abound. *Care for thy soul* is almost like a sacred motet, and is written in a learned style by Francis Pilkington, who, though not a major figure in Elizabethan music, composed a number of effective madrigals. In contrast, Dowland's *Come again, sweet love doth now invite* is in the lighter, chordal style of many madrigals, with three verses which take us through the familiar madrigalian territory of rejected love.

Vaughan Williams was, of course, closely associated with this part of England, setting up the Leith Hill Festival of choral music. He was also famous for his enthusiastic interest in English folksong, and his *Five English Folk Songs* are but one small part of a composing output vastly influenced by this interest. Tonight we hear just the first three songs of the set, all on the traditional theme of love. The first and third song are similar in style, recounting a story, and characterising the two lovers appropriately with the male and female sections of the choir. The second song begins and ends with an evocative, wordless passage of sustained chords, with scraps of melody appearing intermittently from the sombre texture.

Dance to your Daddy is a Northumbrian folksong, sympathetically arranged by David Stone. It really requires a Northumbrian choir to sing it, since many of the words are dialect words unknown in leafy Surrey. John Rutter's *It was a lover and his lass* is a clever setting of Shakespeare's text, written in the close harmony style, but all in fact original material. It demonstrates as clearly as anything Rutter's remarkable ability at reproducing any style he might

possibly hear. When he was Director of Music at Clare College, Cambridge, it was common knowledge that the chapel choir regularly sang a little known setting of the Evening Canticles - Stanford in E - composed, of course, by John Rutter!

The soirée ends with three arrangements, and this might be a suitable moment to mention The Chantry Singers' debt of gratitude to Christopher Mabley in this field. Over the years, we have sung most, if not all, of his sensitive arrangements of popular songs of the thirties and forties, and the two we sing tonight have always been popular with choir and audiences alike. We end with the ever-popular tale of *The Mermaid*.

The Chantry Singers of Guildford was founded in 1983 by its present conductor, and has given three or four concerts a year ever since. The membership has always been in the region of 35 mixed voices, and its repertoire has covered a wide spectrum, from the small-scale performance of oratorios and orchestral masses to unaccompanied chamber choir music, both sacred and secular. Many of the larger-scale concerts have been given in Holy Trinity Church, including a very successful baroque-style performance of *The Messiah*. A most popular venue for the choir's secular concerts has proved to be the Marble Hall at Clandon Park, where the choir has explored the world of close harmony. The choir also tries to do one concert a year for charity, and last November gave a performance in association with Godalming Red Cross.

Timothy Vennell graduated from Cambridge University in 1980, after three years as Organ Scholar at St. Catharine's College. He came to Guildford in 1981 as Assistant Director of Music at the Royal Grammar School, and became Director of Music at Kingston Grammar School in 1987. With KGS Choral Society he has conducted a number of large-scale concerts, including Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and the Mozart orchestration of *The Messiah*. Every summer he conducts Ex Collegio, an 'occasional' choir, singing in different British cathedrals each year, and with whom he has broadcast on Radio 3 and made a record. He is widely known in the Guildford area also as an organist, and has deputised frequently at the Cathedral in the past.

This concert is Tim's last as permanent conductor of The Chantry Singers. All the members wish to thank him for the time he has given to the choir, and for his enthusiasm and his commitment to excellence, which have made the choir such a happy and rewarding experience for so many of us. We send him our very best wishes for the future.

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For further details please telephone Guildford (0483) 67062
