



The Chiltern Choir

President: Patricia Parkes
Conductor: Michael Cayton

Songs for a Summer Evening

Sarratt Village Hall
The Green, Sarratt WD3 6AS

Saturday, June 27

A Welcome from the Chair

Welcome to this last concert of the season. It is lovely to be in Sarratt Village Hall again and I hope you enjoy our concert for this summer evening. It is good to see you here, and thank you, as ever, for your support.



Please sign up to our mailing list with the chance to win two free tickets to our next concert – details are in this programme (see p. 23). We also have a sign-up option on the website in the ‘Contact Us’ section, if that’s more convenient.

Do join us after this concert for complimentary refreshments, and we hope to see you next season; our concert in the autumn will be Rossini’s *Petite Messe Solonelle*, on Saturday 28th November 2026.

Lyndsay Ward
Chair

Programme

George Shearing – *Songs and Sonnets*

*Live with me and be my love
When daffodils begin to peer
It was a lover and his lass
Spring
Who is Silvia?
Fie on sinful fantasy
Hey, ho, the wind and the rain*

George Shearing – *Music to Hear*

*Music to hear
Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Is it for fear to wet a widow's eye
Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more
Blow, blow, thou winter wind*

John Rutter – *Feel the Spirit*

*Joshua fit the battle of Jericho
Steal away
I got a robe
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child
Ev'ry time I feel the spirit
Deep river
When the saints go marching in*

This Evening's Performers

Sopranos Caroline Bartlett
Sam Beard
Hilary Broadbent
Mary Bungard
Anni Facer
Gabrielle Fisher
Christine Guy
Jo Hayter
Sue Kesteven
Charlotte Kohnhorst
Gillian Proctor
Stefanie Robinson
Beverley Small
Lyndsay Ward
Gillian Watson

Altos Cathy Amos
Marian Davies
Ana de'Ath
Rita Fryer
Philippa Goss
Clare Hearnshaw

Conductor:	Michael Cayton
Mezzo-soprano:	Helen Stanley
Piano:	Simon Howat

Alix Hunt
Anne Keyworth
Miriam Morgan
Isobel Platings
Maggie Shrive

Tenors Philip Brown
Andy Etchells
Joan Hunt
Isabel Walker

Basses Paul Davies
Dylan John
Martin Robinson
Richard Watson
Tim Wynne-Jones

Notes

The jazz pianist and composer George Shearing was born in Battersea in 1919. Blind from birth, he began to learn piano when he was three, and his only formal musical training came at the Linden Lodge School for the Blind. He was a member of a band made up entirely of blind musicians and performed with them on BBC radio. In 1947 Shearing moved to New York, where he developed his own style, influenced by swing, bop, and classical music, writing some famous pieces including 'Lullaby of Birdland'.

Shearing became an American citizen in 1956. He not only collaborated with many jazz musicians, such as Nat King Cole, Peggy Lee, and Mel Tormé, but he also performed classical concertos with symphony orchestras. In all, he composed more than 300 works and made over 100 recordings.

George Shearing on 'Music to Hear' (1986): The idea for this work came to me as a result of a commission I received from the Dale Warland Singers in 1985. I was asked to compose an original work for this great choral group whose reputation for excellence reaches far beyond the confines of its St. Paul, Minnesota home.

It occurred to me that, obviously, I would need a first-rate lyricist...one who wouldn't be too busy to help. Fortunately, almost immediately William Shakespeare appeared and offered his literary services. But then I had another question: "Could the musical conception of this work stretch from ol' William's

period to the present time?" Hearing no Shakespearean objection, I went to work.

In the opening section, *Music to Hear*, my admiration for the works of Frederick Delius somehow seems to shine through. Then, bowing to the style of music composed during Shakespeare's time, I wrote *Is It For Fear To Wet A Widow's Eye?* and *Shall I Compare Thee To A Summer's Day?* Finally, segueing into the music I know and love best, I composed *Sigh No More Ladies* and *Blow, Blow Thou Winter Wind*.

After completing the compositional planning of this, for me, joyous project, I realized that there was but one thing left to do. I requested the assistance of my long-time friend and colleague, Frank Metis, in transcribing the entire work for concert performance.

I hereby thank Mr Shakespeare and Mr Metis, and am delighted to present to you the fruits of our labours.

[In 1972 Shearing released an album of standards performed as solo piano jazz pieces, also entitled 'Music to Hear', but entirely separate from the Shakespeare settings performed this evening.]

...and on 'Songs and Sonnets' (1999): Some 15 years ago, William Shakespeare and I brought forth a series of pieces for choir, jazz piano, and bass entitled *Music to Hear*. Because the efforts of the Shakespeare/Shearing team seemed to be received with enthusiasm by singers, choral directors, and audiences alike, and because we enjoyed working together so much, we thought we'd give it another go.

Mr Shakespeare dug around in his trunk and came up with seven more songs and sonnets that we hadn't used yet. We got to work and came up with this collection, entitled *Songs and Sonnets from Shakespeare*. Again, they are all set for choral ensemble, jazz piano, and bass. In them, you'll hear my English musical background and my American jazz influence.

The collection *includes Live With Me And Be My Love, When Daffodils Begin To Peer, It Was A Lover And His Lass, Spring, Who Is Silvia?, Fie On Sinful Fantasy*, and last, but certainly not least, *Hey, Ho, The Wind And The Rain*. We think you'll enjoy the variety of moods they cover...and, if we do say so ourselves, we like them – every one!

The working personnel is much the same. William Shakespeare, George Shearing, Frank Metis, who, again, did yeoman service with his pencil and eraser in putting notes to paper and all the other things necessary in transcribing such a work. There is one addition to our production team: a man considered to be one of the very best choral writers and directors in the business, a man whom I am honoured to be able to call a very dear friend. His name is John Rutter.

I wish to thank each of these outstanding collaborators for their invaluable contributions to this effort. They were always there when I needed them. And if Mr Shakespeare hadn't done his part in the first place, we'd all be in the soup. Enjoy!

[We will be performing 'Songs & Sonnets' first this evening.]

Feel the Spirit

The heritage of the African-American spiritual has been a source of inspiration for composers and performers for more than a hundred years. There have been many arrangements and interpretations, though rarely combining the forces of soloist, choir and orchestra.

Feel the Spirit is a cycle of seven spirituals arranged by John Rutter. It was designed in collaboration with the mezzo-soprano Melanie Marshall and was first performed at the Carnegie Hall, New York, in June 2001.

Worked with Rutter's hallmark craftsmanship, the cycle of seven spirituals is beautifully balanced as a whole, with each individual song being full of harmonic and rhythmic interest and excitement, and finished with sparkling orchestral colours providing interest throughout.

Much of Rutter's output has been sacred music, and although he claims to veer more towards being agnostic than Christian ("I'm more a fellow-traveller than a believer"), he also says about Christianity: "it's given me my values and a strong sense of faith."

The Sonnets

Live with me, and be my love

And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dales and fields
And all the craggy mountains yields
There will we sit upon the rocks
And see the shepherds feed their flocks
By shallow rivers by whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals
There will I make thee a bed of roses
With a thousand fragrant posies
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle.
A belt of straw and ivy buds
With coral clasps and amber studs;
And if these pleasures may thee move
Then live with me and be my love
If that the world and love were young
And truth in every shepherd's tongue
These pretty pleasures might me move
To live with thee and be thy love

When daffodils begin to peer

With heigh! the doxy over the dale
Why, then comes in the sweet o' the year;
For the red blood reigns in the winter's pale
The white sheet bleaching on the hedge
With heigh! the sweet birds, O how they sing!
Doth set my pugging tooth on edge;
For a quart of ale is a dish for a king
The lark, that tirra-lirra chants
With heigh! with heigh! the thrush and the jay
Are summer songs for me and my aunts
While we lie tumbling in the hay

It was a lover and his lass

With a hey and a ho
And a hey nonino
That o'er the green cornfield did pass
In the springtime
In the springtime
The only pretty ring time
When birds do sing
Hey ding a ding ding
Sweet lovers love the spring
Between the acres of the rye
With a hey and a ho
And a hey nonino
These pretty country folks would lie
In the springtime

In the springtime
The only pretty ring time
When birds do sing
Hey ding a ding ding
Sweet lovers love the spring

This carol they began that hour
With a hey and a ho
And a hey nonino
How that life was but a flower

In the springtime
In the springtime
The only pretty ring time
When birds do sing
Hey ding a ding ding
Sweet lovers love the spring

And therefore take the present time
With a hey and a ho
And a hey nonino
For love is crowned with the prime

In the springtime
In the springtime
The only pretty ring time
When birds do sing
Hey ding a ding ding
Sweet lovers love the spring

Spring:

When daisies pied and violets blue
And lady-smocks all silver-white
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue
Do paint the meadows with delight
The cuckoo then, on every tree
Mocks married men; for thus sings he
Cuckoo;
Cuckoo
Cuckoo:
O word of fear
Unpleasing to a married ear!

When shepherds pipe on oaten straws
And merry larks are ploughmen's clocks
When turtles tread, and rooks, and daws
And maidens bleach their summer smocks
The cuckoo then, on every tree
Mocks married men; for thus sings he
Cuckoo;
Cuckoo
Cuckoo:
O word of fear
Unpleasing to a married ear!

Who is Silvia? what is she
That all our swains commend her?
Holy, fair and wise is she;
The heaven such grace did lend her
That she might admired be

Is she kind as she is fair?
For beauty lives with kindness
Love doth to her eyes repair
To help him of his blindness
And, being help'd, inhabits there

Then to Silvia let us sing
That Silvia is excelling;
She excels each mortal thing
Upon the dull earth dwelling:
To her let us garlands bring

Fie on sinful fantasy!
Fie on lust and luxury!
Lust is but a bloody fire
Kindled with unchaste desire

Fed in heart, whose flames aspire
As thoughts do blow them, higher and higher
Pinch him, fairies, mutually;
Pinch him for his villany;
Pinch him, and burn him, and turn him about
Till candles and starlight and moonshine be out

When that I was and a little tiny boy

With hey, ho, the wind and the rain

A foolish thing was but a toy

For the rain it raineth every day

But when I came to man's estate

With hey, ho, the wind and the rain

'Gainst knaves and thieves men shut their gates

For the rain it raineth every day

But when I came alas! to wive

With hey, ho, the wind and the rain

By swaggering could I never thrive

For the rain it raineth every day

But when I came unto my beds

With hey, ho, the wind and the rain

With toss-pots still had drunken heads

For the rain it raineth every day

A great while ago the world begun

With hey, ho, the wind and the rain

But that's all one, our play is done

And we'll strive to please you every day

Music to hear, why hear'st thou music sadly?
Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in joy
Why lov'st thou that which thou receiv'st not gladly
Or else receiv'st with pleasure thine annoy?
If the true concord of well-tuned sounds
By unions married, do offend thine ear
They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds
In singleness the parts that thou shouldst bear
Mark how one string, sweet husband to another
Strikes each in each by mutual ordering;
Resembling sire and child and happy mother
Who, all in one, one pleasing note do sing:
Whose speechless song, being many, seeming one
Sings this to thee: "Thou single wilt prove none."

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Is it for fear to wet a widow's eye

That thou consumest thyself in single life?
Ah! if thou issueless shalt hap to die
The world will wail thee, like a makeless wife;
The world will be thy widow and still weep
That thou no form of thee hast left behind
When every private widow well may keep
By children's eyes her husband's shape in mind
Look, what an unthrift in the world doth spend
Shifts but his place, for still the world enjoys it;
But beauty's waste hath in the world an end
And kept unused, the user so destroys it
No love toward others in that bosom sits
That on himself such murderous shame commits.

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more

Men were deceivers ever, ever
One foot in sea, and one on shore
To one thing constant never
Then sigh not so, but let them go
And be you blithe and bonny
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into hey nonny, nonny, nonny, nonny

Sing no more ditties, sing no more
Of dumps so dull and heavy, heavy
The fraud of men was ever so
Since summer first was leafy
Then sigh not so, but let them go
And be you blithe and bonny
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into hey, nonny, nonny, nonny, nonny, nonny no

Blow, blow, thou winter wind

Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen
Because thou art not seen
Although thy breath be rude
Heigh-ho! sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly:
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:
Then, heigh-ho, the holly! This life is most jolly
Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky
That dost not bite so nigh
As benefits forgot:
Though thou the waters warp
Thy sting is not so sharp
As friend remembered not
Heigh-ho! sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly:
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:
Then, heigh-ho, the holly!
This life is most jolly; This life is most jolly

Tonight's Performers

Michael Cayton – Conductor

Michael joined us as Musical Director in September 2003. Since then he has conducted our performances of repertoire from Bach to Maxwell-Davies, Purcell to Eric Whitacre. He conducted at the premieres of his compositions *Missa Beati Virginis Mariae* (Nov 2017; St Mary's Church, Rickmansworth) and *The Way Through the Woods* (Mar 2024; The Muse, Watford).



Michael is a Lancastrian, educated in Blackpool, where he gained his initial musical grounding, learning the piano and organ. After training at Kneller Hall, Michael served with the Grenadier Guards as a trumpeter, pianist, and organist, performing at a number of State functions in the Royal Palaces. Studying piano at the Royal College of Music, he gained his BMus. He won the Hilda Anderson Deane prize for conducting and improvisation, and became the first Millenium Organ Scholar at the Royal Hospital in Chelsea, while completing postgraduate répétiteur studies.

Since 2003 he has been the Director of Music at St John's Wood Church in London, where he conducts both the critically acclaimed professional choir and Community Chamber Choir. During his career he has worked with several music societies (most notably The Medici Choir, Goldsmiths Choral Union, and Vasari Singers), and he was musical director of the Watford Philharmonic Society until 2025.

As a session musician Michael has made a number of broadcasts, particularly for BBC's Songs of Praise. His compositions are published by Redemptorist Publications and Shorterhouse, and his responsorial psalms are a staple of parish churches up and down the country. With broad musical tastes, a hunger to learn new styles, and a talent for improvisation, he can often be found performing jazz, German cabaret, or Judeo-Spanish Ladino music, as well as fusion and funk.

In addition to conducting, Michael is in demand as a pianist and organist, with regular appearances in Central London venues, especially at St Martin-in-the-Fields. He lives in London with his wife, Gwendolen, and their two children.

Helen Stanley – Mezzo-soprano

Helen studied at the Royal Academy of Music and Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, where she won several prizes including the Seligman Award for Excellence. Her solo concert highlights have included the Bach *St John Passion* and *Mass in B* with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields,



Beethoven *Missa Solemnis* with the Southbank Sinfonia, Daniel-Lesur *Cantique des Cantiques* with the BBC Symphony Chorus and Schmitt *Tragédie de Salomé* with the BBCSO. She has also appeared in opera galas with the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera and with Mid Wales Opera.

Helen is currently singing in the chorus of the Danish Royal Opera in Copenhagen, where she has appeared in operas including *Dialogue des Carmélites*, *Don Pasquale*, and *Idomeneo*. Next season, she will sing in their productions of *Macbeth*, *La Bohème*, and the Danish premiere of *Innocence* by Kaaija Saariaho. Other recent projects include playing Marchesa Melibea in *Il viaggio a Reims* for Wexford Festival Opera, and singing the choruses and alto solos in Waterperry Opera's annual one-to-a-part performance of *Messiah*.

In recent years, Helen has performed *The Greek Passion* with Den Jyske Opera in Denmark and *Das Wunder der Heliane* with Nederlandse Reisopera. Other appearances include Grange Park Opera's film of *Suor Angelica, The Power of Paternal Love* by Stradella, in its first performance since 1678, and *Borka: the Goose with No Feathers*, an opera for children featuring puppetry and animation. Further roles include L'Opinion Publique in *Orphée ux Enfers*, Juno in *Semele*, Isabella in *L'Italiana in Algeri*, Witch in *Hansel and Gretel*, Popova in *The Bear* and Geneviève in *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Helen has premiered new works at Grimeborn, Tête à Tête, and the Sage, Gateshead, as well as site-specific performances of new music at the Foundling Museum, the Royal Greenwich Observatory, and the National Portrait Gallery. She particularly enjoys performing twentieth-century music and recently appeared as Mary in the UK premiere and subsequent revival of Amy Beach's 1932 opera *Cabildo* at Grimeborn Festival and Wilton's Music Hall.

Simon Howat – Piano

Simon studied Music at Cambridge University, followed by post-graduate Piano Accompaniment at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, with Professors Nina Serena and Paul Hamburger.

Over the last thirty-five years, he has, at different points, been in demand as an accompanist, music examiner for ABRSM, and peripatetic piano instructor. On the concert platform, Simon has appeared as a two-piano/piano-duet pianist, an accompanist

for instrumental/vocal recitals, and a concerto performer with several regional orchestras (in Rhapsody in Blue, and the Grieg and Beethoven Emperor Concertos). Further afield, he has appeared at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and the Grimeborn Festival in London, accompanying chamber opera.

As the pianist currently for a number of choirs in the Bucks/Herts region (The Chiltern Choir since 2022), Simon has accompanied a wide spectrum of choral repertoire, with particular highlights being: Verdi's *Requiem*, Brahms' *German Requiem* and *Liebeslieder Waltzes*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, *Carmina Burana*, *Porgy and Bess*, *The Rio Grande*, *Belshazzar's Feast*, *Symphony of Psalms*, *The Bells*, Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*; also, Will Todd's *Mass in Blue* and *Songs of Peace*, plus Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony*, Michael Cayton's *The Way Through the Woods*, and *The Passing of the Year* by Jonathan Dove.



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If you would like to lend your support in this way, please contact Stuart Marshall – info@chilternchoir.org.uk.

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The following have been made honorary members, in recognition of extended service to the Choir:

Mrs Patricia Parkes – President

Dame Gillian Pugh – Vice-President

Mrs K. Darby	Mr M. Gaudie
Prof. I.D. Howarth	Mr D. Lloyd



The Chiltern Singers, a small group drawn from the Chiltern Choir, is available to sing at events – weddings, funerals, social functions, etc. Please direct enquiries to Simon Boulcott at

chilternsingers@chilternchoir.org.uk

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