

Tonight's first half concludes by moving into the 19th Century where we stay for the next four pieces. SS Wesley was the grandson of the more famous Charles Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, and was, as a boy, a chorister at the Chapel Royal, where the Master of the Choristers declared him "the best boy he had ever had". **Ascribe unto the Lord** was written around 1851 for a service in aid of Church missions - hence the references to the "gods of the heathen"!

Our second half this evening begins with the wonderful grandeur of Parry's **I was Glad**. This setting was written for the coronation of Edward VII in 1902, and revised in 1911 for George V's coronation, when Parry added the famous organ introduction, surely one of the best known in Church music. Parry himself led a very full and busy life of teaching and composing. He was Professor of Music at Oxford University and held the post of director of the Royal College of Music concurrently from 1894 until his death.

Faire is the Heaven is William Harris's most famous work. It is a sublime double-choir anthem with words by Edmund Spenser. Listen out for gems such as 'in full enjoyment of felicitie' and the closing line 'how then can mortall tongue hope to expresse the image of such endlesse perfectnesse'. Harris himself was principally an organist, first at New College and Christ Church, Oxford, and later at St George's Chapel, Windsor.

Howells was an extraordinarily prolific composer who wrote music for many musical combinations, and who studied with Parry, among others. He is particularly well-known for his Anglican Church music and wrote many settings of the Evensong staple, the **Magnificat and Nunc dimittis**, including this one, written in 1947 for Gloucester Cathedral. The Magnificat 'My soul doth magnify the Lord' is the song of praise that Mary sang after being visited by the Angel Gabriel, and the Nunc dimittis, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace' is the song Simeon sang in the Temple having seen the baby Jesus with his own eyes. Howells himself has the distinction of being the first person ever to receive radium treatment when, at the age of 23, he was diagnosed with Graves Disease and given six months to live. He proceeded to live to 91!

Sumsion was Organist at Gloucester Cathedral for nearly 40 years, and was a particularly close friend of Howells'. His musical output was far less prodigious than that of Howells, but his compositions are well-loved, not least for their imaginative organ accompaniments. Listen out for the different moods of the sea in **They that go down to the sea in ships**, written in 1979.

The final two pieces are both connected with Diana, Princess of Wales. Mathias was a Welsh composer who was Professor of Music at the University of Wales for 18 years and his **Let the people praise thee, O God** was composed in 1981 for the Royal Wedding. Tavener's **Song for Athene** was commissioned in 1993 by the BBC, and was then performed on the occasion of Diana's funeral in 1997. Another hugely prolific composer, Tavener's fame was secured for posterity as the funeral was watched by one billion people worldwide.

tamesis

chamber choir

musical director - louise rapple

presents the first concert in the
"Fairest Isle" concert series for
the 2006-7 season

I was Glad

Saturday November 11th 2006
7:30 pm,
All Saints' Church, Downshire
Square, Reading

www.tamesischamberchoir.co.uk

Programme

Walter Lambe (c1450-1499) - **Nesciens Mater**
Thomas Tallis (1505-1585) - **Salvator Mundi**
William Byrd (1543-1623) - **Haec Dies**
Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656) - **When David heard**
Henry Purcell (1659-1695) - **I was Glad**

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William Boyce (c1711-1779) - **Voluntary in D major**
(Organ - Christopher Cipkin)

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Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810-1876) - **Ascribe unto the Lord**

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INTERVAL

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Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (1848-1918) - **I was Glad**
William Harris (1883-1973) - **Faire is the heaven**
Herbert Howells (1892-1983) - **Gloucester Service**

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C H H Parry - **Chorale Fantasia on an old English tune**
“**When I survey the wondrous cross**”
(Organ - Christopher Cipkin)

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Herbert Sumsion (1899-1995) - **They that go down to the sea in ships**

William Mathias (1934-1992) - **Let the people praise thee, O God**

John Tavener (1944-) - **Song for Athene**

Tamesis is:

Sopranos

Heidi Cherry
Judith Creighton
Rachel Burgess
Penny Firshman
Rachel Kerwick
Tamsyn Wilson

Tenors

Andy Button
Simon Eastwood
Trevor Mansfield
Jason Murray

Altos

Lucy Allen
Elaine Faulkner
Sarah Finch
Charlie Hodgkinson
Cathy McAllister
Paula Nichols
Liz Rapple

Basses

Reuben Casey
John Cobb
Eric Hanson
Austin Jacobs
Stephen Nichols

Grateful thanks to our accompanist Christopher Cipkin and to the authorities at All Saints' Church for the use of such a lovely venue.

Louise Rapple graduated in Music and French at Reading University in 1998, specialising in performance. During her year abroad she studied conducting at the Conservatoire de Pau in southern France and returned to the UK to direct the Reading University Singers for two years, following that with seven years in Church music, as Organist and Choir Director at two local Churches. When not conducting Tamesis, she is a full-time piano teacher, teaching both in local schools and privately. Tamesis is the realisation of her life-long dream to direct a vigorous and superior choir.

Tamesis Chamber Choir aims to offer something different from other choirs in the area. We are a high-standard, fun chamber choir performing several concerts per year. We re-audition formally each September but do sometimes have vacancies during the year, so if you are interested in singing with us, contact Louise on 0118 931 4279 or email lourap@gmail.com.

Notes on the programme

Our “Fairest Isle” season of English choral music begins with five centuries of Church music, starting in the 15th Century and finishing in 1993 with music from a living composer. One glance at the list of forenames will convince you that we couldn't be anywhere other than England - a quarter of this evening's music is by composers named William!

We start with Lambe's haunting setting of **Nesciens Mater** ('The virgin mother, although she knew not man, brought forth without pang the saviour of the world. This virgin alone, with the milk of heaven, gave suck to the very king of angels'). This work comes from the Eton Choirbook, a large illuminated manuscript from around 1490 which includes works by 25 composers of the time, Lambe being one of the three main contributors. Little is known of him other than that he came from Salisbury and was Master of the Choristers at St George's Chapel, Windsor, in the 1480s.

Tallis was a chief composer of the 16th Century and, as a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal for the latter half of his life, he composed and performed for four successive monarchs, Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth I, during whose reign **Salvator Mundi** was written. The text translates as 'O Saviour of the world, save us, thou who hast redeemed us by thy cross and blood; help us, we beseech thee, our God'. Around twenty years later, in 1591, Byrd wrote his setting of **Haec Dies** ('This is the day which the Lord hath made: let us be glad and rejoice therein. Alleluia'). Byrd had been a student of Tallis and as a boy was a chorister at the Chapel Royal. **Haec Dies** is the last of the three Latin texts in this concert. The emergence of the Book of Common Prayer in the latter half of the 15th Century meant that although Latin texts were still set after this date, English texts were more prevalent.

To continue this evening's pupil/teacher links, Tomkins was a pupil of Byrd's for a while before becoming organist at the Chapel Royal in the 1620s. He was born at St David's in Wales to an extremely musical family: his father and three half-brothers were all musicians. **When David Heard** is a sublime setting of the English text from 2 Samuel, in which David's grief is beautifully portrayed and cannot fail to move the listener.

The first of the two settings of our title piece is Purcell's joyful **I was glad when they said unto me**. Purcell was Organist at the Chapel Royal from 1682, a position which he held simultaneously with that of Organist at Westminster Abbey. He is one of England's finest and most prolific composers, despite having died at the age of only 36, probably of tuberculosis. **I was glad** is traditionally sung at Coronations: the text is from Psalm 122. Purcell's setting was written in 1685 for the coronation of King James II.