

madrigals at all. Thule is an ancient name for Greenland or Iceland. This madrigal uses weird and wonderful words to describe both that cold, fiery country and other far-flung places, but concludes that however wondrous these visions may be, they are not as wondrous as human love, which can alternately fry and freeze the heart.

Partsongs are linked to madrigals in that, in the early 19th century, the fashion for madrigals was revived and Madrigal Societies sprung up around the country. Contemporary composers rose to the occasion and produced partsongs which imitated the madrigalian style. One of the most gifted of these was Pearsall, who wrote the sublime eulogy **Lay a Garland**. Chronologically, Sullivan's well-known **The Long Day Closes** comes next, and is the epitome of the 'Victorian partsong'.

The rest of our partsongs this evening are more modern; with Stanford we move towards the Edwardian era with the impressionism of **The Bluebird**. This looser style is continued with Elgar's **My love dwelt in a northern land** (which isn't, as I've always for some reason imagined, about someone from Yorkshire, but rather a lover from Scandinavia!), and then Vaughan-Williams' arrangement of **Greensleeves**, which appears in this section because it is a traditional song, rather than a folk song as is commonly thought. We move fully into the 20th Century with Finzi's **My spirit sang all day** and finally Rutter's lively **It was a lover and his lass** from his collection *Birthday Madrigals* - an example of a madrigal fully updated for modern times!

We return to folk songs on the theme of love for the last part of our concert: the first two end unhappily, with the male lover never returning to the girl who is patiently waiting for him. **I love my love** starts unpromisingly, with the girl in Bedlam lamenting her lost love, but he does come back and they live happily ever after. **The Turtle Dove** is a love-song from a man who has to go away but vows to be forever true and **The Keel Row** is narrated by a girl who's hoping her boy will return safely from coal-hauling on the Tyne. Listen out for our attempt at a Geordie accent.

We finish with three songs which are less traditional in their texts. **She moves through the fair** is a lament for a lost love, with a beautiful mournful tune. In **Scarborough Fair** the scheming gent sets his erstwhile love several impossible tasks, and claims that if she can complete them 'then she'll be a true love of mine'. And finally, we finish this evening with a truly happy love-song, **Dashing away with the smoothing iron**, about a man who falls in love with a washerwoman and marries her within a week, if the timings are to be believed!

LER, March 2007

tamesis

chamber choir

musical director - louise rapple

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

The Silver Swan

Saturday March 3rd 2007

7:30 pm

St Laurence's Church, Reading

www.tamesischamberchoir.co.uk

Programme

Five English Folk Songs - Ralph Vaughan-Williams (1872-1958):
The Dark Eyed Sailor
The Spring Time of the Year
Just as the Tide was Flowing
The Lover's Ghost
Wassail Song

A selection of partsongs:

Robert Pearsall (1795-1856) - **Lay a Garland**
Gerald Finzi (1901-1956) - **My spirit sang all day**
Edward Elgar (1857-1934) - **My love dwelt in a northern land**
Charles Stanford (1852-1924) - **The Bluebird**
Charles Wood (1866-1926) - **Full fathom five**
Ralph Vaughan-Williams (1872-1958) - **Greensleeves**
Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900) - **The long day closes**
John Rutter (1945-) - **It was a lover and his lass**

INTERVAL

A selection of madrigals:

John Bennet (c1575-after 1614) - **All creatures now**
Thomas Morley (1558-1603) - **April is in my Mistress' face**
Thomas Vautor (c1580-?) - **Mother, I will have a husband**
Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625) - **The Silver Swan**
Thomas Weelkes (c1575-1623) - **Thule, the period of Cosmography and The Andalusian Merchant**

A selection of folk songs, mostly arranged by living composers:

Trad. arr. David Willcocks - **Early one morning**
Trad. arr. John Rutter - **O waly waly**
Trad. arr. Gustav Holst (1874-1934) - **I love my love**
Trad. arr. Ralph Vaughan-Williams - **The turtle-dove**
Trad. arr. John Byrt - **The keel row**
Trad. arr. Daryl Runswick - **She moves through the fair**
Trad. arr. Daryl Runswick - **Scarborough Fair**
Trad. arr. John Rutter - **Dashing away with the iron**

Tamesis is:

Sopranos

Miranda Bradshaw
Rachel Burgess
Heidi Cherry
Judith Creighton
Penny Firshman
Lara Savory
Tamsyn Wilson

Tenors

Andy Button
Simon Eastwood
Trevor Mansfield
Jason Murray

Altos

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

Basses

Reuben Casey
John Cobb
Eric Hanson
Patrick Moore
Stephen Nichols
Ben Styles

Grateful thanks to the authorities at St Laurence's Church for the use of such a spectacular venue.

About us...

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

For me, this concert is perhaps the most quintessentially English of the three concerts in this, our 'Fairest Isle' season. Madrigals, part-songs and folk-songs have been handed down the generations for hundreds of years, and sung in households, halls and fields all over the country.

We begin our concert with Vaughan-Williams' delightful suite of **Five English Folk Songs**. The first three songs in this set run along traditional folk song lines of love and happy endings, while the third one, **The Lover's Ghost**, rings the changes with a sad ending. The final song is a rollicking **Wassail Song** - a traditional Christmas and New Year drinking song.

Having whetted your appetite for folk songs, we now move on to madrigals and partsongs. The madrigal was a very popular song form which originated in Italy in the late 16th to early 17th Century. The English Madrigal School took up the form with alacrity, and this became one of the richest ever periods of English musical composition. The major composers in the field included Gibbons, Tomkins, Wilbye, Byrd, Morley and Weelkes. We hear from three of these tonight. Vautor and Bennet are not far behind, being regarded as slightly 'lesser figures' in madrigal composition.

All creatures now is a traditional madrigal, featuring much fa-la-la-ing, and ending with a tribute to 'Oriana', better known as Queen Elizabeth I, very common in compositions of the time. **April is in my Mistress' face** is less traditional, a musical version of the saying 'beauty is only skin-deep'. **Mother, I will have a husband** has great words - listen out for 'John a Dun should have had me long ere this - he said I had good lips to kiss' and 'to the town therefore will I gad, to get me a husband good or bad'. I know how she feels.

The Silver Swan, our title piece, is perhaps the best known of all madrigals. It is an exquisite lament on the death of the beautiful swan, which remarks that with the swan dies wisdom, leaving more fools in the world than wise.

Thule and The Andalusian Merchant are not typical