



**tamesis
chamber choir**

**musical director:
Louise Rapple Moore
pianist:
Hayley Tull**

**Sweet
Music**

**Saturday 21st March 2026
Christ Church
Henley-on-Thames
7:00pm**

www.tamesischamberchoir.com





Tamesis Chamber Choir

Sopranos

Vicky Elmore
Clare Garner
Louise Hill
Suzanne Hinch
Tanya Houghton
Julie Kench
Joanna Loxton
Anne Owen
Miranda Phillips

Altos

Anna Hodgkinson
Charlie Hobson
Alison James
Emily Reed

Tenors

Tim Beavan
Nick Brown
Alastair Cawdron
Laurence Hicks
Jude Watts

Basses

James Allen
Andy Button
John Cobb
Oliver Hames
Harry Jackson
Patrick Moore
David Webb

Tamesis Chamber Choir was founded in 2003. The choir of around 28 singers has carved a niche in the Berkshire area: members are auditioned each year to maintain the highest standards, and we sing high-quality music with only a few rehearsals for each concert. It's also important to us that we have a lively social aspect!

Tamesis is the Latin name for the River Thames, reflecting our links to Reading and the surrounding area. We regularly perform to raise funds for local and national charities including Macmillan, Sue Ryder, Water Aid, ABF The Soldiers' Charity and Rotary International. The choir has featured several times on local radio and on BBC Radio 3.

Tamesis has been styled 'one of Berkshire's best ensembles' in local press. Our repertoire ranges from sacred to popular music, spanning the centuries from the renaissance period to the present day. Our three CDs, *Spirituals*, *Remembrance* and *Christmas*, will be on sale this evening.

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 lourap@gmail.com.

Programme

If music be the food of love Henry Purcell

Dormiva dolcemente Giovanni Gabrieli

Three sweet madrigals:

Sweet Suffolk owl Thomas Vautor

Adieu sweet Amaryllis John Wilbye

Come away, sweet love Thomas Greaves

There is sweet music Edward Elgar

INTERLUDE:

Sweet chance that led my steps abroad

Michael Head

Baritone: David Webb

Fragments from his dish Bob Chilcott

1. Grace - The clean platter (*cheek pop: Nick Brown*)

2. The pie

3. Harvest in my croft

4. Christmas Day, 1666

5. Whines from the wood - Grace

INTERVAL

If music be the food of love David Dickau

How sweet the sound Trad. arr. Philip Lawson

How sweet the moonlight Emily Crocker

Pure imagination Leslie Bricusse & Anthony
Newley, arr. Matthew D Nielsen

Swing low, sweet chariot
arr. Andrew Pryce Jackman
Bass: James Allen

INTERLUDE:

Taylor the latte boy Marcy Heisler & Zina Goldrich

Soprano: Julie Kench

Sweeney Todd: A choral medley
Stephen Sondheim, arr. Andy Beck
*Soprano: Julie Kench, Alto: Anna Hodgkinson,
Tenor: Tim Beavan, Bass: John Cobb*

Rhythm of life Cy Coleman, arr. Richard Barnes

Notes on the programme

Welcome and bon appetit!

Welcome to *Sweet Music*, Tamesis Chamber Choir's first ever pudding concert! This evening, our menu offers both a banquet of choral music and a feast of homemade desserts in the interval. We hope the first half's music will sharpen your appetite for the sweet treats, and that the gastronomic interlude will send everyone back into the second half replete and ready for post-prandial entertainment!

Every item in tonight's programme is about (or at least hints at) something sweet, edible or indulgent - from sweet owls and sweet love to chocolate factories, giant pies, mince pies and some of the most infamous pies in musical theatre.

Our *Sweet Music* invites you to think about food and sweetness in all their guises - physical nourishment, emotional comfort, poetic imagery and musical metaphor. Our programme spans many eras and styles, always with a playful eye on puddings, pies and all things delicious.

Tonight's special:
Bob Chilcott's 'Fragments from His Dish'

Tamesis has loved, performed and recorded many works by Bob Chilcott (b. 1955). This choral cycle is a little different from most of his oeuvre and has proved unexpectedly challenging!

Fragments from His Dish is a witty and affectionate exploration of humanity's love affair with food. It sets some wonderfully chosen texts from diverse sources - do listen out for the words if you can! Chilcott blends these with harmonic and rhythmic flair to create a tasting menu of musical styles, celebrating food not just as fuel, but as generosity, community and joy.

The *Grace* forms an aperitif and digestif to the piece - a reverent setting of words by Robert Herrick (1591-1634), the 17th-century poet-priest with a fondness for writing about food and feast days. This leads directly into a setting of American humourist Ogden Nash's poem *The Clean Platter*, a gleeful hymn to eating anything and everything, where the poet cheerfully declares a preference for food over more traditional poetic subjects. Chilcott responds with jazz-tinged harmonies and swung rhythms that mirror Nash's playful, overflowing lines.

The second movement takes its cue from a breathtaking newspaper description of an enormous eighteenth-century meat pie, piling up rhythmic repetitions and chugging accompaniments to suggest the sheer scale and weight of the dish. *Harvest in my croft* is the third movement, taking lines from William Langland's medieval poem *Piers Plowman*. A hard-pressed farming community works and worries its way towards harvest, hoping there will be enough produce to feed families. Chilcott's setting feels like a robust folk carol, exhorting the barn to be full this year.

Christmas Day 1666 uses words from Samuel Pepys's diary, written in 1660s London, to describe Christmas dinner, including mince pies. In Pepys' writings, food and drink are constant companions to work, politics and personal drama and he often turns to a good meal to soften anxieties and cement friendships. Chilcott captures this attitude with gently affectionate warmth.

The final movement, *Whines from the Wood*, is a tipsy toast after the plates have been cleared. The title itself is a pun, suggesting both the "whines" of over-indulgence and the wines maturing in wooden barrels. Chilcott's music sighs, swirls and gently sways into halting incoherence, before returning to the opening *Grace* to finish the meal and thank God for his beneficence.

Sweet English madrigals

This trio embeds sweetness in both sound and sentiment. Thomas Vautour (1590-1625)'s *Sweet Suffolk Owl* is a Jacobean miniature, written for four voices and first published in 1619; its text lovingly describes a solitary owl, "trimly dight" in fine feathers, whose haunting night-time call seems to sing a "dirge for dying souls". In *Adieu sweet Amaryllis*, John Wilbye (1574-1638) takes us into the bittersweet world of pastoral love. Smooth, expressive lines and sighing suspensions show why Wilbye is regarded as one of the finest English madrigalists of his generation. In *Come away, sweet love* by Thomas Greaves (dates unknown, but thought to have been active around 1604), the mood turns more playful, inviting the beloved to leave off "sad lamenting" and join the nymphs at their carefree games.

Together, these songs epitomise English madrigal tradition around 1600: they're text-driven, vivid in word-painting and delight in the contrast between sweet surface and more complicated emotions underneath.

Cultural and literary flavours

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)'s *If music be the food of love* sets words inspired by the opening line of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, in which the love-sick Orsino famously cries "If music be the food of love, play on". Purcell's song was probably composed in the 1690s and survives in several versions; in all of them he uses expressive melody and harmonic twists to depict love's sweetness, pleasure and occasional pain, like a dish that is both delicious and a little too rich.

Giovanni Gabrieli (c.1556-1612) brings Italianate flavour to our feast with *Dormiva dolcemente*. Gabrieli is best known for his grand sacred works for St Mark's in Venice, written for multiple choirs and instruments, but this is a secular madrigal for double choir, revelling in intertwining lines and echo effects. Gabrieli uses gently rocking phrases and overlapping entries to create a sense of tender, drowsy contentment in which "Clori slept sweetly, as love cherubs flew merrily around her pretty face".

Sir Edward Elgar (1857-1934)'s part-song *There is sweet music* was written in the early twentieth century as the first of his Op. 53 part-songs. It sets Alfred Lord Tennyson's text "There is sweet music here that softer falls than petals from blown roses on the grass" and is famous for its daring harmonic experiment: the upper voices sing in one key while the lower voices sing in another, creating an almost perfumed haze of sound. This is musical sweetness at its most refined - less sticky toffee pudding and more an elegant dessert with a sublime blend of contrasting ingredients!

American composer David Dickau (1953-2018), gives Purcell's classic recipe a contemporary twist, setting the same famous words in a lush, contemporary choral language rather different from Purcell's Baroque elegance. Dickau elongates key phrases and uses suspensions and climaxes to underline the emotional intensity of love expressed through music.

Shakespearean imagination also lies behind *How sweet the moonlight*, which draws its text from Lorenzo's speech in *The Merchant of Venice*: "How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank". Emily Crocker (b. 1949) is an American composer and choral educator known for accessible works that bring classic texts to life for modern choirs; here she wraps Shakespeare's lines in luminous harmonies that seem to paint moonlight on water.

Spiritual succour

How sweet the sound takes as its starting point the opening line of John Newton's 18th century hymn, *Amazing Grace*, written in the eighteenth century and later set to the now-familiar folk tune. In former King's Singer Philip Lawson (b. 1957)'s arrangement the harmonies unfold gently and richly, allowing the famous line "how sweet the sound" to glow.

Swing low, sweet chariot is one of the best-known African-American spirituals, shaped in the mid-nineteenth century among communities of enslaved people in the American South. Its slow, rocking melody and simple refrain speak of longing for release and a homecoming "over Jordan", imagery that held both spiritual meaning and, for some, coded hope of escape via the Underground Railroad. In this context "sweet" is less about sugar and more about consolation.

Showstoppers from the stage to the table

In the world of stage and screen, our themes of food and sweetness become more literal. In *Pure imagination*, from the 1971 film *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*, Gene Wilder's Willy Wonka invites the children to explore his fantastical chocolate room. The song was written specially for the film by British songwriters Leslie Bricusse (1931-2021) and Anthony Newley (1931-1999). Its gently unfolding melody and reassuring text - "If you want to view paradise, simply look around and view it" - make it an irresistible musical soufflé, light on the surface but full of emotional warmth.

Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* flavours the pies in a rather darker way! Our medley draws on songs by Stephen Sondheim (1930-2021) in the 1979 musical *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. The medley includes numbers such as *The Ballad of Sweeney Todd*, *The Worst Pies in London* and *By the Sea*, charting the grisly partnership between the vengeful barber and the pie-maker Mrs Lovett. Hal Leonard's choral edition describes it as a "razor-sharp recipe for revenge": the show balances macabre humour, genuine pathos and tightly constructed musical motifs, all stirred together with ghoulish efficiency.

If *Pure imagination* is the evening's golden-ticket dessert, *Rhythm of life* is the musical espresso shot. Written by Cy Coleman (1929-2004) with lyrics by Dorothy Fields (1904-1974) for the 1966 Broadway musical *Sweet Charity*, the number appears as a spoof gospel-style anthem sung by the followers of the "Rhythm of Life Church". In the stage show and the later film version, where it is delivered in high-octane style by Sammy Davis Jr., the song affectionately satirises feel-good cults and fads. It fizzes on the tongue with syncopation, rapid-fire lyrics and infectious energy.

CAH, March 2026

GRATEFUL THANKS

Thank you to Julie, Chloe and everyone here at Christ Church for their welcome and their help.

Thanks also to the wonderful Hayley Tull for playing for us this evening.

This evening's drinks are brought to you by the bass section, and the amazing spread of puddings is courtesy of everyone in the choir!



Dates for your diaries

Visit www.tamesischamberchoir.com
for latest news and tickets

Saturday 20th June 2026
Douai Abbey, Woolhampton

Gloria!

Vivaldi's Gloria and Chilcott's Gloria,
plus other joyful music

We always enjoy performing at the beautiful Douai Abbey, the perfect venue for a summer's evening! Come and join us for a programme of uplifting and heart-warming music.

Sunday 8th November 2026, 5pm
Venue to be announced

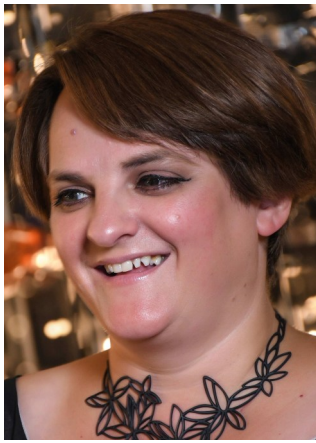
Brahms: A German Requiem

Join us to mark Remembrance Sunday with this sublime requiem, accompanied by piano duet.

Sunday 6th December 2026, 4pm
Venue to be announced

Christmas Concert

Our Christmas concert last year was such a success that we have decided to repeat the format once again. Keep an eye on our website for details of venue and programme nearer the time. Is it too early to be looking forward to mulled wine and mince pies?



Louise Rapple Moore studied conducting at the Conservatoire de Pau in southern France whilst at university and began her conducting career by directing the Reading University Singers. She spent several years in Church music as an organist and choir director and founded Tamesis in 2003. She also directs Tamesis Cathedral Singers, an occasional choir that sings Cathedral Evensongs each year.

Louise is founder and director of Shiplake and Hagbourne Community Choirs, both choirs for singers of all ages and abilities singing a mainly popular repertoire. In October 2013 she was delighted to be recognised for both her work as a Choral Director and her charitable fund-raising efforts by being named Creative Woman of the Year in Sue Ryder's annual 'Women of Achievement' awards at the Madejski Stadium in Reading. In 2017 she gained her LRSM in Choral Conducting via the Advanced Conducting Course with the Association of British Choral Directors.



Hayley Tull previously worked at Berkshire Music Trust as a piano and flute teacher and accompanied exams, masterclasses with Wissam Boustany and Chi-Chi Nwanoku, auditions and competition entries. This latter included the opportunity to play for an entrant into the BBC Young Musician of the Year through to the Woodwind Final in 2020. She has also enjoyed accompanying at the Oxford Flute Summer School in recent years. Hayley currently enjoys all forms of accompaniment at The Abbey Junior and Senior Schools, as well as playing for the Reading Male Voice Choir, New Maidenhead Choir, a Suzuki Violin Group and as Principal Flute at Slough Philharmonic in her spare time.