

Extract from the programme notes for the first Cantemus concert:

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) wrote his *'Five Flower Songs'* in 1950 for the silver wedding of Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst, the owners of Dartington Hall where the English Opera Group had planned to produce *'Albert Herring'*. In the end the Elmhirsts became backers rather than hosts. Britten, explaining his present, wrote 'they were written about flowers because they were both amateur botanists.' Edward Elgar (1857-1934) composed **'My Love dwelt in a Northern Land'** in 1890, the year he was commissioned by the Worcester Festival to provide the overture *Froissart*, a landmark success of his early years. The piece shows off his ability to create a sense of structural magnitude with even the most modest material. C. V. Stanford (1852-1924), although perhaps best known as an influential teacher for more than forty years at the Royal College of Music, was a successful composer of both religious and secular music throughout his life. He was notable for making the effort to collaborate with the poets whose words he set. We do not know if this is the case with **'The Bluebird'** but it is justly famous, a masterpiece created from a mere fragment of verse. The cycle of Robert Bridge's works set by Gerald Finzi (1901-56) numbers seven in all of which **'My Spirit sang all day'** is the third. It was published in 1937 and is an example of the declamatory style often found in his church music.

Robert Ascott studied choral conducting under James Gaddarn. As a businessman he lived overseas for long periods, and has held organist and choirmaster posts in several cities of the world, including London, Cologne and New York. He is the treasurer of the Herbert Howells Society, and lists Bach and Britten among his other favourite composers. In addition to his work on the chamber choir repertoire he has conducted operas and musicals. He conducted the inaugural concert of Cantemus in 2000 and, on average, one of their concerts in every year since then.

Ian Westley studied music at Reading University, specialising in piano and organ. He has a large teaching and choral workshop practice in the Reading area, and accompanies the Reading Haydn Choir, the South Chiltern Choral Society and various recitalists. Ian is a singer, and choirmaster at St Peter's, Caversham; he conducts the *Vivace Voices* upper-voice choir of Newbury College, and directs his own chamber choir *Erleigh Cantors*.

Sam Chapman is 16 years old, and began to learn the cornet at the age of 6, achieving Grade 8 at the age of 14. He has been playing in the Wantage Silver Band for 10 years and has won various competitions including 'Best Instrumentalist' at Royal Leamington Spa.

Jeremy Salter is also 16, and attends Magdalen College School in Oxford. He has been playing the oboe for five years, currently studying with Susan McLatchie having been previously taught by Jon Cox. He has played in the Wantage Orchestra for 18 months.

Cantemus presented its first concert on 19 March 2000 in St Mary's Church, Shaw-cum-Donnington, near Newbury; just as today it was conducted then by Robert Ascott and accompanied by Ian Westley. Four of its founder-members are still with us tonight. The choir continues in its aim of performing a wide variety of sacred and secular music, both accompanied and unaccompanied, ranging from the Renaissance to the present day. The Choir undertakes four performances a year primarily in the West Berkshire area.

Sopranos: Deborah Cox, Sheenagh Dernie*, Leanne Cox, Claire Hamilton, Sarah Holland, Joyce Refausse

Altos: Dinny Barker, Valerie Cooper, Alison Jestico, Bridget Procter, Heather Sims*

Tenors: Pelham Olive, David Wilcox

* *founder-members*

Basses: Mike Ananin, Andrew Blake*, Stephen Blinman, Ian Haslam*

**Wantage
Parish Church**

CANTEMUS
NEWBURY

*10th Anniversary
Concert*

Director: Robert Ascott

with

Ian Westley – Organ and Piano

Sam Chapman – Cornet

Jeremy Salter – Oboe

Saturday 20th March 2010 at 7.30pm

www.cantemus-newbury.org.uk

Applause is welcomed in the Church but the audience is invited to show such appreciation just at the end of each section

Jubilate Deo Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)
Psalm 100

Te Deum Herbert Howells (1892-1983)
The 'Collegium Regale' setting

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*Solo:* Sam Chapman, Cornet (Ian Westley accompanying)  
Fleur de Lis (*valse lente*) J. A. Greenwood  
The Watermill Ronald Binge  
Ballet Suite Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky arr. P. Archibald

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Wie lieblich sind Deine Wohnungen Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
Psalm 84; 4th movement from the 'German Requiem'

Gott ist mein Hirt Franz Schubert (1797-1828)
Psalm 23

Wie der Hirsch Schreit Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
Words from Psalm 42

Interval

Polovtsian Dances Alexander Borodin (1833-1887)
From 'Prince Igor'

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*Solo:* Jeremy Salter, Oboe (Ian Westley accompanying)  
Six Metamorphoses after Ovid, no 1 ('Pan') Benjamin Britten  
Sonata (op 166), 2nd movement Camille Saint-Saëns  
Concerto in D min (op 9 no 2), 2nd movement Tomaso Albinoni  
Gabriel's Oboe Enrico Morricone

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The Evening Primrose Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)
Words by John Clare; from 'Five Flower Songs'

My Love dwelt in a Northern Land Edward Elgar (1857-1934)
Words by Andrew Lang

The Bluebird Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)
Words by Mary Coleridge

My Spirit sang all day Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)
Words by Robert Bridges

Benjamin Britten composed '**Jubilate Deo**' in 1961 to be a companion piece or addendum to one of his earliest choral compositions, the *Te Deum* from 1934. It was composed at the request of the Duke of Edinburgh and premiered in St. George's Chapel, Windsor.

Herbert Howells collated his *Collegium Regale* settings over several years in honour of King's College, Cambridge; the '**Te Deum**' being the first of the series in 1944. He was inspired by his love for the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, his awe at the architecture of cathedrals and college chapels... and by a challenge from the Dean of King's.

Johannes Brahms's mother died in February 1865, a loss that may have inspired his *German Requiem* – yet the work is a meditation on life rather than a mourning of death. The fourth movement quotes Psalm 84: '*How lovely are thy dwelling places, O Lord of hosts! My soul desires and longs for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will always praise thee.*'

Franz Schubert's arrangement of Moses Mendelssohn's '**Gott ist mein Hirt**' ('*The Lord is my Shepherd...*') was composed in 1820 for a soirée given by four sisters, Anna, Barbara, Katharina and Josephine Fröhlich, for the benefit of the pupils of the Vienna Conservatory - where it was subsequently used as an examination piece.

Felix Mendelssohn – grandson of the above Moses - is reported to have acclaimed '**Wieder der Hirsch**' as his best sacred piece. It quotes just the first verse of Psalm 42: '*Like as the hart desires the water-brooks, so longs my soul after thee, O God.*'

The **Polovtsian Dances** are extracted from Act II of Alexander Borodin's opera *Prince Igor* (1890). Borodin spent 18 years on and off composing the work, leaving it incomplete upon his sudden death; it was finished by Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov. The plot is an adaptation of the East Slavic epic '*The Lay of Igor's Host*', which recounts the campaign of Russian prince Igor Svyatoslavich against the invading Polovtsian tribes in 1185. Igor has been captured and held prisoner in the Polovtsian camp, and while he wrestles with his conscience over the dishonour of trying to escape, his captor Khan Konchak insists he is an honoured guest because he did not ask for mercy. Khan summons the Polovtsian slaves to entertain Igor, and offers him the choice of any girl among them. However, in Act III, Igor is finally persuaded to escape and returns home to gather another army to prevent the Polovtsians overthrowing the whole of Russia.

Fly away on the wings of the wind to our native land, O you, our native song; to that place where we sang to you so freely; where things were so carefree for you and me.

There under the sultry sky the air is full of bliss. There under the murmur of the sea, the hills slumber under the clouds. There the sun shines so brightly, our native hills are flooded with light; in the valleys splendid roses bloom, nightingales sing loud in moonlit forests and dusky glades, and purple grapes hang ripe and sweet.

Sing songs of praise to the Khan! Sing! Praise the courage of the Khan! Praise! Glorious Khan! He is our glorious Khan! With a blaze of glory equal to the sun is our Khan. There is no-one equal in glory to the Khan.

Do you see these fair maidens from distant shores? Do you see these slave-girls from beyond the Caspian Sea? Tell me, O Prince, which one you favour and she shall be yours for the choosing.

Equal to the glory of our forefathers is our Khan, Khan Konchak; Glorious Khan Konchak!