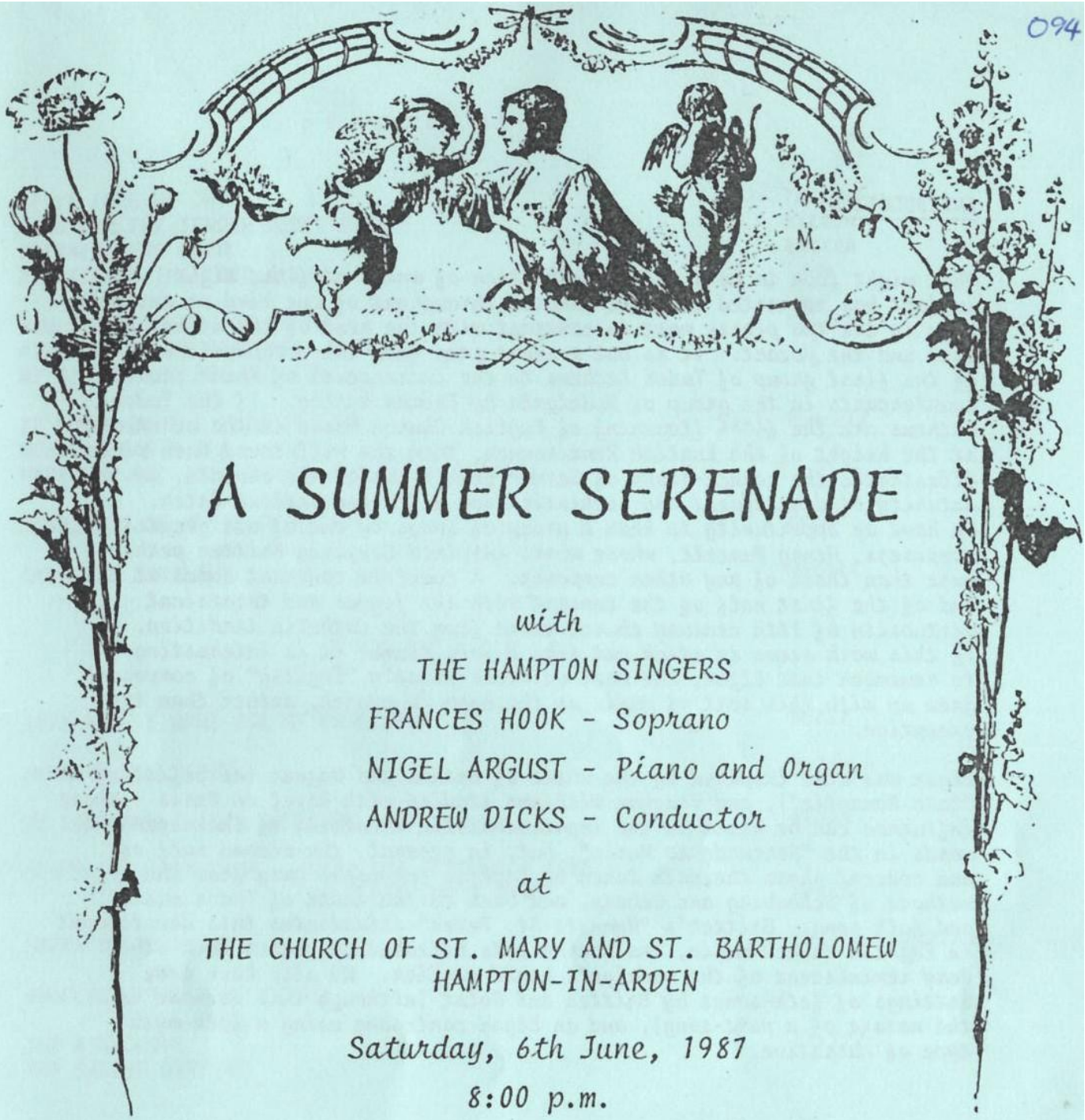
094



A SUMMER SERENADE

with

THE HAMPTON SINGERS

FRANCES HOOK - *Soprano*

NIGEL ARGUST - *Piano and Organ*

ANDREW DICKS - *Conductor*

at

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY AND ST. BARTHOLOMEW
HAMPTON-IN-ARDEN

Saturday, 6th June, 1987

8:00 p.m.



Ticket/Programme: £2.00
(incl. refreshments)

INTRODUCTION

What might look to be a motley collection of works at first sight in fact has connected thematic threads throughout of one kind or another, even in the two pieces most in contrast with the rest of the items, the Bach and the Mozart. It is but a short step from the polyphonic sonorities of the first group of Tudor Anthems to the intricacies of their secular counterparts in the group of Madrigals by Thomas Morley. If the Tudor Anthems are the first flowering of English Church Music in the vernacular at the height of the English Renaissance, then the well-loved Bach piece illustrates the corner-stone of German church music, the chorale, at maturity of development and sophistication a few generations later. We have an opportunity to hear a group of songs by one of our greatest composers, Henry Purcell, whose works inspired Benjamin Britten perhaps more than those of any other composer. A complete contrast comes at the end of the first half of the concert with the joyous and theatrical virtuosity of 18th century church music from the Catholic tradition. If this work seems to stick out like a sore thumb, it is interesting to remember that Elgar, the most quintessentially "English" of composers, grew up with this sort of music as the norm in church, rather than the exception.

Elgar was also inspired by the music of Brahms and Wagner (as befitting a "late Romantic"), and Vaughan Williams studied with Ravel in Paris - whose influence can be heard in the impressionistic treatment of Shakespeare's words in the "Serenade to Music", but, in general, the second half of our concert shows the path taken by English composers away from the methods of Schonberg and Webern, and back to the roots of Tudor music and folk song. Britten's "Hymn to St. Peter" illustrates this development in English church music, and Moeran sets Elizabethan verses in a style very reminiscent of the madrigals heard earlier. We also have some settings of folk-songs by Britten and Holst (although this is more in the nature of a part-song), and an Elgar part-song using a folk-myth type of narrative.

PROGRAMME

IF YE LOVE ME	Tallis
LORD FOR THY TENDER MERCY'S SAKE	Hilton
O PRAISE THE LORD	Batten
REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAY	Anon
NOW IS THE MONTH OF MAYING	Morley
APRIL IS IN MY MISTRESS' FACE	"
MY BONNY LASS SHE SMILETH	"
IF MUSIC BE THE FOOD OF LOVE	Purcell
MUSIC FOR A WHILE	"
HARK HOW ALL THINGS WITH ONE SOUND REJOICE	"
JESU, JOY OF MAN'S DESIRING	Bach
EXULTATE JUBILATE	Mozart

INTERVAL

THIS HAVE I DONE FOR MY TRUE LOVE	Holst
HYMN TO ST. PETER	Britten
MY LOVE DWELT IN A NORTHERN LAND	Elgar
SONGS OF SPRINGTIME: UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE THE RIVER GOD'S SONG	Moeran
SERENADE TO MUSIC	Vaughan Williams
UNACCOMPANIED FOLK SONGS	
THE ASH GROVE	Britten
THE SALLEY GARDENS	"

Applause between groups or items will be very welcome!

During the interval, coffee and biscuits will be served at the West End of the Church.

IF YE LOVE ME - Thomas TALLIS (1505? - 1585)
LORD FOR THY TENDER MERCY'S SAKE - John HILTON (1560 - 1608)
O PRAISE THE LORD - Adrian BATTEN (1585? - 1637)
REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAY - Anon

Of this group of four anthems, the third, by Adrian Batten, represents a last faint bloom from the great Tudor period, the worthy and sincere offering from a workaday organist (at St. Paul's Cathedral) when the conventions were no longer fresh or novel. A feature of this particular anthem is that is is composed in unequal bar lengths: it all hangs together quite nicely, however!

In contrast, the other three anthems were all written by composers coming to grips with creating a new style in what amounted to a new language. As soon as Edward VI ascended the throne, Protestant reform proceeded in leaps and bounds. Cranmer prepared a liturgy entirely in English, and within two years, the Act of Uniformity commended its use in the first "Booke of the Common Prayer".

The earliest anthem is probably "If Ye Love Me", which is believed to have been written by Tallis before the first Prayer Book. Tallis was one of the first great composers of English church music, and here we have an example which is very quick off the mark indeed.

"Lord For Thy Tender Mercy's Sake" may be contemporaneous - or it may not! It is ascribed equally to John Hilton the Elder or Richard Farrant, who came a generation after. Musicologists plump for Hilton on a balance of probabilities, but Farrant seems to have been the livelier character - he was chiefly known from his involvement in the theatre as the boys who sung so sweetly in the cathedral under his direction also played the women's parts in the theatre under his agency - unusual cross-fertilisation of talent.

Very little is known about the popular "Rejoice in the Lord Alway", except that the lie of the words seems to indicate that they were taken straight from the first Prayer Book, and therefore that this post-dates the Tallis anthem.

NOW IS THE MONTH OF MAYING
APRIL IS IN MY MISTRESS' FACE
MY BONNY LASS SHE SMILETH - Thomas MORLEY (1557 - 1603?)

Morley was one of the leading figures of the English Madrigal School, and was the first to apply the term to the setting of English words. It comes from the Italian "madrigale" which might be defined as a part-song, written in imitative counterpoint (often of considerable intricacy) in which all parts have equal weight. Just as madrigals began to fall out of fashion in Italy, they came into their own in England, and while Morley modelled his music on Italian patterns, he became one of the most characteristically "English" of madrigalists. "Now is the Month" and "My Bonny Lass" are "ballets" (from "balletto") which, as the name implies, were intended for dancing, with their strong rhythms, repeating music, and "fa la la" refrain. "April is in my Mistress' Face" is a more sombre variant of the "cruel mistress" poetic convention.

Most of Morley biography is uncertain, but he was a colourful and articulate person. There is reason to believe that he was at one time involved with a subversive Catholic organisation, later turning informer against his former colleagues, but the evidence is not conclusive. He was almost certainly acquainted with Shakespeare: they lived in the same Parish in London, and may have been closer friends.

IF MUSIC BE THE FOOD OF LOVE
MUSIC FOR A WHILE
HARK HOW ALL THINGS WITH ONE SOUND REJOICE - Henry PURCELL (1658/9 - 1695)

Apart from "Dido and Aeneas", perhaps his most famous work, Purcell wrote six semi-operas, and music for some forty-odd plays. Despite the poor quality of the libretti, he showed quite exceptional genius in illustrating verbal imagery. He seemed most happy when dealing with expressive poetic or emotional matters. His music calls for a good technique, or its elaborate detail can seem contrived or trivial. He usually used both major and minor tonalities in moments of great emotion, and seemed to prefer the minor mode even for some of his liveliest tunes. There is always a sense of forward momentum, in part due to his incomparable and inexorable bass lines, which show an astonishing freedom and variety. He also had a remarkable appreciation of natural speech rhythms, and was able to combine it with correct musical stresses, involving the shifts of accent so common in English poetry.

Of the three songs performed tonight, "Hark How All Things with One Sound Rejoice" comes from the "The Faery Queen", while "Music for a While" from "Oedipus" is an example of Purcell's earliest theatre music (1679). All three songs are frequently recorded in anthologies of Purcell's best secular works.

JESU, JOY OF MAN'S DESIRING - Johann Sebastian BACH (1685 - 1750)

This is probably best-known in the version for piano, so much identified with Dame Myra Hess, but in fact, it comes from Church Cantata No. 147. It was Sir Hugh Allen in Oxford who first saw the possibilities of this movement as an anthem on its own, and it was he who pursuaded his friend and neighbour, Robert Bridges, the Poet Laureate, to write the words to which it is always sung today.

EXULTATE JUBILATE - Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756 - 1791)

This exuberant and much-loved motet is probably the best piece of music to come out of Mozart's not otherwise very successful trips to Italy. One of the things that cheered him was the singing of the famous male soprano, Venanzio Rauzzini, in his last opera for Italy. Rauzzini was celebrated for his charm, his technical assurance and excellent musicianship, and the sweetness and purity of his voice. So Mozart wrote this motet for him, which was performed at the Theatine Church in Milan, on 17th January, 1773.

It is in three movements: a lively Allegro section is followed, after a radiantly fresh little recitative, by an exquisitely gentle Andante, which moves straight into the brilliant final "Alleluja".

INTERVAL

THIS HAVE I DONE FOR MY TRUE LOVE - Gustav HOLST (1874 - 1934)

Holst was very enthusiastic about amateur music-making: he started to conduct choirs at the age of 17, and later organised an informal festival for amateur choirs and orchestras at Thaxted in Essex, near his home. His friendship with Vaughan Williams inspired a strong interest in English folk music which transformed his way of setting words to music. He wrote this song for the Thaxted Choir in 1916, and considered it to be his best part-song; years later, and fittingly, it was chosen to be played at his funeral.

It is an elaboration of an old Cornish carol; carols were originally dances, and this demonstrates it provenance by allegorising faith in terms of joining in a dance with God (c.f. "Lord of the Dance" - the modern words to an old Shaker tune which draw upon the same analogy). Furthermore, a startling and unconventional device enables the meaning of the poem to strike home in a direct and powerful way: Christ speaks to us in the first person in terms of a love song. Usually for a carol, the Birth is celebrated only in the first stanza. Each of the following verses give a sharp account of the salient events of His life, reaching a dramatic peak when He is brought before Pontius Pilate, and then drawing back a little for the account of the Resurrection in order to reach a triumphant and radiant conclusion in the Ascension verse.

HYMN TO ST. PETER - Benjamin BRITTEN (1913 - 1976)

While Vaughan Williams and Holst found their stimulus in folk song and Tudor Church Music, Britten found his inspiration in the music of Henry Purcell because of Purcell's original treatment of harmony and part-leading: it was this freedom within tonal writing that Britten rediscovered and developed. Therefore, by exploring the bounds of originality within conventional musical limits, his music has remained in touch with Everyman.

Britten wrote in the preface to his opera, "Peter Grimes":-

> "One of my chief aims is to try and restore to the musical settings of the English language a brilliance, freedom and vitality that have been curiously rare since the death of Purcell."

Britten's sacred music is amongst his finest achievements: his imagination is often at its most brilliant, and his word-setting at its most sensitive.

MY LOVE DWELT IN A NORTHERN LAND - Edward Elgar (1857 - 1934)

The term "part-song" has come to have a particular meaning over the last 100 years, to denote "choral compositions in which the main melodic interest is in the highest vocal line, and other voices supply a strong harmonic basis". Thus, they differ from, for example, madrigals, in which all the voices have equal melodic importance.

During the Industrial Revolution, large choirs established themselves to sing Handel and Mendelssohn. Then smaller groups developed, and it was for these that the publishers exploited the part-song. Rivalries developed between the choirs, so the next step was the foundation of competitive festivals. The part-song became "big business", and the standard of composition rose accordingly.

Elgar was an amateur conductor of choral societies in the Worcester area, so it was natural that he should try to write some songs. "My Love Dwelt", set to verses by Andrew Lang, has the distinction of being the first Elgar work to be accepted for publication by Novello's in 1890. Many years later, his publisher was to write: "I don't want any more Elgar symphonies or concertos, but am ready to take as many part-songs as he can produce, even at extortionate rates"!

SERENADE TO MUSIC - Ralph VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872 - 1958)

This was composed for Sir Henry Wood's Golden Jubilee concert at the Royal Albert Hall, on 5th October, 1938, and dedicated to him "in grateful recognition of his services to music". It contained 16 solo parts for 16 famous British singers who had been associated with him, whose names conjure up waves of nostalgia for those with long memories or an interest in such things: Isobel Baillie, Stiles Allen, Elsie Suddaby, Eva Turner, Margaret Balfour, Muriel Brunskill, Astra Desmond, Mary Jarred, Parry Jones, Heddle Nash, Frank Titterton, Walter Widdop, Norman Allin, Robert Easton, Roy Henderson, and Harold Williams. Each new recording of this work inspires comparison with the original singers - and often the complaint that "we do not sing today as well as our grandfathers did" - a view which has been current for many centuries!

The music is set to words from the scene in Portia's garden in the last act of "The Merchant of Venice", and is in Vaughan Williams's most lyrical and impressionistic mood. The orchestral introduction sets the nocturnal mood, and thereafter, words and music speak for themselves.

SONGS OF SPRINGTIME - UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE
THE RIVER GOD'S SONG Ernest John MOERAN (1894 - 1950)

"Colourful", "jolly", "fresh and spontaneous", "directness of utterance and disarming sincerity" are some of the phrases inspired by a group of recordings under the baton of Sir Adrian Boult, for whom Moeran seems to have drawn out exceptional reserves of warmth, sympathy and expressiveness. His widow has recorded a deeply-felt performance of his Cello Concerto, and his Symphony in G Minor is considered to be in the finest traditions of English symphonic writing, along with Vaughan Williams and Walton, with whom he has affinities.

The "Songs of Springtime" are a set of seven songs for mixed choir, set to Elizabethan verses, and were published in 1933. "Under the Greenwood Tree" is set to verses by Shakespeare which point out that the pleasures of life in nature are threatened only by "winter and rough weather", while "The River God's Song" is a mock-solemn variant of the "come live with me and be my love" tradition.

UNACCOMPANIED FOLK SONGS

FOLK SONGS - THE ASH GROVE
SALLEY GARDENS - Benjamin BRITTEN (1913 - 1976)

Folk-songs are not without their critics, but Constant Lambert's witty dismissal - that there is nothing you can do with a folk-tune once you have played it, except to play it again, louder - is only a half-truth. Vaughan Williams took the opposite view - that the very essence of a good folk-tune was that it did not show its full quality until it had been repeated several times.

Folk songs probably speak most directly and affectingly to an audience if sung unaccompanied, as we have an opportunity to hear tonight.

If translated into an "art song" by the addition of accompaniment, then it would seem to follow that the essence of a good setting of folk-tune would lie in the skill, cunning and variety in that accompaniment: hence the continued popularity of Britten's five volumes of folk-songs which span almost twenty years.

THE HAMPTON SINGERS

SOPRANOS	ALTOS	TENORS	BASSES
Thelma Borley	Betty Blennerhasset	Richard Cook	Christopher Docker
Vicky Cardwell	Bessie Earnshaw	Lucas Davison	Paul Ellender
Christine Cook	Sally-Anne Ellender	Kit Edwards	Malcolm Owen
Hilary Crosby	Lesley Eno	Michael Gough	Alan Smyth
Judith Docker	Frances Gray	Ted Howarth	George Thorpe
Sandra Heard	Shelagh Paton		Tony Worthington
Cheryl Manton	Anthea Purchase		
Betty Rackham			
Ursula Smyth			
Sarah Steele			
Sandy Wasse			

DIRECTOR: Andrew Dicks

OUR NEXT CONCERT will be a "Victorian Evening" of ballads and glees, songs and snatches, at the Fentham Hall, Hampton-in-Arden, on Saturday, 5th December.

We would welcome new members to sing with us! We rehearse on Monday evenings at 8:00 at the Manor Hall in Hampton.

Please come along! Ring Andrew Dicks on 01 - 742 - 6798

or Anthea Purchase on Hampton-in-Arden 2309