



THE KING'S SINGERS

'.. the superlative vocal sextet ..' BBC Music Magazine

David Hurley, COUNTERTENOR

Timothy Wayne-Wright, COUNTERTENOR

Paul Phoenix, TENOR

Christopher Bruerton, BARITONE

Christopher Gabbitas, BARITONE

Jonathan Howard, BASS

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 12, 2014



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About the Artists



One of the world's most celebrated ensembles, **The King's Singers** have a packed schedule of concerts, recordings, media and education work that spans the globe. Championing the work of both young and established composers, they are instantly recognisable for their spot-on intonation, impeccable vocal blend, flawless articulation of the text and incisive timing. They are also consummate entertainers: a class act with a delightfully British wit.

During the 2013-2014 concert season, The King's Singers will perform across the globe in some of the world's most famous venues. Their concert schedule will take them to the United States, Canada, Russia, China, South Korea, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, France, Italy, Sweden, Spain, The Netherlands, Belgium, Latvia, Hungary and Poland.

With a discography of over 150 recordings, the group's contribution to classical recording was recognized when they were selected to join the Gramophone Hall of Fame in June 2013, marking their influence and inspiration across the years. A new collaborative project sees the group work with oboist Albrecht Mayer for a disc of works on the theme of winter, to be released on Deutsche Grammophon.

Deeply committed to new choral music, they have commissioned over 200 works from prominent contemporary composers and choral luminaries, including Whitacre, Richard Rodney Bennett, Maxwell Davies, Ligeti, Rutter, Takemitsu and Tavener; with the 2013-2014 season seeing new works from both James MacMillan and Joanna Marsh.

There are over two million pieces of sheet music published by The King's Singers in circulation. Their arrangements are sung the world over by school and college choirs, and by ensembles both amateur and professional. The King's Singers are double Grammy award-winning artists.

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Myths

THOMAS MORLEY (c.1557 - 1602)

Hard by a crystal fountain

from The Triumphs of Oriana

GIOVANNI CROCE (1557 - 1609)

Ove tra l'herbe e fiori

from Il Trionfo di Dori

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS (1835 - 1901)

Saltarelle

GIOVANNI GABRIELI (c.1554/1557 - 1612)

Se cantano gl'augelli

from Il Trionfo di Dori

EDWARD JOHNSON (1572 - 1601)

Come, blessed Byrd

from The Triumphs of Oriana

FRANCIS POULENC (1899 - 1963)

Un soir de neige

1. De grandes cuillers de neige
2. La bonne neige le ciel noi
3. Bois meurtri
4. La nuit le froid la solitude

GIOVANNI PIERLUIGI DA PALESTRINA (c.1525 - 1594)

Quando dal terzo cielo

from Il Trionfo di Dori

THOMAS WEELKES (1576 - 1623)

As Vesta was descending
from The Triumphs of Oriana

JOBY TALBOT ARR. PHILIP LAWSON (B. 1971)

Leon

INTERMISSION

GOFFREDO PETRASSI (1904 - 2003)

Nonsense

1. C'era una signorina il cui naso
2. C'era un vecchio musicale,
3. C'era un vecchio di Rovigo,
4. C'era una signorina do Pozzilo
5. C'era una vecchia di Polla

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Programme Notes & Song Texts

One of the most fundamental forms of communication has been through storytelling. The tales of mythology have been hugely popular throughout the ages, and in a broader sense “myths” can refer to any traditional story. Madrigals, the most polished form of secular choral music, often evoke the pastoral, amorous or philosophical world of mythology. The form first emerged in Italy in the early 1530s, and was popularized in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, whose nickname “Oriana” links her to the Elysian world of the goddesses of mythology.

The Triumphs of Oriana was inspired by the 1592 Italian madrigal collection, *Il Trionfo di Dori*. It is believed that the madrigals were written in commemoration of the marriage of Leonardo Sanudo to Elisabetta Zustinian in 1577. Again the world of mythology inspired the texts, with each madrigal ending with the refrain, “Viva la bella Dori” (“Long live fair Dori”), a reference to the Greek sea-goddess Doris, the daughter of Oceanus and Tethys.

The influence of *Il Trionfo* seems to have been felt first in England in 1597 with the publication of Giovanni Croce’s *Ove tra l’herbe e fiori*. The work was given a new English text under the title *Hard by a Crystal Fountain*. It is likely that Thomas Morley was familiar with the entire collection, but he pays special homage to Croce in his own identically named madrigal.

Hard by a crystal fountain (Morley)

Hard by a crystal fountain,
Oriana the Bright lay down asleeping.
The birds they finely chirped,
The winds were stilled;
Sweetly with these accenting the air was filled.
This is that Fair, whose head a crown deserveth,
Which Heav’n for her reserveth.
Leave, shepherds, your lambs keeping,
Upon the barren mountain,
And nymphs attend on her and leave your bowers,
For she the shepherds’ life maintains and yours.
Then sang the shepherds and nymphs of Diana:
Long live fair Oriana.

Ove tra l’herbe (Croce)

Ove tra l’herb’e i fiori, vincitrice d’amor, Dori
sede a
Sonar colme di gioia a l’arie’e a venti mille
voci
S’udir’in tal’accenti:
Ecco colei che tra sue degne palme
L’imperio tien de l’alme
E s’arder già solea, sol di mortal’i cori
Hor con begl’occh’il ciel fren’ed incende
Che’l Dio del fuoco nel suo fuoc’accende;
Poi concordi seguir Ninf’e Pastori:
Viva la bella Dori!

The composer Berlioz said of **Camille Saint-Saëns**, “He knows everything but lacks inexperience”. This was a shrewd assessment of someone who had perfect pitch, wrote his first piano piece at the age of three, gave a concert at which he played concertos by Mozart and Beethoven from memory at the age of ten, and in later years, had all the Mozart concertos in his repertory - an

Programme Notes & Song Texts

astonishing feat at a time when only a handful of them were at all well known. *Saltarelle* was written by Saint-Saëns for a male voice singing club in Le Havre. Jolly melodies match the witty, almost irreverent poem by Émile Deschamps where the villagers revelry appals old women. The young priest turns a blind eye, and the Madonna in her oak tree pardons them, veiling her face when she must. Benedictine monks file out with a melancholy chant, and Carnival ends in a “rain of Lenten bulls”.

Saltarelle (Saint-Saëns)

Come, Romany children,
all singing your gay refrains,
leave the plain and the mountain
to dance to the tambourines.

Holy Rome gives you these pleasures
and the Madonna, high in her oak tree,
forgives you for them,
veiling her face when she has to.

The masked carnival,
sequined bodices,
bells, fantastic cry,
throws the police off the scent.

Let us stamp our feet
and clap our hands!
Night comes, and then the dawn.
There is nothing to do but keep dancing!

More than one kiss escapes and flies off.
Do we complain? The wild dance
makes mothers speechless.
So much the better for love.

The good parish priest, who leaves everything
to follow us,
but who knows how to live,
doesn't see anything with his book
that he is not supposed to see.

But what! Tomorrow the Camaldolese
will leave their cells;
and Lent, fasting and bulls
will rain onto the earth.

Se cantano gl'augelli (Gabrieli)

(Text by Oratio Guarganite)

If the birds sing in the treetops;
If the beasts, stung by Cupid's dart,
Sport and play in the fields;
If frisking fish are festive in the waves

Mid grottoes remote and deep:
Why do I also
Manifest my love?
Therefore, shepherds, let us sing:
“Long live fair Dori!”

Programme Notes & Song Texts

Francis Poulenc composed his cantata in four movements, '*Un Soir de Neige*', during the years of Nazi occupation in France. The text was written by Paul Eluard and dispatched to Poulenc in secret. On the surface, the text brings to life the harshness of a winter night in a French forest, but closer examination reveals images of war, and of the great dangers which the fighters faced.

1. De grandes cuillers de neige

Our frozen feet pick up
Great clods of snow
And with deep sighs
We face the coming winter
Each tree has its place in the air
Each rock its place on the earth
Each brook its rushing water
But as for us, we have no fire

2. La bonne neige le ciel noir

The pristine snow, the black sky
The dead branches, the agony
Of the forest full of snares
Shame on the hunted animal
Whose flight is like an arrow in the heart
The tracks of a cruel pursuit
Strength to the wolf, always
The most magnificent wolf and always
The last survivor to suffer
The irresistible force of death.

3. Bois meurtri

Woods ruined, robbed by the ravages of winter.
Vessel where the snows amass
Sheltering woods, dead woods, where without
hope
I dream of a sea made of shattered mirrors
A surge of cold water seized the drowning
victims
My whole body suffering
I grow feeble,
I am undone
I face my life, my death, and everything

4. La nuit le froid la solitude

The night the cold the loneliness
They shut me in tightly,
But the branches sought a way into my prison.
Around me the grass found the sky
The sky was locked up,
My prison crumbled
The living, burning cold had me in its clutches

Quando dal terzo cielo (Palestrina)

When from the third heaven
A benevolent star sent down to earth
The soul of Dori, than whom no lovelier
Nymph e'er donned a veil of mortal flesh,
To the graces and to the gods of love
Joyfully said Cupid: "Oh, for this lady,
How many souls and how many hearts,
How many lavish trophies shall we have in Arcady?
Now behold, on these golden, illustrious shores,
How many noble shepherds
Make the air, the earth, and the sea resound?
"Love live fair Dori!"

Programme Notes & Song Texts

Joby Talbot's extended work *Path of Miracles* is about the world's most enduring route of Catholic pilgrimage - the Camino Frances. The title Leon refers to the Cathedral at Leon. A medieval French refrain - an ode to the sun - punctuates simple observations of lands traversed and hardships overcome. The hypnotic pulse of the pilgrims' walking remains constant throughout the piece, but now the mystical events we hear described present no danger. Even the relentless sun, though it may dazzle, does not burn our travellers.

Leon We have walked In Jakobsland: Over river and sheep track, by hospice and hermit's cave. We sleep on the earth and dream of the road, we wake to the road and we walk. Wind from the hills, dry as the road, sun overhead, too bright for the eye.

Rumours of grace on the road, of wonders: the miracles of Villasirga, the Virgin in the apple tree. The Apostle on horseback - a journey of days in one night.

God knows we have walked In Jakobsland: through the Gothic Fields, from Castrogeriz to Calzadilla, Calzadilla to Sahagun, each day the same road, the same sun.

Here is a miracle. That we are here is a miracle. Here daylight gives an image of the heaven promised by His love.

Goffredo Petrassi's Nonsense dates from 1952, and uses for its text nonsense verse (in the form of limericks) by the nineteenth century English poet and painter, Edward Lear, translated here into Italian by Carlo Izzo. Petrassi, who had been a choirboy in Rome, was influenced by Stravinsky and his objective approach to composition is mirrored in pieces both concise and witty.

1. C'era una signorina il cul naso

There was a young lady whose nose,
Continually prospers and grows,
When it grew out of sight,
She exclaimed in a fright,
"Farewell to the end of my nose".

2. C'era un vecchio musicale

There was an old man with a flute;
A serpent ran into his boot;
So he played day and night,
'Til the serpent took flight
And avoided the man with the flute.

3. C'era un vecchio di Rovigo

There was an old man of Cape Horn,
Who wished he had never been born;

So he sat in a chair,

'Til he died of despair;

That dolorous old man of Cape Horn.

4. C'era una signorina do Pozzilo

There was a young lady whose chin,
Resembled the point of a pin;

So she had it made sharp,

And she purchased a harp,

And she played several tunes with her chin.

5. C'era una vecchia di Polla

There was an old woman of Stroud,
Who was horribly stuck in a crowd;

Some she slew with a kick,

Some she scrunched with a stick;

That impulsive old lady of Stroud.

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