



Tranquillity Base

Tenor: Matthew Secombe
Baritone: Alex Bower-Brown

Conductor: Jack Apperley
Accompanist: Paul Ayres

Saturday 16th March, 2019
at 7.30pm

St John's, Hampton Wick,
KT1 4AL

First three movements from The Creation	Joseph Haydn
My soul, there is a country	Charles Hubert Parry
I know my soul hath power	Charles Hubert Parry
God and the Universe	Charles Villiers Stanford
Organ – Two pieces from "12 Full Organ Pieces"	William Herschel
Seek Him that Maketh the Seven Stars	Jonathan Dove
i will wade out	Eric Whitacre
Interval	
O Thou the Central Orb	Charles Wood
Northern Lights	Ola Gjeilo
Organ - Passacaglia in D minor	Dietrich Buxtehude
Stargazer	Alec Roth
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Stars	Ēriks Ešvalds
Sleep	Eric Whitacre

This evening's concert, inspired by the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing in July this year, explores the mysteries and wonder of space, the universe and our interaction with it through a programme of music composed over three centuries. We are very grateful to Lynda Beament, a choir member, for suggesting the addition of a visual element to the programme and for her hard work in researching the images that accompany this evening's performance; also to Gavin Dawson, for his technical expertise and to Philippa Watterson from St John's Church for kindly offering to project the images for us.

First three movements from The Creation Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Haydn was greatly influenced by the oratorios of Handel, particularly his *Messiah*, which he had heard performed on one of his visits to London, and he completed his *Creation* in 1798. Tonight, we are performing the recitatives, aria and chorus which open the work and depict the creation of light and the first day.

Haydn's text was adapted from Genesis 1, the Book of Psalms and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, originally translated into German by Haydn's patron, Baron Gottfried van Swieten. The *Creation* was subsequently published in both languages and it is said that Haydn preferred the English version.

After an orchestral introduction depicting Milton's description of a “vast immeasurable abyss” the first words “In the beginning” are sung by the bass soloist representing the archangel Raphael. The chorus then enters in hushed tones, accompanied by sombre harmonies, before singing a radiant and fortissimo chord at the word “light”. There follows an aria sung by the tenor as the Archangel Uriel describing how darkness, chaos and hell's spirits are overcome by light. The chorus affirms the events that have been witnessed, firstly taking up the soloist's melody in a contrapuntal section of wide-leaping intervals, and finally expressing joy and wonder, in a deceptively simple chordal section of slightly shifting harmonies, at each repetition of the words “a new created world”.

Organ Prelude

The Representation of Chaos

Recitative with Chorus

Raphael

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth; and the earth was without form, and void;
and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

Chorus

And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said: Let there be light. And there was light.

Uriel

And God saw the light, that it was good;
and God divided the light from the darkness.

Aria with Chorus

Uriel

Now vanish before the holy beams,
the gloomy dismal shades dark;
the first of days appears.
Disorder yields to order fair the place.
Affrighted fled hell's spirits black in throngs;
down they sink in the deep of abyss to endless night.

Chorus

Despairing, cursing rage attends their rapid fall.
A new created world springs up at God's command.

Two pieces from Songs of Farewell Charles Hubert Parry (1848-1918)

The two British composers Parry and Stanford had much in common. They were near contemporaries whose families intended them for conventional careers. Neither studied music at University (although Parry had gained a B Mus while still at Eton), but they went on to pursue musical careers and became influential teachers at the Royal College of Music. Both were profoundly affected by the Great War.

My soul, there is a country and *I know my soul hath power* are the first two of Parry's six *Songs of Farewell*, written between 1916 and 1918. The composer was nearing the end of his life, although still director of the RCM, and his chosen texts are poems which reflect on the transitory nature of human existence and the redeeming power of faith. Parry called the set motets, although they are not conventionally devotional works.

The first song *My soul there is a country* is a setting of words by the 17th century metaphysical poet, Henry Vaughan. It is a somewhat challenging piece to sing, as the music features constant changes of rhythm and tempo with chordal and contrapuntal sections and rich harmonies.

For the second song, *I know my soul has power*, Parry chose the words of the Elizabethan poet John Davies, once the favourite of the Queen. The piece is almost entirely homophonic, simple and moving.

My soul, there is a country

My soul, there is a country
Far beyond the stars,
Where stands a winged sentry
All skilful in the wars:

There, above noise and danger
Sweet Peace sits crowned with smiles
And One, born in a manger
Commands the beauteous files.

He is thy gracious friend
And, O my soul, awake!
Did in pure love descend
To die here for thy sake.

If thou canst get but thither,
There grows the flow'r of Peace,
The Rose that cannot wither,
Thy fortress and thy ease.

Leave then thy foolish ranges,
For none can thee secure
But One who never changes,
Thy God, thy life, thy cure.

Henry Vaughan (1622-1695)

I know my soul hath power

I know my soul hath power to know all things,
Yet she is blind and ignorant in all:
I know I'm one of Nature's little kings,
Yet to the least and vilest things am thrall.

I know my life's a pain and but a span;
I know my sense is mock'd in ev'rything;
And, to conclude, I know myself a Man,
Which is a proud and yet a wretched thing.

John Davies (1569-1626)

God and the Universe

Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)

God and the Universe is the second of six *Songs of Faith*, written by Stanford in 1906. The first three songs are set to words from Tennyson's poems on religious themes, particularly death, infinity and the afterlife. The song begins quietly and simply, and for most of the piece the music is solemn and meditative but Stanford employs vivid and dramatic word-painting with rapid scale passages and extremes

of dynamics for the third line.

Will my tiny spark of being wholly vanish in your deeps and heights?
Must my days be dark by reason, O ye Heavens, of your boundless nights,
Rush of Suns, and roll of systems, and your fiery clash of meteorites?
"Spirit, nearing yon dark portal at the limit of thy human state,
Fear not thou the hidden purpose of that Power which alone is great,
Nor the myriad world, His shadow, nor the silent Opener of the Gate."

Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)

Organ – 2 Pieces from "12 Full Organ Pieces" William Herschel (1738-1827)

Herschel is best known as an astronomer and first President of the Astronomical Society in 1820. Tonight we see another side to Herschel as the accomplished musician and composer.

Seek Him that Maketh the Seven Stars Jonathan Dove (b.1959)

Jonathan Dove, born in London, is a composer of opera, choral works, music for plays and films, community projects, orchestral and chamber music. He studied composition at Cambridge and after graduating, worked as an accompanist, répétiteur, animateur and arranger. Dove's breakthrough as a composer came in 1998 when his opera *Flight* was performed at Glyndebourne.

Seek Him that Maketh the Seven Stars was commissioned in 1995 by Friends of the Royal Academy of Arts for their annual service. Dove selected the text, taken from Amos 5:9 and Psalm 139, feeling that the theme of light would have special meaning for visual artists. From the very opening bars of the "twinkling" organ motif can be heard musical images of light and the night sky. Dove writes that "the refrain, 'Seek Him' starts in devotional longing but is eventually released into a joyful dance, finally coming to rest in serenity."

Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion
and turneth the shadow of death into the morning.
Alleluia, yea, the darkness shineth as the day, the night is light about me.
Amen.

Amos 5:8: Psalm 139

i will wade out

Eric Whitacre (b.1970)

Whitacre grew up in Nevada and in his early years, his eclectic musical tastes included playing in a marching band and in a techno-pop group on synthesizer. He discovered classical choral music – described as “like seeing colour for the first time” - at University and began composing, eventually gaining a Master’s degree at the Juilliard School of Music. Whitacre is now widely known as a conductor and composer of choral and instrumental music and has introduced the concept of the “virtual choir” to the internet.

In 1999, Whitacre was commissioned by North Arizona University's School of Music to write a set of choral pieces to celebrate the school's 100th anniversary. For the first text, he chose for the sensual poem *i will wade out* by the innovative 20th Century American poet ee cummings. Audience members who are familiar with Whitacre's choral pieces, such as *The Seal Lullaby* and *Sleep* (which we will perform in the second half of the concert) will note that this setting uses uncharacteristically jagged and leaping melodies as opposed to the lyrical melodies or shifting chord clusters which characterise much of Whitacre's work.

i will wade out

till my thighs are steeped in burning flowers

I will take the sun in my mouth

and leap into the ripe air

Alive

with closed eyes

to dash against darkness

in the sleeping curves of my body

Shall enter fingers of smooth mastery

with chasteness of sea-girls

Will i complete the mystery

of my flesh

I will rise

After a thousand years

licking

flowers

And set my teeth in the silver of the moon

ee cummings (1894 – 1962)

Interval

O Thou the Central Orb

Charles Wood (1866-1926)

Born in Armagh, Ireland, Wood was exposed to music from an early age as his father sang tenor in the Cathedral Choir. He attended the Cathedral Choir school and then studied organ, firstly at the cathedral, but later as one of fifty inaugural class members of the Royal College of Music where his professors included Stanford and Parry. Wood continued his education at Cambridge, eventually becoming a professor.

Wood is known mainly for his Anglican Church music and *O Thou, the Central Orb*, an anthem with organ accompaniment, is one of his most frequently performed and recorded pieces. A setting of a text by H. Ramsden Bramley, the music is at times reverential, at times weighty and culminates in an Amen section of great splendour.

O Thou, the central orb of righteous love,
Pure beam of the most High, eternal Light
Of this our wintry world, Thy radiance bright
Awakes new joy in faith, hope soars above.

Come, quickly come, and let thy glory shine,
Gilding our darksome heaven with rays Divine.

Thy saints with holy lustre round Thee move,
As stars about thy throne, set in the height
Of God's ordaining counsel, as Thy sight
Gives measured grace to each, Thy power to prove.

Let Thy bright beams disperse the gloom of sin,
Our nature all shall feel eternal day
In fellowship with thee, transforming day
To souls erewhile unclean, now pure within. Amen.

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To souls erewhile unclean, now pure within. Amen.

Henry Ramsden Bramley (1833-1917)

Northern Lights

Ola Gjeilo (b.1978)

The Norwegian pianist and composer Gjeilo began his musical studies at Oslo's Music Academy. He then travelled to London where he graduated from the Royal College of Music. Gjeilo completed his music education in New York, the city where he currently lives and works, where he gained a Master's degree in composition.

Gjeilo's music explores a wide variety of genres, embracing jazz and pop as well as classical.

In his home country, Gjeilo twice witnessed the spectacle of the Aurora Borealis and it was the profound nature of these experiences which inspired his piece *Northern Lights*. He wrote "It is one of the most beautiful natural phenomena I've ever witnessed and has such a powerful, electric quality which must have been both mesmerising and terrifying to people in the past." Composed in 2007, the piece is a setting of a text from the sixth chapter of the Song of Solomon which juxtaposes beauty and fear. Gjeilo describes the music as "mostly serene" and has said that, "above all else, it is about beauty."

Pulchra es amica mea,
suavis et decora sicut Jerusalem,
terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata.
Averte oculos tuos a me
quia ipsi me avolare fecerunt.

Thou art beautiful, O my love,
sweet and comely as Jerusalem,
terrible as an army set in array.
Turn away thy eyes from me,
for they have made me flee away.

Organ - Passacaglia in D minor

Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707)

Buxtehude's lifelong interest in numerology is exhibited in this Passacaglia's intricate structure. The numbers 4 and 7 are the foundation of the entire piece. The repeating pedal melody, which is the basis of the work, is composed of 7 notes in 4 bars, and it appears 28 times ($4 \times 7 = 28$). There are 4 sections, each 28 bars long. These numerical aspects have attracted some attention from scholars, and are explained variously as astronomical concepts, the four sections referring to the four principal phases of the moon.

Stargazer

Alec Roth (b.1948)

Alec Roth was born near Manchester, read music as a mature student at Durham University and then travelled to Java where he studied gamelan, the traditional ensemble music of Indonesia, at the Academy of Indonesian Performing Arts. Roth has composed for solo voices, choirs, orchestra, and collaborated on an opera with the author Vikram Seth. He has been involved in a wide variety of educational projects, including Music Theatre and gamelan.

As the music of *Stargazer* bears many hallmarks of the gamelan, it may be of interest to elaborate here. The gamelan ensemble is made up of mostly bronze, tuned percussion instruments played with mallets, also drums, and sometimes flutes. The music is learnt aurally and structured in unique, repeating rhythmic and melodic patterns added to which is a system of stratification in which the higher notes play faster note values than the lower. When Debussy first heard the gamelan in 1889, he commented "Their conservatory is the rhythm of the sea, the wind among the leaves and the thousand sounds of nature."

In *Stargazer*, set to four very contrasting poems by Victorian writers, the gamelan influence is clearly heard throughout in the repeating rhythmic patterns, cross-rhythms and melodic fragments. In the final song, *Trains*, the choir parts take turns to sing fast, repeating passages sung to nonsense syllables representing a train journey and the words of the poem set to a more relaxed rhythm and melody. Roth's instruction is that the tempo of the piece should be "very steady (more Bummelzug – slow train) than Intercity Express".

Stargazer was commissioned by the Three Choirs Festival in Hereford in 2015

1 Stand and Stare

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.

No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in
grass.

No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at
night.

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can
dance.

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

From *Leisure*

William Henry Davies (1871-1940)

2 The Star-lit Stairs

I love all sights of earth and skies,
From flowers that glow to stars that
shine;
The comet and the penny show,
All curious things, above, below.

But most I love the tube that spies
The orbs celestial in their march;
That shows the comet as it whisks
Its tail across the planets' disks,
Or wheels so close against the sun
We tremble at the thought of risks
Our little spinning ball may run.

Lost in my dream, my spirit soars
Through paths the wandering angels
know;

I leave my mortal self below,
As up the star-lit stairs I climb,
And still the widening view reveals
In endless rounds the circling wheels
That build the horologe of time.

New spheres, new suns, new systems
gleam;
The voice no earth-born echo hears
Steals softly on my ravished ears:
I hear them singing as they shine.

From *The Flâneur*

Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894)

3 Star-struck

Timothy Toodletrot lived up high,
In a small attic just under the sky.

Timothy Toodletrot lived alone,
So high up that the small stars shone
Just over his head and twinkled bright
All night long through his one skylight.

Timothy Toodletrot sat quite still
On his tiny stool under the window-sill:
He gazed all night, till the sky was wan,
At Sirius, Algol and Aldebaran:
As quiet he sat as a mouse all day,
Waiting for night and the Milky Way.
He went not out nor ever came in,
He ate no bread, got thinner than thin:
So long he stared when he'd once begun
That bones were many and flesh was none,
And some folks say that he sits there still,
A skeleton under the window-sill.

From *Star-struck*
Elsie Harriet Raspin

4 In the Train

As we rush, as we rush in the train,
The trees and the houses go wheeling
back,
But the starry heavens above the
plain
Come flying on our track.

All the beautiful stars of the sky,
The silver doves of the forest of night,

Over the dull earth swarm and fly,
Companions of our flight.

From *In the Train*
James Thomson (1834-1882)

Stars

Ēriks Ešvalds (b.1997)

Ešvalds attended the Latvian Academy of Music where he gained a Masters in composition and in 2011 took up a 2-year position as Fellow Commoner in Creative Arts at Trinity College, Cambridge. He has written works for solo voice, choir, orchestra, theatre and film. Ešvalds' music is known for being multi-layered, often in 8 or 16 parts, and he has said that, for him “harmony is important – how it flows and becomes a new harmony. The melodic line is secondary”. For the text of the song *Stars*, Ešvalds turned to the 19th Century lyric poet Sara Teasdale. The 8-part choir is accompanied with oscillating chords played on tuned wine-glasses, as well as the ringing tone of Tibetan bowls to create an ethereal, unearthly quality of sound.

Alone in the night
On a dark hill
With pines around me
Spicy and still,

And a heaven full of stars
Over my head
White and topaz
And misty red;

Myriads with beating
Hearts of fire
The aeons

Cannot vex or tire;
Up the dome of heaven
Like a great hill
I watch them marching
Stately and still.

And I know that I
Am honored to be
Witness
Of so much majesty.

Sara Teasdale (1884-1933)

Sleep

Eric Whitacre (b.1970)

Sleep was originally conceived as a setting of Robert Frost's poem “Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening”. Unknown to Whitacre however, the Frost estate had banned any musical settings of the writer's work, and publication of the song was prevented. After some years, the composer asked his friend and poet Charles Anthony Silvestri to write a new text for the song, a challenging task that required the exact structure of the original poem, and the sentiment to match the music. In interviews, Whitacre has spoken about the “chorale-like nature” of the piece and his love of dissonance caused by close clusters of notes, particularly when produced by the timbre of human voices.

The evening hangs beneath the moon,
A silver thread on darkened dune.
With closing eyes and resting head
I know that sleep is coming soon.

Upon my pillow, safe in bed,
A thousand pictures fill my head,
I cannot sleep my mind's a flight;
And yet my limbs seem made of lead.

If there are noises in the night,
A frightening shadow, flickering light;
Then I surrender unto sleep,
Where clouds of dream give second sight.

What dreams may come both dark and deep,
Of flying wings and soaring leap
As I surrender unto sleep.

Charles Anthony Silvestri (b.1965)

Programme notes by Jane Purser

Matthew Secombe – tenor

Matthew Secombe is in his third year at the Royal Academy of Music. He was a member of the National Youth Choir from 2016-17, and in August 2017 and 2018 he sang as a member of the Royal Academy Chamber Choir on their annual week-long residency at Neresheim Abbey in Germany. From 2017-18, Matthew was a choral scholar with the Esterhazy Singers of London, with whom he sang both as part of the chorus and as a soloist, at venues such as Holy Trinity Church, Sloane Square, and St Paul's Cathedral. He has also sung chorus for the Royal Academy's series of Bach cantata concerts, most recently in November 2018.

Being the great-grandson of Sir Arthur Bliss, Matthew sang a short programme of Bliss and Venables at the Sir Arthur Bliss Society 2016 AGM. More recent solo engagements have included singing the tenor arias in an East Cornwall Bach Society concert of Bach cantatas in March 2018, and giving song recitals later in the year in Standlake, Oxfordshire, for the Exuberant Trust, and at St Mary's Church, Newark.

Upcoming solo engagements include making his role debut as Tamino in *The Magic Flute* in the Uppermill Music Festival in July, and singing the tenor solos for Handel's *Messiah* with Truro Choral Society at Truro Cathedral in December.

Jack Apperley - conductor

Jack Apperley is a London-based freelance conductor. Under the tutelage of Patrick Russill, he graduated from the Royal Academy of Music where he obtained a Masters in Choral Conducting (Distinction) and was awarded the Sir Thomas Armstrong Choral Leadership Prize. Prior to his postgraduate studies, Jack read music at the University of Birmingham where he was mentored by Simon Halsey CBE. In 2018, Jack was awarded Second Prize at the inaugural London International Choral Conducting Competition.

He is the Music Director and Conductor of several London based choirs; Concordia Voices, the Imperial College Chamber Choir, and Brentwood Choral Society. Jack is an Assistant Chorus Master of the London Symphony Chorus. He also directs several workplace choirs, for the Royal College of Physicians, Silicon Valley Bank

and the trade union Unison. In 2018 Jack was the Guest Conductor of the Epsom Chamber Choir.

In July 2019, Jack will be participating in the World Choral Conducting Competition in Hong Kong.

Paul Ayres - accompanist

Paul Ayres was born in Perivale, west London, studied music at Oxford University, and now works freelance as a composer & arranger, choral conductor & musical director, and organist & accompanist. He has received over one hundred commissions for new works, and his music is published in Canada, Germany, Norway, Russia, the UK and the USA. Paul is the regular conductor of City Chorus and the London College of Music Chorus (at the University of West London), accompanist of Concordia Voices, and associate accompanist of Crouch End Festival Chorus. He has led many music education workshops for children, and played piano for improvised comedy shows and musical theatre. Projects for 2019 include a concert/workshop tour of Massachusetts and New Hampshire, organ recitals in Germany, a programme of arrangements for choir & electric guitar, and a new musical for a primary school in Lambeth. Please visit www.paulayres.co.uk to find out more.

Paul has recorded the Buxtehude he is playing tonight on his CD, Passacaglia, which is available for purchase at the back of the church.

Passacaglia

ostinato organ music by Bach, Buxtehude, Willan, Lloyd Webber and others.

Concordia Voices

Concordia Voices is a well-established chamber choir of about 30 mixed voices and is currently directed by Jack Apperley. Our regular accompanist is the composer and arranger Paul Ayres.

The choir performs regularly in south-west London where it is based. We have also toured abroad and to other locations in the UK as well as taking part in local musical events. Concordia Voices enjoy performing music from a wide repertoire ranging over 4 centuries and the choir has a keen interest in performing the work of contemporary composers, including Jonathan Dove, James MacMillan, Morten Lauridsen, John Tavener and Naji Hakim.

Concordia Voices rehearse on Sunday evenings from 6.45pm to 9pm in Hampton Hill. We are a small, friendly choir and new singers are warmly welcome. If you are interested in joining us please contact our secretary for more information at, secretary@concordiavoices.org or visit our web site for information on how to join the choir. www.concordiavoices.org

<i>Soprano</i>	<i>Alto</i>	<i>Tenor</i>	<i>Bass</i>
Jackie Allen Lynda Beament Marta Fletcher Viviane Hardy Julia Lavery Margaret Lord Ruth Parker Heloise Plumley Fiona Rowett Helen Sugiyama	Lindsey Baldwin Rebecca Bevan Julie Hall Jane Newman Barbara Orr Jane Purser Anne Rowett Janet Taylor	Colin Flood Clive Hall Adrian Oxborrow Andre Serra Paddi Sutton-Coulson	Alan Baldwin Adam Brown Philip Congdon Vince Daly Christopher Johnson Tim Rowett

Future Concerts

Saturday, 29th June, 2019, St Mary's, Twickenham

Brahms and Vaughan Williams

Brahms:

Geistliches Lied

Zigeunerlieder

Fünf Gesänge

Vaughan Williams:

Old Hundredth

Lord, Thou hast been our refuge

In Windsor Forest

Saturday, 7th December 2019, St John the Divine, Richmond

