

OXFORD INTERNATIONAL SONG FESTIVAL



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PROUD SONGSTERS

Sunday 15th March 2026, 7:15pm
The Levine Building, Trinity College

Mark Padmore tenor
Libby Burgess piano

With thanks to the President and Fellows of Trinity College

PROGRAMME

Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852 - 1924)	La belle dame sans merci	John Keats (1795 - 1821)
George Butterworth (1885 - 1916)	Loveliest of trees <i>from Six Songs from A Shropshire Lad</i>	Alfred Edward Housman (1859 - 1936)
Gerald Finzi (1901 - 1956)	Channel Firing <i>from Before and After Summer</i>	Thomas Hardy (1840 - 1928)
Liza Lehmann (1862 - 1918)	When I am dead, my dearest	Christina Rossetti (1830 - 1894)
Rebecca Clarke (1886 - 1979)	The Seal Man	John Masefield (1878-1967)
Michael Tippett (1905 - 1998)	Full fathom five <i>from Songs for Ariel</i>	William Shakespeare (1564 - 1616)
Herbert Howells (1892 - 1983)	King David	Walter de la Mare (1873-1956)
Gustav Holst (1874 - 1934)	On Betelgeuse <i>from Humbert Wolfe Songs</i>	Humbert Wolfe (1885 - 1940)
Sally Beamish (b. 1956)	Hoopoe <i>from Four Songs from Hafez</i>	Hafez, trans. by Jila Peacock
Geoffrey Bush (1920 - 1998)	The Poet's Epitaph <i>from Seven Greek Love Songs</i>	Dudley Fitts (1903 - 1968)

Benjamin Britten
(1913 - 1976)

Winter Words Op. 52

Thomas Hardy
(1840 - 1928)

1. At day-close in November
2. Midnight on the Great Western - 'The journeying boy'
3. Wagtail and baby - 'A satire'
4. The little old table
5. The choirmaster's burial - 'The tenor man's story'
6. Proud Songsters - 'Thrushes, finches and nightingales'
7. At the railway station, Upway - 'The convict and the boy with the violin'
8. Before life and after

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OXFORD
INTERNATIONAL
SONG FESTIVAL

SONGS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN



THEANO PAPADAKI soprano

SHOLTO KYNOCH piano

THU 14 MAY, 6PM
WOLFSON COLLEGE



[OXFORDSONG.ORG](https://oxfordsong.org)

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

Stanford / Keats

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
So lone and palely loitering?
The sedge hath wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
So haggard and so woebegone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow
With anguish moist and fever dew,
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful — a faery's child;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She look'd at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
A faery's song.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna dew,
And sure in language strange she said —
'I love thee true.'

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept, and sigh'd full sore,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With kisses four.

And there she lulled me asleep,
And there I dream'd — Ah! woe betide!
The latest dream I ever dream'd
On the cold hill's side.

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried — 'La belle dame sans merci
Hath thee in thrall!'

I saw their starved lips in the gloom,
With horrid warning gaping wide,
And I awoke and found me here,
On the cold hill's side.

And this is why I sojourn here,
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

LOVELIEST OF TREES

Butterworth / Housman

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

CHANNEL FIRING

Finzi / Hardy

That night your great guns, unawares,
Shook all our coffins as we lay,
And broke the chancel window-squares,
We thought it was the Judgment-day

And sat upright. While drearisome
Arose the howl of wakened hounds:
The mouse let fall the altar-crumbs,
The worms drew back into the mounds,

The glebe cow drooled. Till God called, 'No;
It's gunnery practice out at sea
Just as before you went below;
The world is as it used to be:

'All nations striving strong to make
Red war yet redder. Mad as hatters
They do no more for Christ's sake
Than you who are helpless in such matters.

'That this is not the judgment-hour
For some of them's a blessed thing,
For if it were they'd have to scour
Hell's floor for so much threatening ...

'Ha, ha. It will be warmer when
I blow the trumpet (if indeed
I ever do; for you are men,
And rest eternal sorely need).'

So down we lay again. 'I wonder,
Will the world ever saner be',
Said one, 'than when He sent us under
In our indifferent century!'

And many a skeleton shook his head.
'Instead of preaching forty year,'
My neighbour Parson Thirdly said,
'I wish I had stuck to pipes and beer.'

Again the guns disturbed the hour,
Roaring their readiness to avenge,
As far inland as Stourton Tower,
And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge.

WHEN I AM DEAD, MY DEAREST

Lehmann / Rossetti

When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on, as if in pain:
And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.

THE SEAL MAN

Clarke / Masefield

And he came by her cabin to the west of the road,
calling.
There was a strong love came up in her at that,
and she put down her sewing on the table, and "Mother,"
she says,
"There's no lock, and no key, and no bolt, and no door.
There's no iron, nor no stone, nor anything at all
will keep me this night from the man I love."
And she went out into the moonlight to him,
there by the bush where the flow'rs is pretty, beyond the
river.
And he says to her: "You are all of the beauty of the
world,
will you come where I go, over the waves of the sea?"
And she says to him: "My treasure and my strength," she
says,
"I would follow you on the frozen hills, my feet bleeding."
Then they went down into the sea together,
and the moon made a track on the sea, and they walked
down it;
it was like a flame before them. There was no fear at all
on her;
only a great love like the love of the Old Ones,
that was stronger than the touch of the fool.
She had a little white throat, and little cheeks like
flowers,
and she went down into the sea with her man,
who wasn't a man at all.
She was drowned, of course.
It's like he never thought that she wouldn't bear the sea
like himself.
She was drowned, drowned.

FULL FATHOM FIVE

Tippett / Shakespeare

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell
Hark! now I hear them, – Ding-dong, bell.

KING DAVID

Howells / de la Mare

King David was a sorrowful man:
No cause for his sorrow had he;
And he called for the music of a hundred harps,
To ease his melancholy.

They played till they all fell silent:
Played and play sweet did they;
But the sorrow that haunted the heart of King David
They could not charm away.

He rose; and in his garden
Walked by the moon alone,
A nightingale hidden in a cypress tree,
Jargoned on and on.

King David lifted his sad eyes
Into the dark-boughed tree --
"Tell me, thou little bird that singest,
Who taught my grief to thee?"

But the bird in no-wise heeded;
And the king in the cool of the moon
Harkened to the nightingale's sorrowfulness,
Till all his own was gone.

ON BETELGEUSE

Holst / Wolfe

On Betelgeuse
the gold leaves hang in golden aisles
for twice a hundred million miles,
and twice a hundred million years
they golden hang and nothing stirs,
on Betelgeuse.

Space is a wind that does
not blow on Betelgeuse,
and time - oh time - is a bird,
whose wings have never stirred
the golden avenues of leaves
on Betelgeuse.

On Betelgeuse
there is nothing that joys or grieves
the unstirred multitude of leaves,
nor ghost of evil or good haunts
the gold multitude
on Betelgeuse.

And birth they do not use
nor death on Betelgeuse,
and the God, of whom we are
infinite dust, is there
a single leaf of those
gold leaves on Betelgeuse.

HOOPOE

Beamish / Hafez, trans. Peacock

O Hoopoe of the east wind,

To Sheba I shall send you.
Take heed from where to where
I shall send you

Pity a bird like you

Lodged in a well of sorrow.

From here, to the nest of devotion
I shall send you
In quest of love

There is no near or far but only now.
I see you whole, and my fealty

I shall send you

Whispering in the winds
Each dawn and dusk,
Convoys of sweet invocations

I shall send you

Love's face
Reveals the joy of all Creation
In the God-reflecting mirror
I shall send you

THE POET'S EPITAPH

Bush / Fitts

Quietly O Stranger pass by: here sleeps an old man
Cradled with the holy dead in the common silence:
Meleagros: Eukrates' son: who joined in song
Sweet crying Love with the Muses and smiling Graces:
Him divine Tyre and Gadara's sacred land
Sheltered till manhood: but his old age was nursed by
lovely
Kos of the Meropes.
And now O friend Shalam if you are a Syrian:
If Phonikian, Naidios:
But if Greek: Farewell! Farewell! and give me back the
same.

WINTER WORDS, OP. 52

Britten / Hardy

1. AT DAY-CLOSE IN NOVEMBER

The ten hours' light is abating,
And a late bird wings across,
Where the pines, like waltzers waiting,
Give their black heads a toss.

Beech leaves, that yellow the noontime,
Float past like specks in the eye;
I set every tree in my June time,
And now they obscure the sky.

And the children who ramble through here
Conceive that there never has been
A time when no tall trees grew here,
That none will in time be seen.

2. MIDNIGHT ON THE GREAT WESTERN - 'THE JOURNEYING BOY'

In the third-class seat sat
The journeying boy.
And the roof-lamp's oily flame
Played down on his listless form and face,
Bewrapt past knowing to what he was going,
Or whence he came.

In the band of his hat the journeying boy
Had a ticket stuck; and a string
Around his neck bore the key of his box,
That twinkled gleams of the
Lamp's sad beams
Like a living thing.

What past can be yours, O journeying boy,
Towards a world unknown,
Who calmly, as if incurious quite
On all at stake, can undertake
This plunge alone?

Knows your soul a sphere, O journeying boy,
Our rude realms far above,
Whence with spacious vision
You mark and mete
This region of sin that you find you in,
But are not of?

3. WAGTAIL AND BABY - 'A SATIRE'

A baby watched a ford, whereto
A wagtail came for drinking;
A blaring bull went wading through,
The wagtail showed no shrinking.

A stallion splashed his way across,
The birdie nearly sinking;
He gave his plumes a twitch and toss,
And held his own unblinking.

Next saw the baby round the spot
A mongrel slowly slinking;
The wagtail gazed, but faltered not
In dip and sip and prinking

A perfect gentleman then neared;
The wagtail, in a winking,
With terror rose and disappeared;
The baby fell a-thinking.

4. THE LITTLE OLD TABLE

Creak, little wood thing, creak,
When I touch you with elbow or knee;
That is the way you speak
Of the one who gave you to me!

You, little table, she brought —
brought me with her own hand,
As she looked at me with a thought:
That I did not understand.

— Whoever owns it anon,
And hears it, will never know
What a history hangs upon
This creak from long ago.

5. THE CHOIRMASTER'S BURIAL - 'THE TENOR MAN'S STORY'

He often would ask us
That, when he died,
After playing so many
To their last rest,
If out of us any
Should here abide,
And it would not task us,
We would with our lutes
Play over him
By his grave-brim
The psalm he liked best —
The one whose sense suits
“Mount Ephraim”
And perhaps we should seem
To him, in death's dream,
Like the seraphim.

As soon as I knew
That his spirit was gone
I thought this his due,
And spoke thereupon.
“I think” said the vicar,
“A read service quicker
That viols out-of-doors
In these frosts and hoars.
That old-fashioned was
Requires a fine day,
And it seems to me
It had better not be.”
Hence, that afternoon,
Though never knew he
That his wish could not be,
To get through it faster
They buried the master
Without any tune.

But t'was said that, when
At the dead of next night
The vicar looked out,
There struck on his ken
Thronged roundabout,
Where the frost was graying
The headstoned grass,
A band all in white
Like the saints in church-glass,
Singing and playing
The ancient stave
By the choirmaster's grave.

Such the tenor man told
When he had grown old.

6. PROUD SONGSTERS - 'THRUSHES, FINCHES AND NIGHTINGALES'

The thrushes sing as the sun is going,
And the finches whistle in ones and pairs,
And as it gets dark loud nightingales
In bushes
Pipe, as they can when April wears,
As if all Time were theirs.

These are brand-new birds of twelve months' growing,
Which a year ago, or less than twain,
No finches were, nor nightingales,
Nor thrushes,
But only particles of grain,
And earth, and air, and rain.

7. AT THE RAILWAY STATION, UPWAY - 'THE CONVICT AND THE BOY WITH THE VIOLIN'

'There is not much that I can do,
For I've no money that's quite my own!
Spoke up the pitying child —
A little boy with a violin
At the station before the train came in —
'But I can play my fiddle to you,
And a nice one 'tis, and good in tone!'

The man in the handcuffs smiled;
The constable looked, and he smiled, too,
As the fiddle began to twang;
And the man in the handcuffs
Suddenly sang
With grimful glee:
'This life so free
Is the thing for me!'

And the constable smiled, and said no word,
As if unconscious of what he heard;
And so they went on till the train came in —
The convict, and boy with the violin.

8. BEFORE LIFE AND AFTER

A time there was — as one may guess
And as, indeed, earth's testimonies tell —
before the birth of consciousness,
When all went well.

None suffered sickness, love, or loss,
None knew regret, starved hope, or heart-burnings;
None cared whatever crash or cross
Brought wrack to things.

If something ceased, no tongue bewailed,
If something winced and waned, no heart was wrung;
If brightness dimmed, and dark prevailed.
No sense was stung.

But the disease of feeling germed,
And primal rightness took the tinct of wrong:
Ere nescience shall be reaffirmed
How long, how long?

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