

OXFORD INTERNATIONAL SONG FESTIVAL



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THE STORY OF ENGLISH SONG

Sunday 15th March 2026, 11:00am
The New Space, Mansfield Road

Katy Hamilton speaker
Rosie Lavery* soprano
Anna Michels* piano

with **Harriet Burns, Ian Tindale, and Mark Padmore**

* Oxford Song Young Artists, 2024-2025

PROGRAMME

Liza Lehmann (1862 - 1918)	If no one ever marries me	Laurence Alma-Tadema (1865 - 1940)
George Butterworth (1885 - 1916)	The lads in their hundreds <i>from Six Songs from A Shropshire Lad</i>	Alfred Edward Housman (1859 - 1936)
Rebecca Clarke (1886 - 1979)	The Aspidistra	Claude Flight (1881-1955)
Benjamin Britten (1913 - 1976)	As it is, plenty <i>from On This Island</i>	W. H. Auden (1907 - 1973)
	Down by the Salley Gardens <i>from Folk Song Arrangements vol.1: British Isles</i>	W. B. Yeats (1865 - 1939)
Gerald Finzi (1901 - 1956)	Proud Songsters <i>from Earth and Air and Rain</i>	Thomas Hardy (1840 - 1928)
Benjamin Britten (1913 - 1976)	Winter Words Op. 52 (extracts) 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	Thomas Hardy (1840 - 1928)

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

IF NO ONE EVER MARRIES ME

Lehmann / Alma-Tadema

If no one ever marries me -
And I don't see why they should,
For nurse says I'm not pretty,
And I'm seldom very good -

If no one ever marries me
I shan't mind very much,
I shall buy a squirrel in a cage
And a little rabbit-hutch;

I shall have a cottage near a wood,
And a pony all my own
And a little lamb, quite clean and tame,
That I can take to town.

And when I'm getting really old -
At twenty-eight or nine -
I shall buy a little orphan-girl
And bring her up as mine.

THE LADS IN THEIR HUNDREDS

Butterworth / Housman

The lads in their hundreds to Ludlow come in for the fair,
There's men from the barn and the forge and the mill and the fold,
The lads for the girls and the lads for the liquor are there,
And there with the rest are the lads that will never be old.

There's chaps from the town and the field and the till and the cart,
And many to count are the stalwart, and many the brave,
And many the handsome of face and the handsome of heart,
And few that will carry their looks or their truth to the grave.

I wish one could know them, I wish there were tokens to tell
The fortunate fellows that now you can never discern;
And then one could talk with them friendly and wish them farewell
And watch them depart on the way that they will not return.

But now you may stare as you like and there's nothing to scan;
And brushing your elbow unguessed at and not to be told
They carry back bright to the coiner the mintage of man,
The lads that will die in their glory and never be old.

THE ASPIDISTRA

Clarke / Flight

I had an aspidistra
'Twas growing in a pot.
'Twas old and green and dusty,
A living, lingering blot.
I took away its curtains
Because I loved them not.

I took away its curtains
Of lace with velvet tied.
I took away its curtains
Which were the creature's pride.
I took away its curtains
And the aspidistra died.

AS IT IS, PLENTY

Britten / Auden

As it is, plenty;
As it's admitted
The children happy
And the car, the car
That goes so far
And the wife devoted:
To this as it is,
To the work and the banks
Let his thinning hair
And his hauteur
Give thanks, give thanks.

All that was thought
As like as not, is not
When nothing was enough
But love, but love
And the rough future
Of an intransigent nature
And the betraying smile,
Betraying, but a smile:
That that is not, is not;
Forget, Forget.

Let him not cease to praise
Then his spacious days;
Yes, and the success
Let him bless, let him bless:
Let him see in this
The profits larger
And the sins venal,
Lest he see as it is
The loss as major
And final, final.

DOWN BY THE SALLEY GARDENS

Britten / Yeats

Down by the salley gardens my love and I did meet;
She passed the salley gardens with little snow-white feet.
She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the tree;
But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree.

In a field by the river my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white hand.
She bid me take life easy, as the grass grows on the weirs;
But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears.

PROUD SONGSTERS

Finzi / Hardy

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 twelvemonths' 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.

WINTER WORDS, OP. 52 (extracts)

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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SONGS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN



THEANO PAPADAKI soprano

SHOLTO KYNOCH piano

THU 14 MAY, 6PM
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KNIGHT'S DREAM



HELEN CHARLSTON mezzo-soprano
SHOLTO KYNOCH piano

THU 26 NOV, 6PM
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