

# *Introduction*

Welcome to *A Promise of Spring!* I selected this term's music intrinsically for its British connections in this year of Jubilee celebrations. *Merrie England* has turned out to be an interesting piece to work on for whilst it is not harmonically challenging there has been much to do to secure a successful and enthusiastic performance from the choir and soloists.

*Captain Noah and His Floating Zoo* is new to the majority of our singers. It is a relatively modern work which uses a variety of musical styles; jazz, samba and even the lively hoedown!

I am sure that in addition to our two main pieces in tonight's programme you will enjoy the British folk songs and performances from our talented young soloists.

***Nick Thomas***

# Programme

## **Extract from *Merrie England*— Edward German / Basil Hood (libretto)**

Soloists: Pat Phillips, Danielle Stacey-Evans, Huw Davies and Joe Robinson

Choir—*Sing a down, a down, a down*

Choir—*Love is meant to make us glad*

Solo—*She had a letter*

Choir—*God Save Elizabeth*

Choir & solo—*O Peaceful England*

Choir—*The Month o' May has come today*

Choir—*Oh! Here's a to-do to die today*

Choir & Solo—*Yeoman of England*

## ***Mrs Worthington*—Noel Coward**

Solo performed by Huw Davies

Songs from Great Britain part one:

\* ***The Golden Wheat* – Arr. Alan Paynes**

\* ***Loch Lomond*— arr. Thomas F. Dunhill**

\* ***Where The Gentle Avon Flows*—Ronald Binge /  
Christopher Hassall**

— INTERVAL OF 15 MINUTES —

# *Programme*

## ***Laudate Dominum—Mozart***

Solo performed by Danielle Stacey-Evans with Choir

Songs from Great Britain part two:

- \* ***Londonderry Air (Danny Boy) – Fred Weatherley (arr. Bob Chilcott)***
  
- \* ***The Drunken Sailor Arr. Donald Cashmore***

## ***Top Hat, White Tie and Tails—Irvine Berlin***

Solo performed by Joe Robinson

## ***Captain Noah and His Floating Ark— Joseph Horovitz***

Narrator and The Lord: Huw Davies

Captain Noah: Joe Robinson

Please join us for light refreshments after this evening's performance.

# *Selected Programme Notes*

## **Sir Edward German (1862 -1936)**

*Merrie England*

*Merrie England* is an English comic opera in two acts by Edward German to a libretto by Basil Hood. The patriotic story concerns love and rivalries at the court of Queen Elizabeth I, who is portrayed as jealous of the affection of Sir Walter Raleigh for Bessie Throckmorton. It opened at the Savoy Theatre in London on 2 April 1902, under the management of William Greet, and ran for 120 performances, closing on 30 July 1902. The piece then toured while the Kitty Loftus Company played at the Savoy. The production reopened at the Savoy on 24 November 1902 for 56 additional performances, ending on 17 January 1903. It starred Henry Lytton, Louie Pounds, Rosina Brandram, Robert Evett and Walter Passmore, among other regulars of the Savoy. A 78rpm recording of selections from the piece was made in 1931 on the Columbia label, with Clarence Raybould conducting "Under the Supervision" of the composer. The opera became popular and was often performed by amateur groups in the decades following its premiere.

In Queen Elizabeth II's coronation year, over five hundred amateur societies staged the piece. Despite its lively and accessible music and libretto, it has fallen into relative obscurity in recent decades, although anniversaries such as that of the Armada in 1988 have seen revivals. Individual songs from *Merrie England* have been recorded many times although a complete professional recording has not been made in the UK since the early 1960s.

**Source: Wikipedia (edited)**

## **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)**

*Laudate Dominum* (from *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore*, K 339)

In 1780 Mozart completed his second Vespers setting, the *Vesperae solennes de Confessore*. Like its predecessor, the *Vesperae de Dominica* of 1779, it was probably intended for use in Salzburg Cathedral. Both settings consist of a sequence of six separate movements, of which *Laudate Dominum* is the penultimate. The text is from Psalm 116 in the Vulgate numbering. In the *Vesperae Solennes*, it

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is an aria for soprano comprising a simple extended soaring melody of supreme beauty. The rapturous charm of this theme inspired many later arrangers to rework the piece as an independent concert item

**Source: This note was supplied by Making Music. Author: William Gould (2001)**

### ***Frederick Weatherley (1848-1929)***

*Londonderry Air*

The most popular lyrics for the tune are *Danny Boy* ("Oh Danny Boy, the pipes, the pipes are calling"), written by English lawyer Frederick Edward Weatherly in 1910, and set to the tune in 1913. While Weatherly intended the song as a parting message from a woman to a man, others have interpreted the parting in the song as that between a parent or grandparent and a son or grandson going off to war. The song has sometimes been taken as a call to arms or a rebel song, sometimes with the addition of verses of a more military nature.

Frederick Edward Weatherly was an English lawyer, author, songwriter and radio entertainer. He was born and brought up in Portishead, Somerset before moving to Bath.

**Source: Wikipedia**

***The Drunken Sailor*** is an air taken from a traditional Irish dance and march tune, *Oró Sé do Bheatha 'Bhaile* (Translated as "Óró, you are welcome home") originally in dorian mode. The music was first reproduced in printed form in 1824–25 in Cole's *Selection of Favourite Cotillions* published in Baltimore. However, the lyrics were first published in 1891 under the title *What to do with a Drunken Sailor?* It is one of the few shanties that were sung in quick time.

**Source: Wikipedia**

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### **Joseph Horovitz (born 1926)**

#### *Captain Noah and his Floating Zoo*

The British composer and conductor Joseph Horovitz has enjoyed a long and distinguished career stretching back over six decades. His highly accessible and attractive music has won a well-deserved popularity, and his works include 16 ballets, two one-act operas, concertos for bassoon, clarinet, euphonium, oboe, percussion, trumpet and violin, and chamber and band music. He has also written music for the cinema and for television, most notably for the series *Rumpole of the Bailey*. Born in Vienna, Horovitz moved with his family to England at the age of 12. After studying music at New College, Oxford University and at the Royal College of Music in London, he spent a year with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. In 1950 he became music director at the Bristol Old Vic and subsequently worked as an opera conductor, winning an international reputation. He has been professor of composition at the Royal College of Music since 1961 and has been a member of the council of the Composers' Guild of Great Britain since 1970. He served on the board of the Performing Right Society from 1969 to 1996.

An impish sense of humour and a talent for witty parody infuse Horovitz's most popular works, and these gifts are much in evidence in *Captain Noah and his Floating Zoo*. Horovitz composed this cantata in 1970, originally as a work for children, but its down-to-earth and often droll libretto by Michael Flanders soon made it a favourite with adult performers too. It was conceived as an adaptable work and can be performed by a two-part choir of trebles or a full mixed choir with an accompaniment that can range from piano alone to piano, double bass, guitar and jazz percussion, as occasion and available talent dictate.

In *Captain Noah and his Floating Zoo* the Flood story in Genesis is given a generally lighthearted treatment. It is divided into ten sections that employ various contrasting popular musical styles from jazz and musical theatre. Horovitz's reprise of earlier themes at various points helps to

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unify the work. It opens with threatening, clashing chords before launching into the first number, in which God declares his displeasure with humanity. Only Noah and his family have been good, and so God commands Noah to build an ark of gopher wood into which he and his relatives must bring two of every animal. During his preparations, the wicked sinners of Fun City jeer at Noah, but he carries on regardless. To the rhythm of a Latin American samba, the family collect up all the animals from antelope to zebra. Isolated irregular tinkles on the piano signal the first of the raindrops that herald the Flood, and these coalesce into a jazz riff introducing the chorus of sinners singing *It looks like rain*. The music rises in intensity and the world's creatures are drowned in the deluge.

For 40 days and nights the ark sails over the flood waters to serene music. A sombre march portrays the incessant drumming of the rain and the sense of depression caused by being confined within the ark. But then the rain stops and the ark sails on calmly until it comes to rest on Mount Ararat. The music again reflects this serenity, but as the waters recede the mood lightens, and to the rhythm of a hoedown Noah sends forth a raven (note Flanders' cheeky quotation from Edgar Allan Poe) and then a dove to search for dry land. The music winds down to a majestic close as Noah and his family prepare to leave the ark. In a reworking of the first chorus, God instructs Noah to leave his saving home and release the pairs of animals back onto the earth. God tells all his creatures to go forth and multiply and pledges never again to destroy humanity with a flood. In the final number, Noah and his relatives see God's rainbow, a sign of his pledge. This is the cantata's 'big tune', which leads into the fast-paced finale, a closer fit for any stage musical.

**Source: This note was supplied by Making Music. Author: William Gould (February 2008)**

# Biographies

## **Musical Director - Nick Thomas**

Nick retired from his post as Head of Music at Kingsmead School, Wiveliscombe to spend more time on his own wide and varied musical interests. He is a multi instrumentalist concentrating mainly on flute, piano and piano accordion. He was, until recently, musical director and organist at St George's C of E Church, Wilton. He has performed and worked with many groups in the Taunton area including Orchestra West, and many local operatic societies.

Nick regularly plays accordion, flute and whistle with his folk band *Transters Folly*. He greatly enjoys making music, and in particular bringing out the best in other performers - be they adults or young people. He teaches flute at King's College and woodwind and singing at a number of schools around Taunton.

## **Accompanist - Rachel Robinson**

Rachel Robinson has been playing the piano from a young age. After finishing a degree in music she taught piano until she became a full time mum a couple of years ago. Rachel has enjoyed accompanying various performers from singers to instrumentalists. She also plays the French horn with Somerset County Orchestra.

Rachel accompanies the choir during their Monday evening rehearsals.

## **Soloist - Danielle Stacey-Evans**

Danielle is a student at Bridgwater College where she is studying Level 3 Extended Diploma in Music. She performed with The West Somerset Singers at our concert at the Albemarle Centre where she gave an impressive performance of Gershwin's *Summertime*. Danielle plays flute and is learning guitar and piano. Singing is Danielle's first love and she aims to continue with singing and performance at university.

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## **Soloist - Huw Davies**

Huw is a lower sixth form student at Richard Huish College in Taunton. He has performed with our choir before, notably as a boy soprano in Benjamin Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb* and at the Albemarle Centre singing *Mr Cellophane* with which he won a show song class in the Taunton Festival 2011. Huw has recently achieved a merit passed at grade 6 singing. He would like to continue singing but hopes to go to Oxford to study Philosophy, Politics and Economics.

## **Soloist - Joe Robinson**

Joe is a Year 10 student at Kingsmead School, Wiveliscombe where he is studying for his GCSEs. Joe really loves acting and performing and would eventually like to make this his profession but he has no delusions and is really keeping his options open! Joe has performed in several school shows and recently won a class at the Taunton Festival with the song he is going to perform for us this evening from the 1935 musical, *Top Hat*.

# *Acknowledgements*

The West Somerset Singers would like to thank **Taunton Baptist Church** for their hospitality.

Thank you to **Oxford Library** and **Plymouth Library** for supplying copies of *Merrie England*, **Cumbria Library** and **Somerset Performing Arts Library** for supplying *Captain Noah and His Floating Ark*. The other pieces in this evening's programme were supplied by **Somerset Performing Arts Library** or have been purchased by The West Somerset Singers.

Thank you also to **Making Music** for programme notes.

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The West Somerset Singers are looking for new members for all vocal parts. We do not currently hold an audition process but the ability to read music would be very helpful.

We meet on Monday evenings for two terms in the Gwyn Williams room at Taunton School. Our next rehearsal will take place on Monday 10th September 2012 at 7.30pm when we will begin work on our varied Christmas programme.

The West Somerset Singers' next performance will be a Christmas concert to be held on **Saturday 1st December 2012** here at Taunton Baptist Church.

**For further information please visit our website  
[www.westsomersetsingers.org.uk](http://www.westsomersetsingers.org.uk)**