

Dunsford Singers

A Teign Valley Choir

present

Mozart's Missa Brevis in G and Opera Choruses

10th and 17th June 2023

**Conductor: Tim Pithers
Accompanist: Carol Galton**

with string accompaniment

WELCOME

Dunsford Singers offer you a warm welcome on this summer's evening and hope you will feel uplifted and entertained by the programme we are offering tonight. The choir extends its warm thanks to Teign valley-based Mr Barry Clarke of Premier DGU for his sponsorship of the Dunsford Singers: A Teign Valley Choir

Francis Leversedge
Chairman.

MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Tim is passionate about community and student music-making and firmly believes that classical music should be made as accessible as possible to performers and audiences alike.

He undertook his degree in Music and French at the University of Exeter where he studied violin with Mary Eade, composition with Joe Duddell and specialised in musical direction. Tim has studied conducting with Denise Ham, Dominic Grier and Rodolfo Saglimbeni at the George Hurst Conductors' Course at Sherborne Summer School of Music and at the newly established Girton Conducting Course. He enjoys working with ensembles of varying degrees of experience and aims to develop ambitious objectives for amateur groups.

As well as holding the role of Musical Director of the Dunsford Singers, Tim is Conductor of the Dartmouth Orchestra, Exeter University Symphony Orchestra, Exeter University Symphonic Wind Orchestra and EX4 Chamber Orchestra. Recent concert highlights have included Brahms' 2nd Symphony, Tchaikovsky's 2nd Symphony and Variations on a Rococo Theme with soloist Amye Farrell, and iconic works for wind band including Vaughan-Williams' Toccata Marziale and Grainger's Lincolnshire Posy.

ACCOMPANIST

Carol has lived and worked in Devon for the past 36 years. She was born in South Africa where she completed a Masters in Philosophy before coming to the UK to continue as a postgraduate student. At the same time she continued piano and cello studies and received a teaching diploma from the Royal College of Music. She spent 20 years as a primary school teacher in Exeter. In her role as music coordinator she was involved with children's music making at all levels. She now teaches piano and cello, and accompanies instrumentalists and singers, alongside performing. She divides her spare time between vegetable growing, playing chamber music with local musicians and playing cello in the Devon Philharmonic Orchestra.

CONCERT CHOIR

Soprano: Jane Boulton, Julie Cooney, Ruth Frampton, Jeanie Honey, Daphne Leversedge, Hazel Linney, Jo Macdonald, Sarah Maybin, Diana Petit, Mary Sansom, Mari Turner

Alto: Jo Anderson, Bryony Bushell, Jo Jenkin, Erica Lee, Leslie Pearman, Liz Robin, Toria Wimpenny

Tenor: Steve Cook, Giles Frampton, Lorraine Hart, Francis Leversedge, Ray Mallett, Li-li Williams, Mike Wimpenny

Bass: Gerald Battersby, Peter Goodchild, Don Oliver, John Sawyer, Jan Traylen,

FUTURE DATES FOR THE DIARY

Autumn choir rehearsals recommence Monday 18th September 2023 at Dunsford Village Hall. New singers welcome!

Concerts: St Mary's Church Dunsford on Sunday 3rd December at 4.30pm
Teign Valley Community Hall on Saturday 9th December at 7.30pm.

DUNSFORD SINGERS HISTORY

Dunsford Singers has a loyal following in Dunsford while also attracting members from Teign Valley villages such as Christow, Trusham, Bridford and Doddiscombsleigh. Some now attend from Manaton, Bovey Tracey and Ottery St Mary and Honiton. That speaks volumes for our outstanding Musical Director and for the openness of spirit within the choir. While a non-auditioning choir, with some members who do not read music, members expect to practice between sessions. Do feel free to speak with any of us and come to try us out. We always welcome new members. See the back page of this programme and our website for more encouragement!

REFRESHMENTS AND INTERVAL

Complimentary refreshments of wine and soft drinks and nibbles are available during the interval and will be served by choir members.

PROGRAMME - FIRST HALF

MOZART'S MESSA BREVIS IN G MAJOR (KV49)

Dunsford Singers soloists:

Sopranos: Hazel Linney, Julie Cooney, Sarah Maybin

Alto: Jo Jenkin

Tenors: Steve Cook, Giles Frampton

Bass: Don Oliver



Although Mozart regarded himself as principally an operatic composer, he also produced enormous quantities of music in every form available to him. He wrote church music from his early youth until the end of his life. The so-called "Great" Mass in C minor, K.427 and the Requiem, K. 626 are his best known sacred works though he finished neither. Among his shorter pieces, the "Ave Verum", K. 618 is particularly well known. There are fifteen complete Masses, six of which are designated "Missa Brevis" (Short Mass.) Mozart began composing at the age of 5 and the "Missa Brevis" in G major, K.49 which we are singing tonight was the first of the six. It dates from late 1768 when Mozart was 12 years old and living temporarily in Vienna. Written for soprano, alto, tenor and bass soloists and chorus, it consists of the usual five sections: "Kyrie" ("Lord have Mercy"), "Gloria" ("Glory to God in the Highest"), "Credo" ("I Believe in one God"), Sanctus ("Holy, Holy, Holy") and "Agnus Dei" ("Lamb of God"). Mozart originally wrote an accompaniment for a very small orchestra of strings and organ. The function of the strings was mostly to double or elaborate the vocal lines and to keep the texture busy between vocal entries. Although an early work, the composer's promise is already apparent, especially in the lyrical writing for the soloists and the contrapuntal writing for the choir; short fugues conclude the "Gloria" and the "Credo". The "Et Incarnatus" ("He was incarnate") from the "Credo" is also a highlight; slowly moving harmonies in repeated quavers accompany the chorus and descending chromatic lines heighten the intensity of 'Passus et Sepultus' ("He suffered and was buried"). For us, perhaps the most challenging part of the work is a section in the "Credo" where the tempo keeps changing. Here, perhaps, the young Mozart is trying a little too hard to reflect the meaning of the words in his music!

Perhaps Mozart is at his very greatest in the marvellous series of piano concertos, a form which he brought to a perfection hitherto unimagined. In 1784, he produced no fewer than six of them. Try No 17 in G major, K. 453. Even by his standards Mozart was having a good day when he wrote that one!

PROGRAMME - SECOND HALF

HANDEL'S ALCINA: Questo e il cielo de' contenti

Handel's operas were not performed for many years as they were thought to be so hidebound by dramatic convention as to be of no interest to the opera loving public. "Alcina" dates from the 1730s and is quite frequently revived now. Alcina is an enchantress who entices heroes into her domain to become her lovers, transforming them into rocks, streams, trees or wild beasts when she grows tired of them. The "Chorus of the Enchanted Islanders" comes at the beginning of the opera and is sung by Alcina's captives after her palace has dramatically appeared from the middle of a mountain. The story concludes with Alcina losing her magic powers. Her palace is submerged by the sea and the lovers are revived.

BIZET'S CARMEN: L'amour est un oiseau rebelle

Soloists: Julie Cooney, Hazel Linney

Bizet's "Carmen", one of the most famous and popular of all operas, is important historically as it features "real" people living life in the raw as opposed to the mythical machinations of gods or the amorous escapades of members of the aristocracy. This paved the way for the short-lived school of Verismo, of which Mascagni's "Cavalleria Rusticana" was the first example. In Bizet's opera, Carmen sings the famous "Habanera", "Love is a rebellious bird" when she enters. The tune is not, in fact, by Bizet. He adapted it from what he thought was a folk song but it turned out to be a tune by Sebastain Yradier, the composer of "La Paloma", who had died ten years earlier. Bizet later acknowledged this in the score. The opera concludes with Carmen stabbed by her jealous lover, Don José....life in the raw indeed!

PUCCINI'S MADAM BUTTERFLY: Humming Chorus

Puccini was the last of the line of major Italian composers from the golden age of opera. "Madama Butterfly", however, failed at its first performance in 1904 largely because it had been inadequately prepared after the score was completed late. The story concerns a Japanese girl who is abandoned by her American sailor husband, Pinkerton, soon after they are married. She gives birth to his son. When Pinkerton returns with his new wife, Butterfly commits suicide. After the opera's initial failure, Puccini revised it, splitting the second act into two with the famous "Humming Chorus" bridging the gap. It marks the beginning of Butterfly's long wait for Pinkerton's return. Choruses in 20th century music drama are rare because they have a tendency to hold up the action!

'AIR' FROM PIANO SUITE by Helen Hopekirk

Carol Galton, keyboard.

Helen Hopekirk was a Scottish pianist and composer who lived and worked in Boston. She was born in 1856 in Edinburgh, and her early training was in Scotland. As a pianist she gave performances in Europe and also the USA where she decided to settle, to teach, play and compose. The Suite was composed in 1916, and is based on the movements of the Baroque Suite – dances like Minuet, Sarabande. The Air is the third movement and is a gentle piece which I find wistful and charming, and very fitting for a summer evening. I also like to champion women composers! Carol Galton.

PURCELL'S DIDO AND AENEAS: "When I am laid in earth"

Soloists: Julie Cooney, Hazel Linney

The English composer Henry Purcell wrote his opera "Dido and Aeneas" some time during the 1680s. It was his only true opera and his only all-sung dramatic work. The story is based on Book IV of Virgil's Aeneid. It recounts the love of Dido, Queen of Carthage, for the Trojan hero, Aeneas, and her despair when he abandons her. Dido's famous lament comes at the end of the opera. It is built on a ground bass: a sequence of notes repeated in the bass which binds the music together. This is heard for the first time after a brief recitative and comes eleven times in all. Its chromatic descent reflects Dido's despair. Every year "Dido's Lament" is played by the massed bands of the Guards Division at the Cenotaph parade in Whitehall on Remembrance Sunday.

ROSSINI'S GUILLAUME TELL: "Quel jour serein le ciel presage"

The definition of an intellectual, they say, is anyone who can listen to the overture to Rossini's last opera "William Tell" without thinking of someone called the "Lone Ranger"....but there is more to the opera than that.... a lot more, in fact, since it is one of the longest operas ever written, running in its original form for 4 hours. It tells the story of Tell, who was probably a fictional character, and his rallying of the Swiss against the Austrians. The Villagers' Chorus comes at the very beginning of the opera. The people are preparing chalets for three newly wedded couples and sing as they work. Tell stands aside, preoccupied with weightier matters.

Andy Stewart adopted a tune from "William Tell" for his song, "There was a soldier, a Scottish soldier".

VERDI'S NABUCCO: "Va pensiero sul'ali dorate"

"Nabucco", composed in 1841, was the opera which consolidated Verdi's compositional career. After his wife and both his infant children tragically died, he lost heart and vowed never to compose again. Merelli, the impresario at La Scala, Milan, persuaded him to change his mind and "Nabucco" was the result. The Bible sometimes provided material for the stage but not the New Testament since it was then not considered acceptable for Jesus to appear in opera. The story tells of the exiling of the Jewish people from their homeland by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar (Nabucco). "Va Pensiero" is the most famous number from the opera. It is sung by the Israelites as they long for their homeland. When Verdi died in 1901, the crowd of onlookers at his funeral spontaneously began to sing this chorus in tribute to him.

VERDI'S IL TROVATORE: Anvil Chorus

Verdi's opera "Il Trovatore" ("The Troubador") was a triumph when it was first performed in 1853 and is one of the most tuneful of all his works. If you attend a performance in one of Italy's many provincial opera houses you'll hear the audience quietly humming along with all the familiar melodies. The opera's tunefulness is its saving grace because its plot, a story of witchcraft, murder and vengeance, is notoriously complicated. The famous "Anvil Chorus" is sung by gypsies and praises hard work, good wine and pretty women.

Until July 2nd "Il Trovatore" is being performed at the Royal Opera House in London. Catch it live at cinemas in Exeter on June 13th or, recorded, on June 20th.

Don Oliver

DUNSFORD SINGERS



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WHAT DID YOU DO THIS YEAR?!

FILLED MY LUNGS
MAXIMISED MY OXYGEN INTAKE
CORRECTED MY POSTURE
LEARNED TO CONTROL MY DIAPHRAGM
RELAXED AND IMPROVED MY MOOD
WORKED MY NUMERACY
IMPROVED MY LANGUAGES
LISTENED TO OTHERS
CHALLENGED MY BRAIN
FOCUSSED ON TEAMWORK
LAUGHED WITH FRIENDS
MADE MISTAKES AND IT WAS OK
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