



Thomas Tallis Society Choir
Directed by Eamonn Dougan



FINZI Requiem da camera
Baritone - Roderick Williams



Elgar, Parry & Vaughan Williams
Marking the centenary of the end of WWI



PROGRAMME

Sullivan ~ The long day closes

Parry ~ My soul, there is a country

READING: **Thomas** ~ *Lights Out*; **Gurney** ~ *Ypres – Minsterworth*

Finzi ~ Severn Rhapsody

READING: **Gurney** ~ *Billet*; **Thomas** ~ *A Private*

Elgar ~ They are at rest

READING: **Gurney** ~ *Ballad of the three Spectres*; **Thomas** ~ *February Afternoon*

Roderick Williams ~ O saviour of the world

Vaughan Williams ~ The turtle dove

Finzi ~ Requiem da Camera

PROGRAMME NOTES by Daniel Jaffé

Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900) – ‘The Long Day Closes’

Arthur Sullivan is most widely known for the operettas he composed in collaboration with the writer W.S. Gilbert. However even before that partnership he was already by his mid-twenties establishing his reputation. His part song ‘The Long Day Closes’ was first published in 1868, just two years after his first comic opera *Cox and Box*, and three years before his first collaboration with Gilbert, *Thespis*, opened at the Gaiety in 1871. The words for this part song are by Sullivan’s friend Henry F. Chorley, who had also written the libretto for his first shot at opera, *The Sapphire Necklace*.

‘The Long Day Closes’ is a meditation on death, its autumnal imagery preparing for the final image of “the dreamless bed Where grief reposes”. Sullivan’s gentle setting, with just one dramatic moment of unison on the words “Heed not how hope believes And fate disposes”, gently reinforces the poem’s mood of stoic resignation.

Hubert Parry (1848-1918) – ‘My soul, there is a country’

Though famous for rousing choral works such as the coronation anthem ‘I was glad’, and above all for ‘Jerusalem’, Parry – the centenary of whose death falls this year – was also capable of writing works of far more intimate expression. This he demonstrated when in 1906 the Master of the King’s Music, Sir Walter Parratt, commissioned him to write a motet for a service marking the anniversary of Queen Victoria’s death, to be held at the Royal Mausoleum in Frogmore on 22 January 1907. This was the nudge Parry needed to start composing a set of a *cappella* motets he had long aspired to create in emulation of the German composer he admired above all, Brahms. First to be written was ‘There is an old belief’, which received its first performed at that memorial service. This was followed by sketches for three more motets (another two were eventually to follow to make a total of six, published under the collective title *Songs of Farewell*), including ‘My soul, there is a country’, setting the poem ‘Peace’ by the 17th-century metaphysical poet Henry Vaughan.

Parry finished drafting ‘My Soul’ by September 1913, but then, on hearing Stanford’s newly composed Three Motets, Op. 135, felt he should further improve the four motets he had already substantially composed. ‘My soul’ appeared to give him considerable trouble and was apparently not completed until early 1915, by which time the First World War had been raging for some months – making all the more poignant the lines “There, above noise and danger, Sweet Peace sits crowned with smiles”. Such is Parry’s skill in word setting, even when writing for just four-part choir, that his motet encompasses a great variety of moods in a relatively short time, using dramatic key changes and arresting moments of homophony to dramatize the meaning of Vaughan’s poem: yet it all coheres into a single narrative span, the musical query presented by the motet’s first four chords ultimately answered by an assured and convincing resolution.

Edward Thomas (1878-1917) – ‘Lights Out’

Read by Geoff Woodhouse

Born in Lambeth of Welsh heritage, Edward Thomas made a successful career as a writer and literary critic before venturing into writing poetry in 1914 with the encouragement of the American poet Robert Frost. Inspired by his walks with Thomas in East Hampshire, Frost’s most famous poem, ‘The Road Not Taken’, was originally intended to poke gentle fun at Thomas for his indecisiveness when on those walks. Unfortunately, when Frost sent the poem to Thomas, the Englishman took it seriously and persuaded himself that he should enlist in the Artists Rifles in July 1915. Thomas rose through the ranks and in November 1916 was commissioned into the Royal Garrison Artillery as a second lieutenant. He was killed in action at Arras, not long after his arrival in France, on Easter Monday, 9 April 1917.

Ivor Gurney (1890-1937) – ‘Ypres – Minsterworth’

Read by Geoff Woodhouse

Born and raised in Gloucester, Gurney was a notable poet and song composer, who among his friends counted Vaughan Williams, Howells and Finzi. He was a composition student of Stanford’s at the Royal College of Music, and while his notoriously prickly teacher conceded that Gurney was potentially the most gifted of his pupils, he found Gurney quite unteachable. Stanford nonetheless took an interest in Gurney’s early poems, sending some to the Poet Laureate Robert Bridges for his opinion. Gurney joined the army in 1915 and was sent to France in May 1916. Eventually sent home in 1917, having been wounded and gassed, he resumed his scholarship at the Royal College, where he was taught by Vaughan Williams. Increasingly crippled by manic depression, which appears to have been the underlying cause of his eventual loss of sanity – rather, as had once been assumed, his First World War experience – Gurney made several attempts to kill himself before becoming delusional, believing himself to be Shakespeare. Just before Christmas 1922, he was committed to the City of London mental hospital at Dartford. He nonetheless is recognised as one of the great war poets, notable for juxtaposing pastoral elegies with the brutal reality of war.

Gerald Finzi (1901-56) – A Severn Rhapsody

Early in 1923, Gerald Finzi received, as he told his artist friend Vera Somerfield, “the most terrible news I have had for five years. Ivor Gurney has gone mad.” That year he composed *A Severn Rhapsody*, his first substantial instrumental work, which he dedicated to Vera. The work was perhaps prompted by Gurney’s plight, but it seems that Finzi was more generally recalling the whole generation of talent lost during, or apparently through, the First World War, not

least his own beloved first composition teacher Ernest Bristow Farrar (see the note on *Requiem da camera*). Hence the quotation by another casualty of the war, Rupert Brooke, inscribed on the score: "...Oh! Yet Stands the Church clock at ten to three? And is there honey still for tea?" Though we may smile at Brooke's twee sentiment, its significance for Finzi was of a world irrevocably lost or removed by the trauma of the War. The Rhapsody also commemorates George Butterworth, another great talent who was killed in France, through allusions to his song, 'Loveliest of Trees' (setting a poem from A.E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*): first heard at the Rhapsody's very opening, this returns more unmistakably as the music builds in passion.

Finzi designated both this, and his *Requiem da camera*, as his opus 3 under the title *English Pastorals and Elegies*.

Gurney – 'Billet'

Read by Geoff Woodhouse

Thomas – 'A Private'

Read by Geoff Woodhouse

Edward Elgar (1857-1934) – 'They are at rest'

Three years after having approached Parry, Sir Walter Parratt turned to Elgar with a similar request – that is, to write a motet for the annual memorial service at the Royal Mausoleum in Frogmore, held on 22 January 1910. Elgar chose his text from Cardinal Newman, whose poem *The Dream of Gerontius* had been the basis of one of his very greatest choral works. Elgar's motet starts with a melodic phrase which echoes the opening of his by then almost completed Violin Concerto, but made all the more startling by its full harmonisation, which makes it appear to start in a key entirely different key from its 'home' tonality. Its mood – grave and wistful – otherwise recalls Elgar's then recently written Elegy for strings. It is, in its understated way, a perfectly turned masterpiece.

Gurney – 'Ballad of the three Spectres'

Read by Geoff Woodhouse

Thomas – 'February Afternoon'

Read by Geoff Woodhouse

Roderick Williams (b.1965) – 'O Saviour of the World'

Not only is Roderick Williams one of our most distinguished baritones performing today, but he is also a much respected composer. 'O Saviour of the World', written to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Thomas Tallis Society, appropriately takes inspiration from Tallis's 'Salvator Mundi'. The choir first performed Williams's piece, alongside the Tallis work, here at St Alfege Church on 17 October 2015. One does not need to hear the works side by side, though, to hear how Tallis's polyphonic style informs Williams's piece; yet, as the composer has written, it soon shifts "into a more contemporary and impassioned plea for salvation". Part of the piece's disquieting quality is from the almost ever-present *diabolus in musica* – the augmented fourth – and the closely related flattened second degree of the scale, both of which challenge the choir to maintain its tuning and thereby creates the piece's fraught atmosphere.

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) – 'The Turtle Dove'

Vaughan Williams famously had his musical epiphany in 1903 when he heard an Essex labourer, Charles Potiphar, sing 'Bushes and Briars'. This first encounter with genuine English folk song inspired Vaughan Williams to start collecting such melodies from around England – he annotated 800 songs in all – several of which he adapted into hymns and carols as he edited *The English Hymnal*, as well as arranging into atmospheric tone poems for orchestra. He also made several arrangements for choir, including of 'The Turtle Dove', the melody and words of which he first heard and recorded in Sussex. He originally arranged it for baritone and piano in 1919, then in 1924 published this arrangement for baritone and a cappella choir. Vaughan Williams did not hesitate to add something of his own character and style to his arrangements, believing that each rendition of a folk melody inevitably reflected the character of the singer or, in his case, the composer!

* * * INTERVAL * * *

(Drinks served in the Church Hall directly opposite the church)

Finzi – Requiem da camera (completion by Christian Alexander)

Finzi tends to be remembered above all for his cantata *Dies natalis*, one of the most beautiful settings of the English language in 20th-century music, his Clarinet Concerto and for several of his short choral works. The general impression people have of his music is of an English pastoral composer, ruminative in a style to an extent indebted to his mentor Vaughan Williams. Finzi's still little-known early work, *Requiem da camera*, does not so much subvert this image as illuminate and clarify much of what his music signifies.

The poems Finzi set in his *Requiem* were all written during the First World War – that is, all within the ten-year period before he completed this work. Its pastoral setting – although of the kind routinely mocked by smart young composers in the 1920s such as Constant Lambert – was a still vivid memory of a world once familiar to Finzi’s generation (Finzi was 17 when the War ended) and to his elders; a world abruptly and apparently lost through the trauma of the War.

Finzi’s *Requiem* is dedicated to the memory of his first composition teacher, Ernest Bristow Farrar. A former student of Stanford’s at the Royal College of Music, Farrar was later described by his former teacher as “very shy, but full of poetry”. He had just turned 30 when Finzi, aged 14 and just recently settled in Harrogate with his eccentric widowed mother, was introduced to him. Finzi, who had desired to be a composer since he was nine, even in the face of discouraging advice from various musicians, was grateful for Farrar’s serious but highly sympathetic and patient attention to the business of training him in the craft of composition. Even when not due for a lesson, Finzi made a habit of sitting on the fence outside Farrar’s home, waiting either to be invited in, or to take a walk with his teacher on the moors.

In August 1916 Farrar joined the army, passing Finzi into the very capable hands of the organist of York Minster, Edward C. Bairstow. Finzi was nonetheless devastated when news came two years later of Farrar’s death on 18 September 1918, after just ten days at the front and only weeks before the Armistice. Serving alongside Farrar was the poet J.B. Priestley, already celebrated before the war for his poem ‘Sea-Fever’. Priestley wrote to Farrar’s widow, Olive, that her husband was “a representative of one of the finest types of humanity, a creative artist, freed from all little meannesses and jealousies”. In Finzi’s *Requiem da camera* it is verses from his poem, ‘August, 1914’, which are first sung by the choir.

This is preceded by a Prelude for orchestra alone, by turns rhapsodic and brooding, in which appears – as in *A Severn Rhapsody* – that wistful opening phrase from Butterworth’s ‘Loveliest of Trees’. The Prelude reaches an anguished climax of brief discord before ebbing away, the woodwind and horn solos, barely accompanied, suggesting a quiet, abandoned rural landscape – effectively setting the scene for the following setting of Priestley’s poem. This is by far the most substantial movement, much of it sung by a cappella voices (Finzi had originally envisaged a quartet of solo voices, but the small choir typically used to perform this work is more practical and effective: not only is choral singing today of a higher standard than Finzi could have taken for granted, but also such a body of singers better balances with the orchestra). Priestley’s poem starts as a hymn to the countryside and its labourers; then recalls how “century after century” those men “heard...the rumours and alarms of war”, signalling that they are about to be taken from their land. The remarkable intensity of dissonance Finzi builds at this point, followed by the starkness of “Death, like a miser getting in his rent” contrasts with the poignancy of the abandoned landscape, deftly drawn by Priestley’s poem in Finzi’s sensitive setting.

Then follows Thomas Hardy’s ‘In Time of “The Breaking of the Nations”’, with its famous opening line “Only a man harrowing clods”. Hardy had written this poem at the turn of 1915-16, when the London weekly paper *Saturday Review* had requested he should submit something encouraging to publish during the war’s bleakest period. Finzi first attempted to set Hardy’s poem for baritone and piano in 1923, this being his first step in creating what became his four movement *Requiem*. Within the next ten years, after several failed attempts to get his *Requiem* published, Finzi extensively revised this movement, replacing the originally rather stolid setting of the second and third verses with a more varied and expressive treatment. He never quite finished its orchestration, and the rough state of the surviving manuscripts means there has been more than one edition of Finzi’s *Requiem*.

The *Requiem* ends with a setting of Wilfrid Wilson Gibson’s ‘Lament’, which remembers those who can no longer happily love “the sun and the rain”, and considers the “little things” of nature with a sense of an Eden lost.

EAMONN DOUGAN



Eamonn Dougan is an inspirational conductor and renowned baritone. He is Associate Conductor of The Sixteen and founding Director of Britten Sinfonia Voices. Informed by his singing, Eamonn is an engaging communicator with a particular passion for Bach, the French Baroque and Sixteenth and Twentieth Century English repertoire.

Forthcoming conducting engagements include concerts and broadcasts with the BBC Singers, a tour of Belgium with The Sixteen, a programme featuring Stravinsky & Mozart with the Britten Sinfonia at Milton Court as part of the Barbican’s Esa-Pekka Salonen composer focus, a tour of France with renowned ensemble Accentus, and continued work educating choral groups across the world including conducting his own Thomas Tallis Society and Genesis Sixteen. Eamonn’s work with Sir James MacMillan and James’s Cumnock Tryst Festival continues as he returns to conduct the chorus for Mozart’s *Coronation Mass*, and in 2018 he’ll conduct a special MacMillan premiere composed for the Tryst’s fifth anniversary.

With the Britten Sinfonia Voices he has conducted several world premieres including Sir John Tavener’s *Flood of Beauty*, Esenvalds’ *Aqua*, Nico Muhly’s *Looking Forward* for the Britten Sinfonia’s 20th birthday and the choral premiere of Jóhann Jóhannsson’s *Orphée* at the Barbican. He has assisted various conductors including Sir James MacMillan, Martyn Brabbins, Andreas Delfs, Adam Fischer and Sir Mark Elder. Since 2008 Eamonn has been a Visiting Professor to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, where he teaches ensemble singing and directs the Guildhall Consort; he is Music Director for the Thomas Tallis Society. Eamonn read music at New College, Oxford, before continuing his vocal and conducting studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

RODERICK WILLIAMS



Roderick Williams encompasses a wide repertoire, from baroque to contemporary music, in the opera house, on the concert platform and in recital. He won the Singer of the Year Award in the 2016 Royal Philharmonic Society Awards and was awarded the OBE for services to music in June 2017.

He enjoys relationships with all the major UK opera houses and is particularly associated with the baritone roles of Mozart. He has also sung world premieres of operas by, among others, David Sawer, Sally Beamish, Michael van der Aa and Robert Saxton.

Roderick Williams has sung concert repertoire with all the BBC orchestras, and many other ensembles including the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Philharmonia, London Sinfonietta, Manchester Camerata, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hallé, Britten Sinfonia, Bournemouth Symphony, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Russian National Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Ensemble Orchestral de Paris, Academy of Ancient Music, The Sixteen, Le Concert Spirituel, Rias Kammerchor and Bach Collegium Japan. His many festival appearances include the BBC Proms, Edinburgh, Cheltenham, Aldeburgh, Bath and Melbourne.

In 2015 he sang Christus in Peter Sellars' staging of the St John Passion with the Berlin Philharmonic conducted by Sir Simon Rattle – a performance now available on DVD. He will sing this role again with both the Berlin Philharmonic and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in 2019.

Recent and future engagements include *Oronte* in Charpentier's *Medée*, Toby Kramer in Van der Aa's *Sunken Garden* and Don Alfonso/*Così* for English National Opera, the title role in *Eugene Onegin* for Garsington Opera, Van der Aa's *After Life* at Melbourne State Theatre, Van der Aa's *Sunken Garden* at Opera de Lyon, the Amsterdam Sinfonietta and with Dallas Opera, the title role in *Billy Budd* for Opera North and at the Aldeburgh Festival, Papageno *Die Zauberflöte* and Ulisse *Il Ritorno di Ulisse in Patria* for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, a concert performance of Ned Keene/*Peter Grimes* with Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, the Last Night of the 2014 BBC Proms, as well as concert performances with many of the world's leading orchestras and ensembles. He is also an accomplished recital artist who can be heard at venues and festivals including Wigmore Hall, Kings Place, LSO St Luke's, the Perth Concert Hall, Oxford Lieder Festival, London Song Festival, the Musikverein, Vienna, the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam and on Radio 3, where he has participated in Iain Burnside's *Voices* programme.

His numerous recordings include Vaughan Williams, Berkeley and Britten operas for Chandos and an extensive repertoire of English song with pianist Iain Burnside for Naxos.

Roderick Williams is also a composer and has had works premiered at the Wigmore and Barbican Halls, the Purcell Room and live on national radio. He was Artistic Director of Leeds Lieder + in April 2016.

Thomas Tallis Society Orchestra

Violin

Emma Lisney (Leader)

Ivelina Ivanova

Cristina Morell

Arisa Nemoto

Andrew Molloy

Paula Guerra

Viola

Mathias Wiesner

Seb Brooks

Cello

Ed Furse

Alex Borthwick

Double Bass

Alice Kent

Flute

Jenny Dyson

Oboe

Polly Bartlett

Cor Anglais

Emily Penn

Clarinet

Charlotte Bartley

Horn

Paul Coll

Harp

Elizabeth Green

Rehearsal Pianist

Douglas Tang

Thomas Tallis Society Choir

Sopranos

Phoebe Clapham, Alana Clarke, Imogen Faris, Penny Gunstone, **Emily Jennings**, Claire Jones, Philippa Kent, Rachel Lethbridge, Ley Spicer, Jenny Standage, Kathryn Strachan, Hilary Todhunter, Jenny Wegg

Altos

Caitlin Brooks, Rosemary Burch, Joanna Clark, Susan Dean, Moira Fitzgerald, Bryony Ford, Barbara Gormley, Sally Hughes, Emma Humphries, Emily John, Philippa John, Cathy Norbury, Alice Shelton, Ruthie Smith

Tenors

Justin Eeles, Andrew Greene, Larry Howes, Alan Jolly, Andrew Lang, John Parsons, Anthony Ramsden, Paul Renney

Basses

Dermot Agnew, Rob Barker, Richard Brooks, Cyril Cleary, Simon Gallie, Andrew Harper, David Houghton, Daniel Jaffé, Jonathan Louth, Nigel Press, John Sutton, Geoff Woodhouse

Bold denotes TTS Choral Ambassadors. Soloists tonight are: Emily Jennings, Alan Jolly

FOR YOUR DIARY – All in St Alfege Church, Greenwich

Saturday 10 November 7.45pm – Dixit Dominus

Following the sell-out performance of Monteverdi Vespers last November, TTS will again collaborate with The London International Exhibition of Early Music in **'Handel – A Celebration'**.

TTS will be accompanied by the Orchestra of The Sixteen and joined by the outstanding soprano soloist Julia Doyle for Handel's Dixit Dominus, Zadok the Priest and The King shall rejoice. Early booking advised.

Saturday 1 December 7pm – Messiah

A firmly established favourite in the Christmas calendar, TTS Choir and Orchestra perform Handel's Messiah by candlelight.

Saturday 23 March 2019 – Dvorak Stabat Mater

In collaboration with Corinthian Chamber Orchestra.

FRIENDS AND PATRONS



We are very grateful to our faithful group of Patrons and Friends that have been loyally supporting us for a number of years. Their generosity and support have really helped the Society to keep going. A reliable yearly income is a huge benefit in planning programmes and means we can budget more accurately.

We are very keen to increase the number of Patrons and Friends to help us go forward in a sustainable manner and we would love your support as either a Patron or Friend.

A Friend contributes £30 per year and this special relationship with the choir is recognised by:

- A newsletter with early notification of concerts
- An invitation to the annual Friends and Patrons party
- Recognition of support in TTS programmes

As a Patron of the Society you receive additional benefits in recognition of an annual donation of £150:

- A complimentary top price ticket to all concerts
- Free concert programmes
- Separate interval or pre-concert complimentary drinks table
- Acknowledgment of support of the Society in the programme
- An invitation to the annual Friends and Patrons party

Please consider whether you could support TTS by becoming a Patron or a Friend of the Society. Speak to Carole tonight or contact her at carolelowe@rocketmail.com.

We would like to recognise the important contribution of the following TTS Patrons: Mrs Daphne Barnett, Mrs Ursula Bowyer, Mr and Mrs T Dannatt, Ms Susan Doering, Professor Nigel Duncan, Ms Jacqueline Flurschein, Mr Simon Gallie, Revd and Mrs M Hatcher, Mr Robert John, Mr Peter Kinnison, Mr Graham Lane, Mrs Natalie Miles, Mr John O'Neill, Dr Mary-Clare Parker, Mr Adam Pollock, Mr Nigel Press, Mrs Julia Press, Mr David Quarmby, Mr and Mrs T Shelton, Ms Siobhan Smyth, Mrs Jenny Standage, Mr Simon Standage, Mr Richard Williams, Mr Robert Williams, Mrs Virginia Williams.

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With thanks to Chris Moody and the Churchwardens of St Alfege for their unremitting and enthusiastic support to make these concerts possible.