

BRIGHTON CONSORT
DIRECTOR: GREG SKIDMORE

The Byrds & The Bees

**Beautiful a capella choral music for summer
Inspired by nature, in celebration of love**

Saturday 15th July 2023, 7pm

**Church of St Mary-de-Haura
Shoreham-by-Sea, BN43 5DQ**

Sunday 16th July 2023, 7pm

**St George's Church
Brighton BN2 1ED**

Tickets: £12,
£6 concessions (with valid ID), under 12s free
www.brightonconsort.org.uk or on the door

Information: info@brightonconsort.org.uk



Brighton Consort: registered charity no. 1096432

The Byrds & The Bees

Music for summer, inspired by nature, in celebration of love

Brighton Consort

Greg Skidmore, Musical Director

Saturday, 15th of July, 2023

7:00pm

St Mary de Haura

Shoreham-by-Sea

Sunday, 16th of July, 2023

7:00pm

St George's Church, Kemptown

Brighton

Continuing our year-long focus on the music of William Byrd, we present a slightly broader programme still with Byrd at its heart. However, there are some 'birds' as well! The music on tonight's programme is all inspired by nature and love and how the two embrace one another. Sacred and secular love are both explored, and sets of similar texts group our programme together. Our final concert before taking a well-deserved summer break, this should be a slightly lighter affair!

Concert Programme

Looking to nature in the thirst for God

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina - Sicut cervus
Manuel Cardoso - Sitivit anima mea

Finding Heavenly beauty in nature

John Dunstable - Descendi in ortum meum
Cipriano de Rore - Descendi in ortum meum

God's bountiful nature

Heinrich Schütz - Die mit Tränen säen

The lilies of the valley

Francisco Guerrero - Ego flos campi
Raffaella Aleotti - Ego flos campi
Clemens non Papa - Ego flos campi

- - - INTERVAL - - -

All creatures

John Bennet - All creatures now
Edward Johnson - Come blessed bird

The troubles of love

William Byrd - While that the Sun
William Byrd - Penelope

Love's philosophy - take it or leave it!

William Byrd - The greedy hawk
William Byrd - When younglings first
William Byrd - Come jolly swains

Long live fair Oriana

John Mundy - Lightly she whipped
Thomas Weelkes - As Vesta was

Programme note

Our programme this evening explores two ideas that have been intertwined, played with, explored, and expressed by artists and musicians for as long as there have been artists and musicians: nature and love. This is not a surprising choice for a concert of Renaissance choral music, as there is an enormous amount of repertoire written during that period that focuses on these two themes, much of the most famous music we now enjoy relating to one or the other. Where they overlap and intersect is also fertile ground. While the two ideas are quite separate in their essences (the natural world on the one hand - vast, complex, uncontrollable, uninterested in the tiny lives of human beings - and the most intimate of relationships with another human being on the other), these two concepts have often been conceived of as two sides of the same coin, as metaphors for each other.

This being an important William Byrd year, as Byrd died 400 years ago, we will again perform a large amount of his music. We've chosen music by Byrd that is not often performed, as it is in this repertoire that Byrd flexes his poetic muscles in ways that are not often found in his more mainstream sacred repertoire, the more well known of his works.

It is, however, in the world of sacred polyphony that we start our concert. To Mediaeval and Renaissance artists, the animal world must have been irresistibly fascinating. These creatures were so like humans in many ways but also hugely varied and profoundly separate from us. They believed animals were inferior to humans and created by God to be humanity's servants. Regardless, they knew the unshakable truth that, for them, all of creation existed to glorify God and that humanity's role was to behave well enough to merit ultimate salvation. Understanding the natural world in this way leads somewhat logically to the belief that God created the world as a sort of combination pleasure garden and instruction manual for human behaviour. The tradition of the Mediaeval Bestiary, a manuscript in which properties and behaviours of animals were described (often fancifully) such that their traits and characteristics acted as vehicles for moral instruction for the human reader, would have been familiar in the late Renaissance.

This moral and religious link with nature was expressed throughout Christian texts and imagery. The first two pieces on tonight's programme show these links clearly, as the deer's thirst and the dove's wings are each imagined as methods of expressing humanity's desire to be closer to God.

Where human, or 'romantic', love crosses paths with divine love is most strongly witnessed in the Biblical book of the Song of Solomon (often referred to as the Song of Songs). Here, the distinction is in fact difficult to discern! Natural imagery plays an incredibly powerful role in setting these romantic scenes. Food is important (apples, pomegranates, grapes) but also just flowers, trees, and gardens. The desire felt for one's beloved is here equated with the pleasures of natural things. Our programme here presents the first of two pairs of pieces which are settings of the same text, *Descendi in hortum meum*. Both John Dunstable and Cipriano de Rore seem to gravitate toward the pomegranate images in particular, perhaps due to their placement at the end of the first section of the text, for special treatment.

Moving briefly away from the overlap of romantic and divine love, we sing a piece that expresses a more straightforward way in which the natural world was conceived, as that of provider and sustainer. Again, the yearly cycle of agricultural growth from seed to plant and back again must have filled artists with wonder and gratitude. In *Die mit Tränen*, Heinrich Schütz sets out very clearly the distinction between sowing in tears and reaping in joy, a farming metaphor pointing to the transformative effects of salvation upon us miserable humans.

The final three pieces in the first half return to the Song of Solomon in setting one of its most famous passages, *Ego flos campi*. In this text, similar ideas are explored as in *Descendi in hortum meum* but are drawn together; the water metaphors of the *Sicut cervus* pieces mix with the food and flower metaphors of *Descendi in hortum meum*, in glorious wine and fountains of gardens.

The second half of our concert this evening presents secular music from the Renaissance, and explores similar ideas of how nature and animals interacted with the concepts of love, celebration, and moral teaching in the minds of some of England's greatest composers. William Byrd is of course chief among these, but we also present a collection of works by somewhat less well known composers (John Mundy and Edward Johnson for instance) to give Byrd's secular music some context. The non-Byrd works in the second half all come from a very famous collection of English madrigals published in 1601 by Thomas Morley entitled *The Triumphs of Oriana*. All in praise of Queen Elizabeth I, these madrigals all end with the same (or almost identical) textual phrase: 'Then sang the shepherds and nymphs of Diana: long live fair Oriana.' Nature imagery and blatant anthropomorphisation are applied liberally in these texts, as in this excerpt from *Lightly she whipped* by John Mundy.

'Gently she trod the flowers and they, as gently, kissed her tender feet. The birds in their best language bade her welcome, being proud that Oriana heard their song.'

It is quite an extension of the more familiar tropes of birdsong in poetry to posit that the birds themselves might feel (human-like?) pride at the fact that they had the opportunity to sing for a person as special as fair Oriana!

These obviously fanciful (and delightful) texts are contrasted with the words Byrd chooses to set. In all five of the Byrd works we present in tonight's concert, Byrd chooses to engage with a somewhat problematic or negative understanding of human love. Sometimes it is its fickleness, or the pain of longing for love, or the dangers of falling for a pretty face, or hubris in thinking one can navigate love's maze unscathed only to grow to see the errors of one's youth. These are all much more serious themes, and Byrd's only solution seems to come in his *Come jolly Swains*, in which he depicts true happiness as in fact a *carefree* existence, devoid of 'worldly treasures'.

Byrd's music is also more serious, always contrapuntal and well-wrought. Three of the pieces on our programme in fact contain no bass voices at all, indicative of the unconventional vocal ranges that characterise much of Byrd's writing. While most of the repertoire in this concert is in thrall to the power of nature and its animal inhabitants, to their beauty, to the emotive power of the natural world and its connection to both divine and human love, Byrd seems to take a slightly more dispassionate and perhaps analytical (or cynical?) view: Love is something to watch out for! He nevertheless still finds natural

and animal imagery to serve his ends: the burning sun, the soaring hawk stooping for prey, the gall of the ant, and the sting of the bee.

As the familiar reminders of the British summer begin to set in (school holidays, Wimbledon, irrationally large amounts of rain at unhelpful moments), we hope that this concert exploring nature and love, and how the two overlap and interact, will intrigue, delight, and ultimately move you with the inventiveness, variety, and boundless creativity that these Renaissance masters undoubtedly saw in the world around them and brought to their ingenious craft.

*Programme notes by Greg Skidmore
July 2023*

Brighton Consort

Musical Director: Greg Skidmore

Sopranos

Liza Axford
Anne Bonwit
Zoe Carey
Sue Clough
Olivia Cundy
Kathy Holloway *
Hannah Loach
Mirella Marlow *
Pam Nickels

Altos

Eleanor Clapp
Elodie Estier dos Santos *
Janet Gascoine
Emma Kurtz
Rose Peterschmidt
Liz Petty
Susie Pontin

Tenors

Maya Davis
Richard Davis
Nick Jarvis
Hugh Jones
David Waterhouse
Jan White
Stephen White

Basses

Michael Bishop
Rob Carruthers
Mark Findlay
John Petley *
Alessio Santamaria
Mick Venebles
Peter Wells

* indicates a singer who will only be singing in the concert on Saturday, 15 July

Latin & German Texts and Translations

'Palestrina - Sicut cervus', 'Cardoso - Sitivit anima mea'

Sicut cervus desiderat
ad fontes aquarum,
Ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus.
Sitivit anima mea ad Deum fontem vivum.
Quando veniam at apparebo
ante faciem Dei mei?
Quis dabit mihi pennas sicut columbae
Et volabo et requiescam?

Just as the deer longs
for springs of water
So my soul longs for you, God.
My soul has thirsted for God, the living fountain.
When will I come and appear
before the face of my God?
Who will give me wings like a dove's –
Then indeed I will fly up and be at rest.

Descendi in ortum meum

Ut viderem poma convallium,
Et inspicerem si floruisent vineae
Et germinassent mala punica.
Revertere, Sunamitis,
ut intueamur te.

I went down into my garden
to see the fruits of the valleys
And to check whether the vines had flourished
And whether the pomegranates had budded.
Turn back, Shulamite,
so that we may gaze on you.

'Guerrero - Ego flos campi', 'Aleotti - Ego flos campi', 'Clemens non Papa - Ego flos campi'

Ego flos campi
et lilium convallium;
Sicut lilium inter spinas,
Sic amica mea inter filias.
Sicut malus
inter ligna silvarum,
Sic dilectus meus inter filios.
Sub umbra illius quem desideram sedi
Et fructus eius dulcis gutturi meo.
Introduxit me Rex in cellam vinariam;
Ordinavit in me charitatem.
Fulcite me floribus;
stipate me malis
Quia amore langueo.
Fons hortorum
et puteus aquarum viventium
Quae fluunt impetu de Libano.

I am the flower of the field
and the lily of the valleys.
Just like a lily among thorns,
So is my beloved among young women.
Just like an apple tree
among the trees of the woods
So is my beloved among young men.
I sat down under the shade of the one I desired
And his fruit tasted sweet in my mouth.
The King led me into his wine cellar
And has instilled love into me.
Support me with flowers;
surround me with apples,
for I am sick with love.
The fountain of the gardens
and the source of living waters
Which flow in a torrent from Lebanon.

Die mit Tränen säen,
werden mit Freuden ernten.
Sie gehen hin und weinen
und tragen edlen Samen
und kommen mit Freuden
und bringen ihre Garben.

They that sow in tears
shall reap in joy.
He that goeth forth and weepeth,
bearing precious seed,
shall doubtless come again with joy,
bringing his sheaves with him.

English Texts

All creatures now are merry minded,
The shepherd's daughters playing,
the nymphs are falalaing.
Yon bugle was well winded.
At Oriana's presence each thing smileth.
The flow'rs themselves discover,
Birds over her do hover,
Music the time beguileth,
See where she comes,
with flow'ry garlands crowned,
Queen of all queens reknowned.
Then sang the shepherds
and nymphs of Diana,
"Long live fair Oriana!"

Come, blessed bird
and with thy sugared relish
Help our declining choir now to embellish,
For Bonnyboots, that so aloft would fetch it,
O, he is dead and none of us can reach it.
Then tune to us, sweet bird, thy shrill recorder,
Elpin and I and Dorus, for fault of better,
will serve in the chorus:
Begin and we will follow thee in order,
Then sang the woodborn minstrel of Diana:
"Long live fair Oriana!"

Whyle that the Sunne with his beames hot,
scorched the fruits in vale & mountaine:
Philon the shepherd late forgot,
sitting besides a Christall fountaine,
in shadow of a greene Oke tree,
uppon his pipe this song plaid hee:
untrue love, untrue love, untrue love,
adew love, adew love,
your minde is light, soone lost for new love.

Penelope, that longèd for the sight
Of her Ulysses, wand'ring all too long,
Felt never joy, wherein she took delight,
Although she liv'd in greatest joys among.
So I, poor wretch, possessing that I crave,
Both live and lack, by wrong of thee I have:
Then blame me not, although to heavens I cry,
And pray the gods that shortly I might die.

The greedy hawk with sudden sight of lure
Doth stoop in hope to have her wished prey;
So many men do stoop to sights unsure,
And courteous speech
doth keep them at the bay:
Let them beware lest friendly looks be like
The lure whereat the soaring hawk did strike.

When younglings first

on Cupid fix their sight,
and see him naked,
blindfold and a boy,
though bow and shafts
and firebrand be his might,
yet ween they he can work
them none annoy.

And therefore with his
purple wings they play,
for glorious seemeth love
though light as feather,
and when they have done,
they ween to scape away,
for blind men they say,
shoot they know not whither.

But when by proof
they find that he did see,
and that his wound
did rather dim their sight,
they wonder more
how such a lad as he,
should be of such
surpassing power and might
but ants have galls,
so hath the bee his sting,
then shield me heavens
from such a subtle thing.

Come jolly Swaynes,

come let us sit around,
And with blithe Carrols
sullen cares confound.
The Shepherds life
Is void of strife,
No worldly treasures
Distastes our pleasures
With free consenting,
Our mindes contenting,
We smiling laugh
While other sigh repenting.

Lightly she whipped o'er the dales,

Making the woods proud with her presence.
Gently she trod the flowers and they
As gently kiss'd her tender feet.
The birds in their best language
bade her welcome,
Being proud that Oriana heard their song:
The clove-foot satyrs singing,
Made music to the fauns adancing,
And both together with an emphasis,
Sang Oriana's praises,
Whilst the adjoining woods with melody,
Did entertain their sweet, sweet harmony.
Thus sang the shepherds
and nymphs of Diana,
"Long live fair Oriana!"

As Vesta was from Latmos hill descending,
She spied a maiden Queen
the same ascending,
Attended on by all the shepherds' swain,
To whom Diana's darlings
came running down amain,
First two by two, then three by three together,
Leaving their goddess all alone hasted thither;
And mingling with the shepherds of her train,
With mirthful tunes her presence entertain.
Then sang the shepherds
and nymphs of Diana,
"Long live fair Oriana!"

Biographies

Brighton Consort was formed by the late Daphne Elston in 1971 and is best known for its ambitious exploration of the rich repertoire of renaissance and early baroque music. Its Musical Directors have included Deborah Roberts, Katie Thomas, James Dixon and the present director Greg Skidmore. Several choir members are also closely involved in the running of the Brighton Early Music Festival. Brighton Consort's programmes have included collaborations with Ensemble Reza, the Paul Nieman Brass Ensemble and Nick Houghton, and the choir has performed in the Voices of London Festival and at various events in the Royal Pavilion, Brighton. Although our core repertoire is mainly Renaissance choral music, in order to offer variety to audiences and singers alike, our programmes sometimes include contemporary pieces and items from other musical periods too.

Born in Canada, **Greg Skidmore** arrived in England as an undergraduate at Royal Holloway College, University of London. After graduating with First Class Honours in Music, his post-graduate Choral Scholarship at Wells Cathedral led him to Lay Clerkships at Gloucester Cathedral and Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford. He now lives in London and pursues a varied career as a consort, choral, and solo oratorio singer alongside work as a conductor and workshop leader. He has appeared with *The Tallis Scholars*, *The Sixteen*, *The Cardinal's Musick*, *I Fagiolini*, *Tenebrae*, *Gabrieli Consort*, *Alamire*, *Contrapunctus*, *Collegium Vocale Ghent*, *Cappella Amsterdam*, *La Grand Chapelle* (Madrid), and the *Tafelmusik Baroque Chamber Choir* (Toronto). He can be heard on recordings released by Decca, Deutsche Grammophon, Harmonia Mundi USA, and Gimell Records. In February 2022, Greg made his hundredth appearance with *The Tallis Scholars*. While at Christ Church in Oxford, he began a course of doctoral research in Musicology at the University of Oxford and started his own men's voices consort, *I Dedicati*. More recently he was appointed Musical Director of *The Lacock Scholars*, one of the UK's premier amateur vocal consorts. Greg recently completed major coaching projects with students at the University of York and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and also has worked as a freelance vocal coach and conductor at the Royal Academy of Music. He has given workshops and masterclasses in the UK, France, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia in association with *The Sixteen*, *I Fagiolini*, and on his own and he is increasingly engaged in Canada as a guest conductor, clinician, and record producer, founding *The Canadian Renaissance Music Summer Schools* in 2018. He has been published in *Early Music* and his writing has appeared in programmes and CD liner notes for *The Tallis Scholars*, *The Sixteen*, *The Cardinal's Musick*, *The Gabrieli Consort*, *Tenebrae*, and *Ex Cathedra*.

Interested in joining us?

Brighton Consort performs mainly Renaissance and early Baroque choral music but programmes sometimes include contemporary pieces and items from other musical periods too. We normally present three concert programmes per year, usually with two performances of each. We rehearse on Wednesday evenings (7:30pm-10:00pm) at St George's Church, Kemptown. Rehearsals take place throughout the year, with a break during July and August. We are always looking to hear from enthusiastic new singers in all voice parts and the best way to inquire about joining us is to get in touch. We'll ask you a little bit about your experience and suitability for what we do, but we are a welcoming and flexible bunch! We're very open to meeting new people and can't wait to hear from you.

To reach us, please email info@brightonconsort.org.uk

More Information

For more information about **Brighton Consort**, to browse through our past projects, and learn more about the choir and our musical director, please visit our website:

brightonconsort.org.uk

or email:

info@brightonconsort.org.uk

Next Concerts

Our 2023-24 season hasn't yet been announced. Please keep an eye on our website and our social media channels for more information:

brightonconsort.org.uk

facebook.com/BrightonConsort

twitter.com/BrightonConsort