

CERDDORION

VOCAL ENSEMBLE

James John
Artistic Director

PRESENTS

Joie de Vivre
French and English Delights



Saturday, November 12, 2011—8 P.M.
Oratory Church of St. Boniface
190 Duffield Street
Brooklyn, New York

Saturday, November 19, 2011—8 P.M.
St. Ignatius of Antioch Episcopal Church
87th Street and West End Avenue
New York, New York

The Program

Chantez à Dieu (Psalm 96)	Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562–1621)
Ainsi qu'on oit le cerf bruire (Psalm 42)	Claude Goudimel (c. 1514-1520–1572)
Je l'ayme bien	Orlande de Lassus (c. 1532–1594)
La nuit froide et sombre	
Gallans qui par terre	
Romance du soir, Op. 118	Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921)
Calme des nuits, Op. 68, No. 1	
Les fleurs et les arbres, Op. 68, No. 2	
Trois Chansons de Charles D'Orléans	Claude Debussy (1862–1918)
I. Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder	
II. Quant j'ai ouy le tabourin	
<i>Katrina Montagna, soprano</i>	
III. Yver, vous n'estes qu'un villain	
<i>Ellen Schorr, soprano; Susan Glass, alto; Grady Sullivan, tenor; Ethan Wagner, bass</i>	

❖❖❖ *Intermission* ❖❖❖

O Sing Joyfully	Adrian Batten (1591–1637)
Agnus Dei	Thomas Morley (c. 1557–1602)
Serenade	Hamish MacCunn (1868–1916)
The Blue Bird, Op. 119, No. 3	Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924)
<i>Anna Harmon, soprano</i>	
Hark Forward!	Hamish MacCunn
Five Flower Songs, Op. 47	Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)
To Daffodils	
The Succession of the Four Sweet Months	
Marsh Flowers	
The Evening Primrose	
Ballad of Green Broom	
The Long Day Closes	Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900)

CERDDORION

NOW ENTERING ITS SEVENTEENTH SEASON, CERDDORION is one of New York's most highly regarded volunteer choral ensembles. A chamber group of twenty mixed voices, it is known for its eclectic repertoire, encompassing music from the Renaissance to the contemporary. Audiences have come to appreciate the group's interpretive depth and technical excellence in many styles. Cerddorion has also frequently commissioned new works by such composers as Lisa Bielawa, David Lang, Elliot Z. Levine, Robert Dennis, Julie Dolphin, and David Schober.

Besides presenting its own varied programs, Cerddorion is frequently invited to perform with other acclaimed artists. In 2011, the men of Cerddorion sang with esteemed French organist Francis Chapelet in the second inaugural recital of the Manton Memorial Organ at the Church of the Ascension in New York. Past collaborations have included the North American premiere of Sir John Tavener's all-night vigil, *The Veil of the Temple*, performed at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall (with Dessoff Choral Consortium and choristers from London's Temple Church); several appearances with the Christopher Caines Dance Company; Baroque opera performances with the early music instrumental ensemble Concert Royal; and serving as the resident teaching ensemble for the Dennis Keene Choral Festival in Kent, Connecticut.

In 2006, Cerddorion performed at the Eastern Divisional Convention of the American Choral Directors Association the works they had commissioned from three New York composers for their tenth anniversary season. September 2007 marked the release on the Tzadik label of *A Handful of World*, Cerddorion's first commercial recording. The CD is dedicated to vocal works by New York composer Lisa Bielawa and includes Cerddorion's performance of Bielawa's *Lamentations for a City*, which was commissioned and first performed by Cerddorion in 2004.

Cerddorion is a proud member of the New York Choral Consortium.

James John, Artistic Director

James John is Associate Professor and Director of Choral Activities at the Aaron Copland School of Music, Queens College-CUNY, where he conducts the Queens College Choir, Vocal Ensemble and Choral Society, teaches choral conducting, and serves as advisor to the graduate program in vocal performance.

Under Dr. John's leadership, the choral program at the Aaron Copland School of Music has become recognized as one of the finest collegiate choral programs in the region. Past performances with the School of Music's choral ensembles include Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, an award-winning production of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, Requiems by Mozart and Verdi, "A Night at the Opera" with Queens College alumna Erika Sunnegårdh of the Metropolitan Opera, Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*, and world premieres of works by Sidney Boquiren, Leo Kraft, Meg Collins Stoop, and others. His choirs have performed in many of New York's most prestigious venues, including Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Weill Recital Hall, and St. Patrick's Cathedral. The Vocal Ensemble recently released its first CD, featuring premiere recordings of part-songs by Scottish composer Hamish MacCunn, and the Queens College Choir was selected to perform at the 2012 Eastern Division Conference of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) in Providence, RI.

Dr. John's guest conducting appearances include Avery Fisher Hall's annual *Messiah* Sing-In, a concert of American choral music with the Virginia Chorale (Virginia's only professional choral ensemble), chorus master for the Queens Symphony, regional honor choirs throughout New York State, and a recording with jazz trumpeter Michael Mossman. In June 2012, he will lead the Tokyo Oratorio Society in a performance of Brahms's *Requiem* in Tokyo's Suntory Hall. He has given presentations at both divisional and national conventions of the ACDA and is in demand as a clinician and adjudicator throughout the United States.

As a teacher and scholar, Dr. John has served as Guest Lecturer in conducting at the Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, Germany, and has presented seminars on American choral music in Basel and Stockholm. In July 2011, he was appointed Editor of the *American Choral Review*, published by Chorus America. His dissertation on Brahms's *Nänie*, Op. 82, won the Julius Herford Prize from the ACDA and will be published soon in revised form as a book by The Edwin Mellen Press. His articles have appeared in *Choral Journal*, *The American Choral Review*, and the American Choral Foundation's *Research Memorandum Series*. He is currently Project Chair for Research and Scholarship for ACDA's Eastern Division, and is also a member of ACDA's National Research and Publications Committee, where he serves as Chair of the Monographs and Composers Series subcommittee.

Dr. John received his Doctor of Musical Arts in Conducting from the Eastman School of Music. Prior to his current position at the Aaron Copland School of Music, he served as Director of Choral Activities at Tufts University in Boston, Director of Choral Activities at Nassau Community College in Garden City, NY, and as Dartmouth College's first Conducting Fellow. He received his Master of Arts in Conducting from the Aaron Copland School of Music.

Program Notes and Texts

Claude Debussy's *Trois Chansons* and Benjamin Britten's *Five Flower Songs* are among the most beloved works in the *a cappella* repertory. Though thoroughly different in style, language, and sentiment, they share certain characteristics common to great vocal music: elegantly written lines that enhance the natural beauty of the voice, charming variety of expression, and an amalgam of music and poetry that seems artless but which is the product of exceptional compositional skill and inspiration. The idea for this evening's program originated from the desire to pair these two miniature masterpieces—rarely heard together, but often mentioned as favorites among choral musicians. To expand upon this theme, I have done my best to find “gems” of a similar nature, some well-known and others virtually unknown, but no less delightful to sing and share with our audience.



The tumult caused by the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century changed the course of history and was a driving force behind the creation of new styles and genres of sacred music. Congregational singing assumed a great deal of importance, and for that purpose, the French theologian John Calvin oversaw the preparation of the *Genevan Psalter*, published in 1542—a collection of all 150 psalms translated into the vernacular, with tunes compiled and arranged by the composer/theorist Louis Bourgeois. Our program opens with a set of pieces based on melodies from this source, written by two musicians who lived vastly different lives. The Dutch composer and organist Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562–1621) spent most of his career peacefully in Amsterdam. Claude Goudimel (c. 1520–1572) worked in Paris during the first part of his life and was a victim of religious upheaval. He converted to Protestantism in 1557 and died in the famous St. Bartholomew's Day massacre, during which most of the Huguenot population of Lyons was murdered.

The two psalm settings featured here place the original *Genevan Psalter* tunes in the soprano voice. Sweelinck surrounds the melody with intricate, imitative counterpoint, incorporating it into the fabric of the composition in the manner of a seamless organ improvisation. Goudimel's setting (of a well known Psalter tune still familiar to us) highlights the melody so clearly that he may have intended the congregation to sing along.

Chantez à Dieu (*Psalm 96*)

Chantez à Dieu chanson nouvelle,
Chantez, ô terre universelle,
Chantez, et son Nom bénissez,
Et de jour en jour annoncez
Sa délivrance solennelle.

Sing new songs to God,
Sing, O world,
Sing, and bless his holy Name,
And from day to day tell
Of his solemn deliverance.

Ainsi qu'on oit le cerf bruire (*Psalm 42*)

Ainsi qu'on oit le cerf bruire,
Pourchassant le frais des eaux:
Ainsi mon coeur qui soupire,
Seigneur, après tes ruisseaux,
Va toujours criant, suivant,
Le grand, le grand Dieu vivant:
Hélas! Donques quand serace,
Que verrai de Dieu la face?
Jours et nuits pour ma viande
De pleurs me vay soutenant,
Quand je voy qu'on me demande,
Où est ton Dieu maintenant?
Je fond en me souvenant,
Qu'en troupe j'alloy menant,
Priant, chantant, grosse bande
Faire au temple son offrande.

As a hart longs for the brooklet
Flowing in a quiet place,
So my thirsting soul does long, Lord,
For thine all-refreshing grace;
My soul cries out for thine aid,
For sight of the living God.
O when shall mine eyes behold thee?
When shall I see God face to face?
Oft my tears, in long night watches,
Have been bitter food for me;
Mocking men, to try my patience,
Cried, “Why has thy God left thee?”
Why art thou cast down, my soul?
Why art thou disquieted?
Hope in God, and I shall praise him.
I will trust him eternally.



Like Sweelinck, Orlande de Lassus (c. 1532–1594) belongs to the extraordinary Franco-Flemish musical tradition that dominated the courts of Europe for almost two centuries and included a host of venerated musicians, such as Dufay, Josquin, Willaert, and countless others. Born in the city of Mons in modern-day Belgium, Lassus was taken to Italy at the age of 12 and had a truly international career, becoming perhaps the most famous composer of the sixteenth century. He completed more than 2,000 works and was a master of all vocal genres of the time (mass, motet, madrigal, lied, chanson). We are performing three of his most popular chansons this evening.

Je l'ayme bien, a courtly love lyric, is an early work taken from Lassus's first collection of motets, madrigals, and chansons, published in Antwerp in 1555. *La nuit froide et sombre* appeared more than twenty years later (in 1576) and clearly shows Lassus at the peak of his compositional skill. It is an atmospheric setting of a poem by the famous French poet Joachim du Bellay (c. 1522–1560), contrasting the somber beauty of night with the variegated awakening of dawn. *Gallans qui par terre* (to a text by François Villon, c. 1431–1463) is a wonderful example of Lassus's irreverent sense of humor. Raucous rhythms and emphatic repetitions of words drive home the poet's point: "The folly of love makes men beasts; happy is he who has nothing to do with it!"

Je l'ayme bien

Je l'ayme bien et l'aymeray,
en ce propos suis et seray,
et demouray toute ma vie
et quoy qu'on m'en die par envie,
je l'ayme bien et l'aimeray.

I love you well, and will always love you,
In this regard I am and will be,
and will remain all my life
and that's the way I desire it,
I love you well, and will always love you.

La nuit froide et sombre (Joachim du Bellay)

La nuit froide et sombre
Courvrant d'obscur ombre
La terre et les cieux,
Aussi doux que miel,
Fait couler du ciel
Le sommeil aux yeux.

Night cold and somber,
Covering with dark shade
Earth and heaven,
As sweet as honey
Pours, from the sky,
Sleep into the eyes.

Puis le jour suivant,
Au labour duisant,
Sa lueur expose,
Et d'un teint divers,
Ce grand univers
Tapisse et compose.

Then the day following,
With heavy labor,
Spreads its light,
And with varying colors,
This great universe
Covers and composes.

Gallans qui par terre (François Villon)

Gallans qui par terre et par mer,
Allez aux noces et aux fêtes,
Aimez tant que voudrez aimer,
Vous n'y romprez que vos têtes;
Folles amours font les gens bêtes.
Salomon sa loy dénia,
Sanson en perdit ses lunettes;
Bien heureux est qui rien n'ya.

All ye gallants from land and sea
Who hurry to your wedding feasts,
Love as much as you want to,
You will only break your heads at it;
For the folly of love makes men beasts.
Solomon denied his law,
Samson lost his eyes for it;
Fortunate is he who has nothing to do with it.



Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921) was a virtuoso pianist who gave his first public performance at the age of 5 and whose extraordinary precocity often evoked comparison with Mozart. As a composer, performer, and teacher, he was one of France's most influential musical figures during the nineteenth century. Though quite prolific, most of his choral music is either accompanied in some form (by piano, organ, or orchestra) or was intended for one of the many flourishing male choral societies of the time. Our set of three *a cappella* part-songs for mixed chorus therefore represents virtually his entire output in this genre.

Romance du soir, completed in 1902, is a relatively late work. The poem (by Jean Louis Croze) is a succession of fleeting images (blossoming kisses of lovers, children asleep, the moon...) and is tinged with a melancholic sense that the "romance of evening" will last only until dawn. The "mille voix" ("thousand voices") of the second line may have inspired Saint-Saëns's choral setting, which captures a sense of the poem's ephemeral longing through quickly changing harmonies and poignant use of dissonance.

Twenty years earlier, Saint-Saëns was elected to the Académie des Beaux-Arts—a very distinguished honor—which may have been the inspiration behind his Opus 68 part-songs, published the following year (1882). Saint-Saëns presumably wrote the texts himself (no poet is named). *Calmes des nuits* is a beautiful description of the "love of tranquil things," in which nocturnal calm is portrayed by sustained and slow-moving harmonies. In *Les fleurs est les arbres*, Saint-Saëns takes great care to meld the metrical regularity of the text with the musical rhythms, and the lively tempo marking conveys ardent belief in the cathartic and palliative powers of art.

Romance du soir, Op. 118 (J. L. Croze)

La romance du soir dans les airs s'évapore,
Mille voix à la Nuit qui déjà nous atteint
Doucement vont la dire encore
Jusqu'au matin.
Aux lèvres des amants les baisers ont fleuri;
De ce bruit divin l'ombre est pleine;
La rose en s'effeuillant exhale son haleine,
Les enfants en dormant à leur mère ont souri.
Au bord de l'étang la lune se penche
Par dessus le front des saules d'argent;
Le poète rêve et croit voir, songeant
Devant son miroir, quelque dame blanche.

The evening romance disappears into air,
As a chorus of voices takes up its refrain
From the new-fallen dusk
To the first morning light.
On the lips of lovers, kisses have blossomed;
The shadows are full of this heavenly sound;
The rose, as its petals fall, sighs out its breath;
Happy children, asleep, give their mother a smile.
The moon peers over the edge of the pool
With silvery willows adorning its fringe;
The poet, in reverie, stares at his mirror
And therein perceives a white lady, unknown.

Calme des nuits, Op. 68, No. 1

Calme des nuits, fraîcheur des soirs,
Vaste scintillement des mondes,
Grand silence des antres noirs
Vous charmez les âmes profondes.

Calm of night, coolness of evening,
vast sparkling of the world,
great silence of the dark dens,
you charm our innermost soul.

L'éclat du soleil, la gaieté,
Le bruit plaisent aux plus futiles;
Le poète seul est hanté
Par l'amour des choses tranquilles.

A burst of sunlight, gaiety,
the noise appeals to the most futile heart;
the poet is haunted
only by the love of tranquil things.

Les fleurs et les arbres, Op. 68, No. 2

Les fleurs et les arbres,
Les bronzes, les marbres,
Les ors, les émaux,
La mer, les fontaines,
Les monts et les plaines
Consolent nos maux.

The flowers and the trees,
The bronzes, the marbles,
The golds, the enamels,
The sea, the waterfalls,
The mountains and the plains
Console our pain.

Nature éternelle,
Tu sembles plus belle
Au sein des douleurs!
Et l'art nous domine,
Sa flamme illumine
Le rire et les pleurs.

Eternal nature,
You seem more beautiful
To a heart in sorrow!
And art reigns over us,
Its flame illuminates
The laughter and tears.



Claude Debussy (1862–1918) needs no introduction. One of the most influential composers of the last 150 years, Debussy wrote music spanning the transition from late Romantic style to twentieth-century modernism. The *Trois Chansons* are Debussy's only *a cappella* works for mixed chorus, and they are an exquisite rendering of his musical language in the choral idiom.

It is unclear what inspired Debussy to choose the poetry of Charles D'Orléans (1394–1465) for these settings, instead of relying upon the contemporary symbolist poets who provided texts for so many of his vocal works. Perhaps the idea of writing for a *cappella* choir suggested Renaissance models. D'Orléans, a French nobleman captured by the English in 1415 during the battle of Agincourt and held prisoner for the next twenty-four years, wrote most of his nearly 500 poems while in captivity.

Certain characteristics of Debussy's musical language—such as the use of modal scales and harmonies—seem perfectly suited to evoking the colors of these Old French texts. *Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder* is a courtly love poem describing the beauty of an idealized woman. In *Quant j'ai ouï le tabourin*, the choir imitates a distant military band celebrating the arrival of spring, while the soloist, listening from inside her room, cannot find motivation to awaken and join the festivities. *Yver, vous n'êtes qu'un villain* contrasts the cruelty of winter with the warmth of summer by juxtaposing dramatic contrapuntal sections with more graceful homophonic passages highlighted by soloists. Debussy wrote the first and third of the *Chansons* in 1898 for an amateur choir founded by his friend, Lucien Fontaine, which he was then conducting. The second was added ten years later—and the premiere of all three was led by the composer in 1909.

Trois Chansons (Charles D'Orleans)

Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder!

Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder
La gracieuse bonne et belle;
Pour les grans biens que sont en elle
Chascun est prest de la louer.
Qui se pourroit d'elle lasser?
Tousjours sa beauté renouvelle.

God, How good it is to gaze upon her,
So graceful, good and fair!
For the great goodness in her
Everyone is ready to praise her.
Who could weary of her?
Her beauty is ever new.

Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder,
La gracieuse bonne et belle!
Par de ça, ne de là, la mer
Ne scay dame ne damoiselle
Qui soit en tous bien parfaits telle.
C'est ung songe que d'i penser:
Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder!

God, How good it is to gaze upon her,
So graceful, good and fair!
The ocean from shore to shore
Sees no lady or maiden
So perfect in all her goodness.
To think of her is a dream;
God, How good it is to gaze upon her!

Quant j'ai ouy le tabourin

Quant j'ai ouy le tabourin
Sonner pour s'en aller au may,
En mon lit n'en ay fait affray
Ne levé mon chief du coissin;
En disant: il est trop matin
Ung peu je me rendormiray.

Quant j'ai ouy le tabourin
Sonner pour s'en aller au may,
Jeunes gens partent leur butin;
De non chaloir m'accointeray
A lui je m'abutineray
Trouvé l'ay plus prouchain voisin;

Quant j'ai ouy le tabourin
Sonner pour s'en aller au may,
En mon lit n'en ay fait affray
Ne levé mon chief du coissin.

Yver vous n'estes qu'un villain

Yver, vous n'estes qu'un villain;
Esté est plaisant et gentil
En témoing de may et d'avril
Qui l'accompaignent soir et main.
Esté revet champs, bois et fleurs
De sa livrée de verdure
Et de maintes autres couleurs
Par l'ordonnance de nature.
Mais vous, Yver, trop estes plein
De nège, vent, pluye et grézil.
On vous deust banir en éxil.
Sans point flater je parle plein:
Yver, vous n'estes qu'un villain.

When I heard the drum
Beating a summons to the maypole,
In my bed I had no qualms
Nor raised my head from the pillow,
Saying: it is too early in the morning,
I will go back to sleep a while.

When I heard the drum
Beating a summons to the maypole,
Young people were sharing their plunder;
I shall make a friend of lethargy,
I shall plunder it,
I have found it my nearest neighbor;

When I heard the drum
Beating a summons to the maypole,
In my bed I had no qualms
Nor raised my head from the pillow.

Winter, you are nothing but a villain;
Summer is pleasant and gentle
As witnessed by April and May
Which accompany it night and day.
Summer re-clothes fields, woods and flowers
In its livery of green
And many other colors
By the ordinance of nature.
But you, Winter, are full
Of snow, wind and hail.
You should be banished into exile.
Without at all flattering, I speak plainly:
Winter, you are nothing but a villain.

The piece that begins the second half of our performance this evening, Batten's *O Sing Joyfully*, is meant to parallel the motet by Sweelinck that opened our program. Adrian Batten (1591–1637) was a younger contemporary of Sweelinck, active in London around the same time that Sweelinck was working in Amsterdam. Unlike Sweelinck's version of Psalm 96, based on a Genevan Psalter melody, Batten's setting of Psalm 81 contains no preexistent material—though both works were intended for Protestant worship services and convey similar, joyous sentiments.

Thomas Morley (c. 1557–1602) secured his place in the history of music as the driving force behind the extraordinary flowering of the English madrigal at the end of the sixteenth century. Many of his madrigals, such as *April is in my mistress' face*, *Now is the month of maying*, and *Sing we and chant it*, remain tremendously popular today. Morley wrote very little sacred music, however, and thus there is seldom opportunity to hear this more serious side of his personality. Morley's *Agnus Dei* comes from his widely read treatise, *A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music*, published in 1597. Along with four other Latin motets, it is intended to demonstrate advanced principles of musical composition. Far from a mere exercise, however, it is filled with exceptionally beautiful long lines, expressive dissonances, and gorgeous counterpoint. Though a Protestant, Morley was known to have Catholic sympathies. There was no place for Latin church music in Protestant services, and the idea that such inspired writing could be found cloaked in the guise of a compositional exercise makes one wonder if the composer's own treatise was one of the few outlets where his leanings could be safely expressed.

O Sing Joyfully (Psalm 81:1–4)

O sing joyfully unto God our strength:
Make a cheerful noise unto the God of Jacob.
Take the song, bring hither the tabret:
The merry harp with the lute.
Blow up the trumpet in the new moon
Even in the time appointed,
And upon our solemn feast-day.
For this was made a statute for Israel
And a law of the God of Jacob.

Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nostri.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the
world, have mercy on us.





Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924) and Hamish MacCunn (1868–1916) participated in Britain’s late-nineteenth-century efforts to improve educational and professional opportunities for native musicians. Stanford, one of the most influential composers and educators of his time, taught at the Royal College of Music (founded in 1883), where MacCunn, as one of the first generation of composers fully trained in Britain, studied with him for a short time. After completing the requirements for his degree, MacCunn left the school on bad terms, and his relationship with Stanford remained turbulent (including Stanford’s threatening a lawsuit at one point) up until MacCunn’s death in 1916. Though initially very successful, MacCunn’s career ended in disappointment, and his music, like that of most composers of his time, including Stanford, all but disappeared after World War I. While MacCunn and Stanford are not widely known today, their careers paved the way for such composers as Edward Elgar, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Benjamin Britten.

In Stanford’s “The Blue Bird,” his most popular part-song, the chorus beautifully portrays the still, calm lake while the flight of the blue bird is described by a soaring soprano solo. The charming “Serenade,” written when MacCunn was only 14, tells of a young boy attempting to wake a young maiden to go wandering through the dewy meadows at dawn. This youthful, innocent part-song contrasts with “Hark Forward!”, an amusing and somewhat graphic tale of the now outdated thrills of a fox hunt.

Serenade (*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*)

If thou art sleeping, maiden,
Awake and open thy door.
’Tis the break of day
And we must away,
O’er meadow, and mount, and moor.

Wait not to find thy slippers,
But come with thy naked feet;
We shall have to pass
Through the dewy grass,
And waters wide and fleet.

The Blue Bird (*Mary E. Coleridge*)

The lake lay blue below the hill.
O’er it, as I looked, there flew
Across the waters, cold and still,
A bird whose wings were palest blue.

The sky above was blue at last,
The sky beneath me blue in blue.
A moment, ere the bird had passed,
It caught his image as he flew.

Hark Forward! (*Author unknown, from Songs of the Chase, 1810*)

Now night her dusky mantle folds,
The larks are soaring high,
And morn her golden shafts has shot,
To gild the eastern sky.
We sportsmen scour the distant plain,
The hounds pursue their prey,
While echoes round the valleys sound,
Hark forward, hark away!

O’er mountain top and river deep
The fox for shelter flies,
And cowering into coverts strong,
His cunning vainly tries.
His death proclaims the sportsman’s joy,
The dogs they seize their prey,
While echoes round the valleys sound,
Hark forward, hark away!



Benjamin Britten’s (1913–1976) affinity for vocal music stands out among twentieth century composers. In particular, he had an extraordinary gift for writing choral music, and he created a body of work that is virtually unparalleled in quality and breadth. The scholar Peter Porter wrote the following regarding Britten’s ability to capture the intrinsic qualities of a text: “Not since the days when musician and poet were the same person has there been a great composer whose art is as profoundly bound up with words as Benjamin Britten’s. The whole corpus of Britten’s work is informed by a deeply poetical feeling. . . . What poets have prefigured in words, he has reworked in music. This recognition of the fact that even a superb piece of poetry leaves something more to be said is what makes his settings so masterful.”

And indeed, this is certainly true of Britten’s *Five Flower Songs*, written in 1950 to celebrate the twenty-fifth wedding anniversary of the composer’s friends, Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst, who—fittingly—were avid amateur botanists. Fleeting modulations and subtle tension between soprano and bass are the driving force behind *To Daffodils*, the setting of a poem by Robert Herrick (1591–1674) that compares the transience of daffodils to the frailty of human life. *The Succession of the Four Sweet Months* (also by Herrick) extols the abundance of natural beauty that awakens in spring and blossoms throughout summer. Each vocal line represents a different month of the year (Soprano–April; Alto–May; Tenor–June; Bass–July), and their successive contrapuntal entrances create a beautiful mirror for the poetry, as the musical texture grows richer and more abundant with the addition of each new “month.”

Britten's setting of the third poem, *Marsh Flowers*, by George Crabbe (1754–1832), is more angular and dissonant than the first two, in perfect imitation of the tangled, messy bogs it depicts. *The Evening Primrose*, by John Clare (1793–1864), portrays the delicate beauty of this bashful flower, which blooms only at night and fades quickly at the break of day. The shape of Britten's gently interwoven melodic lines and their arrival on an open fifth at the song's conclusion suggest the melancholy withering and disappearance of primrose blossoms at first light. The fifth and final song, *Ballad of Green Broom* (by an anonymous poet), is a comical "rags to riches" tale in which a lackadaisical young man whose father is a broom maker by trade (and thinks his son may never amount to anything) serendipitously meets a "fine lady" who proposes marriage, and to everyone's astonishment they run off together to be wed. "Green Broom" is a type of flowering shrub that, presumably, provided raw material for making brooms.

To Daffodils (*Robert Herrick*)

Fair Daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon;
As yet the early-rising sun
Has not attain'd his noon.
Stay, stay,
Until the hasting day
Has run
But to the even-song;
And, having pray'd together, we
Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you,
We have as short a spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay,
As you, or anything.
We die
As your hours do, and dry
Away,
Like to the summer's rain;
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,
Ne'er to be found again.

The Succession of the Four Sweet Months (*Robert Herrick*)

First, April, she with mellow showers
Opens the way for early flowers;
Then after her comes smiling May,
In a more rich and sweet array;
Next enters June, and brings us more
Gems than those two that went before;
Then, lastly, July comes, and she
More wealth brings in than all those three.

Marsh Flowers (*George Crabbe*)

Here the strong mallow strikes her slimy root,
Here the dull night-shade hangs her deadly fruit;
On hills of dust the henbane's faded green,
And pencill'd flower of sickly scent is seen;
Here on its wiry stem, in rigid bloom,
Grows the salt lavender that lacks perfume.
At the wall's base the fiery nettle springs,
With fruit globose and fierce with poison'd stings;
In every chink delights the fern to grow,
With glossy leaf and tawny bloom below:
The few dull flowers that o'er the place are spread
Partake the nature of their fenny bed.
These, with our sea-weeds, rolling up and down,
Form the contracted Flora of our town.

The Evening Primrose (*John Clare*)

When once the sun sinks in the west,
And dewdrops pearl the evening's breast;
Almost as pale as moonbeams are,
Or its companionable star,
The evening primrose opes anew
Its delicate blossoms to the dew;
And, hermit-like, shunning the light,
Wastes its fair bloom upon the night,
Who, blindfold to its fond caresses,
Knows not the beauty it possesses;
Thus it blooms on while night is by;
When day looks out with open eye,
Bashed at the gaze it cannot shun,
It faints and withers and is gone.

Ballad of Green Broom (*Anonymous*)

There was an old man lived out in the wood,
And his trade was a-cutting of broom, green broom,
He had but one son without thought without good
Who lay in his bed till 't was noon, bright noon.

The old man awoke one morning and spoke,
He swore he would fire the room, that room,
If his John would not rise and open his eyes,
And away to the wood to cut broom, green broom.

So Johnny arose and slipp'd on his clothes
And away to the wood to cut broom, green broom,
He sharpen'd his knives, and for once he contrives
To cut a great bundle of broom, green broom.

When Johnny pass'd under a Lady's fine house,
Pass'd under a Lady's fine room, fine room,
She call'd to her maid: "Go fetch me," she said,
"Go fetch me the boy that sells broom, green broom!"

When Johnny came into the Lady's fine house,
And stood in the Lady's fine room, fine room,
"Young Johnny" she said, "Will you give up your trade
And marry a lady in bloom, full bloom?"

Johnny gave his consent, and to church they both went,
And he wedded the Lady in bloom, full bloom;
At market and fair, all folks do declare,
There's none like the Boy that sold broom, green broom.



Before W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900) began their famous partnership in the 1870s, they worked independently of one another and had a number of different collaborators. The influential music and literary critic Henry Fothergill Chorley completed two libretti for Sullivan (*The Sapphire Necklace* and *The Masque at Kenilworth*) before writing the words for *The Long Day Closes* in 1868. Sullivan completed more than twenty part-songs (most before his collaboration with Gilbert), but this one in particular struck a chord with the public. Rich harmonies and a restrained yet heartfelt expression of grief contributed to its success as one of the most popular pieces of the Victorian era.

The Long Day Closes (*Henry Fothergill Chorley*)

No star is o'er the lake, its pale watch keeping,
The moon is half awake, through grey mist creeping.
The last red leaves fall round the porch of roses,
The clock has ceased to sound. The long day closes.

Sit by the silent hearth in calm endeavour,
To count the sounds of mirth, now dumb forever.
Heed not how hope believes and fate disposes:
Shadow is round the eaves. The long day closes.

The lighted windows dim are fading slowly.
The fire that was so trim now quivers lowly.
Go to the dreamless bed where grief reposes.
Thy book of toil is read. The long day closes.

Program notes by James John and Jennifer Oates (MacCunn/Stanford)

Next Concerts

Please join us on February 25 in Brooklyn or March 3 in Manhattan (at St. Ignatius of Antioch) for Cerddorion's second program of the 2011–2012 concert season, entitled *Music of Solace and Rejoicing*, which will feature Henry Purcell's "Man that Is Born of a Woman," Claudio Monteverdi's "Sestina," Johannes Brahms's "Warum ist das Licht gegeben?" and J.S. Bach's *Cantata 106* ("Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit"), performed with period instruments.

Cerddorion will be holding auditions for prospective new members to join us for this program. If you are interested in singing with us, please visit our web site (www.cerddorion.net) for information, or look for our audition announcement on Vocal Area Network (www.van.org).

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