

OPUS ARTE

The Choir of
Magdalen College
Oxford

Mark Williams

The Sweet
and Merry
Month

Music
for May
Morning



The Sweet and Merry Month

Music for May Morning

- | | | | |
|--|------|---|------|
| 1. The College Clock | 0.53 | 11. Sicut liliūm John Stainer | 1.18 |
| 2. Sumer is icumen in Trad. round, arr. Grayston Ives | 2.45 | text: 19th century, anon. | |
| text: Anon., 13th century | | 12. Haste on my joys Gerald Finzi | 2.10 |
| 3. Now is the month of Maying Thomas Morley | 2.11 | text: Robert Bridges (1844–1930) | |
| text: based on an anon. Italian text | | 13. Music when soft voices die Charles Hubert Hastings Parry | 2.25 |
| 4. Lay a garland Robert Lucas de Pearsall | 3.01 | text: Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) | |
| text: from <i>The Maid's Tragedy</i> by Francis Beaumont (1584–1616) | | 14. Somewhere Over the Rainbow Harold Arlen, arr. Guy Turner | 5.16 |
| & John Fletcher (1579–1625) | | text: Edgar Yipsel Harburg (1896–1981) | |
| 5. I'll Follow the Sun Lennon & McCartney arr. Grayston Ives | 2.14 | 15. Dieu, qu'il la fait bon regarder Claude Debussy | 2.12 |
| text: John Lennon (1940–1980) & Paul McCartney (b. 1942) | | text: Charles d'Orléans (1394–1465) | |
| 6. O Lusty May Anon. | 1.51 | 16. The Lark in Clear Air Trad. Irish folksong, arr. James Whitbourn | 2.36 |
| text: Anon. Scottish song; first published in 1612 | | text: Samuel Ferguson (1810–1886) | |
| 7. Ah Robin William Cornysh | 2.25 | 17. The Silver Swan Orlando Gibbons | 1.41 |
| text: Anon. | | text: Anon. | |
| 8. Linden Lea Ralph Vaughan Williams | 2.38 | 18. Felice primavera Carlo Gesualdo | 3.21 |
| text: William Barnes (1801–1886) | | text: Giovanni Battista Guarini (1538–1612) | |
| 9. Loch Lomond Trad Scottish folksong, arr. David Overton | 3.26 | 19. The Hills John Ireland | 3.19 |
| text: Scottish traditional song | | text: James Kirkup (1918–2009) | |
| 10. Hymnus Eucharisticus Benjamin Rogers | 2.25 | 20. This sweet and merry month of May William Byrd | 2.36 |
| text: Thomas Smith (1638–1710; Fellow of Magdalen 1665–1692) | | text: Thomas Watson (1555–1592) | |

21. The Spring of the Year Peter Warlock text: Allan Cunningham (1784–1842)	2.16
22. The Oak and the Ash Trad. English folksong, arr. Gordon Langford text: Old English ballad	3.27
23. In pride of May Thomas Weelkes text: Anon., English madrigal	3.33
24. Hora e di Maggio Heinrich Isaac text: Anon.	1.22
25. As torrents in Summer Edward Elgar text: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882)	2.24
26. The Bluebird Charles Villiers Stanford text: Mary Coleridge (1861–1907)	3.39
27. The Ballad of Green Broom Benjamin Britten text: Anon.	2.12
28. The Bells of Magdalen College, Oxford	0.56
	72:17

THE CHOIR OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD
MARK WILLIAMS Informator Choristarum



The Choir of Magdalen College, Oxford was founded in 1480. Magdalen College was, at that time, one of the largest and most celebrated choral foundations in late-medieval England, and this historic legacy has been preserved and maintained over five centuries. Amongst those to have held the title of Informator Choristarum (still used for the member of the College responsible for directing the Choir) are John Sheppard, Daniel Purcell, William Hayes, Sir John Stainer, Sir William McKie, Bernard Rose and Grayston Ives. Made up of choristers, who attend Magdalen College School, and Academical Clerks, who are ordinarily students in a range of subjects at the University, the Choir, which now enjoys an international reputation as one of the finest choral ensembles in the UK, exists primarily to sing the daily church services in Magdalen College Chapel, and welcomed its first female Academical Clerk in 2020, having been an all-male entity for over five hundred years.

The Choir has toured Japan, the USA, Hungary, Italy, Holland, Germany, Poland and France; concert appearances have included the BBC Proms and Cadogan Hall. The Choir has worked with a number of leading orchestras including Britten Sinfonia, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. In Oxford, they have collaborated with both composers and musicians in concert and on disc: recordings have included the music of John Ward and Thomas Tomkins with the celebrated viol group, Phantasm, and the work of the renowned composer of sacred music, Matthew Martin. They won a Gramophone Award under former director Grayston Ives, and have collaborated with the film composer George Fenton, most notably in Richard Attenborough's movie, *Shadowlands*, with the Beatles member Sir Paul McCartney, and on the award-winning soundtrack for the BBC TV series, *Blue Planet*.

www.magdalencollegechoir.com

Mark Williams has been Informator Choristarum, Organist and Tutorial Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford since January 2017. He studied at Trinity College, Cambridge, and was for six years Assistant Organist of St Paul's Cathedral and Director of Music at St Paul's Cathedral School. Between 2009 and 2016, he held the post of Director of Music at Jesus College, Cambridge. He has appeared as organist, harpsichordist and conductor internationally and on over 40 discs and soundtracks with many of the UK's leading ensembles, including the English Chamber Orchestra, the City of London Sinfonia, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Cambridge Singers, The King's Consort, The Sixteen and Arcangelo. He is the Principal Guest Conductor of the City of London Choir, the Artistic Director of the William Byrd Festival which takes place each year in Portland, Oregon and a trustee of a number of musical charities specialising in education for young organists and for children from disadvantaged communities and backgrounds across the world.

The Choir of Magdalen College, Oxford

Treble

Luke Rowe (Robertshaw Chorister) (7)
Benjamin Seward (Waynflete Chorister) (7)
Myron Buist (Rose Chorister) (7)
Harry Colman Stewart
Leo Dolan (7)
Flavius Dumitru
Blaise Durodie
Henry Isaacs (7)
Louis Isaacs
Alastair Mucklow
Joshua Rowe
Freddie Rowntree
Max Thomas (7)
Oscar Thomas
Jayme Wang
Shen Wang
Charlie Yap

Alto

Benedict Goodall
William Prier
Joy Sutcliffe
Samuel Thyr (22)

Tenor

Sebastian Hill (16)
Milo Hodgkiss (22)
Asker Kurt-Elli
Matthew Pope (22)

Bass

Charles Baigent
Owen Huxford (22)
Benjamin Watkins (9)
James Watkins

Assistant Organist

Alexander Pott

Organ Scholar

Romain Bornes

Informator Choristarum

Mark Williams

Track numbers following names indicate soloists



The practice of saluting the Spring on or around the first of May dates back to Roman times, when Flora, the goddess of flowers, was celebrated in a week-long *Floralia* festival. In his *Chronicle*, the 6th-century historian John Malalas, refers to 'the nocturnal dramatic festival, held every three years and known as Orgies, that is, the Mysteries of Dionysus and Aphrodite, that is, what is known as the Maiourmas because it is celebrated in the month of May-Artemisios (...) a specific quantity of gold for torches, lights, and other expenses for the thirty-days festival of all-night revels.' The first surviving reference to Oxford's famous May Morning tradition appears in the diary of Anthony Wood, an Oxford antiquary and author of *The History and Antiquities of the University of Oxford*, in 1674: 'the choral ministers of this House do, according to an ancient custom, salute Flora every year on the first of May, at four in the morning, with vocal music of several parts. Which having been sometimes well performed, hath given great content to the neighbourhood and auditors underneath'. The event appears again on 1st May 1688, 'whereas on every May Day morning about 4 of the clock, the choristers and clerks of Magdalen College used to sing on their Tower (which hath been constantly kept since the King's return) was this morn. neglected for want of choristers and clerks'.

The precise origins of the Oxford tradition are uncertain, but a celebration of the completion of the College's Great Tower in 1509 and a Requiem or 'obit' to mark the death of King Henry VII, a benefactor to Magdalen, at the end of April that same year, are two possible explanations pointing to its roots in the early sixteenth century (when singing from towers and processions through the town, in celebration of both sacred and secular feasts, were common). In 1749, John Pointer recorded that 'Another remarkable Custom is their having a Concert of Music on the top of the tower every May Day at 4 o'Clock in the Morning in commemoration of k. Henry VII ... being a Mass of requiem. But now it is a merry Concert of both Vocal and Instrumental Music, consisting of several merry catches and lasting for two hours ending with the ringing of the bells.' In his *History of Magdalen College School*, published in 1958, R.S. Stanier, writes of the custom of choristers hurling rotten eggs from the tower 'by way of retaliation against the town boys who attempted to drown the singing by blowing on trumpets and horns'. Dr John Rouse Bloxam, Fellow of Magdalen and devout Tractarian, wrote to a friend that the singing had become 'more like a Bacchanalian song than a sacred hymn' and determined to re-establish the ceremony's solemnity, revising the rules in 1844 to include the wearing of surplices, the uncovering of heads and turning east for the singing of the **Hymnus Eucharisticus [10]** by Benjamin Rogers (Informator Choristarum 1664-1686), with words by Thomas Smith (Fellow of Magdalen 1665-1692). Two years later, in 1846, the *Illustrated London News*, described the event, now at the later time of 5 o'clock, in 'As the fifth sound died away in the

air, the choristers began singing their hymn, and a very beautiful effect it had. The novelty of the situation, the early hour, the surpliced singers and the black academic robes of the lookers-on, with the notes of the hymn vibrating in the air, all tended to produce a most imposing and thrilling effect.'

Painted in 1890, William Holman Hunt's *May Morning on Magdalen Tower* presents a somewhat romanticised image of the ceremony. It is an imagined gathering, with those featured in the painting including Dr Bloxam and a Parsee priest (representing the practice of veneration of the sun) with former Informators, Sir John Stainer (composer of **Sicut lilium** [11], which incorporates the popular College cry of 'Floreat Magdalena') and Sir Walter Parratt, looking on as Dr John Varley Roberts (Informator Choristarum 1882-1918) conducts the choir. In a letter to the Pall Mall Gazette, the artist wrote that he wished the painting: 'to represent the spirit of a beautiful, primitive and in a large sense eternal service, which has only been in part restored on the tower, even to the floral fullness of three centuries since, but which still carries evidence in it of the origin of our race and thoughts in the same cradle with the early Persians.'

During the Great War, the tradition continued, with the *Cheltenham Looker-On*, a periodical of the time, describing the change in atmosphere: 'As a rule, the listeners on May morning consist chiefly of members of the University clad in sober cap and gown, and quiet residents of Oxford. On this 1st May, 1915, the sun has risen on a very different scene, a khaki clad stripling and a Red Cross nurse stand side by side, a grizzled colonel and a naval officer descend the Tower together, the grey streets of Oxford are thronged with khaki, and academic dress is hardly to be seen.' By the time of the Second World War, the ceremony had moved to 6am to coincide with dawn following the introduction of British Summer Time. Chorister Shirley Michael Wright Hickey joined the Choir in 1939, and wrote in 1941: 'We got up at 5.10am and were on the tower by 5.45. While we were singing a recording was taken; also a Movie-camera film was taken. It will form part of a 'Paramount' film on old-world England or something daff'.

In the 21st century, the ceremony – which, for the first time ever, in 2020 and 2021, took place 'online' owing to Covid restrictions – has evolved into a unique blend of pagan and sacred at sunrise, with the traditional Latin Hymnus Eucharisticus followed by a prayer before the Choir sings Thomas Morley's madrigal **Now is the month of Maying** [3] and a selection of other secular pieces. Records detailing the exact repertoire sung from the tower over the years are scarce, but traditional madrigals celebrating the month of May and the arrival of Summer, including **O Lusty May** [6], **Sumer is icumen in** [2], **This Sweet and Merry Month of May** [20] and **In pride of May** [23] have become stalwarts, sitting alongside popular favourites such as Orlando Gibbons's poignant

The Silver Swan [17] and Pearsall's beautiful **Lay a garland** [4]. Madrigals from the European tradition, such as Gesualdo's **Felice primavera** [18] and Isaac's **Hora e di Maggio** [24] have been integrated into the repertoire more recently, and foreign-language texts such as Debussy's **Dieu, qu'il la fait bon regarder** [15] speak to the increasingly international and diverse audience gathered in the streets below. Bernard Rose (Informator Choristarum between 1957 and 1981) began the tradition of including partsongs such as Elgar's **As torrents in Summer** [25], Finzi's **Haste on my joys** [12], Parry's **Music when soft voices die** [13] and Stanford's peerless **The Bluebird** [26], and English folksongs such as Vaughan Williams's **Linden Lea** [8] and **The Oak and the Ash** [22]. These are complemented in this collection by performances by the Academical Clerks of the Scottish folksong, **Loch Lomond** [9] and the Irish folksong, **The Lark in Clear Air** [16] in an arrangement by former Clerk, James Whitbourn.

To contrast with the revelry of playful madrigals, recent directors of the Choir have tried to capture the beauty of the stillness of that dawn hour, as the sun rises over Oxford's dreaming spires – Cornysh's simple but affecting round **Ah Robin** [7], sung by a small group of choristers, Peter Warlock's **The Spring of the Year** [21], and John Ireland's calm and solemn **The Hills** [19] provide such a moment of reflection. A sense of fun can be restored, before the crowds are sent on their way with peals of bells, by works such as Benjamin Britten's humorous **The Ballad of Green Broom** [27]. The inclusion of **Somewhere Over the Rainbow** [14] in 2019's May Morning ceremony divided opinion, with some lamenting the move away from the 'traditional' repertoire, whilst others delighted in the choice of a piece to which many (unintended) meanings were ascribed. The inclusion in this collection of the Beatles' song **I'll Follow the Sun** [5], in an arrangement by Grayston Ives, Informator Choristarum between 1991 and 2009 and a former member of the King's Singers, could be said to represent a further – if risky – aspiration that the ceremony might, in the future, include more contemporary songs. Whatever happens next, this unique and cherished tradition will no doubt continue to evolve, whilst acknowledging and maintaining its historic roots, so that those who listen, in person and (nowadays) online, feel that they have been part of a truly special event, but also part of something relevant to – and representative of – the vibrant and diverse community that Oxford has become in the 21st century.

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2. Sumer is icumen in

Sumer is icumen in
Lhude sing cuccu
Groweþ sed
and bloweþ med
and springþ þe wde nu
Sing cuccu

Awe bleþeþ after lomb
Ihouþ after calue cu
Bulluc sterþeþ
bucke uerþeþ
murie sing cuccu

Cuccu cuccu
Wel singes þu cuccu
ne swik þu nauer nu
Sing cuccu, Sing cuccu.

Words & Music: Anonymous,
13th century
Arranged by Grayston
Ives (b. 1948; Informator
Choristarum, 1991–2009)

3. Now is the month of Maying

Now is the month of maying,
When merry lads are playing,
Fa la la...

Each with his bonny lass
Upon the greeny grass.
Fa la la...

The Spring, clad all in gladness,
Doth laugh at Winter's sadness,
Fa la la...

And to the bagpipe's sound
The nymphs tread out their ground.
Fa la la...

Fie then! why sit we musing,
Youth's sweet delight refusing?
Fa la la...

Say, dainty nymphs, and speak,
Shall we play barley break?
Fa la la...

Words & Music: Thomas Morley
(1557–1602), based on an anonymous
Italian text

4. Lay a garland

Lay a garland on her hearse
of dismal yew.
Maidens, willow branches wear,
say she died true.
Her love was false, but she was firm
Upon her buried body lie
lightly, thou gentle earth.

Words: from *The Maid's Tragedy* by
Francis Beaumont (1584–1616)
& John Fletcher (1579–1625)
Music: Robert Lucas de Pearsall
(1795–1856)

5. I'll Follow the Sun

One day you'll look
To see I've gone,
For tomorrow may rain
So I'll follow the sun.
Some day you'll know
I was the one,
But tomorrow may rain
So I'll follow the sun.
And now the time has come,
And so my love I must go.
And though I lose a friend,
In the end you will know...

Words & Music: John Lennon
(1940–1980) & Paul McCartney
(b. 1942)
Arranged by Grayston Ives

6. O Lusty May

O Lusty May with Flora quene
The balmy drops from Phebus schene
Preluciand bernes befor the day,
Be that Diana growis grene
Thru' glaidnes of this lusty May.
All luvaris that ar in cair
To thair ladeis they do repair
In fresch mornynys before the day,
And ar in mirth ay mair and mair
Thru' glaidnes of this lusty May.
Of all the moneths of the year
To mirthful May there is no peer
Hir glistring garments are so gay.
You luvars all mak mirrie cheer
Thru' glaidnes of this lusty May.

Words & Music: Anonymous Scottish song; first
published in 1612

7. Ah Robin

Ah, Robin, gentle Robin,
Tell me how thy leman doth,
And thou shalt know of mine.
Ah, Robin ...
My lady is unkind, iwis,
Alac why is she so?
She lov'th another better than me,
And yet she will say no.
Ah, Robin ...
I cannot think such doubleness,
For I find women true:
In faith my lady lov'th me well,
She will change for no new.
Ah, Robin..

Words: Anonymous
Music: William Cornysh (c. 1465–1523)

8. Linden Lea

Within the woodlands, flow'ry gladed,
By the oak trees' mossy moot,
The shining grass blades, timber-shaded,
Now do quiver underfoot;
And birds do whistle overhead,
And water's bubbling in its bed;
And there, for me, the apple tree
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

When leaves, that lately were a-springing,
Now do fade within the copse,
And painted birds do hush their singing,
Up upon the timber tops;
And brown-leaved fruits a-turning red,
In cloudless sunshine overhead,
With fruit for me, the apple tree
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

Let other folk make money faster
In the air of dark-roomed towns;
I don't dread a peevish master,
Though no man may heed my frowns.
I be free to go abroad,
Or take again my homeward road
To where, for me, the apple tree
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

Words: William Barnes (1801–1886)
Music: Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

9. Loch Lomond

By yon bonnie banks and by yon bonnie braes,
Where the sun shines bright on Loch Lomond,
Where me and my true love were ever wont to gae,
On the bonnie, bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond.

O ye'll tak' the high road, and I'll tak' the low road,
And I'll be in Scotland a'fore ye,
But me and my true love will never meet again,
On the bonnie, bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond.

I mind when we parted, in yon shady glen,
On the steep, steep side o' Ben Lomond,
Where in soft purple hue, the highland hills we view,
And the moon looks out from the gloamin'.

Chorus

*Words & Music: Scottish traditional song
Arranged by David Overton (b. 1942)*

11. Sicut liliū

Sicut liliū beatī
Crescant Magdalenae natī,
Far abundet horeis;
Claustra tuta sint portarum,
Pax aeterna custos harum.
Magdalena floreat!

*May Magdalen's happy children
grow like a lily;
May the barns be full of wheat;
May the bolts on the gates remain secure,
Whose guard is endless peace.
May Magdalen prosper!*

*Words: 19th century, anonymous
Music: John Stainer (1840–1901; Informator
Choristarum 1860–1872)*

10. Hymnus Eucharisticus

Te Deum Patrem colimus,
Te laudibus prosequimur,
Qui corpus cibo reficis,
Caelesti mentem gratia.

Te adoramus, O Iesu,
Te, Fili unigenite,
Te, qui non dedignatus es
Subire claustra Virginis.

Actus in crucem, factus est
Irato Deo Victima:
per te, Salvator unice
Vitae spes nobis rediit.

Tibi, Aeternae Spiritus
Cuius afflatu peperit
Infantem Deum Maria,
Aeternum benedicimus.

Triune Deus, hominum
Salutis auctor optime,
Immensum hoc mysterium
Ovante lingua canimus.

*Words: Thomas Smith
(1638–1710; Fellow of Magdalen
1665–1692)
Music: Benjamin Rogers
(1614–1698; Informator
Choristarum 1664–1686)*

*We worship you, O God the Father,
we offer you our praise,
for you nourish our bodies,
and minds with heavenly grace.*

*We adore you, O Jesus,
you, the only begotten Son,
you, who did not disdain
to submit to birth in the Virgin's womb.*

*Driven onto the cross, you were made
the victim of God's wrath.
Through you, our only Saviour,
hope of life returned to us.*

*To you, Eternal Spirit
by whose breath was born
by Mary the Infant God,
be our eternal blessings.*

*Triune God, of all humanity
the great author of salvation,
this immense mystery
our tongues all cheer and sing.*

12. Haste on my joys

Haste on, my joys! your treasure lies
In swift, unceasing flight.
O haste: for while your beauty flies
I seize your full delight.

Lo! I have seen the scented flower,
Whose tender stems I cull,
For her brief date and meted hour
Appear more beautiful.

O youth, O strength, O most divine
For that so short ye prove;
Were but your rare gifts longer mine,
Ye scarce would win my love.

Nay, life itself the heart would spurn,
Did once the days restore
The days, that once enjoyed return,
Return, ah! nevermore.

*Words: Robert Bridges (1844–1930)
Music: Gerald Finzi (1901–1956)*

13. Music when soft voices die

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory—
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

*Words: Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822)
Music: Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (1848–1918)*

14. Somewhere Over the Rainbow

When all the world is a hopeless jumble,
And the raindrops tumble all around,
Heaven opens a magic lane.
When all the clouds darken up the skyway,
There's a rainbow highway to be found.
Leading from your window pane
To a place behind the sun,
Just a step beyond the rain.

Somewhere over the rainbow way up high
There's a land that I heard of
Once in a lullaby
Somewhere over the rainbow skies are blue,
And the dreams that you dare to dream
Really do come true.

Someday I'll wish upon a star,
And wake up where the clouds are far behind me;
Where troubles melt like lemon drops,
Away above the chimney tops,
That's where you'll find me.

Somewhere over the rainbow bluebirds fly
Birds fly over the rainbow
Why then oh why can't I?
If happy little bluebirds fly beyond the rainbow
Why oh why can't I?

Words: Edgar Yipfel Harburg (1896–1981)
Music: Harold Arlen (1905–1986)
Arranged by Guy Turner (b. 1955)

15. Dieu, qui'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 laisser?
Tousjours sa beauté renouvelle.
Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder,
La gracieuse bonne et belle!
Par deça, ne delà, la mer,
Ne scay dame, ne damoiselle
Qui soit en tous biens parfais telle!
C'est un songe d'y penser.
Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder!

Words: Charles d'Orléans (1394–1465)
Music: Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

16. The Lark in Clear Air

Dear thoughts are in my mind
And my soul soars enchanted,
As I hear the sweet lark sing
In the clear air of the day.
For a tender beaming smile
To my hope has been granted,
And tomorrow she shall hear
All my fond heart would say.

I shall tell her all my love,
All my soul's adoration;
And I think she will hear me
And will not say me nay.
It is this that fills my soul
With its joyous elation,
As I hear the sweet lark sing
In the clear air of the day.

Words: Samuel Ferguson (1810–1886)
Music: Traditional Irish melody
Arranged by James Whitbourn (b. 1963,
Academical Clerk 1982–85)

*Lord! how good to look on her,
The good and fair and gracious lady;
For the high qualities within her,
All are eager to praise her.
Who could ever tire of her?
Her beauty always increases.
Lord! how good to look on her,
The good and fair and gracious lady!
The ocean knows of no woman in any quarter,
Married or single, who is as perfect
As she in every way.
You would never dream of such a thing;
Lord! how good it is to look on her!*

18. Felice primavera

Felice primavera
De bei pensier fiorisce nel mio core
Novo lauro d'Amore
A cui rida la terra e il Ciel d'intorno,
E di bel manto adorno
Di Giacinti e viole il Pò si veste.

Danzan le Ninfe oneste e i Pastorelli
E i susurranti Augelli in fra le fronde
Al mormorar dell'onde e vaghi fiori
Donan le grazie à i pargoletti amori

Words: Giovanni Battista Guarini (1538–1612)
Music: Carlo Gesualdo (1566–1613)

17. The Silver Swan

The silver swan, who living had no note,
When death approached, unlocked her silent throat;
Leaning her breast against the reedy shore,
Thus sung her first and last, and sung no more:
"Farewell, all joys; Oh death, come close mine eyes;
More geese than swans now live, more fools than wise."

Words: Anonymous
Music: Orlando Gibbons (1583–1625)

*O cheerful springtime:
happy thoughts flourish in my heart
from Love's new laurels,
on which heaven and earth can only smile, while a
lovely mantle of hyacinths
and violets adorns the banks of the Po.*

*Chaste nymphs and shepherds dance, and birds
rustle in the branches above the murmuring
streams, while the Graces give charming flowers to
the baby cupids.*

19. The Hills

How calm, how constant are the hills,
How green and white and golden in the summer light.
Their lakes, their leaping wells are bright
With flower, leaf and rain.
And their profounder rivers run from rocks
That are the altars of the sun.

How calm, how constant are the hills.
Our time's dark gale of ice and fire
Thunders around them but removes them never.
No tempest overthrows their strong humility
They are both god and temple
And their stones are holy, the earth's enduring thrones.

How calm, how constant are the hills.

Words: James Kirkup (1918–2009)

Music: John Ireland (1879–1962)

21. The Spring of the Year

Gone were but the winter cold,
And gone were but the snow,
I could sleep in the wild woods
Where primroses blow.

Cold's the snow at my head,
And cold at my feet;
And the finger of death's at my e'en,
Closing them to sleep.

Let none tell my father
Or my mother so dear--
I'll meet them both in heaven
At the spring of the year.

Words: Allan Cunningham (1784–1842)

Music: Peter Warlock (1894–1930)

20. This Sweet and Merry Month of May

This sweet and Merry Month of May,
while nature wantons in her prime,
And birds do sing, and beasts do play,
For pleasure of the joyful time,
I choose the first for holy day,
And greet Eliza with a rhyme.
O beauteous Queen of second Troy:
Take well in worth a simple toy.

Words: Thomas Watson (1555–1592)

Music: William Byrd (1540–1623)

22. The Oak and the Ash

"Oh the oak and the ash and the bonnie ivy tree,
How I wish once again in the North I could be!"

A north country maid up to London has strayed
Although with her nature it did not agree.
She wept and she sighed and so bitterly she cried,
"How I wish once again in the north I could be.
Oh the oak and the ash and the bonny ivy tree,
They flourish at home in my own country."

While sadly I roam I regret my dear home,
Where lads and young lasses are making the hay;
The merry bells ring and the birds sweetly sing.
The meadows are pleasant and maidens are gay.
"Oh the oak and the ash and the bonny ivy tree,
They flourish at home in my own country."

No doubt did I please, I could marry with ease,
For where maidens are fair, many lovers will come.
But the one whom I wed must be north country bred,
And tarry with me in my north country home.
"Oh the oak and the ash and the bonny ivy tree,
They flourish at home in my own country.
How I wish once again in the north I could be."

Words & music: Old English ballad, dating from at least the
seventeenth century

Arranged by Gordon Langford (1930–2017)

23. In pride of May

In pride of May the fields are gay,
the birds do sing, do sweetly sing.
Fa la la la la la.
So nature would that all things
should with joy begin the Spring.
Fa la la la la la.

Then Lady dear do you appear,
in beauty like the Spring.
Fa la la la la la.

I well dare say the birds that day
more cheerfully will sing,
Fa la la la la la.

Words: Anonymous English madrigal

Music: Thomas Weelkes (c. 1576–1623)

24. Hora e di Maggio

Hora e di Maggio
Che rinverdisce ogni herba,
Figliuol del re
Facti alla finestrella
Et mira et sguarda,
Et qual e la piu bella.

*Now it is May
that renews all the plants.
Son of the king,
make for the window,
And admire and gaze
at which is the most beautiful.*

Words: Unknown

Music: Heinrich Isaac (c. 1450–1517)

25. As torrents in Summer

As torrents in Summer,
Half dried in their channels,
Suddenly rise, tho' the sky is still cloudless.

For rain has been falling.
Far off at their fountains;

So hearts that are fainting
Grow full to o'erflowing,
And they that behold it,
Marvel, and know not
That God at their fountains
Far off has been raining!

Words: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882)

Music: Edward Elgar (1857–1934)

26. The Bluebird

The lake lay blue, below the hill.
As I looked, there flew across the water
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.
The lake lay blue below the hill.

Words: Mary Coleridge (1861–1907)

Music: Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924)

27. The Ballad of Green Broom

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.

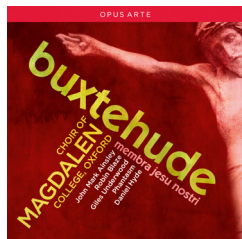
Words: Anonymous

Music: Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)



In the late 1970s the Choir sang from Founder's Tower for three years, owing to the restoration of the Great Tower. Amongst the Academical Clerks pictured here, under the direction of Dr Bernard Rose (Informator Chorisarum 1957–1981), are the founder of The Sixteen, Harry Christophers CBE, Professor Sir John Curtice, election pundit and Lord Briggs, Supreme Court judge.

Also available on Opus Arte



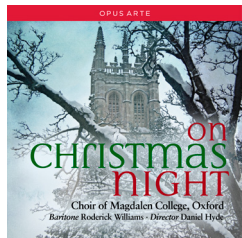
**Buxtehude: Membra
Jesu nostri**
OACD9023D



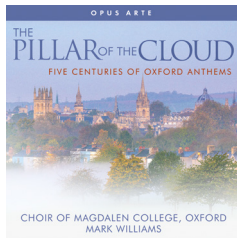
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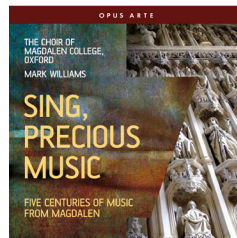
**Matthew Martin:
Jubilate Deo**
OACD9030D



On Christmas Night
OACD9022D



The Pillar of the Cloud
OACD9045D



Sing, Precious Music
OACD9046D

The Choir wishes to express its gratitude to the Friends of Magdalen College Choir, without whose generosity this recording would not have been possible.

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