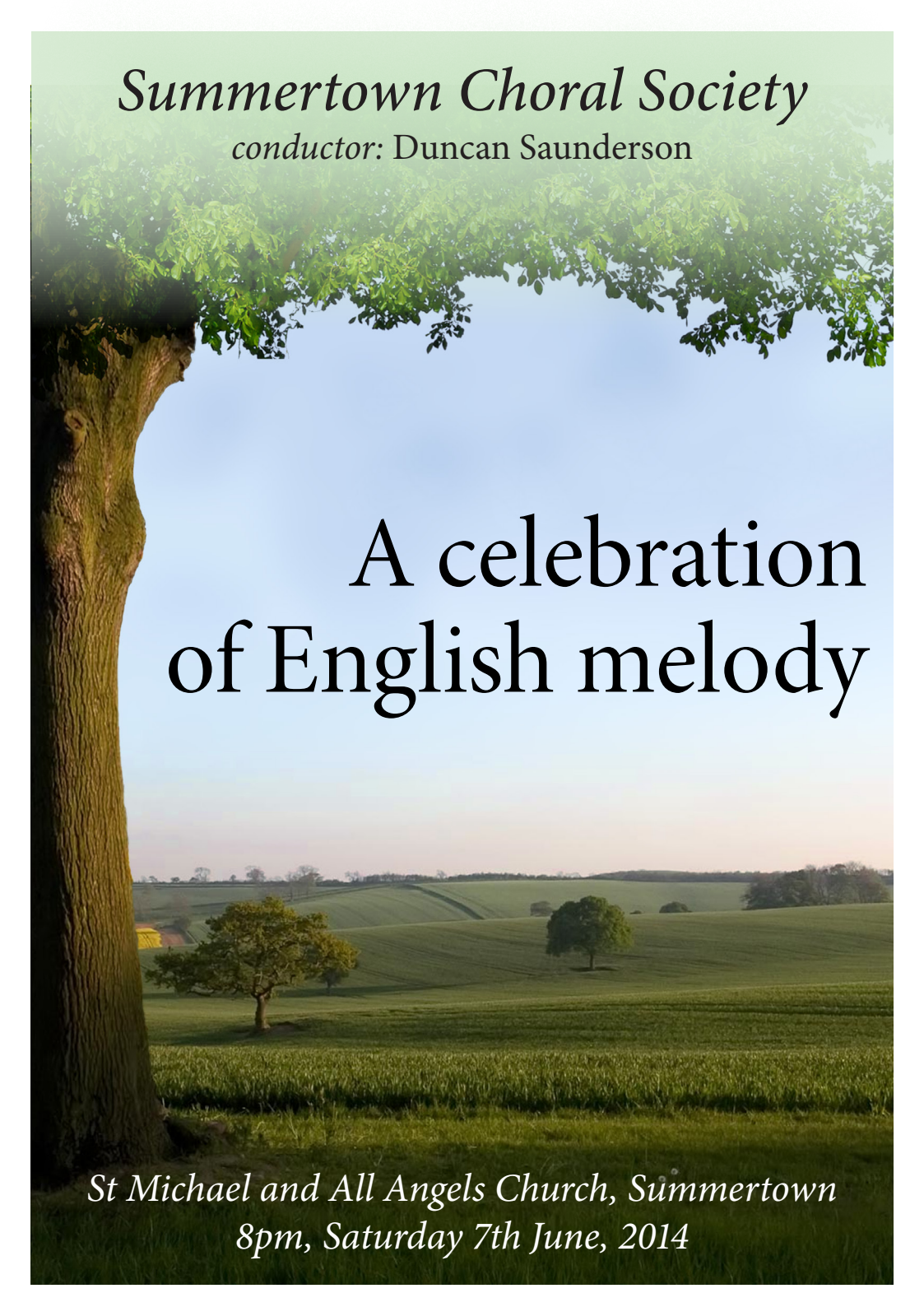




Summertown Choral Society

conductor: Duncan Saunderson

A celebration of English melody

*St Michael and All Angels Church, Summertown
8pm, Saturday 7th June, 2014*

Programme

Charles Wood	<i>Full fathom five</i>
Ralph Vaughan Williams	<i>Bushes and briars</i>
Gerald Finzi	<i>I praise the tender flower</i>
RVW	<i>Dives and Lazarus</i>
"	<i>Linden Lea</i>
"	<i>The turtle dove</i> (baritone solo: Iain McLean)



C. V. Stanford	<i>Ballade, op. 170</i> (piano)
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Thomas Tallis	<i>God grant with grace</i> ("Tallis' Canon")
anon.	<i>There is no rose.</i>
RVW	<i>The sky above the roof</i>
"	<i>Bushes and briars</i>
"	<i>This is the truth</i>
Tallis	<i>Ordina (Veni Creator)</i>



RVW	<i>The old hundreth</i>
RVW	<i>O clap your hands</i>

Interval

Thomas Weelkes	<i>Hark all ye lovely saints</i>
Gustav Holst	<i>There was a tree</i>
"	<i>My sweetheart's like Venus</i>



Herbert Howells

Master Tallis' testament (organ)



Tallis

Andrew Gant

Why fum'th in fight?

RVW Suite

1. *Prelude on a theme of Thomas Tallis*
2. *In the windless stillness*
3. *The fall of the leaf* (soprano solo: Gillian Beattie)
4. *The ploughboy's dream*



C. H. H. Parry

Blest pair of sirens

Summertown Choral Society

Duncan Saunderson, conductor

Stephen Burrows, *countertenor*

James Potter, *countertenor*

Alex Clissold-Jones, *tenor*

Julian Littlewood, *piano & organ*

Summertown Choral Society was founded in 1961. The choir is directed by Duncan Saunderson and the accompanist is Julian Littlewood. New members are always welcome, without audition, to this friendly and well-established choir. The choir season runs from September to June and we perform two concerts each season. Rehearsals are on Thursday evenings 8–9.30pm at St. Michael and All Angels Church, Lonsdale Road, Summertown. Rehearsals for our new term start on Thursday 11 September at 8 p.m. Why not come and join us? More information about the choir, including details of repertoire, can be found on the choir's website at www.summertownchoral.org.uk.

Programme Notes

It has been said that RVW created the first truly ‘English’ sound in the 20th century. Other composers of his generation turned to Germany for a lead whereas RVW looked backwards and his “English pastoral” sound is not without its detractors. However, English madrigals, lute song, sacred polyphony and folk song were all European styles. What is clear is that the quality of English music through the ages and its preservation is outstanding. RVW recognized this quality, and we have him, chiefly, to thank for the preservation of an extraordinary wealth of English melody; he collected over 800 folk songs, he put together The English Hymnal, thus preserving our unrivalled tradition of Hymn singing and he used a tune by Tallis in his first masterpiece, *Fantasia on a theme by Thomas Tallis*, a piece performed all over the world that has sat at no. 3 in ClassicFM’s ‘Hall of Fame’.

RVW’s interest in folk song collecting started when he heard *Bushes and Briars* sung by a 70-year-old labourer at a vicar’s tea party in Essex in 1903. In a 10 minute peace-time propaganda film designed to tackle post war blues, over scenes of the Pennine Hills, a male voice sings the folk song *Dives and Lazarus* and RVW speaks:

Listen to that tune – it’s one of our English folk tunes. I knew it first when I was quite a small boy, but I realized even then that there was something not only very beautiful, but which had a special appeal to me as an Englishman. It dates from a time when people, of necessity, made their own music.

Tonight’s version is from *Nine carols for male voices* written during World War 1 for the choir he developed from the men in his Field Ambulance unit in Greece.

Linden Lea, written in 1912, an original composition in the style of a folk song, was RVW’s first popular success. The words, by the eccentric vicar William Barnes, avoided any trace of Latin, Greek or other foreign influence to create a ‘pure’ English style that could be understood by those without a Classical education. *The Turtle Dove* was sung to RVW by the landlord of The Plough pub in Ruspur, Sussex in 1903.

Three outstanding composers in England in the late 19th century were the Irishman Stanford, the Ulsterman Wood and the Englishman Parry. They were also dedicated teachers and RVW had the good fortune to be taught by them at The Royal College of Music and Cambridge University. “With Stanford I felt I was in the presence of a lovable, powerful and enthralling mind; this helped me more

than any amount of technical instruction". Although Stanford composed in a very wide variety of genres, he is remembered principally for his keyboard works – such as tonight's piano Ballade – and for his choral writing. Stanford sent his Royal College of Music pupils, including Vaughan Williams, to hear "Palestrina for twopence" (the bus fare from Prince Consort Road to Westminster Cathedral) where they would have heard, after three centuries of neglect, a major musical revival of sacred Tudor music by Tallis and Byrd. RVW was deeply inspired by this music, and 16th-century madrigals such as *Hark all you lovely Saints* by the organist of Chichester Cathedral, Thomas Weelkes.

The timeless atmosphere of *The sky above the roof* appears to draw on even earlier music such as the medieval *There is no rose* with its parallel chords that derive from ancient monastic 'organum'. This can also be detected in *O clap your hands* where the use of parallel 5ths (forbidden in post-medieval 'student' harmony) is undisguised. The *Old Hundredth Psalm Tune* was composed for the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in Westminster Abbey on Tuesday, 2 June 1953.

RVW described Parry as "an out-and-out radical both in art and life. He introduced me to Wagner and Brahms ... I fully believe – and keeping the achievements of Byrd, Purcell, and Elgar firmly before my eyes, – 'Blest Pair of Sirens' (dedicated to Stanford and members of The Bach Choir) is the finest musical work that has come out of these islands". He was slightly less easily generous about Wood, but Howells who studied with Wood at The Royal College of Music said "Even when a man has had the luck to have studied with Stanford ... and Vaughan Williams, he could find it possible to rate Charles Wood the most completely equipped teacher in his experience".

At the Three Choirs Festival in 1910, Howells was inspired by RVW's *Fantasia on a theme of Thomas Tallis* to write *Master Tallis's Testament*. The four Tallis songs come from a set of nine 'Tunes' written in 1567 for the psalter of the first Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Parker.

RVW said Holst, his friend and musical confidant of 50 years "had the greatest influence on my music". Of his other close friend, Gerald Finzi, he said "You know what a great friend he was and what a staunch adviser – I always came to him for advice and help". They were brought together by the folk song *This is the Truth*. The young composer, asked RVW for permission to use the song which he collected in Herefordshire. RVW 'renewed' it as one of the country's best loved Christmas carols, as if recalling Milton's words "O may we soon again renew that tune", one of tonight's "loveliest of lovely" English melodies by Parry.

Duncan Saunderson

Notes on 'RVW Suite'

Ralph Vaughan Williams was a big musical personality. Write or read about any aspect of English music in the first half of the 20th century, and you keep bumping into him. This suite of choral songs aims to capture just some of the many and varied aspects of his musical, literary and historical hinterland.

Vaughan Williams' big breakthrough, both in terms of his career and the development of his individual musical style, was the "Fantasia on a theme of Thomas Tallis." The theme is one of the chants contributed by Tallis to Archbishop Matthew Parker's Psalter. The first movement of this Suite takes another tune from the same source, and presents it in the choir exactly as Tallis wrote it. It is ornamented with a piano Prelude, very much in the manner of JS Bach, as used by Vaughan Williams in his famous *Rhosymedre* prelude for organ.

During the first decade of the 20th century, Vaughan Williams and others spent a good deal of time tramping and cycling the highways and byways of rural England, looking for folksongs. It was a time of sylvan innocence, shortly to be shattered for ever by the horrors of war. Novelist LP Hartley captures the essence of this period perfectly in his classic novel "The Go-between." In this passage the young hero, Leo Colston, is walking in the garden, secure in the unchangeable beauty of an English summer day, soon to vanish for ever with the onset of adulthood and knowledge.

The last two movements are folk songs. Vaughan Williams collected "The fall of the leaf" in Wiltshire in 1904. Typically, versions had appeared many times in ballad broad sheets during the 19th century, but the great folklorist Roy Palmer comments "it was considerably improved by the refining and polishing action of oral circulation." The piano accompaniment here nods in the direction of another great arranger of folk song, Benjamin Britten.

The last song was also collected by Vaughan Williams, from Mr Garman of Forest Green, Surrey. These are the words to which Mr Garman sang it. Vaughan Williams used the tune not long after, in his capacity as editor of the new English Hymnal, to words of a quite different character. Mr Garman's original certainly captures more of the vigorous swagger of this fine tune. The accompaniment borrows themes from the piano part of movement one, using them very much in the manner of Vaughan Williams setting of Herbert's poem "Antiphon" ("Let all the world in every corner sing") from the "Five mystical songs."

Andrew Gant

Texts

Full Fathom Five

Charles Wood (1866-1926); words by Shakespeare (c.1564-1616)

Full fathom five thy father lies, of his bones are coral made; those are pearls that were his eyes: nothing of him that doth fade, but doth suffer a sea-change into something rich and strange. Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell: Hark! now I hear them, – ding-dong bell.

Bushes and Briars

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1952)

Through bushes and through briars I lately took my way; all for to hear the small birds sing and the lambs to skip and play. I overheard my own true love, her voice it was so clear; “Long time I have been waiting for the coming of my dear. Sometimes I am uneasy and troubled in my mind, sometimes I think I’ll go to my love and tell to him my mind. And if I should go to my love, my love he will say nay, if I show to him my boldness, he’ll ne’er love me again.”

I praise the tender flower

Gerald Finzi (1901-56); words by Robert Bridges (1844-1930)

I praise the tender flower, that on a mournful day bloomed in my garden bower and made the winter gay. Its loveliness contented my heart tormented. I praise the gentle maid whose happy voice and smile to confidence betrayed my doleful heart awhile; and gave my spirit deploring fresh wings for soaring. The maid for very fear Of love I durst not tell: the rose could never hear, though I bespake her well: so in my song I bind them for all to find them.

Dives and Lazarus

RVW

As it fell out upon one day, rich Diverus he made a feast; and he invited all his friends, and gentry of the best. And it fell out upon one day, poor Lazarus he was so poor, he came and laid him down and down, ev’n down at Diverus door.

Then Lazarus laid him down and down, ev’n down at Diverus gate; some meat, some drink, brother Diverus, for Jesu Christ his sake. Thou are none of mine brother Lazarus, lying begging at my gate, no meat, no drink will I give thee, for Jesus Christ his sake.

Then Diverus sent out his hungry dogs, to bite poor Lazarus away; they had not power to bite one bite, but licked his sores away. Then Diverus sent his merry men all, to whip poor Lazarus away, they had not power to whip one whip, but threw their whips away.

And it fell out upon one day, poor Lazarus he sickened and died, there came two angels out of heav'n, his soul thereto to guide. "Rise up, rise up, brother Lazarus, and come along with me, there is a place prepared in Heav'n, for to sit upon an angel's knee.

And it fell out upon one day, rich Diverus sickened and died, there came two serpents out of hell, his soul thereto to guide. "Rise up, rise up, brother Diverus, and come along with me, there is a place prepared in hell, for to sit upon a serpent's knee."

Linden Lea

RVW; words by William Barnes (1801-86)

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 with the copse, and painted birds do hush their singing, up upon the timber tops; and brown-leaved fruit's 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-room'd 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

The Turtle Dove

RVW

Fare you well, my dear, I must be gone, and leave you for a while; if I roam away I'll come back again, though I roam ten thousand miles, my dear, though I roam ten thousand miles.

So fair thou art, my bonny lass, so deep in love am I; but I never will prove false to the bonny lass I love, till the stars fall from the sky, my dear, till the stars fall from the sky.

The sea will never run dry, my dear, nor the rocks melt with the sun, but I never will prove false to the bonny lass I love, till all these things be done, my dear, till all these things be done.

O yonder doth sit that little turtle dove, he doth sit on yonder high tree, a-making a moan for the loss of his love, as I will do for thee, my dear, as I will do for thee.



God grant with grace (Tallis' Canon)

Thomas Tallis (1505-85)

God grant with grace, he us embrace, in gentle part bless he our heart. With loving face shine he in place, his mercies all on us to fall. That we thy way may know all day, while we do sail this world so frail. Thy health's reward is nigh declared, as plain as eye all gentiles spy.

There is no rose

anon. (1420)

There is no rose of such virtue as is the rose that bare Jesu: *Alleluya*. For in this rose contained was heaven and earth in little space: *res miranda*. By that rose we may well see that he is God in three: *pari forma*. The angels sung the shepherds to: "Gloria in excelsis Deo", *gaudeamus*. Leave we all this worldly mirth, and follow we this joyful birth: *transeamus*.

The sky above the roof

RVW

The sky above the roof is calm and sweet, a tree above the roof bends in the heat. A bell from out the blue drowsily rings; a bird from out the blue plaintively sings. Ah God! A life is here, simple and fair; murmurs of strife are here, lost in the air. Why dost thou weep O heart, poured out in tears? What hast thou done O heart, with thy spent years?

Bushes and briars

arr. for men's voices RVW

This is the Truth

arr. RVW

This is the truth sent from above, the truth of God, the God of love; Therefore don't turn me from your door, but hearken all, both rich and poor. The first thing, which I do relate, that God at first did man create the next thing, which to you I tell, Woman was made with him to dwell. Thus we were heirs to endless woes, till God the Lord did interpose. For so a promise soon did run that He'd redeem us with a Son.

Ordina (Veni Creator)

Tallis

Come Holy Ghost eternal God, which dost from God proceed, the father first, and eke the Son, one God as we do read.

O clap your hands

RVW; words from Psalm 47

O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.

Sing praises to God, sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises everyone that hath understanding. God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.

The Old Hundreth Psalm Tune

arr. RVW

All people that on earth do swell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice; him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell; come ye before him and rejoice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed; without our aid he did us make. We are his folk, he doth us feed, and for his sheep he doth us take.

Oh, enter then his gates with praise; approach with joy his courts unto; praise, laud, and bless his name always, for it is seemly so to do.

For why? The Lord our God is good: his mercy is forever sure; his truth at all times firmly stood, and shall from age to age endure.

To Father, son, and Holy Ghost, the God whom heaven and earth adore, from us and from the angel host be praise and glory evermore.



Hark, All Ye Lovely Saints Above

Thomas Weelkes, (1576-1623)

Hark, all ye lovely saints above, Diana hath agreed with Love, his fiery weapon to remove. Fa la la. Do you not see how they agree? Then cease, fair ladies; why weep ye? Fa la la.

There was a tree

Hampshire folksong, arr. Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

There was a tree all in the woods, as fine a tree as ever you did see, for the tree was in the woods, and the woods lie down in the valley below.

There was a limb all on the tree, as fine a limb as ever you did see, for the limb was on the tree and the tree was in the woods and the woods lie down in the valley below.

There was a bough all on the limb, as fine a bough as ever you did see, for the bough was on the limb, and the limb was on the tree, and the tree was in the woods, and the woods lie down in the valley below.

There was a bird all on the tree, The finest bird that ever you did see, For the bird was on the bough, and the bough was on the limb, and the limb was on the tree, and the tree was in the woods, And the woods lie down in the valley below.

My sweetheart's like Venus

Welsh folk song, arr. Gustav Holst

My sweetheart's like venus, she's lovely and light, she's fairer than blackthorn, she's slim and she's white, there's no one is like her, from far or from near, it's truth i am telling for all men to hear.

Her form has the splendour of straight-growing trees, her hair like ripe corn that is stirr'd in the breeze, her eyebrows like gossamer that hangs by the door; if only she'd love me, I'd ask nothing more.

My sweetheart she loves like a shower of rain, now clouded, now weeping, now smiling again, but she who loves many is left without one, a faithful, true lover has one love alone.

Psalms 2

(set to Nine Psalm Tunes: third tune) **Thomas Tallis** (1510-1585)

Why fum'th in fight the Gentiles spite, in fury raging stout? Why tak'th in hand the people fond, vain things to bring about? The Kings arise, the Lords devise, in counsels met thereto, against the Lord with false accord, against his Christ they go.

Blest Pair of Sirens

Hubert Parry (1848-1918); words by **John Milton** (1608-1674)

Blest pair of sirens, pledges of heaven's joy, sphere-born harmonious sisters, voice and verse, wed your divine sounds, and mixed power employ, dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce, and to our high-raised phantasy present that undisturbed song of pure consent, aye sung before the sapphire-coloured throne to Him that sits thereon, with saintly shout, and solemn jubilee;

Where the Bright Seraphim in burning row, their loud uplifted angel trumpets blow, and the cherubic host in thousand quires, touch their immortal harps of golden wires, with those just spirits that wear victorious palms, hymns devout and holy psalms singing everlastingly:

That we on earth with undiscording voice may rightly answer that melodious noise; as once we did, till disproportioned sin jarred against nature's chime, and with harsh din broke the fair music that all creatures made to their great lord, whose love their motion swayed in perfect diapason, whilst they stood in first obedience, and their state of good.

O may we soon again renew that song, and keep in tune with heaven, till God ere long to his celestial consort us unite, to live with him, and sing in endless morn of light.

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Saturday, 7th February 2015

Rossini: *Petite Messe Solennelle*

Gioachino Rossini's *Petite messe solennelle* was written in 1863 and described by the composer as "the last of my péchés de vieillesse" (sins of old age). However, this glorious and fun-filled mass by the greatest writer of comic operas is neither short or solemn.

Saturday, 6th June 2015

Handel, Mozart, Schubert, & Verdi

Mozart's *Krönungsmesse* (*Coronation Mass*) (Mass in C major, KV 317) composed in 1779, is one of the most popular of his seventeen mass settings. Schubert's Mass in G major, D.167 was composed in 1815 and is the best known of his three 'shorter' mass compositions.

Choruses from Handel's magnificent oratorio *Israel in Egypt* were first performed in London in 1739. The 'Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves' is the best loved number from Verdi's *Nabucco* concerning the Babylonian King Nabucco (Nebuchadnezzar II). The 'Chorus of Scottish Refugees' is from the opera *Macbeth*.