

Polymnia

Remembrance

**A centenary commemoration
of the Great War
in choral music, images and words**

John Byron (director)

Alex Aitken (piano)

Saturday November 10th 2018



FUNDRAISING
IN SUPPORT OF
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Programme

Parry: *My soul, there is a country*

Pizzetti: *Requiem* (1st movement)

Ravel: *Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis*

Debussy: *Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maisons*

Rachmaninov: *Troparion* (from *Vespers*)

Trad. German: *Ich hatt' einen Kameraden*

Reger: *Nachtlied*

Reger: *Abendgang*

Elgar: *Go, song of mine*

INTERVAL

arr. Alwyn: *Medley of Songs from the First World War*

Holst: *I love my love*

Arr. Vaughan Williams: *Carols for male voices*

Elgar: *Pleading*

Elgar: *For the fallen* from *The Spirit of England* (excerpt)

Parry: *Crossing the bar*

W. H. Harris: *Bring us, O Lord God*

The pieces in tonight's concert will be interspersed with readings

John Byron

Director

John Byron read music at Cambridge University and is active as a conductor, pianist, composer and teacher. Choral music has always been an important part of John's career; he sang in the choir of St. Paul's Cathedral and was formerly MD of the Lincoln Chorale. He has conducted Polymnia throughout the eleven years of their existence, and has performed with them in many parts of the UK as well as in Croatia, Spain and Italy. He is well known to many local choirs as a pianist and conductor, and is assistant musical director of the ladies' choir Coro Stellante.

He studied piano with John Bigg and Renée Reznik, and has recently continued his studies with Philip Fowke. His concerto repertoire is substantial, and he has performed with orchestras such as the Milton Keynes City Orchestra, the Milton Keynes Sinfonia, the Luton Symphony Orchestra, the Bedford Sinfonia, the Open University Orchestra and the Icenis Ensemble. In 1980 he was invited to participate in the Park Lane Group series of concerts on the South Bank in London, and he has given solo recitals in many parts of Britain, including the Open University and the British Music Information Centre in London. He is also much in demand as an accompanist, and is harpsichordist with the Baroque ensemble Circa 1685.

John studied composition as a student with Alexander Goehr, and has received several commissions for large-scale works involving chorus, soloists and orchestra. *Different Worlds*, a composition for four pianists at two pianos, was first performed by Piano 40 in the Purcell Room in London. *Two poems by Seamus Heaney* was especially written for two local choirs, the Milton Keynes Chorale and Polymnia. John contributed to the BBC Radio 3 series *The English Cadence* and introduced his own choral piece *Verba* in the programme *Choirworks*.



Photo by Anna Berry

Alex Aitken

Piano



Alex Aitken read Music and was organ scholar at St Catharine's College Cambridge, and now enjoys a national reputation as an outstanding conductor, pianist and organist,

maintaining an extensive, busy and varied schedule working with a number of the UK's most eminent musicians, ensembles and organisations. In addition to his freelance work he is a Musical Director for the National Youth Music Theatre, the Assistant Musical Director for Milton Keynes Chorale and, as a pianist, regularly works with the CBSO Chorus, the National Children's Choir of Great Britain, Oxford Pro Musica and Phoenix Chorale.

Other organisations he has performed with or accompanied for include the BBC Proms, The Lucerne Festival, The Military Wives Choirs, Chichester Festival Theatre, The Cambridge Music Festival, Eton Choral Courses, the National Brass Player's Championships and Cambridge Chorale.

Recent highlights as Musical Director include the National Youth Music Theatre's production of *Sunday in the Park with George* at Andrew Lloyd Webber's The Other Palace and *Into the Woods* for Stowe Creative Academy. He prepared new orchestrations for and conducted the UK school première of the musical *Prodigy*, originally a National Youth Music Theatre commission, having also conducted their production of *Brass* at the Hackney Empire. Alex has also composed the scores to numerous short films which have premiered at BAFTA and the London Film Academy.

Widely acknowledged as a highly versatile and experienced musician and teacher, Alex has been the Director of Music at St Peter and St Paul's Olney, Head of Academic Music, Choirmaster and Organist at Stowe School, and Assistant Director of Music at Little St Mary's in Cambridge. He also spent four years as the Composer, Orchestrator and Musical Director for the Cambridge Footlights. He graduated from Cambridge with a first in musical analysis, along with the Martin Steele Memorial Prize, Licentiate Diplomas in piano performance from the Royal Schools of Music and Trinity College of Music (the latter with Distinction), and the Associateship diploma of the Royal College of Organists.

Polymnia

Patron Lesley Garrett

Polymnia is a chamber choir of twenty-three voices based in the Milton Keynes area. The choir was formed in 2006, and is named after the Greek muse of sacred song. We sing a very wide variety of music to a high standard, under the musical direction of John Byron.

In 2014 we toured Southern Spain, where we had the rare privilege of giving a concert in Granada Cathedral, and also in the amazing acoustic of the caves at Nerja. In 2015 and 2017 Polymnia performed at The Stables, Wavendon, backing Tenors Unlimited and also singing some of our own favourite pieces to packed audiences. We gave the UK Premiere of 'You Are the Music!' by Dan Forrest at the Buckinghamshire High Sheriff's Justice Service, and sang the National Anthems of Fiji and Uruguay at the Rugby World Cup match in Milton Keynes Stadium to crowds of 30,000 and a world-wide TV audience. 2016 was our 10th Anniversary year and Polymnia travelled to Italy to perform in Mantua's Ducal Palace as part of the prestigious Mantova Chamber Festival. However the highlight of the year was the Gala Concert in October where we were joined by International Soprano, Lesley Garrett, CBE. Lesley is now patron of the choir.

In 2017 the choir performed concerts in Bedford, Linslade, Newport Pagnell and Stony Stratford where we were joined by the MK Youth Choir. This year performances have included an Opera Gala in MK Theatre and a trip to Prague to sing in St Vitus Cathedral.

More details of all our concerts are available on our website, www.polymnia.org.uk

Email singers.polymnia@gmail.com to contact us, join our mailing list or book us for events.

Polymnia in Mantua



Polymnia presents this evening a programme of choral music, vocal solos and readings on the eve of the centenary of Armistice Day, the day the guns fell silent in Europe. The pieces in tonight's concert, both serious and popular, are drawn almost exclusively from the 1914–18 era, and celebrate the work of Edward Elgar, an important composer of the Edwardian era, and composers who died a hundred years ago (Debussy and Parry), and fifty years ago (Pizzetti). They provide a glimpse into the spirit and feeling of the times, as well as serving as a departure for meditation and reflection. For that reason, we suggest that applause be reserved until the end of each half of the concert.

Charles Hubert Parry (1848–1918)

My soul, there is a country (1916)

Parry was one of England's foremost 'establishment' musicians up to and including the time of the First World War. His first major works appeared in the 1880s; as a composer he is best known for the hymn *Jerusalem*, his coronation anthem *I was glad*, the choral and orchestral ode *Blest Pair of Sirens*, and the hymn tune *Repton*. His orchestral works include five symphonies and a set of symphonic variations.

My soul, there is a country is the first of the *Songs of Farewell* which Parry composed during the First World War. The motets are a persuasive reminder of Parry's significant contribution to the English choral tradition. For Parry the events unfolding across the channel were an agonising time, and he died two years after the pieces' completion. Conceivably, they can be viewed as his farewell to the rapidly vanishing world of his youth. Common to all the texts are the contrasting themes of the transitory nature of life and the redeeming power of faith. The motets are, to a large extent, expressions of personal belief rather than orthodox liturgical works. Only the final setting has a recognised sacred text.

Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880–1968)

Requiem (1922, first movement)

As well as a composer, Pizzetti was a widely respected teacher, and held a succession of important teaching posts. In October 1900, as one of a group of students, he had met Verdi, in whose presence, he recalled, 'a complete silence descended on the scene. Very rarely, either before or since, have I had such an impression of universal religious awe.'

Both Pizzetti's technique and his musical personality remained remarkably constant

throughout his life. His music clearly declares him to have been a Latin composer, traditional in approach, yet always polished by a mastery of stylization which combined lyrical elements of late Romanticism (in technique rather than ethos) and the clear structure of early Italian masters. Pizzetti's critical writings include several books, one of them being a biography of Paganini. Together with Giuseppe Bastianelli, he co-founded a journal of modern music, *Dissonanza*, in 1914.

During the First World War, Pizzetti lived in Florence, and was the director of the Conservatory there from 1917 to 1923. His Requiem, which uses elements of Gregorian chant, was written in the wake of the war, in 1922.

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

Trois beaux oiseaux du paradis from *Trois Chansons* (1914–5)

Jo Churcher, Liz Camp, Paul North, Ken Storry (soloists)

During the First World War, Ravel served as a transport corps driver, a role similar to that taken by his friend and pupil Ralph Vaughan Williams. Rather than respond directly to the horrors of war, Ravel sought to assert the values of French culture as it had been in an earlier and more civilized era. His set of piano pieces *Le tombeau de Couperin*, completed in 1917, took the form of a Baroque dance suite, and the *Trois Chansons* (1914–15) paid homage to the Renaissance chanson, a form characterized by its pastoral atmosphere and simple tunefulness.

The texts of the *Chansons* are Ravel's own and are as typical of his personality as the music he wrote for them. They are sung by a quartet of soloists, chiefly a mezzo-soprano, with wordless accompaniment. *Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis* is steeped in a tender fairy-tale atmosphere. The colours of the birds, blue, white and red, are those of the French flag, the *tricolore*.

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maisons (1915)

Kylie Turney (soprano)

This song by Debussy was composed in December 1915 to words by himself, and is a condemnation of the occupation of France by the Germans. Like the *Chansons* by his compatriot Ravel, it represents Debussy's strongly patriotic feelings, and was the last song Debussy ever wrote.

The text is a supposed collective prayer of French children, orphaned and homeless,

who call on the infant Jesus to avenge them, as well as their counterparts from Belgium, Poland and Serbia. The song gives a touching impression of the hardships faced by French children during the war: rather than toys, they wish for bread to survive, as well as for France to be victorious.

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873–1943)

Troparion (No.14 from *Vespers*, 1915)

The *Vespers*, or *All-Night Vigil*, by Rachmaninov consists of settings of texts taken from the Russian Orthodox All-Night Vigil ceremony. In spite of Rachmaninov's successes in composing for the piano (he was the composer of four concertos for the instrument, as well as many celebrated solo works), it has been praised as Rachmaninov's finest achievement and some of the greatest music written for the Russian Orthodox Church. It was a personal favourite of Rachmaninov among his own compositions, and the composer requested that its fifth movement (*Nunc Dimittis*) be sung at his funeral.

Rachmaninov reputedly composed the All-Night Vigil in less than two weeks in January and February 1915. The work shows the profound influence of plainchant on Rachmaninov's work. The majority of the Vigil's fifteen movements are based on traditional chant. The first performance was given in Moscow on March 10, 1915, partly to benefit the Russian war effort. It was received warmly by critics and audiences, and was performed five more times within a month. However, the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the rise of the Soviet Union led to the government condemnation of religious music, and in July 1918 the Moscow Synodal Choir, which had given the first performance, was replaced by a non-religious 'People's Choir Academy'.

A *troparion* in Byzantine music and in the religious music of Eastern Orthodox Christianity is a short hymn of one stanza.

Friedrich Silcher (1789–1860)

Ich hatt' einen Kameraden (1825)

Malcolm Chalmers (tenor)

This song, also known as *Der gute Kamerad* (The good comrade), is a traditional lament of the German Armed Forces. The text was written by German poet Ludwig Uhland in 1809, its immediate inspiration being the deployment of Badener troops against the Tyrolean Rebellion. In 1825, the composer Friedrich Silcher set it to music, based on the tune of a Swiss folk song.

The song is about the immediate experience of a soldier losing a comrade in battle; it is not specific as to nationality, and was sung by representatives of many political backgrounds throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. It has been translated for use by numerous fighting forces: French, Dutch, Spanish and Japanese among others. *Ich hatt' einen Kameraden* was of great significance in the First World War, and today plays an important ceremonial role in the German Armed Forces. It is an integral part of modern military funeral and civil ceremonies, and is often played on *Volkstrauertag* (the German Remembrance Day).

Max Reger (1873–1916)

Nachtlied Op. 138 no.3 (1916)

Abendgang im Lenz Op.111 no.2 (1909)

Johann Baptist Joseph Maximilian Reger, commonly known as Max Reger, was a German composer, pianist, organist, conductor, and academic teacher.

Reger is best known today for his Lieder, choral music and works for piano and organ. He was raised a Catholic, but because his wife Elsa was a divorced Protestant he was excommunicated from the Catholic Church.

Before the First World War, Reger was professor at the Royal Conservatory in Leipzig, and musical director at the University Church. He was also appointed Hofkapellmeister (Music Director) at the court of Duke Georg II of Saxe-Meiningen, a post he gave up in 1914 for health reasons. In response to the First World War, he decided in 1914 to compose a choral work to commemorate the fallen of the war. He began to set the Latin Requiem but abandoned the work as a fragment. Instead, he composed eight motets forming *Acht geistliche Gesänge für gemischten Chor* (Eight Sacred Songs for mixed chorus) Op. 138, in a deliberately simple and chorale-like style. Reger died of a heart attack while staying at a hotel in Leipzig on 11 May 1916. The proofs of *Acht geistliche Gesänge*, including *Nachtlied*, were found next to his bed.

Reger's *Abendgang im Lenz*, a setting of words by Kiesekamp, is one of Three Songs for four-part ladies choir Op. 111, written in 1909. Both they and the Eight Sacred Songs provide good examples of the musical cultural background existing in Germany up to the time of First World War.

Edward Elgar (1850–1934)

Go, song of mine Op.57 (1909)

For many, Elgar is *the* composer of the Edwardian era. He came to occupy a revered place in British musical life, although his strongest popularity was relatively short lived. Although he is often regarded as a typically English composer, most of his musical influences were not from England but from continental Europe. He felt himself to be an outsider, not only musically, but also socially. As a self-taught composer and a Catholic in Protestant Britain, he was regarded with some suspicion, and in the class-conscious society of Victorian and Edwardian Britain, he was acutely sensitive about his humble origins even after he achieved recognition.

Elgar's solo songs and part-songs exemplify his commitment to general and amateur music making. While many of his part-songs are sentimental in nature, he did not forego experiment: *There is sweet music*, published in 1908, is written in two different keys simultaneously! *Go, song of mine*, composed in Rome in 1909, is an unusually intense composition, with passages alternating between typically noble Elgarian writing and those of harmonic adventure pointing towards his later works. It sets a translation of words by the Italian early Renaissance poet Guido Cavalcanti, and is prophetic in its depiction of the 'hardness of the heart of man'. The poem's final utterance conveys the poet's wish, perhaps a forlorn one, for it to go forth and break the hardness: 'Go!'

INTERVAL

Alwyn Humphreys (b.1944)

A Medley of Songs from the First World War

It's a long way to Tipperary

Roses of Picardy

Over there

Keep the home fires burning

Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag

The Welsh musician Alwyn Humphreys, who combines the careers of TV presenter and orchestral and choral conductor, made this arrangement of the choruses of popular songs for mixed voices and piano. All the songs were originally written just before or during the First World War, and they reflect popular moods of the age, be they comic, pugilistic or sentimental. The composers of the songs are respectively: Harry Williams, Hayden Wood, George M. Cohan, Ivor Novello and Felix Powell.

Popular songs were the main fare of the thriving British music hall industry that flourished up until the end of the war, and did much to cement the national mood and bolster morale, being sung by both music hall audiences and soldiers in the trenches. Many songs promoted recruitment, although, once the reality of war began to sink home, the recruiting songs all but disappeared. After conscription was introduced in 1916, songs dealing with the war spoke mostly of the desire to return home, and many expressed anxiety about the new roles women were taking in society.

Gustav Holst (1874–1934)

I love my love (1915)

Holst, composer of the suite *The Planets*, was director of music at Morley College in London during the First World War. He and his students had given the first performance in modern times of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* there in 1911. His family was of Scandinavian and Latvian origin, but he nevertheless formally changed his name from 'von Holst' at the end of hostilities when he travelled abroad, to avoid appearing to be German. It was he, along with Vaughan Williams and Cecil Sharp, with the support of figures like Parry, who did much to collect and record England's folksong heritage around the turn of the century – their work was timely, as it was fast disappearing. He and Vaughan Williams made folksong not just an addition to classical music, but an integral part of their compositional style, thus helping to forge a new national musical identity.

Their many arrangements and adaptations made folksong available to a much wider public. In truth, the folksongs were much 'gentrified' to accommodate current tastes and performance practice, but arrangements such as Holst's *I love my love* of 1915 nevertheless provide a valuable window into the folksong heritage of the time.

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

Carol arrangements (1917)

The Lord at first

A virgin most pure

Vaughan Williams, although past the age of recruitment, served as a medical orderly during the First World War. While he wrote little music during the war, he found time to arrange a set of carols for the 'choir' he developed among the men in his field ambulance unit. They are simple, mostly three-part settings of carols, some of which are familiar nowadays, others less so.

In 1917 Vaughan Williams' unit was stationed in Katerini in Greece, near Mount Olympus. Ursula Vaughan Williams, later the composer's wife, wrote: "Another experience, which no-one who was there forgot, was carol singing on Christmas Eve: snow-capped Olympus, the clear night, the stars, and Ralph's choir singing carols of Hereford and Sussex with passionate nostalgia. The choir made that Christmas so far from home one that had a special quality, a special beauty, long remembered."

Edward Elgar (1850–1934)

Pleading Op.48 (1908)

Gina Johnson (contralto)

Elgar's song *Pleading* was composed while he was working on his First Symphony and encountering various setbacks. In September of that year he returned home from a depressing meeting with his publisher and opened his post to find a slim volume of verses sent to him by Arthur L. Salmon. The poem *Pleading*, which at another time Elgar might have disdained, fitted his mood and he composed a work where the sentimentality of the lyric is ennobled by the sincerity of Elgar's almost childlike emotional response. The musical style is close to that of the Victorian ballad but the word setting is charged with a musical energy out of the reach of other composers.

Edward Elgar (1850–1934)

For the Fallen from *The Spirit of England* Op.80 (1917, excerpt)

Kylie Turney (soprano)

Elgar was deeply affected by the suffering caused by the First World War and readily accepted the idea of Sir Sidney Colvin, the head of the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, to compose a war requiem which captured the spirit of the times. Colvin suggested the poems of Laurence Binyon, who was working in his department. Elgar selected three of Binyon's poems - *The Fourth of August*, *To Women* and *For the Fallen* - to set to music as a cantata entitled *The Spirit of England*.

The cantata represents Elgar's fervent wish to contribute to the national good, and stands somewhat in contrast to the song *Land of Hope and Glory*, adapted with his permission from his *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1*, which he came to detest. *The Spirit of England* was first performed in Birmingham on 4 October 1917, conducted by Appleby Matthews, a notable local musician who, three years later, founded the orchestra that was to become the City of Birmingham Symphony

Orchestra. *For the Fallen*, the work's final section (in which occur Binyon's most familiar words), employs a solo soprano voice as well as the chorus. It is rousing, but stoic in nature rather than jingoistic, capturing the sadness and desolation of war without being maudlin.

Charles Hubert Parry (1848–1918)

Crossing the Bar (1903)

It is thought that Alfred, Lord Tennyson wrote *Crossing the Bar* (1889) as an elegy. The poem has a tone of finality and the narrator uses an extended metaphor to compare death with crossing the sandbar between the river of life, with its outgoing 'flood', and the ocean that lies beyond, the 'boundless deep'. Christ is likened to a ship's 'pilot' whom the poet hopes to meet 'face to face'.

W. H. Harris (1883–1973)

Bring us, O Lord God (1959)

The Choirmaster and organist W. H. Harris ('Doc H' to his choristers) is best remembered today for his Anglican church music, though during his lifetime he was mainly known for his achievements as a choir-trainer. His *Communion Service in F* was frequently sung in a great many Anglican parish churches up until the 1970s. His canticles are still sung at Evensong in a number of Anglican cathedrals. He also composed cantatas and organ pieces, as well as the hymn tune *Alberta* (used for the words *Lead, Kindly Light*), and various Anglican psalm chants.

During the First World War, Harris was organist at St Augustine's Church, Edgbaston and Assistant Organist at Lichfield Cathedral. After the war he held a number of Organist posts including New College and Christ Church, Oxford, and St. George's Chapel, Windsor.

The anthem *Bring us, O Lord God* for double choir is one of Harris' most celebrated compositions, and was written in 1959. Harris, who lived through two world wars, was uniquely placed to express within the liturgy the wish for transcendence after death. His text is not biblical but a poem by the English metaphysical poet John Donne (1572–1631), and his anthem makes a fitting end to our commemoration.

(Programme notes from a variety of sources)

Parry: *My soul, there is a country*

My soul, there is a country
Far beyond the stars,
Where stands a winged sentry
All skilful in the wars:

There, above noise and danger
Sweet Peace sits crowned with smiles
And One, born in a manger
Commands the beauteous files.

He is thy gracious friend
And, O my soul, awake!
Did in pure love descend
To die here for thy sake.

If thou canst get but thither,
There grows the flow'r of Peace,
The Rose that cannot wither,
Thy fortress and thy ease.

Leave then thy foolish ranges,
For none can thee secure
But One who never changes,
Thy God, thy life, thy cure.
[Henry Vaughan]

Pizzetti: *Requiem*

Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine
Et lux perpetua luceat eis.
Te decet hymnus, Deus, in Sion,
et tibi reddetur votum in Jerusalem.
Exaudi orationem meam, ad te omnis
caro veniet.
Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine
Et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Kyrie eleison,
Christe eleison,

Kyrie eleison.
[from the Requiem Mass]

Eternal rest give unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.
A hymn, O God, becometh Thee in Sion;
and a vow shall be paid to Thee in
Jerusalem: hear my prayer; all flesh
shall come to Thee.
Eternal rest give unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.

Lord, have mercy,
Christ, have mercy,
Lord, have mercy.

Ravel: *Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis*

Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis,
(Mon ami z'il est à la guerre)
Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis ont
passé par ici.
Le premier était plus bleu que ciel,
(Mon ami z'il est à la guerre)
Le second était couleur de neige, le
troisième rouge vermeil.

Beaux oiselets du Paradis,
(Mon ami z'il est à la guerre)
Beaux oiselets du Paradis, Qu'apportez
par ici?
J'apporte un regard couleur d'azur.
(Ton ami z'il est à la guerre)
Et moi, sur beau front couleur de neige,
un baiser dois mettre, encore plus pur.

Oiseau vermeil du Paradis,
(Mon ami z'il est à la guerre)
Oiseau vermeil du Paradis, que portez-
vous ainsi?
Un joli cœur tout cramoisi,

(Ton ami z'il est à la guerre)
Ah! je sens mon cœur qui froidit...
emportez-le aussi.

[Maurice Ravel]

Three beautiful birds of paradise
(My love is gone to the war)
Three beautiful birds of paradise
Have passed this way.

The first was bluer than the sky
(My love has gone to the war)
The second was the colour of snow
The third was red as vermillion.

"Beautiful little birds of paradise
(My love has gone to the war)
Beautiful little birds of paradise
What do you bring here?"

"I carry an azure glance
(Your love has gone to the war)
And I must leave on a snow-white brow
A kiss, even purer."

"You red bird of paradise
(My love has gone to the war)
You red bird of paradise
What are you bringing me?"

"A loving heart, flushing crimson."
(Your love has gone to the war)
"Ah, I feel my heart growing cold . . .
Take that with you as well."

Debussy: *Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maisons*

Nous n'avons plus de maisons!
Les ennemis ont tout pris,
Jusqu'à notre petit lit!
Ils ont brûlé l'école et notre maître
aussi.
Ils ont brûlé l'église et monsieur
Jésus-Christ!
Et le vieux pauvre qui n'a pas pu s'en
aller!

Nous n'avons plus de maisons!
Les ennemis ont tout pris,
Jusqu'à notre petit lit!
Bien sûr! papa est à la guerre,
Pauvre maman est morte
Avant d'avoir vu tout ça.
Qu'est-ce que l'on va faire?
Noël! petit Noël! n'allez pas chez eux,
N'allez plus jamais chez eux,
Punissez-les!

Vengez les enfants de France!
Les petits Belges, les petits Serbes,
Et les petits Polonais aussi!
Si nous en oublions, pardonnez-nous.
Noël! Noël! surtout, pas de joujoux,
Tâchez de nous redonner le pain
quotidien.

Nous n'avons plus de maisons!
Les ennemis ont tout pris,
Jusqu'à notre petit lit!
Ils ont brûlé l'école et notre maître
aussi.
Ils ont brûlé l'église et monsieur
Jésus-Christ!
Et le vieux pauvre qui n'a pas pu s'en
aller!

Noël! écoutez-nous, nous n'avons plus
de petits sabots:

Mais donnez la victoire aux enfants de
France!

[Claude Debussy]

Our houses are gone!

The enemy has taken everything,
even our little beds!

They burned the school and the
schoolmaster.

They burned the church and the Lord
Jesus!

And the poor old man who couldn't get
away!

Our houses are gone!

The enemy has taken everything,
even our little beds!

Of course, Papa has gone to war.

Poor Mama died

before she saw all this.

What are we going to do?

Christmas! Little Christmas!

Don't go to their houses, never go there
again.

Punish them!

Avenge the children of France!

The little Belgians, the little Serbs
and the little Poles, too!

If we've forgotten anyone, forgive us.

Christmas! Christmas! Above all, no
toys.

Try to give us our daily bread again.

Our houses are gone!

The enemy has taken everything,
even our little beds!

They burned the school and the
schoolmaster.

They burned the church and the Lord
Jesus!

And the poor old man who couldn't get
away!

Christmas, listen to us. Our wooden
shoes are gone,

but grant victory to the children of
France!

Rachmaninov: *Troparion from The
Vespers*

Voskres iz groba i uzy rasterzal esi ada,
razrushil esi osuzhdeniye smerti,
Gospodi,

vsya ot setei vraga izbavivyi,
yavivyi zhe Sebe apostolom Tvoim,
poslal esi ya na propoved;

i temi mir Tvoi podal esi vselennei,
edine mnogomilostive.

*[From the All-night Vigil; original in
Church Slavonic]*

Thou didst rise from the tomb and burst
the bonds of Hades.

Thou didst destroy the condemnation of
death, O Lord,

releasing all mankind from the snares of
the enemy.

Thou didst show thyself to thine
apostles, and didst send them forth to
proclaim thee;

and through them thou hast granted thy
peace to the world, O thou who art
plenteous in mercy.

Trad. German: *Ich hatt' einen
Kameraden*

Ich hatt' einen Kameraden,

Einen bessern findst du nit.
Die Trommel schlug zum Streite,
Er ging an meiner Seite
In gleichem Schritt und Tritt.

Eine Kugel kam geflogen:
Gilt sie mir oder gilt sie dir?
Sie hat ihn weggerissen,
Er liegt zu meinen Füßen
Als wär's ein Stück von mir.

Will mir die Hand noch reichen,
Derweil ich eben lad.
Kann dir die Hand nicht geben,
Bleib du im ew'gen Leben
Mein guter Kamerad!
[Ludwig Uhland]

I once had a comrade,
You will find no better.
The drum called us to battle,
He walked by my side,
In the same pace and step.

A bullet came a-flying,
Is it for me or you?
It tore him away,
He lies at my feet,
As if he were a part of me.

He still reaches out his hand to me,
While I am about to reload.
I cannot hold onto your hand,
You stay in eternal life
My good comrade.

Reger: *Nachtlied*

Die Nacht ist kommen,
Drin wir ruhen sollen;

Gott walt's, zum Frommen
Nach sein'm Wohlgefallen,
Dass wir uns legen
In sein'm G'leit und Segen,
Der Ruh' zu pflegen.

Treib, Herr, von uns fern
Die unreinen Geister,
Halt die Nachtwach' gern,
Sei selbst unser Schutzherr,
Schirm beid Leib und Seel'
Unter deine Flügel,
Send' uns dein' Engel!

Lass uns einschlafen
Mit guten Gedanken,
Fröhlich aufwachen
Und von dir nicht wanken;
Lass uns mit Züchten
Unser Tun und Dichten
Zu dein'm Preis richten!
[Petrus Herbert, 16th century]

Evening song

The night has fallen,
And we should rest;
God is there, to care for us
By his good will,
So that we settle
In his company and blessing,
To maintain the peace.

Father, drive the evil spirits
Far away from us;
Keep the night watch;
Be our protector;
Shield both body and soul
Under your wings;
Send us your angels!

Let us go to sleep
With good thoughts,
Happily awaken
And never waver from you;
Let us, with rearing,
Focus our deeds and words
On your glory!

Reger: *Abendgang im Lenz*

Selig durch die Fluren gehn,
Wenn der Tag verglüht.
Leuchtend in des Abends Schein
Weiß der Birnbaum blüht.

Hoch in Wipfeln feierlich
Süß die Drossel singt.
Wie der ganze Frühlingstraum,
Ach, im Liede klingt.

[Hedwig Kiesekamp]

Evening walk in spring

Blissfully go through the meadows,
When the day goes by.
Shining in the evening glow,
White the pear tree is blooming.

High in treetops
Sweet the thrush sings.
Like the whole spring dream,
Oh, the song sounds.

Elgar: *Go, song of mine*

Dishevell'd and in tears, go, song of
mine,
To break the hardness of the heart of
man:

Say how his life began
From dust, and in that dust doth sink
supine:
Yet, say, th'unerring spirit of grief shall
guide
His soul, being purified,
To seek its Maker at the heav'nly shrine.
In tears, go, song of mine,
To break the hardness of the heart of
man.

*[Cavalcanti, transl. Dante Gabriel
Rossetti]*

**Medley of songs from the First World
War**

It's a long way to Tipperary, it's a long
way to go.

It's a long way to Tipperary, to the
sweetest girl I know!

Goodbye, Piccadilly, farewell, Leicester
Square!

It's a long long way to Tipperary, but my
heart's right there.

[Harry Williams, 1912]

Roses are shining in Picardy, in the hush
of the silver dew,

Roses are flowering in Picardy, but
there's never a rose like you!

And the roses will die with the summer-
time, and our roads may be far apart,

But there's one rose that dies not in
Picardy!

'Tis the rose that I keep in my heart!

[Fred Weatherly, 1916]

Over there, over there,
Send the word, send the word over
there
That the Yanks are coming,

The Yanks are coming,
The drums rum-tumming everywhere.
So prepare, say a prayer,
Send the word, send the word to be-
ware –
We'll be over, we're coming over,
And we won't come back till it's over,
over there.

[George M. Cohan, 1917]

Keep the home fires burning,
While your hearts are yearning.
Though your lads are far away
They dream of home.
There's a silver lining
Through the dark clouds shining,
Turn the dark cloud inside out
Till the boys come home.

[Lena Gilbert Ford, 1914]

Pack up your troubles in your old kit-
bag,
And smile, smile, smile,
While you've a lucifer to light your fag,
Smile, boys, that's the style.
What's the use of worrying?
It never was worth while, so
Pack up your troubles in your old
kit-bag,
And smile, smile, smile.

[George Henry Powell, 1915]

Holst: *I love my love*

Abroad as I was walking
One evening in the spring
I heard a maid in Bedlam
So sweetly for to sing;
Her chains she rattled with her hands
And thus replied she:

Chorus:

I love my love because I know
My love loves me.

Oh cruel were his parents
Who sent my love to sea
And cruel was the ship
That bore my love from me:
Yet I love his parents since they're his
Although they've ruined me:

Chorus

"With straw I'll weave a garland,
I'll weave it very fine;
With roses, lilies, daisies,
I'll mix the eglantine;
And I'll present it to my love
when he returns from sea. For...

Chorus

Just as she there sat weeping
Her love he came on land
Then, hearing she was in Bedlam
He ran straight out of hand;
He flew into her snow-white arms
And thus replied he:

Chorus

She said: "My love don't frighten me,
are you my love or no?"
"O yes, my dearest Nancy,
I am your love, also.
I am returned to make amends
for all your injury."

Chorus

So now these two are married,
And happy may they be
Like turtle doves together,
In love and unity.

All pretty maids with patience wait
That have got loves at sea;

Chorus

[*Trad. Cornish*]

Arr. Vaughan Williams

Trad: *The Lord at first*

The Lord at first did Adam make
Out of the dust and clay,
And in his nostrils breathed life,
E'en as the Scriptures say.
And then in Eden's Paradise
He placed him to dwell,
That he within it should remain
To dress and keep it well.

Chorus

Now let good Christians all begin
An holy life to live,
And to rejoice and merry be,
For this is Christmas Eve.

Now mark the goodness of the Lord
Which he for mankind bore,
His mercy soon he did extend,
Lost man for to restore;
And then for to redeem our souls
From death and hellish thrall,
He said his own dear son should be
The Saviour of us all.

Chorus

And now the tide is nigh at hand,
In which our Saviour came;
Let us rejoice, and merry be,
In keeping of the same.
Let's feed the poor and hungry souls,
And such as do it crave;
Then when we die, in Heaven sure,
Our reward we shall have.

Chorus

Trad: *A virgin most pure*

A virgin most pure, as the Prophets do
tell,
Hath brought forth a baby, as it hath
befell,
To be our Redeemer from death, hell
and sin,
Which Adam's transgression had
wrapped us in.

Chorus

Aye, and therefore be merry,
Rejoice and be you merry,
Set sorrow aside;
Christ Jesus our Saviour was born on
this tide.

At Bethlehem in Jewry a city there was
Where Joseph and Mary together did
pass,
And there to be taxed, with many one
mo'

For Cæsar commanded the same should
be so

Chorus

Then presently after the Shepherds did
spy
A number of Angels that stood in the
sky;
Who joyfully talked and sweetly did
sing,
To God be all glory our Heavenly King.

Chorus

Elgar: *Pleading*

Will you come homeward from the hills
of Dreamland,

Home in the dusk, and speak to me
again?
Tell me the stories that I am forgetting,
Quicken my hope, and recompense my
pain?
Will you come homeward from the hills
of Dreamland?
I have grown weary, though I wait you
yet;
Watching the fallen leaf, the faith grown
fainter,
The memory smoulder'd to a dull
regret.
Shall the remembrance die in dim
forgetting
All the fond light that glorified my way?
Will you come homeward from the hills
of Dreamland,
Home in the dusk, and turn my night to
day?
[Arthur L. Salmon]

Elgar: *For the Fallen* (excerpt)

They shall grow not old, as we that are
left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years
condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the
morning
We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing
comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables of
home;
They have no lot in our labour of the
day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our
hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from
sight,
To the innermost heart of their own
land they are known
As the stars are known to the night;

As the stars that shall be bright when
we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly
plain,
As the stars that are starry in the time of
our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.
[from *For the Fallen*, Laurence Binyon,
1914]

Parry: *Crossing the Bar*

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the
bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the
boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of fare-
well,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time
and Place

The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.

[Tennyson]

W. H. Harris: *Bring us, O Lord God*

Bring us, O Lord God, at our last
awakening
into the house and gate of Heaven,
to enter into that gate and dwell in
that house,
where there shall be no darkness nor
dazzling, but one equal light;
no noise nor silence, but one equal
music;
no fears or hopes, but one equal
possession;
no ends or beginnings, but one equal
eternity,
in the habitations of thy glory and
dominion,
world without end. [Amen]

[Donne]

Christmas concert with MKCO



Polymnia in Mantua

Stony Stratford



HELP FOR HEROES – THE LEADING CHARITY FOR THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY

Help for Heroes believes that those who put their lives on the line for us, deserve a second chance at life. We provide lifetime support for the Armed Forces Community and their families.

HELPING Veterans, service personnel and their families

Today, seven people will be medically discharged from the Armed Forces and their lives will change forever. In an instant, these highly-trained individuals will lose the camaraderie, purpose and career which has been their life.

We provide recovery and support for the Armed Forces community whose lives are affected by their service, no matter when they served.

Our aim is to empower Veterans and Service Personnel to look beyond illness and injury. Every penny we raise, facility we run and activity we offer is to help Veterans and Service Personnel reach their potential, regain their purpose and have a positive impact on society.

HOW WE HELP

Our vast network of professionals and partners not only help serving members of the Armed Forces, but also ex-Servicemen and women and their families. We achieve this through physical and emotional rehabilitation and recovery. We also identify new career opportunities and offer financial and welfare support.

We know that those who serve together, recover better together – supporting each other, enjoying a sense of fellowship once more.

The Nation has united behind our Armed Forces. During our first ten years, we've directly helped more than 17,000 individuals and their families in this way. Offering this to thousands more who need it remains possible thanks to our supporters, and specialist charity partners.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

You too can become part of The Force for Good by helping those whose lives have been affected whilst serving in the UK Armed Forces and their families. There are many ways to get involved, from simply donating via the website to fundraising, taking on a challenge or volunteering.



Soprano

Kate Atalay
Anna Berry
Liz Camp
Rebecca Jones
Teresa Riley
Penny Storry
Kylie Turney
Jane Ward

Alto

Jo Churcher
Chris Crispus Jones
Gina Johnson
Louise Norwood

Tenor

Malcolm Chalmers
Brian Coulstock
Paul North
Ashley Turnell

Bass

Keith Attenborough
Richard Ball
Charlie Calver
Ken Storry
Chris Williams
Perry Williams

Future concerts and events with Polymnia

CHRISTMAS WITH STRINGS AND VOICES

Milton Keynes City Orchestra string ensemble presents an uplifting and traditional music feast for Christmas, with the exceptionally talented Polymnia Chamber Choir, under the baton of John Byron.

The concert is a glorious celebration marking the start of the festive season with many opportunities for audience participation to make a joyous occasion. Mulled wine and mince pies will be served at the end of the concert.

This concert has become an annual celebration for MKCO and Polymnia Chamber Choir and continues to enjoy a large and loyal following.

Saturday 1st December 6.00 to 7.30 Church of St Peter and St Paul, Newport Pagnell



Meet us at the INTU shopping centre, Milton Keynes on Sunday 11th December from 11-12 where we will be singing carols in aid of Help for Heroes.

Our next concert is on Saturday 30th March 2019 at St James New Bradwell.

Further details will be available on our website: www.polymnia.org.uk

With our Patron, Lesley Garrett



Many thanks to the Hilton Milton Keynes for providing refreshments.

All proceeds from refreshments go to their charitable foundation.



Hilton
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