

Stretton Choral

presents

Songs of Love
and Reflection

Conductor

Michael Turner

Soloist

Catherine Rooney-Ward

Piano Duets and Accompanists

Gill Styles and Richard Walker



Saturday 9th May 2026

7.30 pm

Silvester Horne Institute

PROGRAMME

Now Is the Month of Maying

Thomas Morley
Arranged Jem Lowther

Quick! We Have But a Second

Words Thomas Moore
Traditional Irish Air
Arranged Sir Charles Villiers Stanford

The Rainy Day

Words Henry W Longfellow
Composed by Sir Arthur Sullivan

Jeux d'Enfants

Georges Bizet
Piano duet: Gill Styles and Richard Walker

1. Trompette et Tambour-Marche
2. La Poupée-Berceuse
3. La Toupie-Impromptu
4. Petit mari, petite femme!-Duo
5. Le Bal-Galop

The Blue Bird

Composed by Sir Charles Villiers Stanford
No 3 of 8 part songs Op 119
Words Mary E Coleridge
Soloist: Catherine Rooney-Ward

The Long Day Closes

Words Henry F Chorley
Composed by Sir Arthur Sullivan

Interval

Hungarian Dance No 5

Johannes Brahms

Piano duet: Gill Styles and Richard Walker

Liebeslieder Waltzes

“Love Song Waltzes” for four voices and piano duet

Johannes Brahms

To verses from “Polydora” by Georg Friedrich Daumer

English translation by Christopher Goldsack

Thanks for help with “Songs of Love and Reflection” to:

The helpers and choir members who donate and assist with refreshments.

The Silvester Horne Institute.

And for displaying our posters:

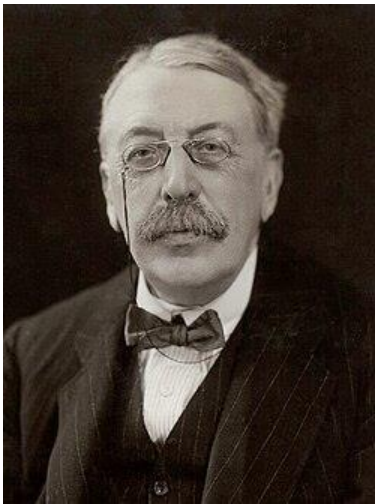
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Berry's Coffee House
The Door Knocker Company
Saxtons Deli
Soul Bean Coffee House
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Musical Notes

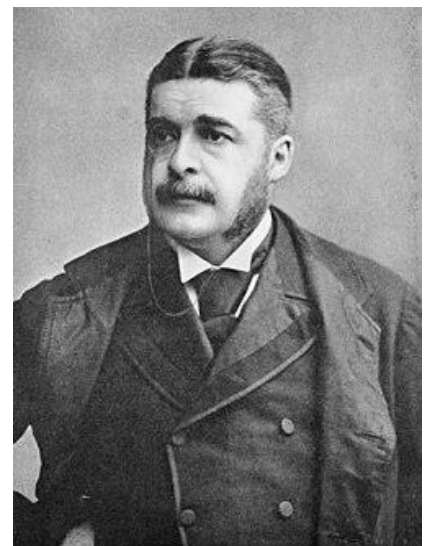
Our Music Director, Michael Turner, shares some thoughts about tonight's programme.

It seemed appropriate to begin this evening's concert with Thomas Morley's (1557-1602) *Now is the Month of Maying*, a very famous English part-song or madrigal written and published in 1595. Seemingly about spring dancing, it's actually a bawdy piece, full of double-entendre and a metaphor for making love. A great way to set the mood for the evening!

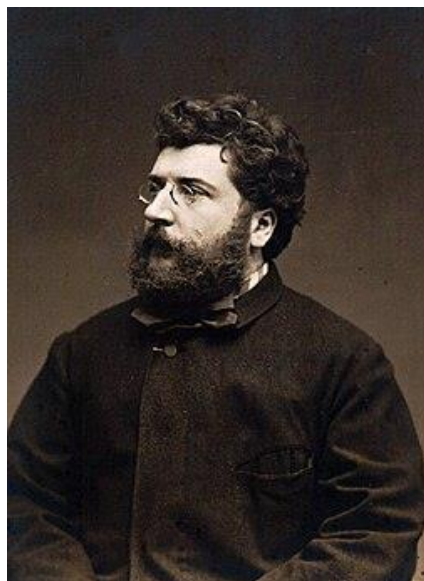


Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) was an Anglo-Irish composer, music teacher, and conductor. He wrote a number of symphonies, concertos and choral works, along with various settings for use in church. We are performing two part-songs by Stanford this evening. *Quick We Have but a Second* is, as the title might suggest, a brief, rapid and jolly setting of an old Irish air, with a text by Thomas Moore on life's fleeting pleasures. Then we have *The Blue Bird*, which could not be more different. Setting the words of *L'Oiseau Bleu*, a poem by Mary Elizabeth Coleridge, the piece depicts a blue bird in flight over a lake. This part-song is considered one of the gems of English choral writing with its evocation of nature and open space.

Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900) is undoubtedly best known for his association with W S Gilbert on the series of operettas that they wrote together. Nevertheless, he wrote a considerable amount of music in his own right, including large-scale orchestral and choral works. As with Stanford, we are performing two Sullivan part-songs this evening. When our rehearsals started, at the beginning of the year, it seemed so appropriate to perform *The Rainy Day*. A setting of a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, each verse is completed with the words "And the day is dark and dreary" – a cheery conclusion if ever there was one! *The Long Day Closes* sets words by Henry



Fothergill Chorley and is considered the most well-known (and probably the best) part-song by Sullivan. The Victorian era saw part-songs became popular in Britain with the growth of a network of choral societies around the country. With its text reflecting on death and its harmonies having an emotional tug to them, *The Long Day Closes* made frequent appearances at events of mourning, often sung at funerals of members of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, renowned for its performances of the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta output.



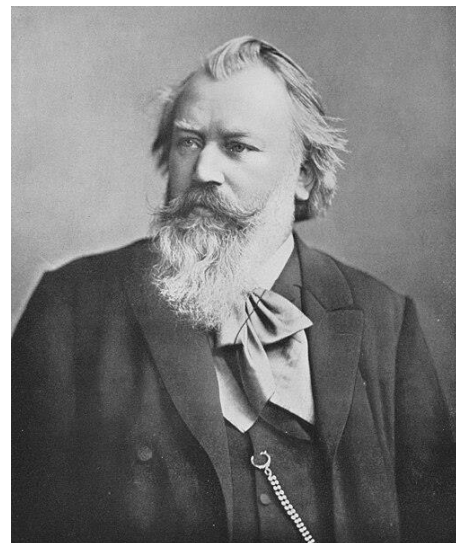
Midway through the first half, by way of contrast to the choral music, we have a selection of five movements from Georges Bizet's (1838-1875) *Jeux d'Enfants* (Children's Games). *Jeux d'Enfants* is made up of twelve pieces for piano four hands, completed in the autumn of 1871. Alongside the original piano duet version, Bizet orchestrated five movements, sometimes performed under the title *Petite Suite*. The pieces were written for the Mesdemoiselles Marguerite de Beaulieu and Fanny Gouin. Marguerite de Beaulieu was the daughter of Mme de Beaulieu, cousin of Geneviève Halévy, the wife of Georges Bizet. Fanny Gouin was the daughter of the

Gouins, friends of Geneviève Halévy. The pieces that make up *Jeux d'Enfants* are each finely honed, exquisite miniatures that can stand individually or as a group. Dying at the age of 36, Bizet's output was quite slight. While he wrote many songs, some choral pieces and a limited number of orchestral works, there are perhaps four pieces by which Bizet's expertise and genius can be measured: the operas *Carmen* and *The Pearl Fishers*, his Symphony in C, and *Jeux d'Enfants*.

The second half of our concert is given over to the music of Johannes Brahms (1833-1897). We start with the *Hungarian Dance No 5* which is drawn from a set of twenty-one *Hungarian Dances*, based mostly on Hungarian themes. These were completed in 1879 and are among Brahms's most popular works. Each dance has been arranged for a wide variety of instruments and ensembles, from piano solo to full orchestra, however, they were originally written for piano – four hands. The majority of the *Hungarian Dances* are based on the folk music that Brahms explored with the violinist Ede Reményi, although three of them can be counted as original compositions. However, *Hungarian Dance No 5* was based on

the csárdás "*Bártfai emlék*" (Memories of Bártfa) by Hungarian composer Béla Kéler, which Brahms mistakenly thought was a traditional folksong.

Our final piece, Brahms' *Liebeslieder Waltzes* are a series of eighteen love songs written in a popular style (which we are performing tonight in an English translation by Christopher Goldsack). The lighter feel to the music is not always associated with Brahms, a physically imposing figure whose music is often considered granite-like and compositionally complex. Unlike works such as the composer's *German Requiem*, these waltzes can be performed by choral groups from the largest choirs down to a vocal quartet. This means that it is ideally suited to groups



such as Stretton Choral, particularly as the modest accompaniment is for piano four hands (although other instrumental versions exist). The texts are from Daumer's *Polydora*, a collection of folk songs and love poems. The Waltzes were an immediate success, bringing significant financial gains to Brahms (as had the *Hungarian Dances*) as a result of their being performed as much in private houses as in more public settings. And the inspiration for the work? Well, there has always been speculation that Brahms' frustrated love for Clara Schumann (wife of the composer Robert Schumann) was the catalyst to his composing this generally light and sunny piece.

So, with this piece by Brahms, have we come full circle from our opening piece by Morley?



MUSIC DIRECTOR: Michael Turner

Michael Turner studied Music at Leicester University. He has been a singer and orchestral percussionist with several professional and amateur groups and still very occasionally plays his violin or viola, although usually only among friends!

Michael has been a keen composer since his student days writing for a wide range of instrumental, choral and orchestral forces. His most recent piece, premiered at the 2024 Ironbridge Brass Band Festival, was composed for the Jackfield (Brass) Band. Written to commemorate a ferry disaster that took place on the River Severn, the piece is entitled *Coalport 1799*.

Michael studied conducting with George Hurst, John Carewe and Hilary Davan Wetton and has held posts with a number of ensembles including the Bloomsbury Chamber Orchestra (for over thirty years) and the Oswestry Sinfonia. More recently, in addition to Stretton Choral, Michael has been appointed Music Director of the New College Chorale, Wellington, and The Newent Orchestra.

SOLOIST: Catherine Rooney-Ward, Soprano

Canadian-British soprano, Catherine Rooney-Ward completed her studies in vocal performance at the Glenn Gould School of the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto and continued her studies with the English National Opera's "Opera Works" programme in 2011. A keen performer of Baroque repertoire, Catherine has performed the role of Sesto in *Giulio Cesare* (Opera in Concert/Aradia Ensemble), Armida in *Rinaldo* and the title role in Handel's *Semele* (Summer Opera Lyric Theatre). Other roles include Frasquita in *Carmen* (Co-Opera Co.), Annina in *La Traviata* (Opera York) and the title role in *La Gran Vestale* by Mercadante (Opera in Concert). Catherine lives in Shrewsbury with her husband Chris, daughters Olive and Florence and pug Thor.

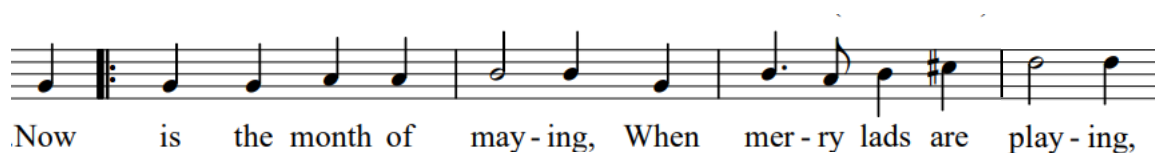
PIANISTS and ACCOMPANISTS: Gill Styles and Richard Walker

Gill & Richard began playing piano duets ten years ago and, since then, have performed regularly in Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Cheshire, covering most of the major piano-duet repertoire.

Gill was born in West Yorkshire. She studied music at Goldsmiths' College, London where she focused on piano and voice. For over thirty years she has been a junior-school class teacher with responsibility for music. Throughout her career she has

enjoyed accompanying singers and instrumentalists, as well as playing chamber music, performing as a vocal soloist and singing in local choirs. As well as performing tonight, Gill is our rehearsal accompanist throughout the year.

Before moving to Shropshire, Richard was Director of Music at Harrow School for 20 years. In the Strettons, he organises a wide range of concerts, gives classical music talks and plays the organ at Little Stretton Church. He plays regularly at St Chad's, Shrewsbury, where he also organises the Friday lunchtime concert programme. Richard is also involved with chamber music and plays double bass (his 3rd instrument) in the Shrewsbury and Ludlow Orchestras. His teaching career began in Edinburgh, followed by five years at the Leys School, Cambridge before his final destination at Harrow.



Coming next with Stretton Choral:

We hope to be putting on a Come and Sing event over the summer. Watch out for details.

Rehearsals for our Christmas concert will be every Thursday at 7.30 p.m. in the United Reformed Church Hall, High Street, Church Stretton, starting on Thursday 10th September.



Website: strettonchoral.org.uk

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