

Spring

Claude LE JEUNE (c. 1528–1600)

Reveycy venir du Printans

Thomas MORLEY (c. 1557-1602)

April is in my Mistress' Face

Edward COWIE (b.1943)

The Four Seasons: I – Spring

(World Première, Commissioned by CC21)

1. *Mount Keira, NSW – Dawn*
2. *Cancleve, Cornwall – 7 am*
3. *Leighton Moss, Lancashire – Dusk*

INTERVAL of 20 minutes

E.J. MOERAN (1894-1950)

Songs of Springtime

1. *Under the Greenwood Tree* (Shakespeare)
2. *The River-God's Song* (Fletcher)
3. *Spring, the Sweet Spring* (Nashe)
4. *Love is a Sickness* (Daniel)
5. *Sigh no more, Ladies* (Shakespeare)
6. *Good Wine* (Browne)
7. *To Daffodils* (Herrick)

Benjamin BRITTEN (1913-1976)

Five Flower Songs

1. *To Daffodils* (Herrick)
2. *The Succession of the Four Sweet Months* (Herrick)
3. *Marsh Flowers* (Crabbe)
4. *The Evening Primrose* (Clare)
5. *The Ballad of Green Broom* (anon)

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Claude Le Jeune was an eminent figure in French Renaissance music, as ‘master composer’ and also ‘Master of the King’s Music’ to Henry 1V. In addition to his sacred output of more than three hundred Huguenot psalms and a number of Latin motets and masses which showed an advanced use of Italian as well as Franco-Flemish polyphonic techniques, he wrote a number of secular chansons. These chansons reflected the aims of the Académie de Poésie et de Musique, which were the setting of strophic French poems in classical metre (*Musique mesurée à l’antique*), resulting generally in repetition of the same rhythmic pattern (*isorythm*), based on the syllabic structure of the text. This and other typically mediaeval techniques are used throughout Le Jeune’s works.



Revecy venir du Printans

Here again comes the Spring, the amorous and fair season.

The water currents seeking the canal in summer become clearer; and the calm sea soothes the waves' sad anger. The duck dives joyfully and washes itself quietly in the water. And the crane that branches off in flight recrosses the air and flies away.

Here again comes the Spring, the amorous and fair season.

The sun shines brightly with a calmer light. Clouds lose their darkness, as they sport and run. Human labour makes the forests, fields and slopes green again, and the prairie unveils its flowers.

Here again comes the Spring, the amorous and fair season.

Cupid, the son of Venus seeding the universe with his arrows, with his flame will rekindle animals that fly in the air, animals that crawl in the fields, animals that swim in the seas. Even those that feel not in love they melt in pleasure.

Here again comes the Spring, the amorous and fair season.

Let us, too, laugh, and let us seek the sports and games of Spring: everything smiles with pleasure; let us celebrate the merry season.

Here again comes the Spring, the amorous and fair season.

Thomas Morley stands out as the chief representative of the English Madrigal School. He was born in Norwich and he became master of choristers there in 1583, spending some time away from East Anglia to study with William Byrd and eventually being engaged as organist at St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

Following the 1588 publication of *Musica Transalpina*, the influential collection of Italian madrigals given English texts, Morley began publishing his own collections of eleven madrigals, mostly lighter than their Italian counterparts but showing a huge range of colour and expression.

April is in my Mistress' Face very briefly and charmingly runs through the four seasons that are to be found simultaneously embodied in the object of the poet's love.



Edward Cowie was born in Birmingham, but most of his early life was spent in rural countryside; Suffolk and the Cotswolds in particular. These early years in quiet natural landscapes were major influences on a life that has always been deeply affected and influenced by the forces of Nature. By the late 1960s some of his early works were finding their way onto professional platforms such as the Edinburgh Festival in 1969. In 1971, he was awarded a Chopin Fellowship to study under Witold Lutoslawski in Poland, and also came under the direct influence of Michael Tippett.



Cowie's career as a composer was firmly established with his BBC Prom Commission, *Leviathan*, which was premièred by the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1975. In 1983 Cowie was awarded the first Granada Composer Fellowship with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. He worked with the orchestra for three years, both as composer and conductor.

As a painter, Cowie has exhibited internationally, and his works are in public and private collections in many countries. He has made several television films, including his acclaimed *Leonardo* of 1986. In 1988 and 1989, he wrote and presented two major radio series commissioned by ABCFM, in Australia. After twelve years in Australia he returned to England to live in 1995. He was appointed the first Composer in Association with the BBC Singers, 2002-2006, and the first Artist in Residence with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, also for the period 2002-2006. His music continues to be featured in festivals throughout the world. *National Portraits*, written for the BBC Singers, was short-listed for the 2007 British Composer, Radio 3 Listeners' Award.

"Though composed third in my cycle of *Four Seasons*, *Spring* will normally be the first to be heard in a complete performance of the work. It is the second and remaining work commissioned by the Choir of the 21st Century, who gave the world première of *Summer* in London on 11 July 2009. Like all the other 'movements' in the cycle, *Spring* is formed in 3 motets of roughly equal duration.

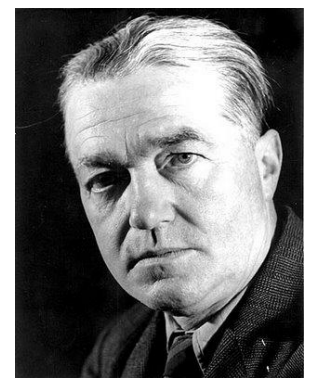
The first of the landscapes treated here is Australian, the remaining two being English. *Motet 1* opens at just before dawn in a rainforest on Mount Keira in New South Wales. Amongst the lofty forest tress, it is almost impossible to sense the rising of the sun over the sea in the distance, but as the smallest piece of light gathers, lyrebirds begin their extraordinary blend of flutings, warbling, clicks and chatters in a constant stream of sonic invention. These sounds are evoked by solo sopranos to the end of the motet.

Motet 2 is also a 'dawn evocation', but this time an area of Cornish cliff-coastline, shrouded in ever-shifting and metamorphosing sea-mists. It is a sonic portrait shrouded in harmonic 'mists', coiling and cross-phasing in a continuous stream, ultimately 'clearing' to release songs from 'choirs' of warblers.

Motet 3 'visits' one of my favourite landscapes, Leighton Moss on the Cumbrian border of Lancashire. At dawn and dusk, this wetland resounds to the baleful and resonant 'boom' of male bitterns, accompanied by the 'weft and warp' of reed-birds in full song.

Spring celebrates the coming of a stronger light and the emergence of birdsongs as winter looses its icy grip. In all cases, I try to write a music that touches as many of the senses as possible, so I do hope that what can be heard in this music can be inter-sensually received and absorbed."

Ernest John Moeran was brought up in the fens of Norfolk, and studied piano and composition under Stanford at the RCM. His studies were cut short in 1914 when he enlisted as a motorcycle despatch rider with the Norfolk Regiment. In 1917 in France he



received a severe head injury, with shrapnel embedded too close to the brain for removal, and so underwent the fitting of a metal plate into the skull. In 1920 he returned to the music course at the Royal College, this time under John Ireland, entering also into a highly creative compositional period. At this point he also began collecting folk songs, especially in Norfolk.

Following this period of involvement in the English Folksong School and of friendship with Warlock, he moved towards a more broadly eclectic style, settling eventually in south-west Ireland and thus returning to the country of his paternal roots. By 1950 he was living in increasingly poor health in Kenmare, County Kerry. On 1st December 1950, during a storm, he fell from the pier at Kenmare, and was dead on his recovery from the sea, his cause of death being given as a cerebral haemorrhage following a heart attack.

The Songs of Springtime date from 1930, before Moeran's move to Ireland. As with his later set entitled *Phyllida and Corydon*, he took Elizabethan poems from a variety of writers, and treated them in his own way - which in the case of this earlier cycle involved some reflection of his youthful debt to Delius.

Benjamin Britten was born in Lowestoft. Having composed prolifically from the age of seven, at fifteen he started to take private lessons with Frank Bridge; two years later he went to the Royal College of Music in London, studying with Arthur Benjamin, Harold Samuel and John Ireland. While still a student, he wrote, the *Sinfonietta* (his 'official' Op. 1) as well as the *Phantasy Quartet* for oboe and string trio, and in 1936 he composed *Our Hunting Fathers*, a song-cycle for soprano and orchestra, which demonstrated his well-developed vocal and instrumental technique.



Britten wrote the **Five Flower Songs** in the early part of 1950 in honour of Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst on the occasion of their 25th wedding anniversary. The Elmhirsts were the owners of Dartington Hall in Devon, which was the venue for the first performance of the work in July 23 that year, when the flower gardens at the Hall would have been at their resplendent best. The conductor was Imogen Holst. Comparison of Britten's setting of Herrick's *To Daffodils* with that of Moeran is naturally interesting at many levels. Most striking perhaps is the younger composer's characteristic ingenuity in his part-writing, through which, as in so much of Britten's music, the listener is invited to share and enjoy his evident creative delight.

The Performers

Howard Williams has covered a wide range of work both in the opera house and concert hall. He has conducted most of the UK's leading orchestras, appearing at the BBC Proms and at the Edinburgh, Leeds, Bath and Brighton Festivals, and at festivals in Budapest, Hong Kong, and throughout France and Spain. In Europe Howard has appeared in the concert seasons of the Austrian Radio Symphony, Bavarian Radio Symphony, Swedish Radio Orchestra, Belgian Radio Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Symphony and Chamber Orchestras, Slovak Philharmonic, Hungarian National Philharmonic, Hungarian Radio Symphony, Budapest Philharmonic, Orchestre Nationale de Lyon, Orchestre de Strasbourg, Orchestre Symphonique de Montpellier, Orchestre de Picardie, RTE Symphony Orchestra, Dublin and the Portuguese National Symphony Orchestra.



Howard studied piano with Ronald Smith and violin with Clarence Myerscough, read music at Oxford and Liverpool Universities and joined the Advanced Conducting course at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London. After joining English National Opera as répétiteur and then Chorus Master he quickly went on to conduct eleven operas for ENO, including four new productions and the world première of Iain Hamilton's *Anna Karenina*. At the same time he worked with David Freeman in the opening seasons of Opera Factory in London, firstly to conduct the sensational new production of Birtwistle's *Punch and Judy* and then to première the reduced orchestration of Tippett's *The Knot Garden*, both televised by Channel 4. His subsequent operatic premières have included his own completion of Bizet's largest opera, *Ivan IV*, (now recorded on the NAIVE label), Brian Howard's

Inner voices, David Ward's *The snow queen*, Bernard Stevens' *The shadow of the glen* (available on ALBANY) and the première recording of Frank Bridge's *The christmas rose* for PEARL. His operatic repertoire now numbers over seventy titles.

With the English Bach Festival Baroque Orchestra he has conducted productions at Covent Garden of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, Purcell's *Fairy queen* and *Dido and Aeneas* and Handel's *Oreste*, as well as touring a production with historical instruments of Rossini's *Le siège de Corinthe*. Howard's work in the theatre has also included appearances with the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden, as well as with the Dutch National Ballet, Netherlands Dance Theatre and Hamburg Ballet.

Following his appointment in 1989 as Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Pécs Symphony Orchestra in Hungary, Howard devoted a significant amount of his time to working with symphony orchestras in that country, leading to his being referred to in the Hungarian press as an "honorary Hungarian"! For his services to new Hungarian music, he has been the recipient of an *Artisjus* award, and in 1997 was honoured with the Bartók medal for services to Hungarian music abroad.

On leaving Pécs in 2000 Howard was appointed to the new post of Head of Conducting at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff, as well as becoming Artistic Director of the Oxford Orchestra da Camera. His subsequent six years' at the RWCMD enabled Howard to explore and develop his attitude to the teaching of conductors, while at the same time training student orchestras. His work with student and youth orchestras has been extensive and is an increasingly important aspect of his conducting activity. He is co-founder of the group *K12 Conductors in Education*, dedicated to the promotion of orchestral and choral collaborations within the international educational field. Since the group's formation he has been highly active in the organization of collaborations between UK conservatoires and those in Poland, including a festival in Kraków in 2008 and the Copernicus Festival in London in 2009, in which he conducted the International Student Symphony Orchestra in the *Planets*.

Recent additions to his extensive discography include the release in 2008 with CC21 of Philip Glass's *Another Look at Harmony, Part 4*, and in July 2009 a disc of British Piano Concertos with Mark Bebbington and the CBSO, both on the SOMM label.

CC21 – Choir of the 21st Century was formed at the beginning of the new millennium to create performances with a 21st-century perspective. It is made up of some of London's most experienced amateur singers, performing a repertoire which is deliberately broad, both sacred and secular, to reflect the depth and richness of the choral music which is our heritage.

CC21 has appeared at venues including St John's Smith Square, Cadogan Hall and St. James's Piccadilly, and has given concerts for the English Music Festival, English-Speaking Union, European Union of Women, National Children's Orchestra and Cambridge-Szeged Festival. In 2009 the choir performed Taverner and Taverner at the invitation of the Worshipful Company of Musicians in the Great Hall of the Old Bailey.

The choir's recordings on the SOMM label include both the Elgar and Kodály versions of *The Music Makers* (with the Oxford Orchestra da Camera) and Philip Glass's *Another Look at Harmony – Part IV* with Christopher Bowers-Broadbent (organ), both critically acclaimed. The Glass CD was recommended by *Gramophone* magazine ("the impressive Choir of the 21st Century under Howard Williams") and described by the *All Music Guide* as "wonderfully engaging".

The choir's recent collaborations with the English Chamber Orchestra have included *Messiah* and Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, both under Howard Williams's direction. Of the sold-out Bach performance in the Cadogan Hall, MusicalCriticism.Com wrote that it would "have been difficult to better".

Today's concert is the third stage of a major commission from Edward Cowie, whose *Four Seasons for a cappella* choir was launched in July 2009 by CC21 with a performance in the Grosvenor Chapel of *Summer*. *Winter* was premièred in December in Oxford by the choir Commotio under Matthew Berry, who will be rounding off the cycle with *Autumn* later this year. Complete performances of the *Four Seasons* are planned in Bristol and London for November 2011. CC21 is delighted to be playing its part in the commissioning of this new major work, and believes it represents a very important addition to the *a cappella* choral repertoire.



Choir of the 21st century

Sopranos

Elaine Close
Nicola Ichnatowicz
Nicola Johnstone
Joanne Kilpatrick
Gaby Molloy
Chloe Morgan
Miranda Rogers
Hilary Todd

Altos

Rosemary Burch
Penny Burton
Philippa Dodds John
Louise Gowman
Virginia Harding
Kate Kermode
Kate Jackson
Isabel Nisbet

Tenors

Philip Cartledge
Nigel Eastman
Andy Evans
Alan Jolly
John Perry
Ian Priest
Paul Renney
Ben Revill

Basses

Graham Cooper
Richard Evans
David Henderson
Martin Johnson
Richard Lea
Douglas Lee
Chris Moore
Nigel Press



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We look forward to seeing you again soon.

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CC21 is funded mainly by voluntary donations, ticket sales and Friends' membership subscriptions.

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- rehearsal venue hire
- conductor's fees
- commissioning new works
- soloists
- ticket printing
- programme printing
- leaflet design
- postage costs
- web page hosting
- *and much more*

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- Opportunities to meet the conductor and choir
- Support of one concert or new commission per season (Benefactors)

For further information, contact Martin Johnson at chair@cc21.org.uk or pick up a Friends' leaflet at this evening's concert

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