

HANDEL AND BACH ~ THE BEST OF THE BAROQUE:

Tonight's concert opens with a celebration of some of the finest and most familiar music penned by the two most influential and prolific of musical giants from the sumptuous, kaleidoscopic and emotive Baroque era of music: '*the great*' Georg Frederic Handel, and '*the most stupendous miracle in all music*', Johann Sebastian Bach. Both musical phenomena were born in the same year (1685) in the same country (Germany).

A musical genius who, like his compositions, was powerful, passionate and persuasive, Handel was aptly described as '*the most inspired master of our arts*', by the revered Rococo composer, Gluck; Beethoven exclaimed: '*Handel is the greatest composer that ever lived . . . I would kneel down on his tomb*'; Haydn simply stated: '*he is the master of us all*', '*uniting learning with invention and fire*'; and Bach declared: '*Handel is the only person I would wish to be, were I not Bach!*' And, of Bach and his musical legacy, praise, accolades and encomia remain justifiably endless and rightly lavish; his musical presence and influence reign profound and universal amongst fellow musicians and audiences alike. Dylan Thomas most perfectly summated unanimous consent of Bach's unparalleled stardom, when he wrote, quite simply: '*Bach is best!*'

Thus, inestimably revered, respected and imitated, both these prodigious gods' creative legacies represent the apex of the canon of Western classical music: the source from which most subsequent music was born; and by which most subsequent music (of myriad styles, scorings, and genres) was influenced.

~

'Let Their Celestial Concerts!', Samson **Georg Frederic Handel** (1685-1759)

Introducing our eminent guest soloist, Crispian Steele-Perkins, internationally-renowned and globally-lauded trumpeter, is a triumphant chorus which praises the power of music and the joy of singing: '*Let their celestial concerts all unite!*' from Handel's astonishing oratorio, **Samson**.

Naturalised an English subject in 1727 (though resident in London since 1712), the pan-European Handel was successful in all musical fields (enjoying extensive sacred

and secular patronage), as well as financially; he quickly realised that English religious leanings at this time rendered oratorios (effectively operas with sacred subjects delivered as concert performances - rather than acted out on stage), like **Samson**, were more in demand (and thus more lucrative all round) than operas on secular matter (like **Alexander's Feast**), and so this is where he concentrated his primary musical efforts and spent the majority of his time composing from his prestigious address of 25 Brook Street in Mayfair (which has now become the memorial 'Handel-Hendrix' house museum).

A 3-act oratorio (the longest and most substantial Handel was to write: standing as an impressive 298-page autograph score), **Samson** dates from 1741, following on from his **Messiah**. However, it would be 2 further years before **Samson** was to be premièred at Covent Garden, London, where it was, and has remained, an instant overwhelming success. After its first performance, it was reviewed as: '*a most exquisite entertainment . . . the finest piece of music he ever composed . . . giving us an idea of heaven, where everybody is to sing such music*': marking the prime of Handel's creative fecundity. It is comparable with a buffet, in being a collection of separate movements (orchestral pieces, solo vocal arias, vocal ensembles, and choruses), all setting suitable text by Irish librettist, Newburgh Hamilton, and poetry by English poet, John Milton. Most memorably, it boasts the famous and moving tenor aria, '*Total eclipse*'; the uplifting and smile-inducing soprano aria, '*Let the bright seraphim . . . their proud uplifted angel trumpets blow!*', whose trumpet obbligato part (that is, a trumpet part which is specifically distinctive and integral to the music, thereby elevating it to an equal duetting rôle with the vocal soloist) - which Crispian Steele-Perkins has oft performed and recorded, most famously with Kiri Te Kanawa at St Paul's Cathedral, London, for the marriage of the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1981 - and this concluding chorus, '*Let their celestial concerts all unite!*'

With choruses of solemn Israelites, hedonistic Philistines, and carefree virgins, to present and support the respective strands and perspectives of the familiar bible story of Samson (Judge of Israel, with infamous supernatural strength from his uncut hirsute coiffure) and Dalila (solipsistic Philistine temptress and seductress), **Samson** closes, at the end of its third act, with the ebullient '*Let the bright seraphim*', which leads inexorably into this triumphant paean, after Samson's death, as the Israelites fanfare their God with heartfelt gratitude: '*ever to sound His praise in endless blaze of light!*'

Founded in the early 1960s by an American in Paris (Ward Swingle), '*Les Swingle Singers*' released their first ground-breaking recording in 1963. They comprised a group of eight freelance professional singers performing Ward Swingle's agile and slick arrangements of instrumental and orchestral music (initially all by the unsurpassed musical guru, Johann Sebastian Bach) for unaccompanied chamber choir. Described as '*swung Baroque*', his arrangements fuse jazz and classical styles, using nonsense sounds/syllables ('scatting') rather than real words. After 10 years, the group disbanded in France, and Swingle moved to England. Here he formed a new group, which has risen like a phoenix, continuing to entertain worldwide with arrangements as diverse as Tchaikovsky's **1812 Overture** and Beatles' hit numbers!

Drawing on the musical brilliance and driving rhythmic force of Bach's music, this arrangement of an outstandingly lively and thrilling work (originally a four-voice fugue in g minor for solo organ - supremely exhilarating and inspiring to play and to listen to - B.W.V. 578: a product of his tenure as organist and Kapellmeister at the Protestant church in Arnstadt, 1703-1707) is a stunning paradigm of '*Swingling*', all the way to its final triumphant cadence: a '*tierce-de-Picardie*' resolution which encapsulates hope and salvation (despite sinning, despair, and suffering) in the reassuringly coruscant and horripilatory tonic major - for there is always hope and a better future!

Nicknamed '*the little fugue*' (to distinguish it from Bach's later '**great' fugue in g minor**, B. W. V. 542 of ca. 1720 - greater in its length, complexity and challenges for both brain and limbs than its younger brother, B. W. V. 578), its universal popularity, allure and potency (from its overtly passionate expression to its irresistible musical earworms) have led to numerous arrangements from full orchestral versions (such as the one made by the English conductor of American orchestras, Leopold Stokowski) to this a-cappella choral rendering (first performed by ExeVox in its inaugural concert in Exeter in the Spring of 2005), all of which capture the spirit and essence of the original, and confirm the perennial timelessness and eternal infinitude of Bach's music.

As the Swingle Singers - whose founder, the American Ward Swingle, died, aged 87, in January 2015 - so truly concluded:

'it is perhaps not surprising when one considers how innovative and prolific Bach was, that he has been revered and respected by so many composers throughout the centuries, and that his music continues to be infinitely adaptable and a source of inspiration today.'

And as the great modern American organist and Bach specialist, Cameron Carpenter wrote (and named his 2016 CD album of solo organ music): '*all you need is Bach!*'

'The Many Rend The Skies', Alexander's Feast G. F. Handel

Alexander's Feast musically personifies a libretto by, once again, one of Handel's most beloved authors, Newburgh Hamilton (1691-1761) - itself modelled on English, Stuart, Restoration poet, John Dryden's ode to the patroness of music and musicians, St Cecilia (for her feast day on 22nd November). Subtitled '*The Power of Music*', it 'embodied imaginative grandeur, lyrical tenderness and a characteristic Augustan wit, all of which the great master Handel readily seized . . . in this stirring and brilliantly conceived piece, which stands as one of the noblest examples of English Baroque art . . . in which the choral writing breaks new ground in its dramatic outbursts, most notably in the passacaglia' (that is, built on a regularly-repeated ground-bass line). '*The many rend the skies with loud applause*' magnificently brings to a close the first of this 176-page Cecilian ode's two acts, specifically designed to incite the required reaction from the audience!

'Never was upon like occasion so numerous and splendid an audience at any theatre in London' than at the première of **Alexander's Feast** in 1736, the year Handel completed it at his home in Mayfair, London, and directed it from the harpsichord and organ in the Covent Garden Theatre in performances typically interspersed with three of his organ concerti. Two years later, a statue of Handel containing a score of this very masterpiece was hewn and proudly established at Vauxhall Gardens for all to admire.

Its ground-bass/passacaglia structure synthesizes this inherent unity with a diverse multitude of musical strands, ideas, motifs, rhythms and harmonies woven by Handel throughout all four voice parts above this recurrent bass line to greatly stimulating musical effect. Swishing in triple time - and abounding in Baroque suspensions and hemiolas to heighten its music impulse and rhythmic propulsion - this glorious chorus's ravishing '*Andante*' (gently strolling) opening morphs into an arousingly lusty duple-time '*Allegro*' (cheerfully lively) closing section on the words: '*so love was crown'd but music won the cause!*', which Handel reiterates with ever-increasing vim and vigour, until there can be no denying the power, meaning and effect of this line of text and his complementary inspired music:

'its notes ascend the sky, and heav'nly joys inspire!'

~

CRISPIN STEELE-PERKINS
Handel solos for trumpet and piano

~

Supported by the third Duke of Devonshire (as eighteenth-century Viceroy of Ireland), **Handel** was commissioned to '*compose something special in aid of the Dublin sick*' for the benefit of both Mercer's Hospital in Stephen's Street and the Charitable Infirmary at the Inn's Quay, as well as for another charity which was funded at this time by profits from musical ventures: the Prisoners' Debt Relief ('*for many souls stricken in several Irish gaols*'). The result was '*the immortal Messiah, finished by Handel on September 14th, 1741, having been written in three weeks - a marvellous tour de force!*' It has duly become one of the most timeless, perennially-popular and immortal of compositions: a unique, moving and memorable musical tableau.

Handel dutifully arrived in Dublin and rapidly played the organs at various churches and cathedrals, and entertained wealthy patrons and subscribers on harpsichords at their houses and estates. He also directed choral, instrumental and concerto concerts in the New Musick Hall in Fishamble Street to appreciative full-capacity audiences.

The culmination of Handel's visit to Ireland was on Thursday 8th April, 1742, with a public rehearsal of his *Messiah*, complete with a typical Baroque instrumental band of strings, timpani and 2 trumpets, assembled from local talent. Prelude to the first public performance of Handel's '*sublime oratorio*' at 12 noon on Tuesday 13th April, it was unanimously agreed by those present to be: '*the finest Composition of Music that ever was heard . . . Neale's Music Hall was densely packed with a most enthusiastic and discriminating audience as Handel's Messiah made its impression once and for ever.*'

And the Dublin Journal's review was similarly gushing and exultant: '*the best judges allowed it to be the most finished piece of music. Words are wanting to express the exquisite delight it afforded to the admiring, crowded audience. The sublime, the grand, and the tender, adapted to the most elevated, majestic and moving words, conspired to transport and charm the ravished heart and ear.*'

The 50th number (out of 53), '*O death, where is thy sting?*' is a driving duet for alto and tenor conversing, imitating, adding, agreeing and competing in persistently pleading musical entreaty, leading '*segue*' (without a break) into the following number: a chorus which heartily bursts forth with their assuaging '*but thanks be to God!*'. This chorus continues the determined counterpoint and elegant Baroque interaction and interweaving of musical lines which characterised the preceding duet in its enhanced four choral voice parts: '*who giveth us the victory thro' our Lord Jesus Christ*'. It culminates with a Handelian summation: a final 3-bar '*Adagio*' (half the speed and twice the impact of the prior chorus), which unquestionably resolutely reasserts and reaffirms the monumental message and motive of this exemplary extract from **Messiah**.

'A work of universal appeal and profound significance', Handel's **Messiah** was, unusually, not performed in London until a year after its first appearance in Dublin, being performed in March 1743 in his favourite Covent Garden Theatre. Astonishingly rapidly completed (the whole work was surprisingly accurately written by Handel's hand in just 24 days during the summer of 1741), it became so widely successful and appreciated that it was performed every year for the rest of Handel's life (for charity in the chapel of London's children's Foundling Hospital in Brunswick Square, Bloomsbury); and innumerable times regularly throughout the world ever since.

Setting a mélange of text from the King James Bible, laced together and supplemented with fresh words by Handel's friend, the poet, Charles Jennens, it has now become a legend in Western Classical music, as the most frequently performed and recorded of sacred choral works (albeit really a 3-act Italian opera in disguise). A musical triptych, it reflects on the life of Jesus as the Christian Messiah, from his birth in part I; via the passion story in part II (culminating with this stirring '*Hallelujah*' chorus); to his resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven in its third and final part. Jennens hoped that Handel would '*lay out his whole genius and skill upon [this work, and] that the composition may excel all his former compositions*': his hopes were indubitably fulfilled.

A strident march in the bright, bubbly key of D major (most befitting the use of natural trumpets and drums), the '*Hallelujah*' chorus (with its '*potency . . . spiritual elevation . . . and exalted level of inspiration . . . [making it] truly striking and sublime . . . [as] a most happy and marvellous concatenation of harmony, melody and great effects*') requires the singers to mimic different instruments (brass, string and woodwind) in singing their praises.

Audiences typically listen to this chorus standing proudly to attention, thus following the custom of the first London performance, during which King George II reputedly arose, thereby causing the entire audience dutifully to follow suit. However, the King had jumped up in an attempt to relieve his crippling cramp, rather than in honour of the music or its lyrics. Whilst writing this chorus, Handel professed to seeing '*all of heaven and the great God himself*' before him, thus the whole movement appropriately builds in fortitude and vitality to its final '*adagio*' cadence for the 67th (and last) musical appearance of the single word, '*Hallelujah!*'.

*'The distinction due to Shakespeare in energy of poetry;
and to Michelangelo in sculpture and painting;
Handel may justly claim in the sister art:
to him belongs the majesty of music.'*

~ *INTERVAL* ~

NIGHT AND DAY:

As has become the tradition of ExeVox concerts, the second half of our programme tonight presents a smörgåsbord of more modern secular pieces, presenting you with a wealth of beautiful, expressive and communicative styles: from tender German Romanticism and Swedish folk-style music to equally-beguiling American cinematic classics and chart-topping songs.

In stiller Nacht, W.o.O. 34/8 (1863)

*In silent night, at first watch,
A voice begins to lament.
The night wind has sweetly and gently
Carried the sound to me.
With bitter pain and sorrow
My heart is melted.
With simple tears and flowers
I have watered all of them.*

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

*The lovely moon will now set,
For sorrow it doesn't want to shine,
The stars stop their gleaming,
They want to weep with me.
No birdsong nor joyous sounds
Can be heard in the air.
Even the wild beasts grieve with me
In rocks and ravines.*

[translated by Richard Stokes, 2005]

Fundamentally influenced by Bach's music and approach to composition, expression, and word setting, Brahms here fused this profound inspiration with his love of folk-music and their idioms at a nexus of his 19th-century perspective and *Zeitgeist* of full-blooded German Romanticism. An avid, experienced choral director, Brahms was imbued with a burgeoning love for, and growing knowledge of, vocal and choral music, and its panoply of possibilities and inter-relationships, as manifested in this miniature choral cameo, which brims with peaceful passion, soothing sonorities, gently swaying rhythms, and emotive polychromaticism.

The first of his two characteristically sublime original settings (the other being for solo voice and piano, penned 30 years later) of this enigmatic German folk-song text (the eighth - and his personal favourite - of a set of fourteen), this one is scored - with his legendary musical acuity and perspicacity - for unaccompanied 4-part choir (that is, the customary soprano, alto, tenor and bass parts):

'a lament, carried on the wind at night, melting the heart and inciting tears of pain and sorrow from the eyes of the listener . . . its poem is united with music of equal simplicity and poignancy . . . chorally reinforcing the expressive undulation of the melody'.

Set in the manner of a hymn, its four voice parts move in sync ('*homophonically*'), thus delicately strengthening its musical flavour, and optimising the clarity and audibility of its descriptive text. Its languorous musical phrases are organic; its luscious harmonies ecstatic; its golden silences lugubrious, lachrymose, and reflective; its mood onomatopoeic; and its dénouement rapturous.

As the German musicologist, Max Friedländer concluded: '*In stiller Nacht* stands today amongst the most impressive and moving impressionistic pictures in choral music'.

~

Earth Song (2007)

Frank Ticheli (b. 1958)

Ethereal, hypnotic, mesmeric and reverential, Ticheli's recent **Earth Song** seems to capture the gentle breathing and pace of the earth, air, and life, as its supple and subtle musical phrases peacefully appear, expand, float, subside, and vanish, before another breath breathes life into its next musical utterance. Apart from a short break for the basses in the middle of this song, all four of its vocal parts move together almost solely as one - '*one for all, and all for one*' - until it comes tenderly to rest on an enigmatically unresolved chord of a bare fifth, repeating the summatory exhortation: '*peace*'.

Ticheli is an American composer based in Los Angeles as professor of composition at the University of Southern California. With a wall full of degrees, and a mind full of tastes and interests, he has contributed to most major musical genres and groupings (from ensembles to large-scale works; for instruments and/or voices) in his plethora of rôles as teacher, professor, composer, and composer-in-residence throughout the United States of America, satisfying commissions and garnering awards, grants, and fellowships for his musical compositions, including the Charles Ives Scholarship and the Distinguished Service to Music Medal for his American band music.

In a world ravaged by war of all types (visible and invisible; transitory and lasting), this beautifully poignant setting remains dearly close to Ticheli's heart. It originally appeared as part of a work for wind ensemble entitled '**Sanctuary**', but broke loose, eschewing wind instruments for voices. Ticheli wrote: '*the music is so vocal in itself . . . as a cry and a prayer for peace . . . of weariness and comfort . . . like a rose, it's got both thorns and beauty.*' Uniquely, the words came to Ticheli after he had written the music in 2007 (invariably composers start with the words as the inspiration for their music).

Now Ticheli's **Earth Song** has almost become an anthem for our times: '*music remains a constant support in our lives, helping us remain grounded and secure . . . there is always peace in music - even when life overwhelms us and pulls us apart.*'

In its creator's own words: '*Earth Song* is one of only a few works that I have composed without a commission . . . I felt a strong impulse to create something that would express my own personal longing for peace. It was this longing which engendered the poem's creation. I knew I had to write the poem myself - partly because it is not just a poem, but a prayer, a plea, a wish - a bid to find inner peace in a world that seems eternally bent on war and hatred. But also, the poem is a steadfast declaration of the power of music to heal. In the end, the speaker in the poem discovers that, through music, he is the embodiment of hope, peace, and the song with the *Song*. Perhaps music has the power not only to nurture inner peace, but also to open hearts and ears in a world that desperately needs love and listening.'

~

Holding the Stars (2010)

Paul Carr (b. 1961)

A Cornish man - and brother of larger-than-life baritone and conductor, Gavin - Paul Carr studied voice and piano at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama, working on his composing autodidactically.

Classic FM launched Paul Carr's music into international orbit by promoting his **Requiem for an Angel** in 2011, the year after he had written this atmospheric a-cappella motet, **Holding the Stars** - four years before he was awarded an honorary doctorate of music from Nottingham Trent University '*for his significant contribution to music at a national level*'. Bolstering this growing recognition for his music, commissions have included choral works for Bath Abbey and for the Dutch choral group, Opus; an **oboe concerto** for English oboist, Nicholas Daniel; and an **Air** for strings, which has also been championed by the radio station, Classic FM.

Aptly instructed to be performed '*with wonderment*', Carr's **Holding the Stars** is another anthropomorphic homophonic choral miniature, whose natural musical phrases ooze and seep together, as it shifts effortless from note-to-note, bar-to-bar and line-to-line with soporific radiance and hope: '*a simple reverie to the solitude of thoughts and feelings that we all feel*', as he explained.

Carr continues: '*in November 2009, I attended a concert in the church of St. Mary Redcliffe in Bristol, given by the Bristol Bach Choir, conducted by my brother Gavin. It was an inspired programme of contemporary American music and included works by Morten Lauridsen, Eric Whitacre and Samuel Barber. Among the Barber pieces was his timeless setting of the James*

Agee poem '*Sure on this shining night*'. I thought it beautiful and felt I wanted to set the words myself for unaccompanied choir and did so straight away. I assumed, foolishly, that the works of James Agee would be in the public domain, but I was wrong. As Eric Whitacre discovered with his now famous choral piece, *Sleep* - which he originally set to words by Robert Frost, but was then denied publishing rights - obtaining permission from publishers to set words still under copyright can be painfully problematic, as I have now found out. In the end Whitacre commissioned a friend and poet to write new words to his already composed music and the piece went on to become a modern choral classic. So, I have followed suit, only in this case I found it cheaper to commission myself! I'm no poet, but anyone can write words; here, lost in the beauty of a summer's night - in contemplation of oneself and the world.'

The second of a triptych of three motets (single-movement unaccompanied pieces of sacred choral music - the others being **Now Comes Beauty** and **The Cloths of Heaven**) for four voices (comprising the usual choral composite of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass), **Holding the Stars** is a haunting evocation of Carr's own text:

'wandering alone and lost in thought under a starlit summer sky'.

~

At Evening (2014)

Will Todd (b. 1970)

And so to another choral contemplation by a contemporary English composer: **At Evening** by Durham- and Bristol-educated jazz-obsessed, pianist-composer, Will Todd - but, to set its mood, scene, key and pace, this one begins with - and is driven and underpinned by - a luscious jazz-infused piano part. With work taking him from London to New York; from the Royal Opera House to the Lincoln Center; from his works, the opera, **The Blackened Man** to his **Mass in Blue**, Todd wrote this setting of his own text for The Wellensian Consort of Wells Cathedral and their director, Chris Finch, as a night-time, pre-sleep blessing: *'the day is done and night will fall . . .'*.

To be performed, as Todd directs, *'with rubato'* ('robbed time')/flexible tempo/ebb and flow), its freedom of rhythm mirrors its freedom from shackles, and its organic aliveness, *'to add to the expressive nature of the music: lyrical . . . warm. . . and somniferous.'*

The vocal texture divides the four parts into two pairs: the upper two female voices (sopranos and altos) duetting in conversational dialogue with the lower male pair (tenors and basses); uniting in concord at key points: *'may I be always encircled in your love'* and *'God above'*. Its closely-knit vocal writing; stretching and yawning melodic contours; and jazz-influenced harmonies, all combine to create a tranquil dreamworld: a hypnagogic musical idyll bound by its piano part.

~

CRISPIN STEELE-PERKINS
Bacharach and Gershwin solos for trumpet and piano

~

HOPE AND REFLECTION:

Sommarsalm (1933)

Gustaf Waldemar Åhlén (1894-1982)

*The earth adorned in verdant robe sends praises upward surging,
While soft winds breathe on fragrant flowers from winter now emerging.
The sunshine bright gives warmth and light to budding blossoms tender,
Proclaiming summer splendour.*

*The summer splendour fades away and goes like evening shadows.
My Friend is mine, and He will stay with me past death's grim meadows.
In Paradise, He will me rise and let me stay forever. No graves will be there; never.*

[verses 1 and 5 of a poem written by the Swedish poet,
Carl David af Wirsén (1842-1912), written in 1889]

Composed in Swedish in 1933, **Sommarsalm** ('Summer Hymn') is a Scandinavian love-song, recalling, as ever they do in Sweden, images of nature and landscape to conjure up and mirror, calm, mitigate, embody and pacify their feelings. Its composer, Åhlén, was a Swede who was utterly musical through-and-through: a much-loved organist and composer, as well as a widely-acclaimed educator and director. This gentle unaccompanied hymn has come to signify and epitomise the quintessence and delicate fragrance of Swedish music, life and love. To this day, it is the most prized, beloved and familiar of Swedish choral works.

From a family of singers and teachers, Åhlén was first taught at home, before gaining a place to study the organ, singing, and music in general, at the Royal Swedish Academy of Music in Stockholm. Ever thereafter centred in his country's historic and culturally-rich capital city, he promoted his own organ recitals; accepted the best organ-playing work; directed several award-winning native choirs; and taught both children, the blind, and adults for many decades. He founded the Association of Stockholm Singing Teachers in 1930, alongside his many activities as a composer (producing an extensive array of popular solo vocal and multi-part choral music), amply urged by, and supplementing, Sweden's widespread and deep-rooted choral repertory, and the Swedes' enviable tradition of singing at, and for, all occasions.

Throughout his career - and even closing his farewell concert - Åhlén's **Sommarpsalm** (with its gracefully-arching melody, fluid sway, and lilting triple-time rhythms) figured prominently, becoming his distinctive musical calling card. Ever requested, rehearsed, recorded and encored, it has been rescored for copious vocal and instrumental groupings. His most instantly-recognisable piece of music, it has also been incorporated into a plethora of Swedish film scores, as well as appearing on the music lists for royal weddings and other indigenous services.

~

Moon River (1961)

Henry Mancini (1924-1994), arr. P. J. A.

Remember Audrey Hepburn eating a cold croissant whilst window shopping at Tiffany's on Fifth Avenue in New York in the 1961 film, **Breakfast at Tiffany's**, and this charming song - replete with its indelible musical hooks - will doubtless spring to mind! Indeed, **Moon River** was recently selected by the American Film Institute as the fourth most memorable song in Hollywood film history (after **Over the Rainbow**, **As Time Goes By**, and **Singin' in the Rain**).

Moon River began its life with lyrics by John ('Johnny') Herndon Mercer (1909-1976): a popular American singer-songwriter, and creator of lyrics to nearly 2,000 songs; founder of Capitol Records; recipient of 19 Academy-Award nominations; and winner of 4 '*best original song*' Oscars, including **Moon River** in the year of its release. His partnership with fellow American musician, Enrico Nicola ('Henry') Mancini (1924-1994) - respected composer, arranger and conductor, best known for his film scores, from the **Pink Panther** films to Hitchcock's chilling **Frenzy**, via, of course, **Breakfast at Tiffany's** - resulted in no finer and more enduring and unforgettable a piece than this time-honoured, sentimental, multi-award-winning song.

Furthermore, Mancini used its melody at the start of each episode of his own television show; named his production company after it; entitled his autobiography, '**Moon River and Me**'; and even an inlet near his hometown in Georgia was subsequently renamed '*Moon River*' in honour of this indelible legacy. Reminiscent of a carefree childhood (including picking huckleberries in the summer); built on a folk-song-like range of notes (very limited, to suit Audrey Hepburn's slender vocal range); and beloved of its duo creators (as well as Hepburn herself), **Moon River** soon shot to pole position in the 'easy-listening' charts' hit list. Unusually in triple time (most popular songs have 4 beats per bar), it also boasts a satisfyingly more complex and varied harmonic language and structure than similar film-based songs; all extended, expanded and enriched in this a-cappella version made for tonight's concert especially by the choir's director, to encourage and foster reflection and hope for a better future.

ENCORE:

What a Wonderful World (1967)

Thiele & Weiss, arr. P. J. A.

Concluding our voyage through an ocean of musical styles, moods and centuries is one of the most positive, uplifting and familiar of songs involving us all. First recorded in 1967 by Louis Armstrong - for whom it was written - it rapidly leapt to the top of the pop charts across the globe.

Primarily aiming '*to bring people of different races and beliefs together*', it soon achieved international status as a jazz standard. Transcending race or creed - and despite suffering and strife - both the clear strong lyrics and memorably folk-like music of this song help to assure us all that there is perennial hope; there will always be enjoyable friendship; and music shall last forever.

In this special bespoke arrangement, Crispian will play the obbligato trumpet part to synergise with ExeVox and their director at the piano in wishing everyone a healthier, better, brighter future: one full of music - which never dies - and myriad other joys and pleasures shared and savoured with friends and families throughout the world.

Viva la musica!

© Peter Adcock

Exeter

MMXXI

~

EXEVox
~ chamber choir ~
<https://www.exevox.org.uk>

~
CRISPiAN STEELE-PERKiNS
~ trumpeter ~

Crispian Steele-Perkins began playing the trumpet at the age of 10 and, after training at the Guildhall School of Music in London, he became a member of the English National Opera, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the English Chamber Orchestra.

As a soloist Crispian's purity of tone and artistic subtlety have received widespread critical acclaim for more than four decades. On 10th October 2015 the BBC's CD Review concluded that, of all the available recordings of Haydn's famous Trumpet Concerto worldwide, his is 'the one to have'.

Crispian collects and restores antique trumpets upon which he has performed and recorded with The Academy of Ancient Music, The Kings Consort and The English Baroque Soloists. Appropriately, he plays the theme tune to one of the BBC's longest-running and most popular TV programmes, the Antiques Roadshow.

Described by Virtuoso magazine as 'the world's leading exponent of the Baroque Trumpet', particularly when heard in duet with some of the world's greatest singers such as Kiri te Kanawa, Emma Kirkby, John Tomlinson and Bryn Terfel, he has also recorded with popular artists including Led Zeppelin, Kate Bush, Lulu, Cliff Richard, Bob Geldof and Harry Secombe. In addition, he has performed on numerous TV scores for shows including, amongst many others, Dr Who, Oliver Twist, The World at War, Inspector Morse and Tales of the Unexpected.

In the world of cinema he has participated in more than 80 classic scores such as Jaws, Gandhi, Star Wars Episode IV, Batman, Monty Python's Life of Brian, Lord of the Rings - The Two Towers and no less than six films from the James Bond series.

Whilst his numerous solo recordings extend from Handel to Glenn Miller, he has featured regularly as a concert soloist in London at the Royal Albert Hall and the Royal Festival Hall, New York's Carnegie Hall, Boston's Symphony Hall, the Sydney Opera House and Tokyo's Suntory Hall. His largest 'live' audience was 133,000 at the Edinburgh International Festival.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crispian_Steele-Perkins

~

PETER ADCOCK

~ musical director and pianist ~

Peter read music as an organ scholar at Oxford University, securing another scholarship with the highest first in his year. A pianist, organist and flautist, Peter reached the regional piano finals of the B.B.C. Young Musician of the Year at the age of 14, taught by Maurice Cole and Professor Alexander Kelly, head of keyboard studies at the Royal Academy of Music.

Peter regularly accompanies instrumentalists, singers, choirs, and students throughout the South-West; and frequently collaborates with other professional musicians in workshops, lessons, masterclasses, concerts, recitals and recordings.

A similarly experienced choral director, he is the founding director of the award-winning chamber choir, ExeVox; organizes concerts; devised and ran two annual music festivals in Devon; performs widely as accompanist, soloist and conductor; gives lecture recitals; acts as répétiteur; arranges and transcribes music; writes programme notes, lectures, articles and booklets; and teaches and coaches both professionals and amateurs privately, both from his base in Exeter and online.

Numerous concert engagements as pianist, accompanist and director have taken him across England and Europe to Australia.

www.peteradcock.co.uk

~