

COLCHESTER CHAMBER CHOIR

Director Roderick Earle

A MUSICAL BESTIARY

songs about the animal kingdom from
England, France, Germany and Italy

COLCHESTER CHAMBER CHOIR

Formed in 2010, we have gained a reputation for high quality performances which explore a breadth of repertoire, presenting it with musicality, drama and imagination. We aspire to the highest possible standards of music-making through detailed rehearsals and a professional approach.

Currently around one quarter of our singers are under the age of twenty-five. We value our young singers and are always on the look out for potential new recruits.

We sing all over East Anglia in a variety of venues which include cathedrals, churches, stately homes and gardens, performing rarely-heard music from the Renaissance to the 21st century, from much loved works to UK premieres, in languages including Danish, Slovak and Czech. In November 2014 we performed the UK première of Emile Naoumoff's Concert Sacré in St Edmundsbury Cathedral and in September 2015 were invited to present two concerts at the Roman River Festival.

We are largely self-funding with the help of some generous donations. We work to bring our music to wider audiences and develop our singers, particularly young ones, through our choral apprenticeship scheme. Several of our choral apprentices have gone on to receive choral scholarships at universities and cathedrals, benefiting from the unique experience of singing in the choir.

Roderick Earle was a boy chorister at Winchester Cathedral and following a choral scholarship at St. John's College, Cambridge and the Royal College of Music entered the singing profession as a soloist. He was a principal baritone with the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden for 21 years, singing more than 60 roles with many of the greatest singers, conductors and directors of the era. He has sung in opera and concerts all over the world, in the USA, Argentina, Israel, Australia, New Zealand and the Far East as well as throughout Europe and the UK. He has made several recordings and videos from early to contemporary music. Roderick is also a singing professor at The Royal College of Music, London and teaches the choral scholars at Trinity College, Cambridge.

Peter Humphrey is the choir's rehearsal pianist.

Animal heads by **David Trenow**: www.davidtrenow.co.uk

Sopranos: Diana Childs, Liz Curry, Anita Filer, Rosanna Fish, Lesley Gunfield, Jennifer Lloyd, Linda Pearsall, Leonie Russell

Altos: Lehla Abbott, Patsy Cosgrove, Tessa Freebairn, Julia King, Meg Prolingheuer, Eleanor Walters

Tenors: Martin Arnaud, Zachary Kleanthous, Andrew Marsden, Daniel Ruiz Viejobueno

Basses: Dominic Blanchard, Simon Bowen, Samuel Carbonero, Jonathan Francis, Sean Moriarty, Stephen Smith

Bestiary – noun. A descriptive or anecdotal treatise on various kinds of animal, especially a medieval work with a moralizing tone (Oxford Dictionary).



Adriano Banchieri (1568-1634) lived and worked in Bologna. His *Contrappunto bestiale* comes from his madrigal entertainment for the evening of Giovedì Grasso (the Thursday before Ash Wednesday).

Jean Absil (1893-1974) spent most of his life teaching at the Brussels Conservatoire. He is best known for his works with piano. Poems from Guillaume Apollinaire's collection *Le Bestiaire*, from which the five texts are taken, were also famously set by Poulenc for baritone and piano. The original publication was graced with woodcuts by Raoul Dufy. Absil's setting dates from 1944.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) produced a vast number of works in various genres. His three sets of *Lieder im Freien zu singen* (Songs to be sung outdoors) deserve to be better known. The two songs in this evening's programme were written in 1839 and 1843.

Josquin des Prez (c.1450-1521) was the most widely respected of the Franco-Flemish Renaissance composers. He wrote copious volumes of music for the church but also much secular music. *El grillo* is what is called a frottola, an early form of madrigal.

Claude Le Jeune (c.1528-1600) was also a Franco-Flemish composer but from a later generation. He was praised for restoring metre to French song placing it on an equal footing with harmony. His chanson *Le puce* is a good example of his style and displays his theories.

Thomas Vautour (c1590-1619) spent many years in the service of the Duke of Buckingham, James I's favourite. *Sweet Suffolk owl* displays much word painting and originality.

Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625) started his musical career as a chorister at King's College, Cambridge. Later he became organist to the Chapel Royal of James I. *The silver swan* is one of his best known madrigals and was possibly written in memory of Prince Henry Stuart.

John Wilbye (1574-1638) was born in Suffolk and received patronage from the Cornwallis family, going on to work for the Kitsons at Hengrave Hall. He spent the last ten years of his life in Colchester in the house of Mary Kitson, dying in the 'great brick house opposite Holy Trinity church'. The house still stands. He is considered one of the greatest English madrigalists. *Sweet honey sucking bees* is written in 5 parts and in two sections.

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) is one of the 20th century's greatest, but much underappreciated, composers. His *Six Chansons* (settings of texts by Rainer Maria Rilke) were written in 1939 during a spell in Switzerland after Hindemith had left Germany and was on his way to the USA where he took American nationality only returning to Germany in 1953. *La biche* and *Un cygne* show the influence of Poulenc.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) became the leading composer in France in the 1920s and 30s. As well as being considered a great orchestrator and author of large scale works like *Daphnis et Chloé* he wrote wonderful miniatures in the form of songs and chamber music. *Trois beaux oiseaux du paradis* comes from his set of *Trois Chansons*. The words are by the composer.

Edward Elgar (1857-1934) wrote many pieces for unaccompanied choir but none so strange as *Owls (An Epitaph)*. Here both text, by the composer, and music are curiously ambiguous. The listener is left wondering what the piece is really about. Elgar said to his friend, Jaeger, 'It is only a fantasy and means nothing. It is in a wood at night evidently and the recurring 'Nothing' is only an owlish sound'. But is there more to it? Is it a reflection on the composer's loss of faith – a nihilistic musical footnote to his earlier passionately Catholic *Dream of Gerontius*? To add to the mystery, he dedicated the piece to his daughter's rabbit, Peter – to my friend Pietro d'Alba - whom he occasionally credited as a collaborator on texts and in musical ideas.

Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) was born in Dublin, became Professor of Music at Cambridge and was one of the founders of the Royal College of Music. He is best known today for his church music. *The Blue Bird* is his best known part song coming from a set of eight of which the others have slipped into obscurity.



PROGRAMME

Contrappunto bestiale alla mente a 5	Adriano Banchieri (1568 - 1634)
Bestiaire op.58	Jean Absil (1893 - 1974)
Le dromadaire	
L'écrevisse	
La carpe	
Le paon	
Le chat	
Die Nachtigall op. 59, no. 4	Felix Mendelssohn (1809 - 1847)
Lerchengesang op. 48, no. 4	
El grillo	Josquin des Prez (c.1450 - 1521)
Une puce	Claude Le Jeune (c.1528 - 1600)
Sweet Suffolk owl	Thomas Vautor (1590 - 1619)
The silver swan	Orlando Gibbons (1583 - 1625)
Sweet honey sucking bees	John Wilbye (1574 - 1638)
La biche (no. 1 from Six Chansons)	Paul Hindemith (1895 - 1963)
Le cygne (no. 2 from Six Chansons)	
Trois beaux oiseaux du paradis (no. 2 from Trois Chansons op. 69)	Maurice Ravel (1875 - 1937)
Owls (An Epitaph)	Edward Elgar (1857 - 1934)
The blue bird	Charles Villiers Stanford (1852 - 1924)

Contrappunto bestiale alla mente a 5 Adriano Banchieri

Fa la la.

Nulla fides gobbis

similiter est zoppis.

Si sguerzus bonus est,

super annalia scribe.

Bau, bau!

Miao, miao!

Chiù, chiù!

Cucù, cucù!

Fa la la.

Fa la la.

Bass: No trust in hunchbacks,

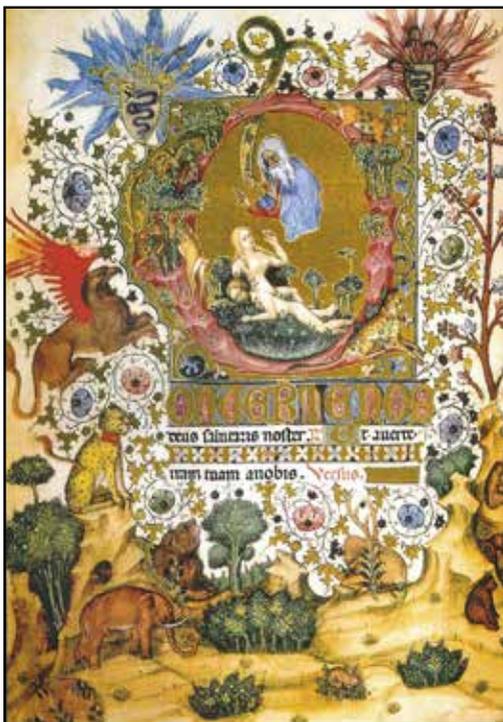
Just like limpers,

If the outside rind is good,

Write it in the records.

This poem is written in "macaronic Italian", which is an artificial mixture of Latin and Italian words with Latin endings.

The content is as nonsensical as the language in which it is written. The translation is something like the above.



Le dromadaire

Avec ses quatre dromadaires
Don Pedro d'Alfaroubeira
Courut le monde et l'admira.
Il fit ce que je voudrais faire
Si j'avais quatre dromadaires.

With his dromedaries four
Don Pedro of Alfaroubeira
Wandered the world and savoured it.
He did just what I'd like to do
Had I four dromedaries too.

L'écrevisse

Incertitude, ô mes délices
Vous et moi nous nous en allons
Comme s'en vont les écrevisses,
A reculons, à reculons.

Uncertainty, my secret joy,
We travel
Like the crayfish
Backwards, backwards.

La carpe

Dans vos viviers, dans vos étangs,
Carpes, que vous vivez longtemps!
Est-ce que la mort vous oublie,
Poissons de la mélancolie.

Carp In your marshes, in your ponds,
Carp, how long you live!
Have you slipped death's mind,
Fishes of despond.

Le paon

En faisant la roue, cet oiseau,
Dont le pennage traîne à terre,
Apparaît encore plus beau,
Mais se découvre le derrière.

When opening his fanlike tail
This bird whose plumes behind him trail
Looks lovelier than when it's shut,
But he reveals his behind.

Le chat

Je souhaite dans ma maison:
Une femme ayant sa raison,
Un chat passant parmi les livres,
Des amis de toute saison
Sans lesquels je ne peux pas vivre.

I hope I may have in my house
A sensible right-minded spouse,
A cat stepping over the books,
Loyal friends always about
Whom I couldn't live without.

Die Nachtigall op. 59, no. 4 Felix Mendelssohn

Die Nachtigall, sie war entfernt
der Frühling lockt sie wieder.

Was neues hat sie nicht gelernt;
singt alte liebe Lieder.

The nightingale had gone afar;
Spring summons her back.
She has learned nothing new;
She sings the old beloved songs.

Lerchengesang op. 48, no. 4

Wie lieblicher Klang,
o Lerche, dein Sang!
Er hebt sich, er schwingt sich in Wonne.
Du nimmst mich von hier,
ich singe mit dir,
wir steigen durch Wolken zur Sonne.

How lovely is the sound
of your song, oh lark!
You rise and you swing in delight;
You take me away from here;
I'm singing with you as
we ascend through the clouds to the sun.



El grillo Josquin des Prez

El grillo è buon cantore,
Che tiene longo verso,
Dalle beve, grillo canta.
Ma non fa come gli altri uccelli,
Come li han cantato un poco,
Van' de fatto in altro loco
Sempre el grillo sta pulsaldo,
Quando la maggior el caldo
Allor canta sol per amore.

The cricket is a good singer
He sings for a long time
Give him a drink, he'll sing.
But he isn't like the other birds.
If they've sung a little bit
They go somewhere else
The cricket remains where he is
When the heat is very fierce
Then he sings for love alone.

Une Puce Claude le Jeune

Une puce j'ai dedans l'oreille, hélas
Qui de nuit et de jour me frétille et me mord
Et me fait devenir fou.

Nul remède n'y puis donner,
je cours de ça, je cours de là.

Retire-la moi je t'en prie.

O toute belle, secoure-moi.

Quand mes yeux je pense livrer au sommeil
elle vient me piquer, me démange et me point,
et me garde de dormir.

D'une vieille charmeresse aidé me suis
qui guérit tout le monde, et de tout guérissant
ne m'a su me guérir moi.

Bien je sais que seule peut guérir ce mal.
Je te prie de me voir de bon œil
et vouloir m'amollir ta cruauté.

J'ai souvent dedans l'oreille farfouillé,
mais je n'ai par amour ni par art su trouver
la manière de l'ôter.

I've a flea in my ear, alas!
which night and day wriggles and bites me
and drives me mad.

No one can help me,
I run here and there.

Take it out, I beg you,

O fairest one, help me.

When I think to give my eyes over to sleep,
it comes to sting, itch and bite me,
and prevent me from sleeping.

I am helped by an old enchantress
who cures everyone and everything,
but does not know how to cure me.

I know well that this evil can be cured.
I beg you to see me favourably
and soften your cruelty.

I've often rummaged around in my ear
But neither by love or skill
Can I discover how to remove it.

Sweet Suffolk owl Thomas Vautor

Sweet Suffolk owl, so trimly dight
With feathers, like a lady bright;
Thou sing'st alone, sitting by night,
'Te whit! Te whoo!'

Thy note that forth so freely rolls
With shrill command the mouse controls;
And sings a dirge for dying souls.
'Te whit! Te whoo!'



The silver swan Orlando Gibbins

The silver swan, who, living, had no note,
when death approached, unlocked her silent throat.

Leaning her breast upon the reedy shore,
thus sang her first and last, and sang no more:

"Farewell, all joys! O death, come close mine eyes!

More geese than swans now live, more fools than wise".

Sweet honey-sucking bees John Wilbye

Sweet honey-sucking bees, why do you still
surfeit on roses, pinks and violets,
as if the choicest nectar lay in them
wherewith you store your curious cabinets?
Ah, make your flight to Melisuavia's lips.

There may you revel in ambrosian cheer,
where smiling roses and sweet lilies sit,
Keeping their springtide graces all the year.

Yet, sweet, take heed,
all sweets are hard to get:



Sting not her soft lips, O, beware of that,
for if one flaming dart come from her eye,
was never dart so sharp, ah, then you die.



La biche (no. 1 from Six Chansons) Paul Hindemith

O la biche; quel bel intérieur
d'anciennes forêts dans tes yeux abonde;
combien de confiance ronde
mêlée à combien de peur.
Tout cela, porté par la vive
gracilité de tes bonds.
Mais jamais rien n'arrive
à cette impossible
ignorance de ton front.

O doe, what lovely ancient forest
depths abound in your eyes;
how much open trust
mixed with how much fear.
All this, borne by the brisk
gracility of your bounds.
But nothing ever disturbs
that unpossessive
unawareness of your brow.

Un cygne (no. 2 from Six Chansons)

Un cygne avance sur l'eau
tout entouré de lui-même
comme un glissant tableau;
ainsi à certains instants
un être que l'on aime
est tout un espace mouvant.
Il se rapproche doublé
comme ce cygne qui nage
sur notre âme troublée ...
qui à cet être ajoute
la tremblante image
de bonheur et de doute.

A swan advances over the water
all wrapped up in itself
like a gliding tableau.
Thus at certain moments
a being that one loves
seems just like a moving space.
He draws near, doubled
like that swan who swims
across our troubled soul,
who adds to this being
the trembling image
of happiness and of doubt.

Trois beaux oiseaux du paradis Maurice Ravel
(no. 2 from **Trois Chansons op. 69**)

Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis,
(Mon ami z'il est à la guerre)
Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis
Ont passé par ici.

Three lovely birds from Paradise
(My belov'd is to the fighting gone)
Three lovely birds from Paradise
Have flown along this way.

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.

The first was bluer than Heaven's blue
(My belov'd is to the fighting gone)
The second white as the fallen snow
The third was wrapt in bright red glow.

"Beaux oiselets du Paradis,
(Mon ami z'il est à la guerre)
Beaux oiselets du Paradis,
Qu'apportez par ici?"

"You lovely birds from Paradise
(My belov'd is to the fighting gone)
You lovely birds from Paradise
What bring you then this way?"

"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"

"I bring to you a glance of azure
(Your belov'd is to the fighting gone)"
"And I on fairest snow white brow
A fond kiss must leave, yet purer still."

"Oiseau vermeil du Paradis,
(Mon ami z'il est à la guerre)
Oiseau vermeil du Paradis,
Que portez-vous ainsi?"

"You bright red bird from Paradise
(My belov'd is to the fighting gone)
You bright red bird from Paradise
What bringest you to me?"

"Un joli cœur tout cramoisi ...
(Ton ami z'il est à la guerre)"
"Ah! je sens mon cœur qui froidit ...
Emportez-le aussi".

"A faithful heart all crimson red,
(Your belov'd is to the fighting gone)"
"Ah! I feel my heart glowing cold...
Take it also with you."

Owls Edward Elgar

What is that? ... Nothing;
The leaves must fall, and falling, rustle;
That is all: They are dead as they fall, -
Dead at the foot of the tree;
All that can be is said.
What is it? ... Nothing.



What is that? ... Nothing;
A wild thing hurt but mourns in the night,
And it cries in its dread, till it lies
Dead at the foot of the tree;
All that can be is said.
What is it? ... Nothing.

What is that? ... Ah!
A marching slow of unseen feet,
That is all: But a bier, spread with a pall,
Is now at the foot of the tree;
All that could be is said.
Is it ... what? ... Nothing.

The Bluebird Charles Villiers Stanford

The lake lay blue below the hill.
O'er it, as I looked, there flew
Across the waters, cold and still,
A bird whose wings were palest blue.

The sky above was blue at last,
The sky beneath me blue in blue.
A moment, ere the bird had passed,
It caught his image as he flew.
The lake lay blue below the hill.





**COLCHESTER
CHAMBER CHOIR**

Director Roderick Earle

In Paradisum

Durufié / **Requiem**

Charpentier / Poulenc / Messiaen

**St Edmundsbury Cathedral
Sunday 13 November 7pm**

tickets on sale from September at www.colchesterchamberchoir.org
email info@colchesterchamberchoir.org / 01206 820813
registered charity: 1149515

We would like to thank our patrons for their
generosity in supporting our choir.

David Jewell
Jill and Peter Newton
Linda and David Salmon

a message from the sponsors of this recital

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO JANE

from your very own Beasts

Maude, Flo, Bertie, David, Lucy, Emma,
Alice, Eileen, Phoebe, and Ella



If you would like to find out how to support us
by becoming a patron or sponsor please email
info@colchesterchamberchoir.org



For more information please visit our website
www.colchesterchamberchoir.org
registered charity number: 1149515

