

# MEDIA VITA

a concert of English choral masterpieces

| Iken Scholars  
| *Matthew Dunn*

Friday 5 April

7.30pm

St Mary-le-Bow

L O N D O N

## THANK YOU

The *Iken Scholars* would like to thank St Mary-le-Bow for allowing us to sing in this wonderful church.

It is always a great pleasure to perform here.

## WHY IKEN SCHOLARS?

Iken is a small village in Suffolk where St Botolph was granted land to build a monastery in the mid-seventh century.

Matthew was Organist and Director of Music at St Botolph without Aldgate when he first came to London.

## KEEP IN TOUCH

There are lots of ways to keep in touch with the *Iken Scholars*

*Website:* [www.ikenscholars.co.uk](http://www.ikenscholars.co.uk)

*Facebook:* [www.facebook.com/ikenscholars](http://www.facebook.com/ikenscholars)

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# MEDIA VITA

## PROGRAMME

Lord's Prayer

*John Sheppard (c.1515-1558)*

Media Vita

*Sheppard*

*Interval*

Magnificat

*Robert White (c.1538-1574)*

Seven songs of Robert Bridges

*Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)*

*I praise the tender flower  
I have loved flowers that fade  
My spirit sang all day  
Clear and gentle stream  
Nightingales  
Haste on, my joys!  
Wherefore tonight so full of care*

## PROGRAMME NOTES

Im wunderschönen Monat Mai, als alle Knospen sprangen, da ist in meinem Herzen die Liebe aufgegangen.	<i>In the wonderfully fair month of May, as all the flower-buds burst, then in my heart love bloomed.</i>
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So begins Heinrich Heine's 1822 poem, which famously became the first of a cycle of sixteen-poems set by Robert Schumann in 1840: *Dichterliebe*. It is a rather beautiful, optimistic and sunny exposition, but in Schumann's hands something else is at play. Charles Rosen, in his fabulous book *The Romantic Generation*, spends quite some time in the company of this song; exploring the complex relationship between voice and piano, melody and accompaniment, dissonance and harmony. I shan't bore you with all the

details here (but I do recommend the book to music buff and enthusiast alike!), except for one.

Rosen explores at length how the music creeps out of nowhere on an unstable chord, searches repeatedly for a sense of tonal stability and finds none, and instead returns again and again to the same dissonant chord before ending as inconclusively as it began. In doing this, Rosen argues, Schumann creates a cyclical structure that doesn't have to end when the last notes fade away, nor, for that matter, are we certain that anything really begins with the piano's first tentative entry. Instead the persona's *Verlangen* (longing) stretches out in both directions and hints at a potential infinity quite unrestricted by time and place, and that we come and go merely in the middle of things, *in media res*.

Now, you may be worried that you have come to the wrong concert, or that I have printed the wrong programme notes. You have not and I have not: Schumann is not on the menu tonight. His idea, however, is an interesting one and *that* is at the heart of tonight's programme: because tonight we are all about beginnings and endings, both in history and in music, at two pivotal moments in this nation's musical heritage.

\* \* \*

Here are three interesting dates from the mid-sixteenth century: 28 January 1547, 30 September 1553 and 15 January 1559. They are all coronation dates for some of the most contrasted and divisive monarchs England has ever been led by: Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I. The first part of our programme tonight (the two pieces of the first half and the first of the second) traces the changing flavours of religious upheaval these monarchs oversaw and their impact on the musical life of this nation.

John Sheppard (c.1515-1558) saw much of this upheaval at close quarters. Born under Edward VI's father, Henry VIII, he came to prominence first as *informator choristarum* (teacher of the choristers) at Magdalene College, Oxford and then later as a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal. There are some who argue that Sheppard began his musical education as a chorister next door at St Paul's, but I have not seen any evidence to support this.

Significantly, Sheppard's time in the Chapel Royal (c.1547-1558) is likely to have compassed most, if not all, of Edward's reign. The music he therefore began to compose in these years adhered closely to the new and distinctly Protestant flavour of works that Edward oversaw (influenced greatly by reforming instincts of Thomas Cranmer and the Duke of Northumberland): a flavour that was far more pronounced than anything Henry had instigated in his reign. Henry was, after all, a Catholic at heart: for all the tumultuous reforming spirit he initiated, he died clutching his rosary beads, having ordered a mass to be said daily until the end of world for the salvation of his soul.

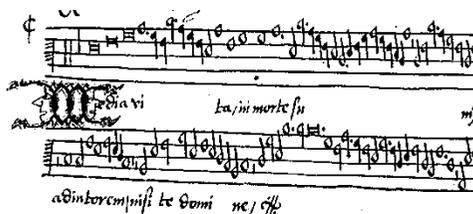
It is in the turbulent melee of the Chapel Royal under Edward that we begin our concert tonight. Sheppard's *Lord's Prayer* is a beautiful example of his early mature style. By way of comparison to the *Media Vita* to come, it is worth noting the choir are singing in English; that the text proceeds with clarity and without much repetition; and that there is a clear sense of the music being led by the upper voice and supported below (which further aids the clarity). Listen out in particular for the beautiful ascending scale in the tenor at 'forever more', which provides the structural high point of the piece.

If Edward pushed England further down the Protestant path than it had ever been before or since, Mary was determined to reverse this when she came to the throne after the early death of her younger half-brother in 1553 aged 15. Mary was the only surviving child of Catherine of Aragon: the fiercely Catholic first wife of Henry VIII of over twenty years, who had previously been married to Henry's older brother, Prince Arthur. It was this earlier marriage that led Henry VIII (after meditating on the prescription not to marry your brother's wife in Leviticus) to seek a divorce from Catherine, which ultimately led to England's split from Rome.

Catherine's Catholicism lived on through her daughter and on ascending the throne Mary quickly moved to reinstate the Sarum Rite to English liturgy, quashing resistance with such gruesome force that she earned the un-loving nickname of 'Bloody Mary' within her lifetime.

This shift had a remarkable impact on the musical outputs in England: an impact that arguably reaches its highest expression in Sheppard's gargantuan antiphon *Media Vita*.

*Media Vita* is the antiphon sung at compline before the Nunc Dimittis in the third week of Lent in the Sarum Rite. Indeed, tonight's performance incorporates a plainsong Nunc Dimittis at its heart. What has changed, however, is that the antiphon which might once have taken a moment or two to recite, here takes on huge proportions and this changes our understanding and response to the music, as well as the amount of time we spend listening to it.



Opening of *Media Vita* in the Mean voice of the Baldwin Partbooks (Oxford Christchurch)

This brings me back to Schumann and his eternally cyclical structure: because in the same way Schumann generates a sense of eternity through repeating motifs that never find rest, so Sheppard sets music that flies back and forth through the choir's copies (and the original manuscript), so much so that it is hard to be certain when the musical structure has worked out all of its permutations. Similarly, the music arrives, as if out of nowhere, with a single voice presenting an ancient chant which persists throughout the piece in the midst of the dense texture.

This music does not have word painting in it: it is the wrong thing to look for. Instead it presents us with a mediation on the text at a level once removed: it is a plea from beginning to end for mercy and comfort from a God who is at once intimately present and eternally distant.

With the *Magnificat* of Robert White (c.1538-1574) we move beyond the upheaval and, perhaps, the excesses of Mary's reign. Sheppard died within a month of Mary and a new generation of composers came to the fore in England. Elizabeth sought a *via media* between the extreme of her two siblings and this ushered in a period of relative calm and stability: Catholics were tolerated within limits, but the Church of England was the new religion in town.

There are famous examples of Catholic musicians who rose to great eminence in their lifetimes under Elizabeth, William Byrd and Thomas

Tallis perhaps being the most obvious, but Robert White should be included in this list as well. A local lad (born and brought up in Holborn a few minutes away), after Cambridge he took positions in Ely, Chester and eventually became organist at Westminster Abbey. This would be an impressive CV for anyone and all the more so when his untimely death at the age of 36 is taken into consideration.

Some of his music is now fragmentary or lost, but enough remains to establish him in the first order of composers of his generation. Amongst them are some beautiful Lamentation settings and tonight's *Magnificat*.

White harks back to a compositional style that had almost gone in this piece. It proceeds as a series of alternating sections of chant and polyphony, some of which are highly virtuosic and reminiscent of the style of John Taverner. Listen out in particular for the grandiose opening building from three voices to a full six-part texture; the interplay between the individual voices (perhaps most exciting displayed in the trio 'et semini eius' for the lower voices) and the eerie 'sicut erat in principio' towards the end.

Gerald Finzi's (1901-1956) ***Seven Songs of Robert Bridges*** leave the religious upheavals of the sixteenth century long behind. His music, instead, has come to represent for many another high-point of the vernacular English sound: this time of the twentieth century.

Finzi's early life was tainted with tragedy when he lost his father at the age of eight and then all three of his older brothers and his music teacher in the First World War (he himself could not fight because of his age). These early family tragedies had a profound effect on Finzi's compositional output that some have attributed his melancholic tone to. The *Seven Songs* are a good example of this; written on the eve of the Second World War, the settings of these poems yearn nostalgically for an England that perhaps never existed.

MJD

TEXT AND TRANSLATIONS

**Lord's Prayer, Sheppard**

Our Father, which art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done,  
in earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive them that trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power, and the glory,  
for evermore.  
Always so be it.

**Media Vita, Sheppard**

Media vita in morte sumus  
Quem quaerimus adiutorem nisi te,  
Domine  
Qui pro peccatis nostris  
juste irasceris?  
Sancte Deus,  
Sancte fortis,  
Sancte et misericors Salvator,  
Amaræ morti  
ne tradas nos.

Nunc dimittis servum tuum,  
Domine, secundum verbum tuum  
in pace:  
Quia viderunt oculi mei  
salutare tuum  
Quod parasti  
ante faciem omnium populorum:  
Lumen ad revelationem gentium,  
et gloriam  
plebis tue Israel.

In the midst of life we be in death:  
Of whom may we seek for succour,  
but of Thee, O Lord  
which for our sins  
justly art moved?  
Yet, O Lord God most holy,  
O Lord most mighty,  
O holy and most merciful Saviour,  
Deliver us not into the bitter pains  
of eternal death.

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant  
depart in peace:  
according to thy word.  
For mine eyes have seen:  
thy salvation,  
Which thou hast prepared:  
before the face of all people;  
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles:  
and to be the glory  
of thy people Israel.

Gloria Patri, et Filio,  
et Spiritui Sancto:  
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc,  
et semper, et in sæcula sæculorum.  
Amen.

Ne projicias nos in tempore senectutis  
cum defecerit virtus nostra ne  
derelinquas nos Domine.  
Sancte Deus,  
Sancte fortis,  
Sancte et misericors Salvator,  
Amaræ morti  
ne tradas nos.

Noli claudere aures tuas  
ad preces nostras.  
Sancte fortis,  
Sancte et misericors Salvator,  
Amaræ morti  
ne tradas nos.

**Magnificat, *White***

Magnificat, anima mea, Dominum  
et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo,  
salutari meo.  
Quia respexit humilitatem  
ancillæ suæ:  
ecce enim ex hoc  
beatam me dicent omnes generationes.  
Quia fecit mihi magna,  
qui potens est:  
et sanctum nomen eius,  
et misericordia eius  
a progenie in progenies  
timentibus eum.  
Fecit potentiam in brachio suo,  
dispersit superbos  
mente cordis sui.  
Deposuit potentes  
de sede  
et exaltavit humiles;

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son:  
and to the Holy Ghost;  
As it was in the beginning, is now,  
and ever shall be: world without end.  
Amen.

Do not cast us away in our old age;  
When our strength fails us do not  
abandon us O Lord.  
O Lord God most holy,  
O Lord most mighty,  
O holy and most merciful Saviour,  
deliver us not into the bitter pains  
of eternal death.

Thou knowest, Lord,  
the secrets of our hearts  
O Lord most mighty,  
O holy and most merciful Saviour,  
deliver us not into the bitter pains  
of eternal death.

My soul doth magnify the Lord  
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God,  
my Saviour.  
For he hath regarded the humility of  
his handmaid:  
for behold from henceforth  
all generations shall call me blessed.  
For he that is mighty  
hath done great things to me:  
and holy is his name.  
And his mercy is from generation  
unto generations,  
to them that fear him.  
He hath shewed might in his arm:  
he hath scattered the proud  
in the conceit of their heart.  
He hath put down the mighty from  
their seat  
and hath exalted the humble.

esurientes implevit bonis  
et divites dimisit  
inanes.  
Suscepit Israel puerum suum  
recordatus misericordiæ suæ,  
sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,  
Abraham et semini eius in sæcula.

Gloria Patri, et Filio,  
et Spiritui Sancto:  
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc,  
et semper,  
et in sæcula sæculorum.  
Amen.

He hath filled the hungry with good  
things: and the rich he hath sent  
empty away.  
He hath received Israel his servant,  
being mindful of his mercy.  
As he spoke to our fathers:  
to Abraham and to his seed for ever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Ghost.  
As it was in the beginning, is now,  
and ever shall be,  
world without end.  
Amen

**Seven songs by Robert Bridges, *Finzi***

**1. I praise the tender flower,**

I praise the tender flower,  
That on a mournful day  
Bloomed in my garden bower  
And made the winter gay.  
Its loveliness contented  
My heart tormented.  
I praise the gentle maid  
Whose happy voice and smile  
To confidence betrayed  
My doleful heart awhile;  
And gave my spirit deploring  
Fresh wings for soaring.  
The maid for very fear  
Of love I durst not tell:  
The rose could never hear,  
Though I bespake her well:  
So in my song I bind them  
For all to find them.

I have loved flowers that fade,  
Within whose magic tents  
Rich hues have marriage made  
With sweet unmemoried scents:  
A honeymoon delight,  
A joy of love at sight,

That ages in an hour  
My song be like a flower!

**2. I have loved airs that die**

I have loved airs that die  
Before their charm is writ  
Along a liquid sky  
Trembling to welcome it.  
Notes, that with pulse of fire  
Proclaim the spirit's desire,  
Then die, and are nowhere  
My song be like an air!

Die, song, die like a breath,  
And wither as a bloom;  
Fear not a flowery death,  
Dread not an airy tomb!  
Fly with delight, fly hence!  
'Twas thine love's tender sense  
To feast; now on thy bier  
Beauty shall shed a tear.

**3. My spirit sang all day**

My spirit sang all day  
O my joy.  
Nothing my tongue could say,  
Only My joy!  
My heart an echo caught  
O my joy  
And spake,  
Tell me thy thought,  
Hide not thy joy.  
My eyes gan peer around,  
O my joy  
What beauty hast thou found?  
Shew us thy joy.  
My jealous ears grew whist;  
O my joy  
Music from heaven is't,  
Sent for our joy?  
She also came and heard;  
O my joy,  
What, said she, is this word?

What is thy joy?  
And I replied,  
O see, O my joy,  
'Tis thee, I cried, 'tis thee:  
Thou art my joy.

#### **4. Clear and gentle stream!**

Clear and gentle stream!  
Known and loved so long,  
That hast heard the song  
And the idle dream  
Of my boyish day;  
While I once again  
Down thy margin stray,  
In the selfsame strain  
Still my voice is spent,  
With my old lament  
And my idle dream,  
Clear and gentle stream!

Where my old seat was  
Here again I sit,  
Where the long boughs knit  
Over stream and grass  
A translucent eaves:  
Where back eddies play  
Shipwreck with the leaves,  
And the proud swans stray,  
Sailing one by one  
Out of stream and sun,  
And the fish lie cool  
In their chosen pool.

Many an afternoon  
Of the summer day  
Dreaming here I lay;  
And I know how soon,  
Idly at its hour,  
First the deep bell hums  
From the minster tower,  
And then evening comes,  
Creeping up the glade,  
With her lengthening shade,

And the tardy boon  
Of her brightening moon.

Clear and gentle stream!  
Ere again I go  
Where thou dost not flow,  
Well does it beseem  
Thee to hear again  
Once my youthful song,  
That familiar strain  
Silent now so long:  
Be as I content  
With my old lament  
And my idle dream,  
Clear and gentle stream.

**5. Beautiful must be the mountains whence ye come,**  
Beautiful must be the mountains whence ye come,  
And bright in the fruitful valleys the streams, wherefrom  
Ye learn your song:  
Where are those starry woods? O might I wander there,  
Among the flowers, which in that heavenly air  
Bloom the year long!

Nay, barren are those mountains and spent the streams:  
Our song is the voice of desire, that haunts our dreams,  
A throe of the heart,  
Whose pining visions dim, forbidden hopes profound,  
No dying cadence nor long sigh can sound,  
For all our art.

Alone, aloud in the raptured ear of men  
We pour our dark nocturnal secret; and then,  
As night is withdrawn  
From these sweet-springing meads and bursting boughs of May,  
Dream, while the innumerable choir of day  
Welcome the dawn.

**6. Haste on, my joys! your treasure lies**  
Haste on, my joys! your treasure lies  
In swift, unceasing flight.  
O haste: for while your beauty flies  
I seize your full delight.

Lo! I have seen the scented flower,  
Whose tender stems I cull,  
For her brief date and meted hour  
Appear more beautiful.

O youth, O strength, O most divine  
For that so short ye prove;  
Were but your rare gifts longer mine,  
Ye scarce would win my love.

Nay, life itself the heart would spurn,  
Did once the days restore  
The days, that once enjoyed return,  
Return, ah! nevermore.

**7. Wherefore to-night so full of care,**  
Wherefore to-night so full of care,  
My soul, revolving hopeless strife,  
Pointing at hindrance, and the bare  
Painful escapes of fitful life?  
Shaping the doom that may befall  
By precedent of terror past:  
By love dishonoured, and the call  
Of friendship slighted at the last?  
By treasured names, the little store  
That memory out of wreck could save  
Of loving hearts, that gone before  
Call their old comrade to the grave?  
O soul, be patient: thou shalt find  
A little matter mend all this;  
Some strain of music to thy mind,  
Some praise for skill not spent amiss.  
Again shall pleasure overflow  
Thy cup with sweetness, thou shalt taste  
Nothing but sweetness, and shalt grow  
Half sad for sweetness run to waste.  
O happy life! I hear thee sing,  
O rare delight of mortal stuff!  
I praise my days for all they bring,  
Yet are they only not enough.

Iken Scholars  
*Matthew Dunn*

*Director*  
Matthew Dunn

*Sopranos*

Jenny Forsyth  
Sophie Cleobury  
Katharina Dunn  
Nerissa Taysom

*Altos*

Jess Daggers  
Jessica Ballantine  
Anoushka Kenley

*Tenors*

Andrew Balls  
John Robb  
William Wallis  
David Thomson

*Basses*

Chris Jeanes  
Joachim Sabbath  
Maxime Rischard

## UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

6 April, 5.00pm	Choral Evensong <i>St Paul's Cathedral</i> <i>Music by White, Palestrina and Tomkins</i>
17 April, 7.30pm	Sung Mass <i>Holy Redeemer, Exmouth Market</i>
26 May, 2pm	Music of the Spheres <i>Watts Gallery, Guildford</i> <i>Music inspired by the moon and stars</i>
17-24 August	An Italian tour <i>Details to be confirmed, but keep an eye on our website and you can join us on our summer holidays</i>
27 September, 7.30pm	Music for the Sistine Chapel <i>Location to be confirmed</i> <i>This will be a Brandenburg festival concert</i>
December 2019	Ikens Do Christmas <i>Location to be confirmed</i> <i>A concert of Renaissance and modern music for Advent and Christmas</i>
Early 2020	Sacred and Secular <i>Location to be confirmed</i> <i>The music of Claudio Monteverdi and the Venetian School</i>