


**EDINBURGH
INTERNATIONAL
FESTIVAL**

MEMBERS OF THE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL CHORUS

—

29 Aug 2.30pm

EDINBURGH ACADEMY JUNIOR SCHOOL

The performance lasts approx. 40mins
with no interval.

Please ensure all mobile phones and electronic
devices are turned off or put on silent.

MEMBERS OF THE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL CHORUS

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Instrumental ensemble

Aidan Oliver Conductor

Anon	Sumer is icumen in
Ravenscroft	Three Country Dances in One Round
Bob Chilcott	Tallis Canon
Britten	Old Abram Brown
Errollyn Wallen	Rice and Beans — and Plantains Too!
Abbie Betinis	Be like the bird
Holst	When first we met Evening on the Moselle If 'twere the time of lilies
Richard Crossland	Liverpool Street Station
Pachelbel (arr. Aidan Oliver)	Canon ('Come, o come, my life's delight')

PROGRAMME NOTES

The canon (also known as a round) is one of the simplest but most powerful devices in music, a way of combining a melody against itself, sometimes several times over, to generate richness and complexity from the most elementary starting point. ‘Frère Jacques’ is a simple example, but canons can be far more creative and expressive than that – as the pieces in today’s concert demonstrate.

‘Sumer is icumen in’ welcomes the arrival of our current season in one of the very earliest pieces of music we know, from the mid-13th century. About 400 years later, Thomas Ravenscroft combined three 17th-century dance tunes in a single round, even using his bass singers to explain what’s going on. British choral conductor and composer Bob Chilcott made his rich arrangement of Renaissance English composer Thomas Tallis’s famous 1567 hymn tune – usually simply called the ‘Tallis Canon’ – in 2007.

‘Old Abram Brown’ is the last of 12 song settings in Britten’s *Friday Afternoons* from 1935, and generates an extraordinarily complex web of lines against the piece’s inexorable, funereal tread. Errollyn Wallen pays funky tribute to Britten’s earlier canon, while celebrating her favourite food from the country

of her birth, Belize. Contemporary US composer Abbie Betinis sets words by Victor Hugo in her 'Be like the bird', whose angular melody only reveals its complexity and beauty when sung in canon against itself.

Holst's 'When we first met' is the fourth of his 1926 *Seven Partsongs*, setting words by then Poet Laureate Robert Bridges. 'Evening on the Moselle' and 'If 'twere the time of lilies' are the final two items in Holst's *Eight Canons* of 1932, cunningly arranged so that each voice sings the same melody in an entirely different key. There's a surprise (or perhaps an aural illusion) in store as the voices build up layers using the same words and melody in British conductor and composer Richard Crossland's witty 'Liverpool Street Station'. The concert closes with the resplendent choral arrangement of Pachelbel's famous instrumental Canon by today's conductor (and Chorus Director of the Edinburgh Festival Chorus), Aidan Oliver, given new words by Thomas Champion.

David Kettle

David Kettle is a music and arts writer based in Edinburgh, who contributes regularly to the *Scotsman* and the *Daily Telegraph*. He has also written for publications including *BBC Music Magazine*, *The Times*, *The Strad* and *Classical Music*, and for organisations including the BBC Proms, Glyndebourne and Scottish Opera.

EDINBURGH FESTIVAL CHORUS

The Edinburgh Festival Chorus has been at the heart of the Edinburgh International Festival since its foundation in 1965, when it opened the 19th Festival with the Scottish premiere of Mahler's Symphony No 8. Since then the Chorus has worked with many of the world's leading orchestras and conductors in the great symphonic and oratorio repertoire, while also taking part in premieres of specially commissioned works in recent years. At the 2015 Festival, the Chorus celebrated its first 50 years by taking part in a spectacular outdoor project based on John Adams's *Harmonium*, while its appearances in the 2019 Festival included MacMillan's *Quickening* with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Edward Gardner, Mahler's Second Symphony with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Gustavo Dudamel, Elgar's *The Kingdom* with the Hallé and Martyn Brabbins, and Britten's *War Requiem* with the Orchestre de Paris and Daniel Harding. Frequently performing with Scotland's leading orchestras, the Chorus forms an integral and iconic part of Scotland's contribution to the Edinburgh International Festival.

Its occasional appearances outside the Festival have included performances in Glasgow, at the BBC Proms in London, and further afield across Europe.

AIDAN OLIVER

Aidan Oliver has been the Chorus Director of the Edinburgh Festival Chorus since September 2018. Oliver is also the Chorus Director at Glyndebourne. The Glyndebourne Chorus is one of the pre-eminent choruses in international opera and has long been regarded as one of the foremost training grounds for the next generation of opera stars. He is also the founding director of Philharmonia Voices, the renowned professional chorus that collaborates with the Philharmonia Orchestra on many of its most ambitious choral projects. His previous positions include Director of Music at St Margaret's Westminster (the Parliamentary Church) and Associate Conductor of the St Endellion Festival. Oliver has worked extensively on the music staff of the Royal Opera and English National Opera and as guest chorus director of groups including the BBC Symphony Chorus, BBC Singers, Huddersfield Choral Society and RIAS Kammerchor of Berlin.

AUDIENCE SURVEY

We are delighted to welcome audiences back to live performances. The past year has been one of the most challenging in the International Festival's history, so your feedback is more important to us than ever. Anyone who completes the survey will be entered into a prize draw for a chance to win £200 in vouchers of your choice.

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