



Portishead Choral Society

Conductor: Jonathan Palmer

Richard Lennox (Piano)

Alexander Robinson (Tenor)

SUMMER CONCERT

BRITISH MUSIC FOR A SUMMER'S EVENING

including a celebration of the
Coronation of King Charles III

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor: 'Hiawatha's Wedding Feast'

Handel: Coronation Anthem 'The King Shall Rejoice'

English songs for tenor voice

Gordano School, Portishead, BS20 7QR

Saturday 10 June 2023 at 7.30

To contact us via the website:

www.portisheadchoral.co.uk/contact



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music**

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PROGRAMME

Hiawatha's Wedding Feast

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor



Samuel Coleridge-Taylor wrote his epic choral work *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* in 1898. He was born in London in 1875 and lived in Croydon for most of his life. An English Heritage blue plaque marks his residence at 30 Dagnall Park, South Norwood (he was the first black recipient of a plaque). He died at his home in St Leonard's Road in 1912. *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* was the stand-out composition of Coleridge-Taylor's career. He drew on African and North-American influences and the work was widely performed in both Britain and the United States. However, in dire financial need, he sold his copyright for 15 guineas, and was near-penniless when he died.

The work has a fascinating history during the first part of the 20th century. During the years 1924-1939, Thomas Fairbairn, a producer of operatic spectacles was requested to stage Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's 'Hiawatha'. The spectacular staging featured a real waterfall, a 10,000 sq. ft. backcloth, a snow storm, a ballet, hundreds of 'Native Americans' and a medicine man played by a genuine Mohawk called Chief Os-Ke-Non-Ton. Members of the Royal Choral Society made their own costumes, and because of their number were forced to change in tents supplied in Hyde Park. For a fortnight each year from 1924 until 1939 *Hiawatha* performed by the RCS proved a sell-out. For a time, *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* was better known by the public than *Messiah*! The last big production of *Hiawatha* was in 1953, as part of the coronation celebrations of Queen Elizabeth II.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807 – 1882) was an American poet and educator. He wrote many lyric poems known for their musicality and often presenting stories of mythology and legend, classic epics from American historical events and materials – Native American oral history. He became the most popular American poet of his day and had success overseas, but was sometimes criticized for imitating European styles and writing poetry that was too sentimental. He reminded Americans of their roots and in the process became an American icon himself.

While *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* might seem somewhat old-fashioned by today's standards, it should be viewed as a product of its time when it was popular with all choral societies. The music is really well-written for the voice with all sections of the choir being equally important, and the musical language is firmly British, with occasional Elgarian traits. There are also highly memorable melodies that linger – surely a praiseworthy quality?

Hiawatha's Wedding-Feast - Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)

You shall hear how Pau-Puk-Keewis,
How the handsome Yenadizze
Danced at Hiawatha's wedding;
How the gentle Chibiabos,
He the sweetest of musicians,
Sang his songs of love and longing;
How Iagoo, the great boaster,
He the marvellous story-teller,
Told his tales of strange adventure,
That the feast might be more joyous,
That the time might pass more gayly,
And the guests be more contented.

Sumptuous was the feast Nokomis
Made at Hiawatha's wedding;
All the bowls were made of bass-wood,
White and polished very smoothly,
All the spoons of horn of bison,
Black and polished very smoothly.

She had sent through all the village
Messengers with wands of willow,
As a sign of invitation,
As a token of the feasting;
And the wedding guests assembled,
Clad in all their richest raiment,

Robes of fur and belts of wampum,
Splendid with their paint and plumage,
Beautiful with beads and tassels.

First they ate the sturgeon, Nahma,
And the pike, the Maskenozha,
Caught and cooked by old Nokomis;
Then on pemican they feasted,
Pemican and buffalo marrow,
Haunch of deer and hump of bison,
Yellow cakes of the Mondamin,
And the wild rice of the river.

But the gracious Hiawatha,
And the lovely Laughing Water,
And the careful old Nokomis,
Tasted not the food before them,
Only waited on the others
Only served their guests in silence.

And when all the guests had finished,
Old Nokomis, brisk and busy,
From an ample pouch of otter,
Filled the red-stone pipes for smoking
With tobacco from the South-land,
Mixed with bark of the red willow,
And with herbs and leaves of fragrance.

Then she said, "O Pau-Puk-Keewis,
Dance for us your merry dances,
Dance the Beggar's Dance to please us,
That the feast may be more joyous,
That the time may pass more gayly,
And our guests be more contented!"

Then the handsome Pau-Puk-Keewis,
He the idle Yenadizze,
He the merry mischief-maker,
Whom the people called the Storm-Fool,
Rose among the guests assembled.

Skilled was he in sports and pastimes,
In the merry dance of snow-shoes,
In the play of quoits and ball-play;
Skilled was he in games of hazard,
In all games of skill and hazard,
Pugasaing, the Bowl and Counters,
Kuntassoo, the Game of Plum-stones.
Though the warriors called him Faint-Heart,
Called him coward, Shaugodaya,
Idler, gambler, Yenadizze,
Little heeded he their jesting,
Little cared he for their insults,
For the women and the maidens
Loved the handsome Pau-Puk-Keewis.

He was dressed in shirt of doeskin,
White and soft, and fringed with ermine,
All inwrought with beads of wampum;
He was dressed in deer-skin leggings,
Fringed with hedgehog quills and ermine,
And in moccasins of buck-skin,
Thick with quills and beads embroidered.
On his head were plumes of swan's down,

On his heels were tails of foxes,
In one hand a fan of feathers,
And a pipe was in the other.

Barred with streaks of red and yellow,
Streaks of blue and bright vermilion,
Shone the face of Pau-Puk-Keewis.
From his forehead fell his tresses,
Smooth, and parted like a woman's,
Shining bright with oil, and plaited,
Hung with braids of scented grasses,
As among the guests assembled,
To the sound of flutes and singing,
To the sound of drums and voices,
Rose the handsome Pau-Puk-Keewis,
And began his mystic dances.

First he danced a solemn measure,
Very slow in step and gesture,
In and out among the pine-trees,
Through the shadows and the sunshine,
Treading softly like a panther.
Then more swiftly and still swifter,
Whirling, spinning round in circles,
Leaping o'er the guests assembled,
Eddying round and round the wigwam,
Till the leaves went whirling with him,
Till the dust and wind together
Swept in eddies round about him.

Then along the sandy margin
Of the lake, the Big-Sea-Water,
On he sped with frenzied gestures,
Stamped upon the sand, and tossed it
Wildly in the air around him;
Till the wind became a whirlwind,
Till the sand was blown and sifted
Like great snowdrifts o'er the landscape,
Heaping all the shores with Sand Dunes,
Sand Hills of the Nagow Wudjoo!

Thus the merry Pau-Puk-Keewis
Danced his Beggar's Dance to please them,
And, returning, sat down laughing
There among the guests assembled,
Sat and fanned himself serenely
With his fan of turkey-feathers.

Then they said to Chibiabos,
To the friend of Hiawatha,
To the sweetest of all singers,
To the best of all musicians,
"Sing to us, O Chibiabos!
Songs of love and songs of longing,
That the feast may be more joyous,
That the time may pass more gayly,
And our guests be more contented!"

And the gentle Chibiabos
Sang in accents sweet and tender,
Sang in tones of deep emotion,
Songs of love and songs of longing;
Looking still at Hiawatha,

Looking at fair Laughing Water,
Sang he softly, sang in this wise:

"Onaway! Awake, beloved!

Thou the wild-flower of the forest!
Thou the wild-bird of the prairie!
Thou with eyes so soft and fawn-like!

"If thou only lookest at me,
I am happy, I am happy,
As the lilies of the prairie,
When they feel the dew upon them!

"Sweet thy breath is as the fragrance
Of the wild-flowers in the morning,
As their fragrance is at evening,
In the Moon when leaves are falling.

"Does not all the blood within me
Leap to meet thee, leap to meet thee,
As the springs to meet the sunshine,
In the Moon when nights are brightest?

TENOR SOLO

"Onaway! my heart sings to thee,
Sings with joy when thou art near me,
As the sighing, singing branches
In the pleasant Moon of Strawberries!

"When thou art not pleased, beloved,
Then my heart is sad and darkened,
As the shining river darkens
When the clouds drop shadows on it!

"When thou smilest, my beloved,
Then my troubled heart is brightened,
As in sunshine gleam the ripples
That the cold wind makes in rivers.

"Smiles the earth, and smile the waters,
Smile the cloudless skies above us,
But I lose the way of smiling
When thou art no longer near me!

"I myself, myself! behold me!
Blood of my beating heart, behold me!
Oh awake, awake, beloved!
Onaway! awake, beloved!"

CHORUS

Thus the gentle Chibiabos
Sang his song of love and longing;
And lagoo, the great boaster,
He the marvellous story-teller,
He the friend of old Nokomis,
Jealous of the sweet musician,
Jealous of the applause they gave him,
Saw in all the eyes around him,
Saw in all their looks and gestures,
That the wedding guests assembled
Longed to hear his pleasant stories,
His immeasurable falsehoods.

Very boastful was lagoo;
Never heard he an adventure
But himself had met a greater;
Never any deed of daring
But himself had done a bolder;
Never any marvellous story
But himself could tell a stranger.

Would you listen to his boasting,
Would you only give him credence,
No one ever shot an arrow
Half so far and high as he had;
Ever caught so many fishes,
Ever killed so many reindeer,
Ever trapped so many beaver!

None could run so fast as he could,
None could dive so deep as he could,
None could swim so far as he could;
None had made so many journeys,
None had seen so many wonders,
As this wonderful lagoo,
As this marvellous story-teller!
Thus his name became a by-word
And a jest among the people;
And whene'er a boastful hunter
Praised his own address too highly,
Or a warrior, home returning,
Talked too much of his achievements,
All his hearers cried, "lagoo!
Here's lagoo come among us!"

He it was who carved the cradle
Of the little Hiawatha,
Carved its framework out of linden,
Bound it strong with reindeer sinews;
He it was who taught him later
How to make his bows and arrows,
How to make the bows of ash-tree,
And the arrows of the oak-tree.
So among the guests assembled
At my Hiawatha's wedding
Sat lagoo, old and ugly,
Sat the marvellous story-teller.

And they said, "O good lagoo,
Tell us now a tale of wonder,
Tell us of some strange adventure,
That the feast may be more joyous,
That the time may pass more gayly,
And our guests be more contented!"

And lagoo answered straightway,
"You shall hear a tale of wonder,
You shall hear the strange adventures
Of Osseo, the Magician,
From the Evening Star descending".

INTERVAL

Three songs performed by Alex Robinson (tenor)

Silent Noon

Vaughan Williams (1872 – 1958)

This song was written in 1903 and included in the 1904 cycle of six settings of poems by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Among the most effective of his songs, Silent Noon evokes countryside in summer.

Invitation to the Gondola

Ian Venables (1955 -)

This is a setting of a poem by the 19th-century author and poet John Addington Symonds (1840-1893), and is an atmospheric evocation of the magical city of Venice. The six stanzas provided an obvious ternary structure that is sustained by an impressionistic and descriptive harmonic language.

Since she whom I loved

Benjamin Britten (1913 - 1976)

The Holy Sonnets of John Donne dates from 1945 when Britten had returned from his self-imposed American exile. Donne had risked his life and soul for the love of Anne More; this dark sonnet is a product of his grief at her death. Britten's treatment is tender, rich and compassionate.

Coronation Anthem

George Frideric Handel (1685 - 1759)

'The King Shall Rejoice'

Although part of the traditional content of British coronations, the texts for all four Coronation anthems were picked by Handel—a personal selection from the most accessible account of an earlier coronation, that of James II of England in 1685. Right from their first appearance, the four anthems have been popular and regularly played on state occasions, and in concerts and festivals ever since.

The King Shall Rejoice is thought to have been composed between 9 September 1727 and 11 October 1727. Taking a text from Psalm 21 (verses 1–3, 5), Handel splits this work into separate sections. The first movement is in D major, on the king's joy in God's power. It starts with a long introduction and is full of festive pomp and fanfares. The second is in A major in a gentle triple tempo. The short third movement begins with a radiant D major chord, a brief outburst of triumph with a harmonic surprise, telling of the king's coronation. This leads to No 4, a fugue in B minor where all the vocal lines share the main melody in turn. The final movement is an exuberant D major double fugue with lots of repetitions of 'Allelujah' symbolising the precise moment the king was crowned.

1. Chorus: 'The King shall rejoice'
2. Chorus: 'Exceeding glad shall he be'
3. Chorus: 'Glory and great worship'
4. Chorus: 'Thou has prevented him'
5. Chorus: 'Allelujah'

Performance 1 (Choir only)

Short rehearsal

Performance 2 (Full, with optional audience!)

This is a perfect opportunity to find out what it's like singing in a choir. Extra music copies are available; take one before the first performance by the choir and follow the music. Try some of it out during the short rehearsal and then join in with the second performance! It really is fun....

Jonathan Palmer (Conductor)



After a distinguished teaching career in a variety of schools, Jonathan decided to retire in 2007 in order to concentrate on his composition, and for eight years was a part-time research student at the University of Bristol. In August 2010 he was awarded the Raymond Warren Prize for Composition. Having studied under Professor Geoff Poole and Professor John Pickard, he completed his PhD in Composition in January 2015, and became a Fellow of Trinity College, London, in Composition.

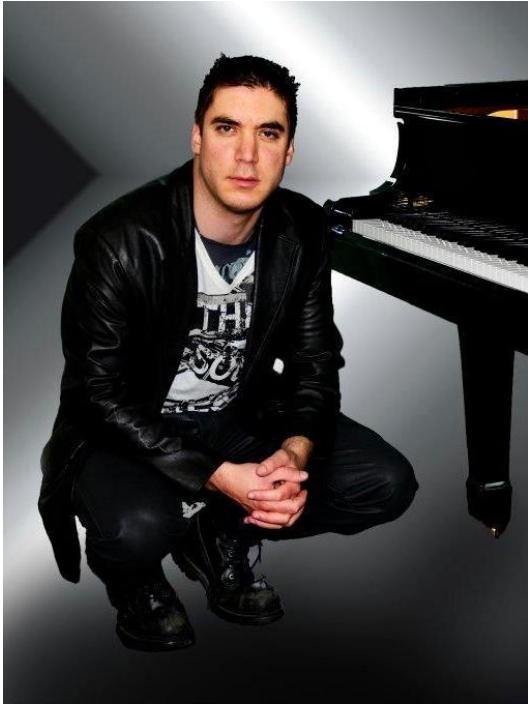
Over the years he has conducted numerous choral societies and orchestras. His choice of repertoire is varied, from Handel, Haydn, Mozart and Schubert to Vaughan Williams, Bernstein, Gershwin, and Rutter. In 1984, he directed performances of Olivier Messiaen's *Trois Petites Liturgies* at Sherborne Abbey and Clifton Cathedral, and in 2007, conducted a large-scale performance of Orff's *Carmina Burana* with massed choirs at the Colston Hall, Bristol.

Jonathan was appointed Musical Director of Portishead Choral Society in September 2013.

During the 2013-14 season, he directed the choir in Handel's *Messiah*, Gounod's *Messe Solennelle de Sainte-Cécile* and Edward German's *Merrie England*. In the spring of 2014, he composed a special new cantata for the choir to coincide with the Diamond Jubilee celebrations. *Awake the Voice*, a thirty minute work in six movements for chorus, soloists, audience and orchestra, received its first performance in Gordano School, Portishead in December 2014. It was subsequently performed again in December 2018 in Clifton Cathedral in a collaborative Christmas-themed concert with Nailsea Choral Society and Chew Valley Choral Society. He enjoys the challenge of devising imaginative programmes for the concerts, and always tries to combine sacred and secular, familiar and the less-known, old and new, while seizing any opportunity for the audience to participate! In June 2019, the finale of the concert 'From Russia with Love' even required the audience to sing in Russian!

In 2009, he was appointed as a Choral Director for 'Choirs at Sea', and for a time, enjoyed numerous voyages on cruise ships forming choirs from the passengers. However, with the pandemic, he withdrew from that activity, and is now a member of a team of visiting speakers. He plays the cello and particularly enjoys playing chamber music. In his spare time he enjoys maintaining his classic cars, instrument restoration, cooking and travelling.

Richard Lennox (Piano)



Richard joined Portishead Choral Society as their accompanist in September 2016 and has played for their rehearsals and concerts over the past six years. He has recently worked with Weston Operatic Society as their Musical Director for '9 To 5 The Musical' at the Playhouse Theatre in Weston Super Mare, and has played in many concerts around the West Country. He played a return online concert with the internationally acclaimed bass/baritone Jonathan Viera 'Live from the Steinway Room', recorded on Sunday 30th October 8pm, and still available to view on YouTube and Facebook.

Richard plays all genres of music, which makes him an exciting professional musician. His other accomplishments include accompanying students for their exams (vocalists and Instrumentalists) at dance schools in Epsom and Cheltenham. Last year he had the privilege of accompanying one of the BBC Singers, Jamie W Hall, performing with Weston Choral Society.

Each year Richard has the pleasure of performing at the Royal Albert Hall - a Christian event 'Prom Praise' with the All Souls Orchestra and Choir, playing on their mighty organ and their Steinway piano. He also accompanies their soloists, including Mike Smith, Graham Kendrick, and Jonathan Viera.

Richard has had several interviews with Radio Bristol, and been invited to play his music; they are excellent in promoting his work. Various CDs have been recorded by Richard, with sincere thanks accorded to Chris Emmerson.

Alexander Robinson (Tenor)



Alex is a recent graduate from the University of Bristol, and currently works at the University's Student Union. His first notable performance was as a treble soloist, when he was cast as Miles in Britten's opera *The Turn of the Screw* in Salzburg. He also recorded the treble solos for a Christmas CD recorded at Abbey Road Studios in 2008, and in the same year also appeared in a music video by Dido!

As a tenor, Alex was a choral scholar for the London Youth Chamber Choir and at Southwark Cathedral, and as a soloist sang with these choirs in venues such as St. Paul's Cathedral, London, and St. Mark's Basilica, Venice. He has recorded CDs with conductors such as Valery Gergiev and the late Sir Charles Mackerras, and was awarded first place in the 2017 Blackheath festival for young singers.

During his tenure at the University, Alex was an active member of the Opera Society, playing the title roles in Handel's *Acis and Galatea* and Bernstein's *Candide*. He also played the role of Toby in BOPS' sell-out production of *Sweeney Todd*, and was cast as Ralph Rackstraw in Gilbert and Sullivan's infamous *HMS Pinafore*. Alex is currently a choral scholar at Clifton Cathedral where he sings every Sunday.

Portishead Choral Society

President: Pamela Rudge, GRSM(Hons), ARCM

Registered Charity No: 1039773

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Future Concerts

Portishead Choral Society - 2nd December 2023 in Portishead Methodist Church

The programme is to be confirmed, but the current plan is to perform *Quattro Pezzi Sacri* (Four Sacred Pieces) by Giuseppe Verdi. These four pieces were written separately during the last decades of the composer's life, when, after his operatic successes, Verdi returned to his beginnings as a church musician. He studied Bach and Palestrina, and these influences appear in the music. There will also be, of course a selection of Christmas music, and carols with our traditional audience participation!

New members are always welcome, with no audition! For more information, please see our website portisheadchoral.co.uk, contact a member, or email contact@portisheadchoral.co.uk. Rehearsals are at Portishead Methodist Church on Thursday evenings at 7.30pm.

Members of the choir are available to sing at weddings, funerals, and other events – please see our website, contact a committee member, or email contact@portisheadchoral.co.uk.

Clevedon Choral Society – for information, please visit www.clevedonchoralsociety.org.uk

Nailsea Choral Society - for information, please visit www.nailseachoral.org.uk

Acknowledgements

The society is affiliated to Making Music, the charity that represents and supports amateur choirs, orchestras, and music promoters throughout the United Kingdom.

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Programme notes by Jonathan Palmer.