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Concert: King's Singers

King's Singers

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ITHACA COLLEGE
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

ITHACA COLLEGE CONCERTS 2005-6

King's Singers

David Hurley, countertenor
Robin Tyson, countertenor
Paul Phoenix, tenor
Philip Lawson, baritone
Christopher Gabbitas, baritone
Stephen Connolly, bass

Ford Hall
Monday, October 24, 2005
8:15 p.m.
Songs from the Auvergne

Là-bas, dans le Limousin
Une gentre bergère
L'eau de source
Le baylère
A la campagne

Traditional
Arranged by S. Von Goff Richards

French chansons

Dessus le marché d'Arras
Les yeux bendez
Il est bel et bon
La guerre

Orlandus Lassus
(1532-1594)
Pierre Vermont
(d. 1532)
Pierre Passereau
(1490-1547)
Clément Janequin
(1485-1558)

Valentines

A lover's journey – Four Valentines

Libby Larsen
(b. 1950)

INTERMISSION

Masterpiece

Masterpiece (1981)
Paul Drayton
(b. 1944)

Arrangements in Close Harmony

Selections from the lighter side of the repertoire

Program is subject to change

Photographic, video, and sound recording and/or transmitting devices are not permitted in the Whalen Center concert halls. Please turn off all cell phone ringtones.
Program Notes

Songs from the Auvergne

The Auvergne is a remote mountainous district in the middle of the Massif Central in France, which the passage of time has left largely untouched. The local people, who live mainly by stock-breeding, as the soil is poor, remain content and happy, as is shown by the rich treasury of folk song which has developed in this region. The character of the people is reflected in the infinite variety of the songs--merry and sad, rhythmic and lyrical, robust and gentle.

La-bas, dans le Limousin (Down there in Limousin)
A comparison of the virtues of the local girls, and prowess of local men with that of their counterparts down in Limousin.

Une gentie bergere (A Sweet Shepherdess)
This is a 'regret,' a sad, slow song that would have been performed on special occasions such as weddings, reunions, festivals, etc. This particular song tells of a lost love.

L'eau de source (Spring water)
"Spring water will kill you, little girl, spring water will kill you! .... you shouldn't drink water, but you should drink wine!" Who will argue?

Le baylere (The Shepherd's song)
This is probably the most familiar of all Auvergnat songs, and became known in the UK through a well known television commercial. It is the song of the shepherds, who, in distinct and plain voices, sing to and answer each other across vast distances.

A la campagne (In the country)
Finally, a melange of two songs in which the praises of country life are sung, "that's the life of poor country urchins, so say the town dwellers that mock us...but we carry on just as we please!"

This collection of regional French songs was commissioned by the Harrogate International Festival for the King's Singers in 1980.

French chansons

The large sixteenth century repertoire of French madrigals, or chansons, by composers from France and the Netherlands (now the countries of Belgium and Holland), treat amorous subjects either in a suave courtly vein or in a popular and often ribald manner. The Gothic tradition of setting strict verse forms in tedious and complex repetitive forms was abandoned by Josquin des Pres (c. 1440-1521), who generally preferred shorter stanzas treated in a simpler style. Josquin's skill in polyphonic writing became a model
for the next generation of composers, which included Clement Janequin (c. 1485-1558), the French master of the anecdotal and onomatopoeic chanson, Pierre Passereau (1409-1547) and the Flemish master Orlandus Lassus (1532-1594).

Orlandus Lassus (also known as Roland de Lassus, Orlando di Lasso, and even "divine Orlande, prince of musicians," depending on what country he was in) was generally acknowledged as the leading composer of his day: he saw more of his output published than did any of his contemporaries; and that output was vast and varied. Lassus was born in Mons, in the county of Hainault and the country which since the 19th century has been called Belgium. The area was famous at the time for its choir schools and its musicians, who through their polyphonic mastery held a position of hegemony in the art music of most of Europe.

Lassus was truly a man of many parts; a talented singer in his youth, a prolific, cosmopolitan composer in his twenties, an extrovert comic actor in his thirties, a keen traveler and amusing polyglot correspondent in his forties and fifties, and an introverted melancholic in his sixties. His works embraced the greatest variety of subject and style within the realm of vocal polyphony, a medium which dominates the surviving art music of the time.

In addition to the French chansons, Lassus' prodigious production, much of it published by his sons ten years after his death in a Magnum opus musicum, includes Latin motets, masses, Magnificats and other liturgical works, Italian madrigals and villanelle, and German lieder. This unusual variety of language is matched by a similar variety of subject-matter and form.

Passereau is best known for his chansons, which comprise the vast majority of his output. A substantial portion of his music was published along with that of his compatriot Janequin, who was famous in his own lifetime for his use of bird-song and other programmatic effects (such as the descriptive cries and noises of the battlefield in La guerre) in his music. Relatively little is known about Janequin's life, but he composed over 250 chansons, two of which he later included in his two Masses, and in his later years he settled in Paris, becoming Compositeur du Roi (composer to the King) and he entered Paris University as a student after the age of 70.

**Valentines**

A Lover's Journey is a set of four pieces which chronicle the extraordinarily commonplace yet supremely elegant story of love and valentining. They are settings of three texts by William Shakespeare and one text by James Joyce, which was published by
William Shakespeare & Company in 1915. When the concert date for the premiere of our new piece was set for February 14 (2001), I began to search for appropriate texts and remembered Ophelia's song from *Hamlet*: "Good morrow! Tis St. Valentine's Day." In reading about the texts' origins, I came upon a curious custom practiced in some parts of Great Britain and Italy, whereby before sunrise on St. Valentine's Day, unmarried women stand by their window, sometimes for hours, watching for a man to pass by. It's said that the first man they see (or more practically someone who looks like him!) will marry them within a year. I decided to play with this theme in *A Lover's Journey*. I created four pieces, beginning with the poem "Simples" by James Joyce. Set in a moonlit garden, the lover is bedazzled by a young woman, his "bella bionda." The lover repeats these words to himself over and over again, silently summoning her. The second, quiet piece, "Good morrow! Tis Saint Valentine's Day," takes place at sunrise. In it the lovers meet and undo each other. The third piece is a brief, insistent rhythmic outcry, setting words from *The Taming of the Shrew*: "Will you, nill you, I will marry you." And finally, "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day" completes the lover's journey.

**Masterpiece**

In response to the challenge of the King’s Singers Composers Competition in 1981, Paul Drayton offered this light-hearted work, *Masterpiece*, which is an affectionate tribute to seven masters of classical composition - hence the title. The text is made up of the names of these composers and of certain words and phrases (mostly Italian, German, and French) associated with their particular styles of music.

First comes a fugue on the name Johann Sebastian Bach, which is slightly disrupted by certain voices attempting to introduce other Bachs - Wilhelm Friedmann, C.P. Emmanuel, etc. Next a majestic flourish of "trumpets and drums" introduces a lively gigue in the manner of Handel, featuring harpsichord effects. The serene Mozartian aria which follows is interrupted by a dramatic section in the style of Beethoven, and this includes a slight disagreement about whether his prefix should be "van" (Dutch) or "von" (German). Mendelssohn, the next victim, is represented by a sentimental "song without words," and this is followed by a conflation of Viennese Waltz cliches in homage to the various Strausses. A mood of Gallic sensuousness prevails in the Debussy section, with vague memories of piano preludes and French lessons. And now names of composers begin to come thick and fast. Apart from an ostentatious intrusion by Wagner, the pace hardly slackens until most major composers (and several minor ones) have
been mentioned ending with "...Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, Stockhausen, Gershwin and Bach again."

**Arrangements in Close Harmony**

*Selections from the Lighter Side of the Repertoire*

The King's Singers like to end their program with such selections, which might consist of anything from arrangements of folk songs and spirituals, to standard evergreens, music from stage & screen, and contemporary pop songs.

**King's Singers**

For over 35 years the King's Singers have been delighting audiences around the world with their incomparable musicianship combined with charm and wit. Founded in 1968 by six Choral Scholars from King's College Cambridge, they quickly became a prominent musical force in the UK. The rest of the world soon followed, so that today the group's engagements are spread throughout the four corners of the globe. Right from the start they specialized in "everything." From medieval music to masterpieces of the Renaissance, from romantic songs to folk, pop and jazz, their repertoire is all-encompassing. Always on the lookout for new pieces the six could sing together, they have, since their debut concert, commissioned works from many well-known composers including Krystof Penderecki, Luciano Berio, John McCabe, Peter Maxwell Davies, Ned Rorem, and Gyorgy Ligeti. This branch of their repertoire now comprises well over 150 pieces.

The list of venues at which they have appeared is equally diverse, including cathedrals and palaces as well as many of the world's major concert halls. They have joined forces with many famous orchestras such as the London Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Concert Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and with chamber ensembles including, recently, the Harp Consort and Tragicomedia. They also team up with distinguished soloists like Kiri te Kanawa, Emanuel Ax, Evelyn Glennie, Dudley Moore, George Shearing, and even Bruce Johnston of the Beach Boys. These collaborations have often resulted in recordings to add to the group's discography of nearly 90 albums.

Renowned for their commitment to blend, balance and intonation in their own performances, they are keen to pass on their knowledge through educational work. They regularly conduct masterclass courses in many countries, and since 1996 have been Prince Consort Ensemble-in-Residence at the Royal College of Music, London.
But above all it is their simple enjoyment of what they do that has captured the imagination of the public all over the world and kept the King's Singers at the top of their game for three and a half decades. As *The Times* put it, they are "still unmatched for their musicality and sheer ability to entertain."

**David Hurley, countertenor**, began his life on a wet August bank holiday Monday in 1962. His next significant day was Saturday, February 7, 1970, when his parents gave him the choice of enjoying a football match at Southampton, or enduring the 'Voice Trials' for Winchester Cathedral Choir. Rather to his surprise now, he chose the 'Voice Trials' and even more surprising - was given a place as a chorister in the choir. At thirteen, he went to Winchester College where, rather later than he would have liked, his voice made the short drop to countertenor. After three years as a choral scholar at New College, Oxford, and armed with a geography degree, he began his career as a freelance singer before joining the King's Singers in 1990. When he is not touring with the group, David tries to spend as much time as possible with his hard-working wife, Sarah. They look forward to having enough time to sail their boat and the completion of the seemingly never-ending renovation of their home.

**Robin Tyson, countertenor**, joined the group in January 2001. He has been singing his whole life, first as a chorister at Canterbury Cathedral, then as a baritone (loose terminology!) for a while before he bit the bullet and became a countertenor at the age of seventeen. But it paid off, as he was offered a choral scholarship to King's College, Cambridge, the spiritual home of the King's Singers! He studied Theology at King's and started singing in the college with an a cappella group, that was occasionally wrongly billed as the King's Singers. This always made Robin's chest swell! Before joining the real King's Singers, he sang all over Europe, America and Asia, first as a choir member of various groups, including his own six-man outfit, the Acappellafellas, and then as a soloist in concerts and opera. Robin and his wife, Christina make their home in London with their twin boys, Henry and Magnus (born June 2005) and dog Rosie. The boys will no doubt be raised to share their parents' passions - cooking, eating and going through the joys and agonies of supporting a second division football club, Reading.

**Paul Phoenix, tenor**, began his musical training aged nine as a chorister at St. Paul's Cathedral, during which time he made several successful recordings, including the Ivor Novello Award winning theme to John Le Carre's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* in 1979. After graduating from the Royal Northern College of Music in 1991, he worked as a freelance singer for six years enjoying a varied existence, from backing Elaine Paige in concert, to coaching
singing, to the boy trebles of Westminster Under School. Paul joined the King's Singers in September 1997 and loves the hectic but rewarding way of life: traveling the world and being privileged enough to sing in some of the finest concert halls, churches and cathedrals around. He is married to Helena and has two sons, William aged eight, a complete soccer fanatic, and Edward aged three, who already spends most of his days singing! Paul's other great passion in life is cars - he is already on his fourth Audi in as many years, and is always easily identified in airport lounges around the world, with his head buried in the latest motoring journal!

Philip Lawson, baritone, had his first experience of singing in the choir of the thousand-year-old church at Worth in Sussex, and before leaving school he became choirmaster there and organist of another local church. Philip studied music at the University of York and sang countertenor in the choir of the city's gigantic Minster. By the time he moved to London, however, he had switched to baritone and spent three years as a freelance singer, working mainly with the BBC Singers (alongside future King's Singers colleague Bob Chilcott) and the choir of St. Paul's Cathedral (behind present King's Singers colleague, chorister Paul Phoenix!). His connections with the King's Singers continued when he joined the choir of Salisbury Cathedral in 1982 where one of the choristers at the time was Simon Carrington's son Jamie and the annual Southern Cathedrals Festival brought him regularly onto the same platform as Winchester Lay Clerk David Hurley! For over ten years, until he took over Simon's job in the King's Singers, Philip was a schoolteacher in Salisbury and ran several choirs and a business selling new and secondhand music. He also built up a catalogue of compositions, which consists mainly of church music, but which also includes jazz arrangements, musicals and now, of course, arrangements for the King's Singers. Philip lives in a village near Salisbury with his wife Lizzie and their three daughters Sophie, Amy and Georgia.

Christopher Gabbitas, baritone, first became aware of the King's Singers as a young boy, when his parents played "A Portrait of the King's Singers" during long journeys in the car, but he never thought he might one day be joining the group! Chris started singing at age 8 at Rochester Cathedral, Kent. After his voice broke, he spent a few years away from singing, before taking up a music scholarship to Uppingham School, with whose choir and orchestra he performed a concert in King's College Chapel, Cambridge (the King's Singers' alma mater). He still remembers feeling a great sense of awe at first performing in this wonderful building. In 1997 Chris gained a choral scholarship to St. John's College, Cambridge, where he read law and slept a great deal, as well as playing cricket and soccer and attending regular curry
tastings. During his time at Cambridge, Chris sang with and occasionally directed "The Gentlemen of St. John's," a close harmony group of St. John's choristers, and (like Robin) sang with "Collegium Regale" – singers from King's College, Cambridge. Since graduating in 2000, Chris attended law school in Oxford (combining this with singing with Christ Church Cathedral Choir) and became a fully qualified Solicitor in 2003. At 25, he is the newest and youngest member of the group, having realized that traveling and singing all around the world is a much more sensible career than sitting in an office sorting out other people's problems. Chris lives in Greenwich in South East London, and enjoys spending his spare time on the golf course being tormented by a small white ball.

Stephen Connolly, bass, having been a fan of the King's Singers in his teenage years, he is still a little shocked to find himself part of the very same group, and to be a member for almost 20 years. He was born in Yorkshire, and began his musical life in the choir of Leeds Parish Church, where he sang both as a boy chorister and at 16, a bass. On leaving school Stephen moved to London and accepted a scholarship at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Before officially finishing his studies, he jumped at a chance to audition with his "old time idols," the King's Singers, and jumped even higher when he was offered the job! Stephen lives in Devon and has two children, Harry and Molly, young musicians in the making.

Visit the King's Singers website at www.kingssingers.com

The King's Singers appear by arrangement with IMG Artists
Carnegie Hall Tower, 152 W. 57th St., 5th Floor, New York, NY 10019
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The King's Singers recordings are available on the Signum Records, EM Records, TELARCC, RCA Victor & Red Seal/BMG Classics, and EMI/Angel labels.

Recording Distributor for the King's Singers American Concerts:
DJ Records, P.O. Box 445, Trout Lake, WA 98650
www.dj-records.com

Selected King's Singers choral arrangements are available from:
Hal Leonard Corp., 7777 West Bluemound Road, Milwaukee, WI 53213
## Concert Calendar

**October**
- **25** 8:00 *The Un-Master Class; William Westney, clinician*
- **26** 7:00 Faculty Chamber Recital; Ithaca Brass
- **30** 2:00 Faculty Recital; Angus Godwin, baritone; assisted by Steve Brown, Gordon Stout, Nicholas Walker, Shay Godwin '95, percussion
- **31** 7:00 Tuba Ensemble; “Octubafest”

**November**
- **7** 8:15 Faculty Recital; Charis Dimaras, piano
- **10** 8:15 Faculty Chamber Recital; Ithaca Wind Quintet
- **11** 8:15 *Guest Recital; Ensemble X*
- **12** 7:00 Choral Composition Festival Closing Concert
- **15** 7:00 Flute Ensemble; Elizabeth Golden, graduate conductor
- **16** 8:15 Brass Choir; Keith Kaiser, conductor
- **17** 8:15 Contemporary Chamber Ensemble; Jeffrey D. Grogan, director
- **28** 8:15 Choir; Lawrence Doebler, conductor; Carl Ruck ’81 M.M., organ
- **29** 8:15 Vocal Jazz Ensemble; Lauri Keegan, musical director
- **30** 8:15 Jazz Workshop; Steve Brown, musical director

**December**
- **1** 8:15 Opera Workshop; Denes Van Parys, musical director
- **2** 8:15 Jazz Workshop; Steve Brown, musical director
- **3** 12:00 All-Campus Band; Heidi Miller, conductor
- **4** 3:00 *Winter Choral Concert*
  - Choir and Madrigal Singers; Lawrence Doebler, conductor
  - Women’s Chorale and Chorus; Elizabeth Swanson, conductor
- **5** 8:15 Chamber Orchestra and Symphony Orchestra; Jeffrey D. Grogan, conductor
  - Susan Waterbury, violin; Elizabeth Simkin, violoncello
- **6** 8:15 Percussion Ensemble; Cayenna Ponchione, director
- **7** 8:15 Wind Ensemble; Stephen Peterson, conductor; Col. Arnold Gabriel ’50, ’53 M.S., guest conductor; Steven Mauk, saxophone
- **8** 8:15 Concert Band; Mark Fonder, conductor; Col. Arnold Gabriel ’50, ’53 M.S., guest conductor
  - Symphonic Band; Elizabeth Peterson, conductor

## Ithaca College Concerts 2005-6
(admission charge)

- **October 5** Beaux Arts Trio
- **October 24** King’s Singers
- **March 2** Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, violin
  - Anne-Marie McDermott, piano

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*Notes: All concerts are held at the Ithaca College Arts Center unless otherwise specified. Admission is usually free for Ithaca College students and faculty.*