

THE GUILDHALL SINGERS
FESTIVAL CONCERT PROGRAMME JULY 15TH 2026

The Guildhall Singers are delighted and honoured to give the first performance of **Like a Bell**, a piece of music specially commissioned by Kate Parker to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the King's Lynn Festival. Norfolk composer James McConnel has set the words by Rachel Goodman to music in a dynamic and joyous way, describing a stage performance, including references to the town's maritime and theatrical past.

The concert celebrates the themes of James' piece and the maritime and cultural heritage of King's Lynn, in particular Shakespeare's suggested association with St George's Guildhall and Vaughan Williams' visit to the town as part of his project to collect regional folk songs. Through music we explore the town's links with the sea through the centuries and include composers from fellow members of the Hanseatic league.

We start with a setting of **If Music be the food of love** from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* by Henry Purcell (1659-1695), English composer and organist of the middle Baroque. The town's links with Hanseatic countries is illustrated by music by the next two composers. Two pieces by the outstanding Franco-Flemish composer of Renaissance music, Josquin des Prez (1450-1521), **Mille regrets** and **Il Grillo** are followed by **Tutto lo di** and **Matona mia Cara** by Orlando di Lasso (1532-1594), a leading Belgian/Dutch composer in the polyphonic style of the Renaissance period.

Leaping forward to the twentieth century we continue with two highly imaginative arrangements of texts from Shakespeare: **Double Double, Toil and Trouble** (*Macbeth*) and **Lullaby** (*Midsummer Night's Dream*) by Jaako Mäntyjärvi (1963-), a Finnish composer and translator. Remaining in the Shakespearean vein, the Swedish composer Nils Lindberg was known for combining jazz, folk and classical styles in his music, as shown in his arrangement of **Shall I compare thee to a summer's day**, *Shakespeare's sonnet No 18*.

Vaughan Williams (1872–1958) visited King's Lynn around the year 1910 as part of his project to collect regional folk songs, and we are delighted to include two that reflect a link to the maritime heritage of King's Lynn and life at sea: **The lover's ghost** and **Just as the tide was flowing**. Next, Eric Whitacre's (1970-) setting of a poem from Kipling's *Jungle Book*, **Seal lullaby**, evokes the lonely cries of grey and common seals on our nearby coast.

Our last group of songs are four settings of texts from the Elizabethan period by blind English jazz pianist and composer George Shearing (1919–2011): **Live with me and be my Love** (*Marlowe: the Passionate Shepherd to his Love*); **Who is Sylvia** (*Two gentlemen of Verona*); **Fie on Sinful Fantasy** (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*) and **Hey, Ho, the Wind and the Rain** (*Twelfth Night*).

We end the concert with the premiere of **Like a Bell**

Encore

Philip Lawson (b1957) British choral conductor, Grammy winning composer and arranger: for 18 years was a baritone with The King's Singers and for 15 years, their principal arranger. The text for his arrangement is from Act 1 Scene 1 of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*

- If Music be the Food of Love