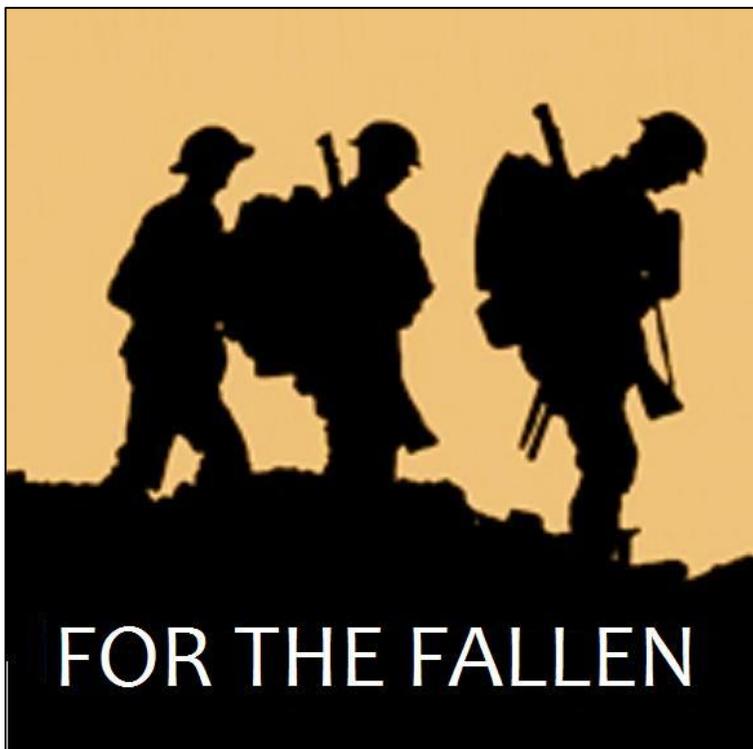


Pegasus



LED BY IWM



MUSIC AND POETRY OF THE GREAT WAR

Pegasus Chamber Choir

Matthew Altham *Director*

David Goudge *Reader*

Sunday, 2 February 2014, 4pm

St George's Church, Bloomsbury

Programme

This programme has been conceived as a continuous sequence of poetry and music. We therefore ask that you hold your applause until the end of the concert. Thank you.

I Have a Rendezvous with Death	Alan Seeger (1888–1916)
Nunc Dimittis	Gustav Holst (1874–1934)
First Time In	Ivor Gurney (1890–1937)
Nachtlied	Max Reger (1873–1916)
Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis	Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)
For the Fallen	Douglas Guest (1916–1996)
Concert Party: Busseboom	Edmund Blunden (1896–1974)
Returning, We Hear the Larks	Isaac Rosenberg (1890–1918)
A Short Requiem	Walford Davies (1869–1941)
1. Salvator Mundi	6. Audi vocem
2. De profundis clamavi	7. Hymn
3. Requiem aeternam I	8. Gloria Patri
4. Levavi oculos	9. Vox ultima crucis
5. Requiem aeternam II	
Excerpts from the letters of Edward Colver	
Blagoslovi dushe moya gospoda	Sergei Rachmaninov (1873–1943)
Nyne otpushchaeshi	Sergei Rachmaninov
Everyone Sang	Siegfried Sassoon (1886–1967)
Psalm 23	Ivor Gurney
Since I Believe in God the Father Almighty	Ivor Gurney
Disabled	Wilfred Owen (1893–1918)
The Dying Soldier	Traditional, arr. Nigel Short
Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen	Gustav Mahler (1860–1911), arr. Clytus Gottwald

Composers and the Great War

By Samir Savant

The first world war began in the late summer of 2014, and in this centenary year Pegasus is joining the commemorations of the millions who died. The war involved soldiers from across the world, but its effects were felt most keenly in Europe, where old empires crumbled, monarchies were toppled and new countries were born.

It is easy sometimes to overlook the personal and human cost of war, and in putting together this programme of poems and music I have been inspired by the individual stories of the artists involved, including composers from five countries most affected by the conflict. In today's programme, you will also hear correspondence from Lieutenant Edward Colver to his family – he was the great-great-uncle of our conductor, Matthew. We all have a story to tell, our own reaction to the tragedy that was “the Great War”.

My own connection to the war is not familial, but it is personal: every time I enter the Royal College of Music, where I work, I see the name of George Butterworth on the war memorial in our outer hall. Butterworth was one of the most promising British composers of his generation and was killed in 1916 during the Battle of the Somme. He was 31 years old. His name is a reminder of so many lives cut short, including within the world of the arts.

Gustav Holst wanted to enlist at the outbreak of the war and was frustrated to be found unfit for military service. He taught and composed during the war, completing the orchestral suite *The Planets*, the first movement of which is a vivid evocation of “Mars, the Bringer of War”. Holst's friends the composers George Butterworth and Cecil Coles, whom he had got to know at the Royal College of Music, were among those killed in action.

In 1918 Holst finally had the chance to contribute to the war effort, eagerly volunteering for the music section of the YMCA's education department, to work with British troops stationed in Salonica awaiting demobilisation. For the purpose, Holst changed his name from “von Holst” to “Holst”, fearing that it looked too German to be acceptable in such a role. He returned to Britain in the summer of 1919.

Holst's unaccompanied *Nunc dimittis* dates from 1915 and was written for Richard Terry, organist of Westminster Cathedral, and first performed on Easter Sunday of that year. For some reason it was afterwards forgotten and was only published in 1979, in an edition by the composer's daughter, Imogen Holst. Holst's love of Renaissance music is clear in this unaccompanied piece, particularly the way the male and female voices of the eight-part choir answer each other antiphonally.

Like many of the composers in this programme, the German **Max Reger** was deeply patriotic and committed to his own country's war effort. At the beginning of the war he began to compose a setting of the Latin Requiem, having in mind his countrymen who were dying in active service. After a false start, he began anew in 1915. Reger never got to hear the completed work, which was scored for solo voice, chorus and orchestra, since it was first performed in July 1916, a few months after his death.

Reger's *Acht geistliche Lieder* (Eight Sacred Songs) of 1914 show the influences of Bach and Brahms – the former in their technical mastery and the latter in their introspection and harmonic richness. From this set we sing *Nachtlied*, a setting of the 16th-century German Protestant theologian and hymn writer Petrus Herbert, calling upon God for protection during the night.

Maurice Ravel was keen to join the French air force the moment the war began, but like Holst he was thwarted in his attempts to enlist on account of his age and weak health. Instead, he became a truck driver stationed at the Verdun front. During the war Ravel composed one of his most popular works, the suite for solo piano *Le tombeau de Couperin* (Couperin's Tomb), which is both an homage to the French Baroque composer François Couperin and a memorial to six friends of the composer who died in the conflict.

Despite his strong antipathy towards the German aggression, Ravel refused to join the National League for the Defence of French Music, formed during the war, stating: "It would be dangerous for French composers to ignore systematically the works of their foreign colleagues, and thus form themselves into a sort of national coterie".

Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis was written in December 1914 as one of three songs for unaccompanied choir which mark a rare foray into choral writing for Ravel. He wrote both the texts and music while waiting to join the army.

The sombre central movement, which we sing this afternoon, is a melancholy reflection on the war for which Ravel was preparing, and it includes references to the three colours of the French flag as well as to a soldier who has left for war. The innocence of the flowing soprano solo contrasts sharply with the harsh realities Ravel would experience during active service.

Douglas Guest was born in 1916, at the height of the war. He had a distinguished career in church music, serving as organist of Salisbury and Worcester cathedrals and finishing his career at Westminster Abbey. Although he composed comparatively little, his music was always beautifully crafted, with a natural feel for text. Guest's setting of Laurence Binyon's famous poem *For the Fallen* was written for Westminster Abbey choir in 1971 and is sung all over the world on Remembrance Sunday each year.

Shropshire-born **Walford Davies** studied at the Royal College of Music with Charles Villiers Stanford and Hubert Parry, later joining them as a member of the composition faculty. He did not serve in the war but was appointed the first director of music of the newly-created Royal Air Force in 1918.

Davies's *Short Requiem*, published in 1915, was composed "In sacred memory of all those who have fallen in the war". The work favours texts from the scripture over the Latin mass, including his famous setting of Psalm 121 ("I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills") and a religious poem by the medieval monk John Lydgate. Since the Reformation, British composers had shied away from writing Requiem masses, as lavish musical settings of prayers for the dead were seen as too Catholic in sentiment. Davies can therefore be said to have written the first "British" Requiem; certainly many British composers were to copy his model, including Herbert Howells. Rowan Williams refers to this liturgical and musical shift as "possibly the biggest single change in the Christian culture [in England] in the 20th century".

Thousands of miles away, in Russia, in just two weeks of January and February 1915, **Sergei Rachmaninov** composed his *All-Night Vigil*, from which we sing two movements this afternoon. Often referred to as the *Vespers*, this most important and popular of Rachmaninov's religious works had its premiere in Moscow in March of that year to benefit the Russian war effort, and was so warmly received that it was repeated five times within a month. Rachmaninov was particularly enamoured of *Nyne otpushchaeshi* (the Nunc

Dimittis, set in traditional church Slavonic in contrast to Holst's Latin) and expressed a desire to have it sung at his own funeral.

Rachmaninov had already toured Russia the previous autumn to raise funds for Russian war relief, though he had conflicting feelings about this: having spent much time in Germany he admired advances in Teutonic art and science and did not join in the anti-German hysteria which swept Russia, showing the same ambivalence as Ravel to nationalistic fervour.

Of all the composers in today's programme, **Ivor Gurney** has perhaps the most tragic life story. Born in modest circumstances in Gloucester, he won a scholarship in 1911 to study at the Royal College of Music. Stanford is reputed to have told his fellow pupil and friend Herbert Howells that Gurney was potentially the best of his entire generation, but that he was unteachable. Gurney's studies were interrupted in 1915 by his enlistment in the Gloucestershire Regiment. It was at the front, facing the misery of daily life and unable to find the peace and tools required for composition, that he turned to poetry for solace. He went on to write some 1,500 poems, including two anthologies which were published during the war.

The war inflicted great personal hardship on Gurney: he was shot in the arm, gassed and spent much time in military hospitals, even attempting suicide in 1918. Although it was at one time thought that Gurney was a victim of shell-shock, it is now generally accepted that his illness predated the war, but his experiences there may have worsened his condition.

After the war Gurney recovered from his physical injuries enough to resume studies at the Royal College of Music, this time with Ralph Vaughan Williams. However, the horrors of what he had endured ultimately took their toll and his behaviour became more erratic. From 1922 he was institutionalised in an asylum in Gloucester, and then in a mental hospital in London, where he died of tuberculosis in 1937, aged just 47.

This afternoon we sing two of Gurney's rarely heard choral works which, like many of his poems, remain unpublished to this day. His setting of Psalm 23 ("The Lord is my Shepherd") was written in 1914 while he was a student, and carries a special significance as he used to sing it to himself in the trenches to calm his nerves. *Since I Believe in God the Father Almighty*, a motet for double choir composed in 1925, sets words by Robert Bridges which explore

a contradictory relationship with God, reflecting Gurney's own doubts after witnessing the inhumanity of war at first hand.

Nigel Short, director of the vocal ensemble Tenebrae, adapted Mack Wilberg's arrangement of the haunting American traditional song *The Dying Soldier* for baritone solo and chorus. The piece depicts the final moments of a young soldier as he contemplates his death, his faith, and the repercussions for his family. Although not directly related to the first world war, it is a reminder of the universality of the human experience in times of war.

Gustav Mahler died a few years before the beginning of the war, but we include him in this afternoon's programme because to contemporary ears, the lush late Romanticism of his music can typify the decadence and self-absorption of the last years of the Austro-Hungarian empire, unaware that it was on the verge of catastrophe. At the same time, Mahler sometimes seems to share with other artists a keen awareness of the coming cataclysm. Thomas Mann based the physical description of Gustav von Aschenbach, the protagonist of his novella *Death in Venice*, upon Mahler, and Mann's narrator describes 1911 – the year of Mahler's death – as one "that for months showed our continent such a threatening face."

Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen is one of Mahler's *Rückert Lieder*, settings of the German Romantic poet Friedrich Rückert originally written for solo voice and orchestra or piano. The song, which we sing in a choral arrangement by Clytus Gottwald, was composed at the turn of the twentieth century and incorporated by Mahler a few years later into the famous Adagietto movement of his fifth symphony. Its elegiac introspection may be said to sum up – and bid farewell to – a culture that was to be irreparably ruptured by the outbreak of the war.

HOLST – Nunc Dimittis

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 tuae Israel.
Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto,
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et
semper, et in saecula saeculorum.
Amen.

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 peoples,
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles
And to be the glory of thy people Israel.
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.

REGER – Nachtlied

Text by Petrus Herbert (1533–1571)

Die Nacht ist kommen,
Drin wir ruhen sollen;
Gott walt's, zum Frommen
Nach sein'm Wohlgefallen,
Daß wir uns legen
In sein'm G'leit und Segen,
Der Ruh' zu pflegen.

The night has fallen,
And we should rest;
God is there, to care for us
By his good will,
So that we settle
In his company and blessing,
To maintain the peace.

Treib, Herr, von uns fern
Die unreinen Geister,
Halt die Nachtwach' gern,
Sei selbst unser Schutzherr,
Schirm beid Leib und Seel'
Unter deine Flügel,
Send' uns dein' Engel!

Father, drive the evil spirits
Far away from us;
Keep the night watch;
Be our protector;
Shield both body and soul
Under your wings;
Send us your angels!

Laß uns einschlafen
Mit guten Gedanken,
Fröhlich aufwachen
Und von dir nicht wanken;
Laß uns mit Züchten
Unser Tun und Dichten
Zu dein'm Preis richten!

Let us go to sleep
With good thoughts,
Happily awaken
And never waver from you;
Let us, with rearing,
Focus our deeds and words
On your glory!

RAVEL – Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis

Text by the composer

Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis,
(Mon ami z'il est à la guerre)
Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis
Ont passé par ici.

Le premier était plus bleu que ciel,
(Mon ami z'il est à la guerre)
Le second était couleur de neige,
Le troisième rouge vermeil.

“Beaux oiselets du Paradis,
(Mon ami z'il est à la guerre)
Beaux oiselets du Paradis,
Qu'apportez par ici?”

“J'apporte un regard couleur d'azur.
(Ton ami z'il est à la guerre)”
“Et moi, sur beau front couleur de
neige,
Un baiser dois mettre, encor plus pur.”

“Oiseau vermeil du Paradis,
(Mon ami z'il est à la guerre)
Oiseau vermeil du Paradis,
Que portez-vous ainsi?”

“Un joli coeur tout cramoisi,
(Ton ami z'il est à la guerre)”...
“Ah! je sens mon coeur qui froidit ...
Emportez-le aussi.”

Three beautiful birds from Paradise
(my beloved is away at war),
three beautiful birds from Paradise
have passed by here.

The first was bluer than the sky
(my beloved is away at war),
the second was the colour of snow,
the third a red vermilion.

“Lovely little birds of Paradise
(my beloved is away at war),
lovely little birds of Paradise,
what do you bring here?”

“I bring a look from blue eyes
(your beloved is away at war).”
“And I, on your snow-white brow
am to lay a kiss, even purer.”

“Red bird of Paradise
(my beloved is away at war),
red bird of Paradise,
what do you bring?”

“A dear heart all crimson
(your beloved is away at war)”...
“Ah! I feel my heart grow cold...
Carry it off as well . .

GUEST – For the Fallen

Text by Laurence Binyon (1869–1943)

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

WALFORD DAVIES – A Short Requiem

1. Salvator Mundi

O Saviour of the world,
Who by Thy cross and precious blood hast redeemed us,
Save us and help us, we humbly beseech thee, O lord.

2. De profundis clamavi

Out of the deep have I called unto you, O Lord, Lord hear my voice.
O let your ears consider well the voice of my complaint.
If thou Lord will be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord who may abide it?
For there is mercy with thee, therefore shalt thou be feared.
I look for the Lord, my soul doth wait for him; in his word is my trust.
My soul fleeth unto the Lord, before the morning watch I say, before the morning watch.
O Israel trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.
And he shall redeem Israel from all his sins.

3. Requiem aeternam I

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis.
(Eternal rest grant them, Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them.)

4. Levavi oculos

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.
My help cometh even from the Lord, who hath made heaven and earth.
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: and he that keepeth thee will not sleep.
Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord himself is thy keeper: the Lord is thy defence upon thy right hand.
So that the sun shall not burn thee by day, neither the moon by night.
The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: yea, it is even he that shall keep thy soul.
The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore.

5. Requiem aeternam II

6. Audi vocem

I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me:
Write: from henceforth
Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.
Even so saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours.

7. Hymn

No more to sigh, no more to weep,
The faithful dead in Jesus sleep.
Unfading let their memories bloom
While rest their bodies in the tomb;
Nor will the Lord their love distrust
That strews its garlands o'er the dust.

Though in the grave their clay is cold
They have not left the Christian fold;
Still we are sharers of their joy,
Companions of their blest employ;
And Thee in them, O Lord most high,
And them in Thee we magnify.

An Angel sings that they are blest,
Yea, saith the spirit, sweet their rest;
In bowers of Paradise they meet,
Secure beneath their Saviour's feet,
Nor fear the trump that soon shall all
Before the throne of judgment call.

8. Gloria Patri

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.

9. Vox ultima crucis

Tarry no longer toward thy heritage,
Haste on thy way and be of right good cheer.
Go each day onward on thy pilgrimage.
Think how short time thou shalt abide thee here.
Thy place is built above the starre's clear;
None earthly palace wrought in so stately wise.
Come on, my friend, my brother most dear!
For thee I offered my blood in sacrifice.
Tarry no longer!

RACHMANINOV – Blagoslovi dushe moya gospoda

Bless the lord, o my Soul, blessed art thou, O Lord.
O Lord my God, thou art very great.
Thou art clothed with honour and majesty.
Blessed art thou, O Lord.
The waters stand upon the mountains.
Marvellous are thy works, O Lord.

In wisdom hast thou made all things.
Glory to thee, O Lord, who hast created all.

RACHMANINOV – Nyne otpushchaeshi

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. A light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people, Israel.

GURNEY – Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

GURNEY – Since I believe in God the Father Almighty
“Johannes Milton Senex” by Robert Bridges (1844–1930)

Since I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Man's Maker and Judge, Overruler of Fortune,
'Twere strange should I praise anything & refuse Him praise,
Should love the creature forgetting the Creator,
Nor unto Him in suff'ring and sorrow turn me:
Nay how could I withdraw me from His embracing?

But since that I have seen not, and cannot know Him,
Nor in my earthly temple apprehend rightly
His wisdom, and the heav'nly purpose eternal;
Therefor will I be bound to no studied system
Nor argument, nor with delusion enslave me,
Nor seek to please Him in any foolish invention,
Which my spirit within me, that loveth beauty
And hateth evil, hath reprov'd as unworthy:

But I cherish my freedom in loving service,
Gratefully adoring for delight beyond asking
Or thinking, and in hours of anguish and darkness
Confiding always on His excellent greatness.

TRADITIONAL – The Dying Soldier

Oh brother Green, oh come to me,
For I am shot and bleeding,
Now I must die, no more to see,
My wife and my dear children.

The fighting foe has laid me low,
On this cold ground to suffer,
Stay brother, stay, and lay me away,
And write my wife a letter.

Oh brother I am dying now,
Oh see I die so easy,
Oh surely death has lost its sting,
Because I love my Jesus.

Go tell my wife she must not grieve,
Oh kiss my dear little children,
For they will call for me in vain,
When I am gone to heaven.

MAHLER – Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen

Text by Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866)

Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen,
Mit der ich sonst viele Zeit verdorben,
Sie hat so lange nichts von mir
vernommen,
Sie mag wohl glauben, ich sei
gestorben!

Es ist mir auch gar nichts daran
gelegen,
Ob sie mich für gestorben hält,
Ich kann auch gar nichts sagen
dagegen,
Denn wirklich bin ich gestorben der
Welt.

Ich bin gestorben dem Weltgetümmel,
Und ruh' in einem stillen Gebiet!
Ich leb' allein in meinem Himmel,
In meinem Lieben, in meinem Lied.

I am lost to the world
with which I used to waste so much
time,
It has heard nothing from me for so
long
that it may very well believe that I am
dead!

It is of no consequence to me
Whether it thinks me dead;
I cannot deny it,
for I really am dead to the world.

I am dead to the world's tumult,
And I rest in a quiet realm!
I live alone in my heaven,
In my love and in my song!

English translation by Emily Ezust

Pegasus

Soprano

Rachel James
Judith Kerr
Anna Kirby*
Katy McAdam
Lindsey Norman
Madeline Smith†
Danielle Toyer

Alto

Rose Dixon
David Gabbe
Kirstin Gillon
Alison Grant
Philippa Ouvry‡
Rhian Phillips
Ali Sheppard†

Tenor

Andy Craig
Gareth Moss†
Samir Savant‡
Martin Toyer

Bass

James Baer†
David Benedict
Richard Ford
Peter Hatch
John Jones
Graham Kirk•
Tim Peters
Adrian Smallwood

* Soloist in Ravel

† Quartet in Davies

‡ Soloist in Rachmaninov

• Soloist in Short

Pegasus is one of London's most versatile and accomplished chamber choirs. Its extensive repertoire embraces sacred and secular music from the Renaissance to the present day, and includes premieres of works by John Tavener, Thomas Adès and Francis Grier.

Pegasus's members are experienced singers who pursue their passion for choral music alongside careers in other fields. The choir has worked with the London Handel Players under Laurence Cummings and the Southbank Sinfonia under John Rutter. Pegasus has performed at the London Coliseum in three productions with renowned dancer Carlos Acosta. The choir's London concerts in the past year included Rachmaninov's *Vespers* at St George's, Bloomsbury, Handel's *Messiah* at the Grosvenor Chapel, Baroque works at St Martin-in-the-Fields, and concerts celebrating major anniversaries of Gesualdo, Poulenc and Britten.

In May 2013 Pegasus won the Chamber Choir prize at the Florilège Vocal de Tours International Choral Competition in France, along with a special award for its performance of the music of Poulenc. Pegasus was a semi-finalist in the BBC Choir of the Year competition in 2005 and a prize-winner at the 2007 Tolosa International Choral Competition in Spain. The choir has been featured on BBC television and radio, Channel 4 and Classic FM.

Matthew Altham has been the director of Pegasus since 2001. He began conducting choirs while studying at Oxford University. Alongside his work as a management consultant, Matthew directs Pegasus, Vox Cordis and the London Bach Players, with whom he has performed on several occasions in Pau, France. He has toured as a conductor and has broadcast on BBC Radio and Classic FM. Matthew also sings regularly in the church choir of St Mary the Virgin, Bourne Street, London.

David Goudge read English at the University of York, and trained as an actor at The Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. In a career of almost twenty years he appeared in nearly fifty theatre productions, including *Married Love* and *The Mousetrap* in the West End. Television included *Brookside* and *Inspector Morse*. David was a member of the BBC Radio Drama Company between 1988 and 1990. He has been delighted to perform readings at Pegasus concerts on previous occasions, and Pegasus is grateful for his kind participation this afternoon.

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BLOOMSBURY