

The Dark Lady & The Tender Churl

Celebrating William
Shakespeare on the
400th anniversary
of his death

Saturday 23 April 2016
Middle Temple Hall

**THE FOURTH
CHOIR**

Artistic Director, Dominic Peckham

Welcome from the chair

I am delighted you are joining us tonight for our concert commemorating the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death in the magnificent Middle Temple Hall. This Hall is where the first performance of Twelfth Night took place in 1602 and is the only surviving Tudor building in which Shakespeare himself performed.

Of the 400 years since Shakespeare's death, homosexual lives and loves were criminalised for 351 of them. Same-Sex Marriage became legal in England and Wales in March 2014, and in Scotland in December of the same year, but same-sex couples are still unable to marry in Northern Ireland. While much work has been done to make advances in politics and policy, there is still much more cultural work that can be done for the equality of LGBT people. The Fourth Choir was founded with the mission to promote diversity and equality through cultural impact, by performing at events under-represented by the LGBT community, as well as getting important but neglected LGBT-relevant texts set to choral music.

Many people have joined us with this shared vision, and the volunteer effort behind the choir has been passionate and committed. Members provide their professional services for free in the evenings – financial planning, legal advice, event planning, design and writing. Special thanks have to go to Séamus Rea for conceiving tonight's concert, booking Middle Temple Hall on the very day of the 400th anniversary (before anyone else thought of it), and choosing the sonnets you will hear tonight.

We are especially thrilled that Tobias Menzies is appearing with us tonight. Hailed by the Sunday Times drama critic as "one of the finest

and most exciting Hamlets I've seen", Tobias will be performing some of the most beautiful and dramatic of the Sonnets throughout the course of the evening.

We are also delighted to be performing four world premières of new choral settings of some of Shakespeare's sonnets. We wanted this important anniversary to have a longer legacy than just one evening, so we ran an international competition to set a Shakespeare sonnet to music. The response was overwhelming, and you will hear the winning compositions tonight. Two of the winning composers have travelled from Wales and Scotland to be with us for the premières.

We are particularly grateful to our Artistic Director, Dominic Peckham, whose leadership has been indispensable and a massive inspiration and attraction for singers, audiences and partners.

We would also like to thank all of you, our benefactors, loyal supporters and audiences, who have given us the confidence to take on this significant project, knowing you will be here to support us again.

We hope you enjoy the evening!

Kathleen Holman
Chair, The Fourth Choir



Front Cover: the Cobbe Portrait: named after Charles Cobbe, Anglican Archbishop of Dublin in the 17th century, who inherited it from a descendant of the 3rd Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare's patron. In 2009, researchers from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust put forward evidence proposing that this is a portrait of Shakespeare painted from life.

The Story of Shakespeare's Sonnets

The Tender Churl

A collection of 154 sonnets by Shakespeare was published in 1609, probably without his permission. However, many of them had been circulating privately in manuscript copies for more than 10 years, so it is likely that most of them were written in the mid to late 1590s when Shakespeare was in his mid 30s. 126 of the 154 Sonnets are addressed to – and inspired by – a handsome younger man who embodied for Shakespeare everything that was finest in the world. In the very first sonnet, he calls him his “tender churl”. Initially, everything in the relationship is perfect and Shakespeare litters the poems with terms of endearment for the Tender Churl: “the Master Mistress of my passion”; “Lord of my love”; “dear friend”; “my love”; “best of dearest, and mine only care”; “beauteous and lovely youth”. But that was to change.

The Dark Lady

Gradually we find out that the Tender Churl has been unfaithful to Shakespeare. Shakespeare is devastated to discover this and ties himself in all sorts of illogical knots, trying to forgive the Tender Churl whilst still maintaining that he represents everything that is not only beautiful but true in the world:

*No more be grieved at that which thou hast done:
Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud
(Sonnet 35)*

But the bombshell drops in Sonnet 42. The Tender Churl has not only been unfaithful - he has had an affair with Shakespeare's own mistress. The remaining hundred Sonnets examine a tortured and tortuous love triangle, unprecedented in world literature, between the bisexual older poet, the Tender Churl and the woman who has come to be known as the Dark Lady of the Sonnets. This nickname is derived not only from Shakespeare's physical descriptions of her (“my mistress' eyes are raven black”) but of her actions as he blames her for stealing the Tender Churl away from him: “In nothing art thou black save in thy deeds”.

The Love Triangle and the End

The Sonnets do not follow a simple, coherent plot (any more than life or emotions do). We do not know whether the order in which they were published in 1609 was arranged by Shakespeare, by the publisher or by an admirer who collected the 154 poems in manuscript and arranged for them to be published. In tonight's concert, you will hear 37 Sonnets, both spoken and sung, which have been arranged in an order which simply tries to tell the story of the unhappy triangle and its unhappy end. Even after the revelation of the affair with the Dark Lady, Shakespeare remains obsessed with the Tender Churl to an almost masochistic degree. The effort of processing the pain which the Tender Churl's affair with the Dark Lady has caused him, whilst also trying to absolve the young man from all blame, seems to have driven Shakespeare to the point of insanity. Some of the sonnets display an almost King Lear-like mental state and Shakespeare considers death as a welcome release:

*Tired from all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that to die, I leave my love alone.
(Sonnet 66)*

Most of the 26 Sonnets about the Dark Lady are filled with hatred. Shakespeare appears to have continued having a sexual relationship with her, even after her affair with the Tender Churl, and he loathes both her and himself for doing so. The triangle is at its most extreme in Sonnet 144 when he characterises her as a devil and the Tender Churl as an angel:

*Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits do suggest me still:
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worse spirit a woman coloured ill.*

We don't know how the triangle came to an end. The conventional sonnet has 14 lines but Sonnet 126, the last in the sequence addressed to the Tender Churl (“O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy power/Dost hold Time's fickle glass”), has only 12 lines, the last two lines indicated in the 1609 edition by two mysterious sets of empty brackets. It is as if, worn out by the intensity of an impossible relationship, even Shakespeare had no words left to express an appropriate conclusion.

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About tonight's music

Part One

Tonight's concert will include five world premières, four of which are winning entries from the Fourth Choir's Shakespeare Composition Competition (see pages 15 and 16). The concert starts with the first of these compositions, a setting of Sonnet 104 by Stuart Beach of Canada which he has called *The Fair Youth*.

We then move to a setting of Sonnet 18, possibly the most famous Sonnet of them all. *Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day* is by the Swedish composer and jazz musician, Nils Lindberg, and was written in 1998.

Next is the first of a set of Three Shakespeare Songs by Ralph Vaughan Williams, composed in 1951 for the Festival of Britain. *The Cloud-Capp'd Towers* is part of Prospero's famous speech "Our revels now are ended" from Act IV of *The Tempest*. The other two pieces from the set will close the first half of the concert.

We then return to the Sonnets, first with an extraordinary setting from 2002 of *Sonnet 76 Why is my verse so barren of new pride* by the Norwegian jazz pianist and composer Alfred Janson; and then another of our competition winners, Justin Henry Rubin from Minnesota, and his setting of Sonnet 104, inspired by his late father, which he has entitled *Three Beauteous Springs*.

The fifth world première in tonight's concert is a choral arrangement by The Fourth Choir's Artistic Director, Dominic Peckham, of *A Woman's Face*, a setting of Sonnet 20 by Rufus Wainwright from his new album *Take All My Loves* which was released yesterday in honour of the Shakespeare anniversary.

The first half of the concert will close with the other two Vaughan Williams settings: *Over Hill, Over Dale* from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (the answer given by one of Titania's attendants to Puck's question "How now, spirit! whither wander you?") and *Full Fathom Five* one of Ariel's mysterious songs from *The Tempest*, which he sings to Ferdinand who thinks that his father has drowned when their ship was sunk by the tempest.

Part Two

The second half of the concert starts in lighter mood with a setting of *It Was a Lover and His Lass* by Ward Swingle who founded the Swingle Singers in 1962.

The major work of the second half is Four Shakespeare Songs written by the Finnish composer Jaakko Mäntyjärvi in 1984. A choral singer himself, most of Mäntyjärvi's compositions are for mixed choir. We are back in the world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with *Lullaby* in which Titania's retinue sings her to sleep. This was a song in the original play and the line "Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullabye", fully written out by Shakespeare in the play's text, has inspired Mäntyjärvi to underpin the words with a gently, rocking rhythm. Mäntyjärvi also has great fun with rhythm for Macbeth's witches in *Double, Double Toil and Trouble* but before that, we will sing *Too Much I Once Lamented* by Thomas Tomkins, a contemporary of Shakespeare's who was organist at Worcester Cathedral for most of his life. Tomkins did indeed have much to lament during his long life (he died in 1656 at the age of 84) as he suffered badly during the Civil War. The organ at Worcester was seriously damaged when Cromwell's troops vandalised the Cathedral and his house took a direct hit from a cannon, destroying much of his music.

Our final winners from the Shakespeare Competition follow. Firstly, *Weary with Toil*, a setting of Sonnet 27 by Benjamin J. Cramer of Minneapolis but now studying in Aberdeen; and then *Three Years*, a setting of Sonnet 104 by Ian Lawson of Wales, which won the Competition's first prize of £1,000.

In the final section of the concert, we return to Mäntyjärvi and his settings of *Full Fathom Five* and *Come Away Death* from *Twelfth Night*. It is particularly thrilling to be singing these words from *Twelfth Night* in the Hall in which they were first uttered in 1602.

The concert closes with a *Magnificat* by the great Spanish Renaissance composer Victoria. It was first published in Madrid in 1600 and so must have been written in the late 1590s when Shakespeare was writing the Sonnets. It is a glorious work, written for three 4-part choirs, sometimes singing singly, sequentially or all together when all 12 lines amalgamate. Shakespeare may never have heard polyphonic music of this sort in Protestant Elizabethan England where church music was homophonic and in English. The choice of closing our Shakespeare Memorial Concert with this piece is not therefore historical or logical so much as musical and emotional: this is the best we have to give him.

The Dark Lady & The Tender Churl

Narrated by Tobias Menzies
Conducted by Dominic Peckham
Devised by Séamus Rea

Performed by The Fourth Choir
Tenor solo by Nigel Pilkington

The Fair Youth – World Première

Music: Stuart Beatch (b. 1991)
Text: Sonnet 104

Joint Runner-up, Fourth Choir's Shakespeare
Composition Competition

*To me, fair friend, you never can be old,
For as you were, when first your eye I ey'd,
Such seems your beauty still. Three winters cold
Have from the forests shook three summers' pride,
Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turn'd
In process of the seasons have I seen,
Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burn'd,
Since first I saw you fresh, which yet are green.
Ah! yet doth beauty, like a dial-hand,
Steal from his figure and no pace perceiv'd;
So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth stand,
Hath motion and mine eye may be deceiv'd:
For fear of which, hear this, thou age unbred;
Ere you were born, was beauty's summer dead.*

Sonnets 19, 26 and 63: Tobias Menzies

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day

Music: Nils Lindberg (b.1933)
Text: Sonnet 18

*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimm'd:
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.*

Sonnets 1 and 29: Tobias Menzies

The Cloud-Capp'd Towers

Music: Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)
Text: The Tempest

*The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind: We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.*

Sonnets 58 and 108: Tobias Menzies

Sonnet No. 76

Music: Alfred Janson (b.1937)
Solo: Nigel Pilkington

*Why is my verse so barren of new pride?
So far from variation or quick change?
Why with the time do I not glance aside
To new-found methods and to compounds strange?
Why write I still all one, ever the same,
And keep invention in a noted weed,
That every word doth almost tell my name,
Showing their birth and where they did proceed?
O, know, sweet love, I always write of you,
And you and love are still my argument;
So all my best is dressing old words new,
Spending again what is already spent:
For as the sun is daily new and old,
So is my love still telling what is told.*

Sonnets 73 and 43: Tobias Menzies

Three Beauteous Springs – World Première

Music: Justin Henry Rubin (b.1971)

Text: Sonnet 104

Honourably Mentioned, Fourth Choir's Shakespeare
Composition Competition

Sonnets 35 and 57: Tobias Menzies

A Woman's Face

Music: Rufus Wainwright (b.1973), World Première of
choral arrangement by Dominic Peckham

Text: Sonnet 20

*A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted
Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion;
A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted
With shifting change, as is false women's fashion;
An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,
Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;
A man in hue, all "hues" in his controlling,
Which steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth.
And for a woman wert thou first created;
Till Nature, as she wrought thee, fell a-doting,
And by addition me of thee defeated,
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.
But since she prick'd thee out for women's pleasure,
Mine be thy love and thy love's use their treasure.*

Sonnets 44 and 45: Tobias Menzies

Over Hill, Over Dale

Music: Ralph Vaughan Williams

Text: A Midsummer Night's Dream

*Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough briar,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire
I do wander everywhere.
Swifter than the moonè's sphere;
And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.
The cowslips tall her pensioners be;
In their gold coats spots you see;
Those be rubies, fairy favours,
In those freckles live their savours:
I must go seek some dew-drops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.*

Sonnet 50: Tobias Menzies

Full Fathom Five

Music: Ralph Vaughan Williams

Text: The Tempest

*Full fathom five thy father lies,
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell: Ding-dong.
Hark! now I hear them, – ding-dong bell.*

INTERVAL

Refreshments are available at the bar in the
Parliament Chamber. The bar will remain open
after the concert so please join the Choir for
a nightcap. Concert Patrons should please
make their way to the Prince's Room for the
champagne reception.

From the diary of John Manningham, a
member of Middle Temple, who saw the
performance of Twelfth Night in the Hall in
1602:

*Feb 2 at our feast (Candlemas) we had
a play called Twelfth Night or What you
will, much like the Comedy of Errors or
Menechmi in Plautus... A good practise
is it to make the steward beleve his
Lady widdowe was in Love with him by
couterfayting a lettre, as from his Lady, in
general termes, telling him what shee liked
best in him and prescribing his gesture in
smiling his apparraile etc. And then when
he came to practise, making him beleve
they took him to be mad.*

It Was a Lover and His Lass

Music: Ward Swingle (1927-2015)

Text: As You Like It

*It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino
That o'er the green corn-field did pass.
In spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding a ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.*

*Between the acres of the rye,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
These pretty country folks would lie,
In spring time ...*

*This carol they began that hour,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
How that life was but a flower
In spring time ...*

*And therefore take the present time
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
For love is crowned with the prime
In spring time ...*

Sonnets 130, 128 and 136: Tobias Menzies

Lullaby

Music: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi (b.1963)

Text: A Midsummer Night's Dream

*You spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong,
Come not near our fairy queen.*

*Philomel, with melody
Sing in our sweet lullaby;
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby:*

*Never harm, nor spell nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh;
So, good night, with lullaby.*

*Weaving spiders, come not here;
Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence!
Beetles black, approach not near;
Worm nor snail, do no offence.*

Philomel, with melody ...

Sonnets 144, 42 and 33: Tobias Menzies

Too Much I Once Lamented

Music: Thomas Tomkins (1572 – 1656)

Text: Anon

*Too much I once lamented,
while love my heart tormented, fa la la ...
Alas, and ay me, sat I wringing,
now chanting go, and singing, fa la la ...*

Sonnets 133 and 131: Tobias Menzies

Double Double Toil and Trouble

Music: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

Text: Macbeth

*Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.
Thrice and once the hedge-pig whined.
Harpier cries: 'Tis time, 'tis time.*

*Round about the cauldron go;
In the poison'd entrails throw.
Toad, that under cold stone,
Days and nights had thirty-one
Swelter'd venom sleeping got,
Boil thou first in the charm'd pot.
Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.*

*Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake;
Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg and owlet's wing,
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.
Double, double ...*

*Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
Witches' mummy, maw and gulf
Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark,
Root of hemlock digg'd in dark,
Liver of blaspheming Jew,
Gall of goat, and slips of yew
Sliver'd in the moon's eclipse,
Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips,
Finger of birth-strangl'd babe*

*Ditch-deliver'd by a drab,
Make the gruel thick and slab:
Add thereto a tiger's chaudron,
For the ingredients of our cauldron.
Double, double ...*

*By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes.
Open, locks, whoever knocks!*

Sonnet 61: Tobias Menzies

Weary with Toil – World Première

Music: Benjamin J. Cramer (b.1991)

Text: Sonnet 27

Joint Runner-up, Fourth Choir's Shakespeare
Composition Competition

*Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travel tired;
But then begins a journey in my head,
To work my mind, when body's work's expired:
For then my thoughts, from far where I abide,
Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,
And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,
Looking on darkness which the blind do see:
Save that my soul's imaginary sight
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,
Makes black night beauteous and her old face new.
Lo, thus, by day my limbs, by night my mind,
For thee and for myself no quiet find.*

Sonnet 110: Tobias Menzies

Three Years – World Première

Music: Ian Lawson (b.1955)

Text: Sonnet 104

First Prize Winner, Fourth Choir's Shakespeare
Composition Competition

Sonnets 92, 116, 93 and 87: Tobias Menzies

Full Fathom Five

Music: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi , Text: The Tempest

Sonnets 71 and 81: Tobias Menzies

Come Away, Death

Music: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi , Text: Twelfth Night

*Come away, come away, Death,
and in sad cypress let me be laid;
Fly away, fly away, breath;
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.
My shroud of white, stuck all with yew, O prepare it;
My part of death, no one so true did share it.*

*Not a flower, not a flower sweet
on my black coffin let there be strown;
Not a friend, not a friend greet my poor corpse where
my bones shall be thrown;
A thousand thousand sighs to save, lay me O where,
Sad true lover never find my grave, to weep there.*

Sonnets 74 and 146: Tobias Menzies

Magnificat

Music: Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548 – 1611)

Text: St Luke's Gospel

*Magnificat anima mea Dominum.
Et exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.
Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae,
ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes
generationes.
Quia fecit mihi magna, qui potens est,
et sanctum nomen ejus.
Et misericordia ejus a progenie in progenies
timentibus eum.
Fecit potentiam in brachio suo,
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.
Deposuit potentes de sede
et exaltavit humiles.
Esurientes implevit bonis
et divites dimisit inanes.
Suscepit Israel puerum suum,
recordatus misericordiae suae.
Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,
Abraham et semini ejus in saecula.
Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper,
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen*

Shakespeare: His Life and Tragedies

In his Will, Shakespeare famously left his wife Anne Hathaway his “second best bed”: a gesture that some suggest indicates the couple had grown distant by the time of his death. He also left money to some of his actor friends so they could buy mourning rings in his memory. This comprised the precise sum of 26 shillings and 8 pence each “to my ffellowes John Hemynges, Richard Burbage and Henry Cundell ... to buy them Ringes”. Burbage was the most famous actor of his day and was the first actor to play Hamlet, Othello, Richard III and King Lear. Heminge and Condell were both actor-managers of Shakespeare’s company and they remembered him in the best way possible by deciding to collect all his plays and have them published. It took them seven years to complete this mammoth task and in 1623 the First Folio, containing thirty-six plays, finally appeared.

The First Folio contains eleven tragedies which are now world-famous but the tragedies Shakespeare experienced in his personal life are less well known. Although there are periods in his life, particularly his early life, about which almost nothing is known, research into the life of the world’s greatest dramatist has yielded a surprising amount of biographical information. We know that when he was born in 1564, he was the third child to be born to his parents, although the first to survive infancy. His mother, Mary, went on to have five more children, the last of which, Edmund, was born in 1580 when William was sixteen and already a young man. Just prior to that, William experienced a first tragedy when his sister, Anne, died in 1579 at only eight years of age.

The most famous shotgun marriage in literary history took place when William married Anne Hathaway in November 1582. William was eighteen and Anne was twenty-seven – and three months pregnant. Their first daughter, Susanna, was baptised on 26 May 1583. Less than two years later, they had twins, Hamnet and Judith, who were baptised on 2 February 1585. In contrast to William’s mother who had eight children over a twenty-two year period, Anne had no further

children. It has been suggested that the difficulties of giving birth to twins at that period may have left her unable to bear any more children. Or it may have been that William, now in his early 20s, had already left for London (some authorities suggest that he arrived in London as early as 1584) to begin his career as an actor and playwright and did not return to live permanently in Stratford until he retired there thirty years later.

Shakespeare appears to have met with early success in London. By 1593 and not yet thirty, he was a published author, but of poetry – *Venus and Adonis* – not a play. However, his first plays had already been performed by this time and he soon joined the Lord Chamberlain’s men, the country’s leading theatre company. Other company members were Burbage, Heminge and Condell: the “ffellowes” remembered in his Will twenty years later. Shakespeare was becoming famous, successful and rich.

As his career prospered in London, tragedy struck back home in Stratford. Hamnet, Shakespeare’s only son, died of unknown causes and was buried on 11 August 1596. He was eleven years old. Working hard at his career in London, Shakespeare can not have spent much time with his son. Perhaps it was as much from guilt as from grief that made Shakespeare buy New Place, the second-largest house in Stratford, and move his remaining family into it in 1597. Spelling was very fluid in Tudor times, particularly of names, and Hamnet and Hamlet were used interchangeably. It is touching to think that Shakespeare may have named his most famous character as a tribute and memorial to his lost son.

Back in London, the plays continued to pour out of him. And not only plays, but poems. In the 1590s, the sonnet form was highly popular – so much so, that, in the moment leading up to Romeo and Juliet’s first kiss in Act 1 of the play, the dialogue Shakespeare gives them forms a perfect sonnet form. Although Shakespeare’s



collection of 154 Sonnets was not published until 1609, it is likely that they were written in the late 1590s when the fashion for the verse form was at its height. Certainly at least some of them had been written by 1598, as we know from a book published that year by Francis Meres in which he refers to

“mellifluous & honey-tongued Shakespeare, witness his Venus and Adonis, his Lucrece, his sugared sonnets among his private friends”.

If one believes, as I do, that the Sonnets are autobiographical, then in the years after Hamnet’s death, Shakespeare’s private life in London was ecstatic, heartbreaking and messy. He had a mistress who was evidently married to someone else: in Sonnet 152, one of the most bitter in the collection, he states brutally that, in loving him, she has broken her “bed-vow”, presumably to her husband. Many of the other sonnets eulogise a handsome younger man – the Tender Churl – who represents perfection for Shakespeare and with whom he becomes obsessed. When Shakespeare finds out that his mistress and the Tender Churl are sleeping together, he is driven to the brink of madness and despair. No wonder this was the period of composition of the great tragedies. Reading the Sonnets is like reading Shakespeare’s private notebook. The romantic ecstasy of *Romeo and Juliet* is there, but so also is the jealousy of *Othello*, the madness of *Hamlet* and the nihilism of *King Lear*.

There was to be another poignant tragedy which Shakespeare suffered in 1607. We know only a few bare facts about Shakespeare’s youngest brother Edmund, born when William was sixteen, but those few facts suggest that the two were very close. Even after William married Anne Hathaway and had children of his own, he continued to live with his parents – three generations in one household. Edmund was barely three when he became an uncle on the birth of William’s first child, Susanna, and not yet five when the twins were born. The children must all have played

together and Edmund must have seemed more like a son to William than a younger brother. As a young man, Edmund followed William to London, the only member of Shakespeare’s family to do so, and also became an actor. Edmund must have hero-worshipped his rich and famous older brother in order to follow him into the same profession and William must surely have used his influence to give Edmund a start in the theatre. Whether Edmund had any talent is unknown as his name never appears in the lists of actors with the successful companies. His name does however appear in the baptismal register of St Leonard’s Shoreditch in July 1607 where he took his newborn son to be baptised. Sadly, the infant survived barely a month and was buried in Cripplegate where the register, in another example of volatile Tudor spelling, records the death of “Edward sonne of Edward Shackspeare Player”. But worse was to follow: Edmund himself died before the year was out and was buried at St Saviour’s Church, Southwark (now Southwark Cathedral) on 31 December 1607. The Thames froze that winter and it must have been bitterly cold when Shakespeare, now 43, attended the funeral that New Year’s Eve of his 27 year-old brother.

Worn out with tragedy, there followed Shakespeare’s final creative period of mysterious, fairytale-like plays: *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*. Did he care when the Sonnets were published, almost certainly without his consent, in 1609? Or were they merely reminders of passions long-since spent? Finally, he retired to Stratford and it is impossible to imagine what he felt of the quiet life of his retirement, so different from the excitement, the glory and the tragedies of his life in London. One can only hope he found contentment for those last few years until the day when, four hundred years ago, the lawyer was called to his bedside so he could bequeath some final gifts to the actor friends he had left behind in London.

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400 Years of Denial

When the Sonnets were first published in 1609, the Great Elizabeth had been dead for six years and King James I was on the throne. Despite having had seven children with his wife, Anne of Denmark, James had throughout his life a succession of handsome male favourites who were rapidly promoted to the nobility. The times may therefore have seemed sympathetic for the publication of a collection of Sonnets which eulogized a handsome young man.



King James I (1566-1625)

However, for most of the next 400 years, homosexuality was not only socially unacceptable but criminal. The idea that the Sonnets might be autobiographical and that England's National Poet was in love (or in lust) with another man's wife whilst also being in lust (or in love) with a handsome young man was simply unacceptable.

For the next four centuries, commentators have gone to extraordinary lengths to find alternative interpretations of the Sonnets, rather than simply giving the words their natural meaning.

To begin with, the easiest solution was simply to change the sex of the Tender Churl from male to female. In the second edition of the Sonnets, produced by John Benson in 1640, "sweet boy" became "sweet love" and "I teach thee how/To make him seem long hence as he shows now" became "I teach thee how/To make her seem long hence as she shows now".

This was the text which remained current for over a hundred years, until George Steevens, a friend of Dr. Johnson's, reverted to the original text in his edition of 1766. Steevens later seems to have regretted doing so as, in the forward to an edition of the plays in 1793, he explained that

"We have not reprinted the Sonnets of Shakespeare because the strongest act of Parliament that could be framed would fail to compel readers into their service".



George Steevens (1736-1800) by Henry Richard Vassall-Fox

Steevens at least seemed to be in no doubt of the true subject-matter of the Sonnets.

Steevens's edition led to an amusing spat with George Chalmers, a Scottish writer and antiquarian who was completely unable to accept the concept that Shakespeare could write love poetry to another man. "Mr. Malone [another editor who used the original text], and Mr. Steevens speak like men of some other planet". Chalmers propounded an alternative and novel theory – that all the Sonnets were in fact addressed to Queen Elizabeth I. Steevens would have none of it: "If they were, her Majesty was bless'd with the insignia of both sexes".

In the nineteenth century, an era when intense same-sex relationships were accepted unquestioningly as platonic “manly friendship”, the Tender Churl sonnets appear to have been less problematical. Indeed, Wordsworth was more shocked by the Dark Lady sonnets which he found “abominably harsh, obscure and worthless”.



George Chalmers (1742-1825) by James Tannock

Oscar Wilde (another dramatist who married young, had children and fell in love in later life with a beautiful young man) sought the protection of the Sonnets in a famous speech from the dock of the Old Bailey:

“The Love that dare not speak its name in this century is such a great affection of an elder for a younger man as there was between David and Jonathan, such as Plato made the very basis of his philosophy, and such as you find in the sonnets of Michelangelo and Shakespeare”.

Even if Wilde was hoping to persuade the jury that he was speaking of non-sexual relationships, it was still an extraordinarily courageous speech to make when he was in such personal danger and it was the first time in two thousand years that anyone had made so public a defence of same-sex relationships. No wonder that the spectators in the Old Bailey gallery burst into applause.

After Wilde, twentieth-century commentators could no longer pretend that poems such as Sonnet 27, where the poet lies awake at night and sees his beloved’s face in the dark “like a jewel hung in ghastly night”, were simply examples of manly friendship. They responded



Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) by Napoleon Sarony

by developing metaphorical interpretations of the Sonnets, apparently substituting their own objects of compulsion for male beauty.

For Charles Ellis, in *Fifty Sonnets with their Scriptural Harmonies* (!), Shakespeare’s two loves are Christ and the despairing soul. John Forbis in 1924 believed that the Sonnets recount Shakespeare’s struggle with alcoholism. Alternatively, the Sonnets were pronounced to be either a poetic exercise with no autobiographical significance or a work commissioned by an aristocratic lady to persuade her son to get married (a view which can only be held by those who stop reading at Sonnet 17).

Possibly the most extreme view came from Henry McClure Young in *The Sonnets of Shakespeare: A Psycho-sexual Analysis* published by the University of Missouri in 1937. Pausing only to inform us that “Homosexuality . . . is all but universal among very feeble-minded males, congenital imbeciles, and the epileptic insane” (thanks Henry), Young declared that “Shakespeare’s affective life as revealed in these sonnets” was “completely normal”. The passionate language used by Shakespeare to the Tender Churl can be explained, he tells us, by the fact that

“The men of Elizabeth’s day were frank and demonstrative. They kissed, embraced and wept over each other like Frenchmen or pelicans.”

So now we know.

Perhaps now, after 400 years of denial, we are at last able to give the words of Shakespeare’s Sonnets their natural meaning.

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Credits

Tobias Menzies, Narrator



Tobias Menzies was born in London. He graduated from RADA in 1998 and began his acting career in popular British series such as *Foyle's War*, *Midsomer Murders*, and *Casualty*. In 2005 he gained international recognition playing Marcus Junius Brutus in the epic HBO/BBC joint-venture television series *Rome*. Since then he has also starred as Edmund Tully in the hit fantasy drama *Game of Thrones*, played the dual role of Frank Randall and Jonathan "Black Jack" Randall in *Outlander* – for which he was nominated for a Golden Globe Award – and appeared in the critically acclaimed BBC drama *The Night Manager* as MI6 agent Geoffrey Dromgoole.

His many stage credits include a performance of *Hamlet* (directed by Rupert Goold in 2005), hailed by *The Sunday Times* as "one of the finest and most exciting Hamlets I've seen". Earlier, in 2003, he was nominated for the Ian Charleson Award for his role in Michael Blakemore's West End production of *Three Sisters*. He recently completed a run of *Uncle Vanya* at the Almeida Theatre playing Doctor Mikhail Astrov opposite Vanessa Kirby.

Menzies had an early major film role in *The Low Down with Aidan Gillen* in 2000 and featured in the 2006 reboot of the James Bond franchise, *Casino Royale*, as M's assistant Villiers. Other notable film appearances include *Finding Neverland* (2004) and *Atonement* (2007). He will appear in the fifth installment of the *Underworld* action-horror film series, to be released in Autumn this year.

Dominic Peckham, Artistic Director



Dominic Peckham is regarded as one of the UK's finest young orchestral and choral conductors. A conductor of immense energy and focus, Peckham is renowned for his dedication to the Renaissance and Baroque era, whilst also passionate about the delivery of new works and inspirational collaborations.

In addition to his Artistic Directorship of The Fourth Choir, Peckham holds an impressive array of posts including Musical Director of The London Oriana Choir, Guest Conductor for The Royal Opera House, Assistant Music Director of The National Youth Choirs of Great Britain, Artistic Director and Founder of iSingUK, Artistic Director of The Ulster Youth Choir and Guest Conductor for Trinity Laban College of Music and Aldeburgh Music.

In 2014, Peckham was invited to be Guest Chorus Master at English National Opera and worked on the highly acclaimed world première of *Thebans* by Julian Anderson for the company in their 2013/14 season. The production received fantastic reviews and critics praised Peckham and the chorus for 'their immense levels of intensity'.

Always keen to promote and support new music, Peckham has commissioned many new composers and conducted numerous world premieres, notably Alexander Campkin's *Unleash The Beauty of Your Eyes* with The Fourth Choir, Oliver Searle's *Pride, Poverty and Pianos* for the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Toby Young's *Love and Harmony* for The London Mozart Players, *Friday Afternoons* for Aldeburgh Music. In 2016 he is launching a pioneering commissioning programme for women composers spanning five years, with performances across the world.

Competition

Seamus Rea, Events Director



Séamus started his professional life as a theatre director specialising in opera. After working as an assistant director at Covent Garden, Opera North and Scottish Opera, Séamus directed more than 25 productions, mainly in Ireland at the Belfast Opera House, the Wexford Opera Festival and Castleward Opera. During a brief diversion into the business world - he worked as a lawyer in the City for 20 years - he maintained his interest in the arts, writing and directing four short films (winning awards at the BBC Short Film Festival and the Milan Gay Film Festival) and a live “in concert” video with the international cabaret star, Barb Jung. Séamus is a member and Trustee of The Fourth Choir.

Nigel Pilkington, Tenor



Nigel read Law at Peterhouse, Cambridge University where he was a Choral Scholar. Having worked as a solicitor in the City, he then became an actor, comedian, writer and voiceover artist. He’s performed in various radio dramas for Radio 4, having recently played Haemon in *Antigone* with Hayley Atwell and Michael Maloney. Nigel voices the engines of Percy and Trevor in the long-running cartoon series *Thomas & Friends* (Nick Jr and Channel 5), as well as Squirrel Nutkin in *The Adventures of Peter Rabbit* (CBeebies). Nigel is also a member of The Fourth Choir.

Fourth Choir’s Shakespeare Composition Competition

In November 2015, The Fourth Choir launched a competition for a new choral setting of one of the six “Tender Churl” Sonnets (Sonnets 19, 27, 63, 102, 104 or 144). The prize for winning first place was £1000.

By January 2016, we had received 96 entries from 17 countries around the world - Australia, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Holland, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Sweden, UK, and the USA.



The entries were judged blind (with no biographical information attached), and the judges were Dominic Peckham, our Artistic Director, Andrea Brown, our Associate Director, and Alexander Campkin, our Composer in Residence.

First Place:

Ian Lawson (Wales, UK)

Joint Runner Ups:

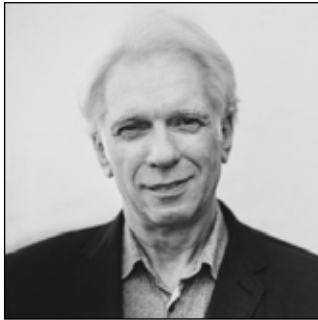
Benjamin Cramer (from Minnesota, USA, studying in Scotland, UK)
Stuart Beatch (SK, Canada)

Honorable Mentions:

Justin Rubin (Minnesota, USA),
Manos Panayiotakis (Crete, Greece)

Competition Winners

Ian Lawson, First Place

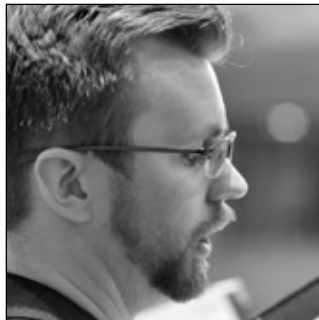


Ian Lawson is a composer, record producer and recording studio owner. He's also one half of the TV and film music writing partnership Heneghan and Lawson, responsible for the music of many well-known animation series. Ian studied music at University College Cardiff and his orchestral work has been performed by the Hallé, BBC NOW, and the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera and released on the Chandos and Signum Classic labels.

Choral music is becoming an increasingly important part of his output and he has composed many songs, including a major song cycle, *The Tree Calendar*. Cantemus Chamber Choir Wales has recorded a CD (*The Contingent World*) of his short choral pieces as well as music by Ben Heneghan – the other half of Heneghan and Lawson. Tracks from this album have been broadcast on BBC R3 and Classic FM and *Requiescat* was a specially commended runner-up in the Classic FM composers' competition.

Ian also co-leads, with Ben Heneghan, The Boo-Hooray Theory: an eclectic 12-piece rock band formed to record and perform some of their non-classical songs. However, it must be mentioned that his most well-known composition has to be *Fireman Sam*: the theme song for a favourite children's animation series still going strong after twenty-five years.

Benjamin Cramer, Joint Runner Up



Benjamin Cramer is a composer and conductor currently studying for a Masters degree at the University of Aberdeen. Born and raised in Minneapolis, he studied Physics and Music at Luther College in Iowa where he sang in the Nordic Choir under Allen Hightower. Following graduation he co-founded the Vox Nova Chorale and, later on, the ensemble Painted Harmony.

Since 2013, the two groups have commissioned and premiered over 20 pieces of new music by 13 composers. His own music has been performed internationally, mostly recently in London, Scotland, the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America.

Stuart Beatch, Joint Runner Up



Stuart Beatch is a composer based in Regina, Canada. He studied Music Education at the University of Regina and Composition and Theory at the University of Alberta and plans to pursue graduate studies in Composition at King's College London later in 2016. Beatch's work comes from a passion for simple and expressive music, often contrasted by relentless rhythms and chaotic

harmonies. With a particular focus on the choral medium, his music has been sung by choirs across North America, including the National Youth Choir of Canada, Pro Coro Canada, the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, and the Choral Arts Initiative.

Justin Rubin, Honorable Mention



Dr Justin Rubin is Professor of Music and Chair of the Composition and Theory Program at the University of Minnesota Duluth, and Artistic Director of the UMD New Music Festival. A graduate of the Manhattan School of Music, Purchase College (New York), and the University of Arizona, Rubin has recorded several albums of solo and collaborative work since 2009. His work has been performed

by the Minnesota Orchestra as well as chamber ensembles throughout the United States and internationally. Current projects include a recording of his works for piano four-hands that spans a decade-long partnership with Duo Gastesi-Bezerra.

Thank you

The Fourth Choir would like thank the following people without whom this concert would not have been possible:

Benefactors

David and Liz Sturgeon
Gill Phillips
Francis Nwokedi

Concert Patrons

Tony and Lesley Bingham
Jonathan Blake
Janice Brennan
Ren Brocklehurst
Dr and Mrs K Evans
Georgina Ferry and David Long
Andrew and Wendy Gairdner
George Garland
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His Honour Judge Ian Graham
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John Mohan and Eleanor Rivers
Patrick and Kate Robathan
John Schlesinger and Margaret Rowe
Sheila Skipper
Alexandra Wessel
Anonymous Patron
Anonymous Patron
Anonymous Patron

We would also like to thank those Patrons who bought their tickets after the programme was printed.

The Fourth Choir

The Fourth Choir was founded in September 2013 by a group of LGBT singers aspiring to sing classical and modern choral works to the highest possible standard. Led by Artistic Director Dominic Peckham, one of the UK's finest young choral conductors, our goal is to represent the LGBT community in London's world-class classical music scene.

Just two and a half years old, the choir is going from strength to strength. We have performed in some of the city's top cultural venues, including Hall 1 at King's Place, the Royal Festival Hall, the British Museum, St Peter's Eaton Square and the stunning Two Temple Place. This year the choir will perform overseas for the first time, singing in Amsterdam's Concertgebouw as part of EuroPride's choir festival and, one week later, staging a re-run of this Shakespeare celebration in Antwerp's Queer Arts festival.

In addition to our own charitable aims, we are proud to support other causes in our music making. We celebrated the legalisation of same-sex marriages in the UK, appearing on Newsnight and singing at an event in 2014 where Sandi and Debbie Toksvig renewed their vows in front of an audience of thousands. Last year we donated proceeds from our Spring concert, raising over two and a half thousand pounds for local migrant support centres.

The choir welcomes experienced singers of all backgrounds and identities. While our members are not all LGBT, we assume that anyone who works with us celebrates diversity and equal rights. To register your interest in singing with us, please see our website.

The Fourth Choir is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered in England and Wales, number 1156769.



Sopranos

Alice Humphrey
Anna Macham
Birgitta Kenyon
Cat Jones
Che Ramsden
Enya Patricio
Hannah Wheeler
Jenny Mohan
Kathleen Holman*
Leila Stroud
Tracey Button

Altos

Annabelle Southern
Azura Farid
Elly Barnes
Genevieve Almond
Kathryn Thomson
Lara De Belder
Laura Cioffi
Lucy Bingham
Michaela Caunter
Riognach Sachs
Stella Merz

Tenors

Ben Lee
Ed Long*
Gavin Evans
Giancarlo Galliani Peccia
James Guy
Luke Taylor
Michael Gaffney
Nigel Pilkington

Basses

Ben Lumb
Chris Weston
Daniel Florea
David Dellaire
Finn Schulze-Feldmann
Giuseppe Pecce
Gus Cairns
John Holtorp*
Oliver Glynn
Philip Raynor
Séamus Rea*

* Trustees

Upcoming Events



Sunday 8 May - Sing Out, Hackney Empire

We will join host Sharon D Clarke in Hackney Empire's celebration of song, performing alongside a stellar line up including the winners of the BBC's Naked Choir a cappella competition Sons of Pitches as well as finalists Stratford East Singers, led by Bryon Gold.



Saturday 4 June - Colourscape, Waddesdon Manor

In June we're recreating composer Alexander Campkin's immersive light and sound experience Imagined Cities at Colourscape Music Festival in Waddesdon Manor. Last year's festival finale performance in the inflatable Colourscape structure on Clapham Common was one of the most unconventional and exciting events we've been involved in.



Saturday 2 July - Art Night, Institute of Contemporary Arts

Inspired by Paris's annual Nuit Blanche, London will host its first ever Art Night in July this year. The ICA have commissioned The Fourth Choir to take part in a performance developed by contemporary artist Linder in collaboration with composer Maxwell Sterling and fashion designer Christopher Shannon.



Friday 5 August - EuroPride Choir Festival, Concertgebouw, Amsterdam

The Fourth Choir will join the Pink Singers, Diversity and eleven other LGBT choirs from across Europe at EuroPride's celebration of choral music held at the prestigious Amsterdam Concertgebouw.



Friday 12 August - The Dark Lady and the Tender Churl, Queer Arts Festival, Antwerp

The choir will round off our first European tour with a re-staging of tonight's programme which will be one of the highlights of Antwerp's Queer Arts Festival: a week-long festival preceding the city's Pride celebrations.

Finally, please save the date for our Autumn concert on Friday 21 October and our Christmas concert on Saturday 10 December.