

# CAMBRIDGE SINGERS A CAPPELLA

Britten: Hymn to St Cecilia and music by Schumann,  
Ravel, Debussy and Poulenc

The Cambridge Singers + directed by John Rutter



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*A cappella* is the term for choral music without instrumental accompaniment, also applied to choirs performing without accompaniment. Literally translated from the Italian, it means 'in the style of the chapel', probably a reference to the Sistine Chapel in Rome where a tradition of unaccompanied choral singing has been maintained since the Renaissance. Nowadays the term has lost its exclusively sacred connotations and can refer to any unaccompanied choir or choral music, sacred or secular.

Dans le contexte de la musique chorale la notation *a cappella* indique l'absence d'un accompagnement instrumental, et s'applique également aux chœurs donnant des représentations sans accompagnement. Traduite littéralement de l'italien elle signifie 'dans le style de la chapelle', se référant probablement par là à la chapelle Sixtine de Rome où traditionnellement depuis la Renaissance le chant choral s'exécute sans accompagnement. De nos jours ce terme a perdu ses connotations essentiellement sacrées et peut se référer à part égale soit à un chœur non accompagné soit à la musique chorale sans accompagnement, qu'elle soit religieuse ou profane.

*A cappella* bezeichnet Choräle oder Chorwerke, die ohne instrumentale Begleitung dargeboten werden. Der Terminus stammt aus dem Italienischen und heißt wörtlich übersetzt 'im Stile der Kapelle', wahrscheinlich bezugnehmend auf die Sixtinische Kapelle in Rom. Dort wurde seit der Renaissance eine Tradition an unbegleitetem Gesang gepflegt. Heutzutage bezeichnet *a cappella* nicht mehr ausschliesslich sacrale Gesänge, sondern alle unbegleiteten Chorstücke und Choräle, seien es nun geistliche oder weltliche.

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The music heard on this recording is selected from the great wealth of *a cappella* choral repertoire written in Germany, France and England in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The purity and beauty of the sound of unaccompanied choir was always recognized, but in the seventeenth and eighteenth century virtually no music was written for choir alone, since voices were almost invariably combined with instruments during this period. Under the influence of the Romantic movement, with its love of the past, interest in *a cappella* singing began to revive in the early nineteenth century, a revival which paralleled the slightly later pre-Raphaelite movement in the visual arts. The Cecilian movement was active in Germany and France, while in England madrigal societies began to revive secular unaccompanied singing for mixed voices, and the glee clubs (like their German counterpart the *Liedertafeln*) cultivated male-voice music. These trends can be seen at work in the music of Pearsall and Schumann, the two earliest composers represented here: Pearsall wrote madrigals for the Bristol Madrigal Society, and Schumann his Op.141 pieces at the time he was directing a newly-established choral society in Dresden. A little later Brahms instituted a female-voice choir in Hamburg, conducting and composing *a cappella* music regularly. By the end of the nineteenth century the *a cappella* medium was firmly re-established, though it retained archaic overtones: Debussy's *Trois chansons de Charles d'Orléans* and Ravel's *Trois Chansons* both deliberately evoke the style of the Renaissance chanson. Even for the generation of Poulenc and Britten, a sense of looking back remained: Poulenc set traditional rhymes in his *Chansons françaises*, while Britten used 'old' compositional devices in his *Hymn to St. Cecilia*. Yet Britten instinctively realized and brought to the fore a more crucial quality of the *a cappella* medium: its essentially pure, distilled nature, enabling it to reflect the inner soul of music itself. It was no accident that unaccompanied choir was his chosen medium for setting poetry invoking a saint regarded as the ultimate in purity, while at the same time dealing with the profound and mysterious process of musical inspiration.

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La musique de cet enregistrement est tirée du très vaste répertoire de musique chorale *a cappella* composée en Allemagne, France et Grande-Bretagne aux 19<sup>ème</sup> et 20<sup>ème</sup> siècles. La pureté et la beauté du son d'un chœur non accompagné ont depuis toujours été reconnus, bien qu'aux 17<sup>ème</sup> et 18<sup>ème</sup> siècles presque aucun morceau n'ait été composé pour chœur seul puisqu'à cette époque les voix étaient presque toujours combinées à des instruments. Ce fut grâce au mouvement romantique et à son amour du passé qu'il y eut un renouveau d'intérêt pour le chant *a cappella* au début du 19<sup>ème</sup> siècle, renouveau qui devait aller de pair avec le mouvement pré-raphaélite des arts visuels quoique celui-ci soit un peu plus tardif. Alors qu'en France et en Allemagne le mouvement cécilien battait son plein, les 'madrigal societies', petits groupes amateurs, commencèrent à faire revivre les chants profanes pour voix mixtes non accompagnées en Grande-Bretagne, ainsi que les 'glee clubs' (l'équivalent des 'Liedertafeln' allemands) qui eux cultivaient la musique pour voix d'homme. Ces tendances générales se retrouvent ici dans les œuvres de Pearsall et de Schumann, les compositeurs les plus anciens de cet enregistrement: Pearsall composa des madrigaux pour le groupe madrigal amateur de Bristol, et Schumann composa les morceaux de l'Opus 141 en temps que chef de musique d'une nouvelle chorale à Dresden. Peu après, Brahms fonda un chœur de voix féminines à Hambourg, dirigeant et composant régulièrement de la musique *a cappella*. Alors qu'on approche de la fin du 19<sup>ème</sup> siècle, la composition *a cappella* est bien fermement rétablie bien qu'elle garde encore un mode archaïque: les *Trois chansons de Charles d'Orléans* de Debussy ainsi que les *Trois Chansons* de Ravel évoquent délibérément le style de la chanson de la Renaissance. Cette sensation du regard vers le passé se retrouve encore toujours pour la génération de Poulenc et de Britten: Poulenc composa ses *Chansons françaises* autour de comptines traditionnelles, pendant que Britten se servait d'anciennes mesures de composition dans son *Hymn to St. Cecilia*. Cependant, Britten avait réalisé instinctivement que le chant *a cappella* avait une qualité primordiale et l'avait bien mise en valeur; sa nature essentiellement pure, distillée, qui lui permet d'être un reflet de l'âme même de la musique. Ainsi ce n'est pas une coïncidence qu'il choisit préférentiellement le chœur non accompagné pour évoquer de façon poétique le caractère de la sainte, d'une ultime pureté, tout en traitant de l'élément à la fois profond et mystérieux de l'inspiration musicale.

(Traduction: Claire de Burbure Craddock)

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Die Musik dieser Aufnahme ist aus jenem vielfältigen Reichtum von *a cappella* Repertoire ausgewählt, das in Deutschland, Frankreich und England des neunzehnten und zwanzigsten Jahrhundert entstand. Die Reinheit und Schönheit des Klanges unbegleiteter Chormusik wurde zwar stets geschätzt, doch wurden im siebzehnten und achtzehnten Jahrhundert sogar wie keine Werke für Chor allein komponiert. In dieser Epoche wurden Stimmen fast immer in der gleichen Weise mit Instrumenten kombiniert. Unter den Einflüssen der Romantik und deren Liebe zu Vergangenen, stieg das Interesse am *a cappella* Gesang im frühen neunzehnten Jahrhundert. Diese Revitalisierung stellt eine Parallele dar, zur etwas später einsetzenden 'prärafael'schen Bewegung' der bildenden Künste. Während in Deutschland und Frankreich die Cäcilia-Bewegung aktiv war, ließen englische madrigale Vereinigungen weltliche Gesänge für gemischte Stimmen und die sogenannten 'glee clubs' Musik für Männerchor aufleben ('glee clubs' sind das Gegenstück der deutschen *Liedertafel*). Diese Trends erkennt man an Werken Pearsalls und Schumanns, die frühesten der hier vertretenen Komponisten: Pearsall schrieb Gesänge für die Bristol Madrigal Society, Schumann komponierte seine Op. 141 Stücke zu Zeiten als er die neugegründete Singverein in Dresden leitete. Etwas später gründete Brahms in Hamburg einen Frauenchor, dirigierte und komponierte regelmäßig *a cappella* Werke. Ende des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts war das *a cappella* Medium mit seinen traditionellen Zügen wieder sehr verbreitet. Debussys *Trois chansons de Charles d'Orléans* und Ravel's *Trois Chansons* lassen beide den Stil des Renaissancechansons erkennen. Sogar für die Generation von Poulenc und Britten blieb die Vorliebe für musikalische Rückblicke erhalten. In seinen *Chansons françaises* vertonte Poulenc traditionelle Volksdichtungen, während Britten alte Techniken der Komposition anwendete als er die *Hymn to St. Cecilia* schrieb. Britten erkannte und betonte die Wichtigkeit des *a cappella* Mediums: es war für ihn die natürliche Reinheit, fähig das innerste Wesen der Musik selbst zu reflektieren. So ist es kein Zufall, daß Britten unbegleitete Chöre als poetisches Element einsetzte und gleichzeitig der Hauch an Heiligkeit ein Ausdruck der unverfälschten Reinheit und tiefer mystisch-musikalischen Inspiration ist.

(Übersetzung: Stefan Kapelari)

# CAMBRIDGE SINGERS A CAPPELLA

The Cambridge Singers

directed by John Rutter

Total playing time: 62' 32"

Note: Words credits are given at the end of each text.

## Music of England and Germany

- [1] **Hymn to St. Cecilia** (9' 58") Benjamin Britten (1913–76)  
Soloists: Caroline Ashton, Donna Deam, Susanna Spicer, Angus Smith, Charles Pott

**Vier Lieder aus dem Jungbrunnen** (4' 00") Johannes Brahms (1833–97)  
for female voices

- [2] 1. Nun stehn die Rosen in Blüte (1' 25")  
[3] 2. Die Berge sind spitz (0' 38")  
[4] 3. Am Wildbach die Weiden (0' 41")  
[5] 4. Und gehst du über den Kirchhof (1' 06")

**Vier doppelchörige Gesänge, Op. 141** (13' 28") Robert Schumann (1810–56)  
for double choir

- [6] 1. An die Sterne (4' 08")  
[7] 2. Ungewisses Licht (2' 04")  
[8] 3. Zuversicht (2' 46")  
[9] 4. Talismane (4' 15")

- [10] **Lay a garland** (2' 31") R. L. Pearsall (1795–1856)

- [11] **The splendour falls on castle walls** (3' 22") Frederick Delius (1862–1934)

## Music of France

**Trois Chansons** (5' 44") Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

- [12] 1. Nicolette (1' 32")  
[13] 2. Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis (2' 21")  
Soloists: Donna Deam, Frances Jellard, Paul Badley, Ben Parry  
[14] 3. Ronde (1' 40")

**Trois chansons de Charles d'Orléans** (5' 55") Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

- [15] 1. Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder (1' 46")  
[16] 2. Quant j'ai ouy le tabourin (2' 00")  
Tenor solo: Angus Smith  
[17] 3. Yver, vous n'estes qu'un villain (1' 56")

**Chansons françaises** (16' 42") Francis Poulenc (1899–1963)

- [18] 1. Margoton va t'a l'iau (2' 10")  
Soprano solo: Fiona Clarke  
[19] 2. La belle se sied au pied de la tour (1' 24")  
[20] 3. Pillons l'orge (0' 44")  
[21] 4. Clic, clac, dansez sabots (2' 00") for male voices  
Bass solo: Edward Caswell  
[22] 5. C'est la petit' fill' du prince (4' 10")  
[23] 6. La belle si nous étions (1' 08") for male voices  
[24] 7. Ah! mon beau laboureur (2' 52")  
Soprano solo: Fiona Clarke  
[25] 8. Les tisserands (1' 38")

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Britten, *Hymn to St. Cecilia* is published by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.  
Ravel, *Trois Chansons* is published by Éditions Durand.  
Debussy, *Trois Chansons de Charles d'Orléans* edited by John Rutter is published by  
Oxford University Press.  
Poulenc, *Chansons françaises* are published by Éditions Salabert.

### The Cambridge Singers

**Sopranos:** Caroline Ashton, Fiona Clarke, Simone Mace, Jocelyn Miles, Mary Mure,  
Nancy-Jane Thompson, Clare Wallace, Susanna Watson, Julia Wilson-James  
**Altos:** Patrick Craig, Natanya Hadda, Mary Hitch, Frances Jellard, Susanna Spicer, Lucy Winkett  
**Tenors:** Paul Badley, Harvey Brough, Andrew Gant, Paul Gordon, Angus Smith, Jeremy Taylor  
**Basses:** Michael Chambers, Bruce Hamilton, Ben Parry, Charles Pott, Benjamin Thompson,  
Julian Walker

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## Music of England and Germany

### 1 Hymn to St. Cecilia (Benjamin Britten) (SSATB, with solos)

This, the last of several works Britten wrote in collaboration with W. H. Auden, was planned in August 1940 when composer and poet were both living in the United States. Britten began work on the music, but, in his own words, 'got stuck', and did not resume until his voyage home to England in the spring of 1942. The *Hymn to St. Cecilia* and the *Ceremony of Carols* were completed aboard the Swedish steamship *Axel Johnson*, and the *Hymn* received its first performance by the BBC Singers in the same year on November 22nd, St. Cecilia's Day and Britten's birthday. Auden's text, dedicated to Britten, consists of three poems which the composer set as three movements roughly corresponding to a symphony, the first of them marked *Tranquillo e scorrevole* (calm and gliding), the second a rapid *Vivace* inspired by Mendelssohn's 'fairy' scherzos, the third (the longest and most complex) *Andante con moto*. Each movement ends with an invocation to St. Cecilia, binding the hymn into one. Britten's musical language in the *Hymn* is simple and pure, with much use of mellifluous major triads and transparent choral textures. There are a number of deliberately backward-looking features: slow-moving tenor and bass parts against faster upper voices, recalling medieval cantus-firmus techniques; a Purcellian ground bass at the start of the third movement; and instrumental imitations near the end, another Purcell reference, specifically to his St. Cecilia's Day odes which Britten clearly wished to acknowledge as the precedent for his unusual and lovely hymn.

I  
In a garden shady this holy lady  
With reverent cadence and subtle psalm,  
Like a black swan as death came on  
Poured forth her song in perfect calm:  
And by ocean's margin this innocent virgin  
Constructed an organ to enlarge her prayer,  
And notes tremendous from her great engine  
Thundered out on the Roman air.

Blonde Aphrodite rose up excited,  
Moved to delight by the melody,  
White as an orchid she rode quite naked  
In an oyster shell on top of the sea;

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At sounds so entrancing the angels dancing  
Came out of their trance into time again,  
And around the wicked in Hell's abysses  
The huge flame flickered and eased their pain.

*Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions  
To all musicians, appear and inspire:  
Translated Daughter, come down and startle  
Composing mortals with immortal fire.*

II

I cannot grow;  
I have no shadow  
To run away from,  
I only play.

I cannot err;  
There is no creature  
Whom I belong to,  
Whom I could wrong.

I am defeat  
When it knows it  
Can now do nothing  
By suffering.

All you lived through,  
Dancing because you  
No longer need it  
For any deed.

I shall never be  
Different. Love me.

*Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions  
To all musicians, appear and inspire:  
Translated Daughter, come down and startle  
Composing mortals with immortal fire.*

III

O ear whose creatures cannot wish to fall,  
O calm of spaces unafraid of weight,  
Where Sorrow is herself, forgetting all  
The gaucheness of her adolescent state,  
Where Hope within the altogether strange  
From every outworn image is released,  
And Dread born whole and normal like a beast  
Into a world of truths that never change:  
Restore our fallen day; O re-arrange.

O dear white children casual as birds,  
Playing among the ruined languages,  
So small beside their large confusing words,  
So gay against the greater silences  
Of dreadful things you did: O hang the head,  
Impetuous child with the tremendous brain,  
O weep, child, weep, O weep away the stain,  
Lost innocence who wished your lover dead,  
Weep for the lives your wishes never led.

O cry created as the bow of sin  
Is drawn across our trembling violin.

O weep, child, weep, O weep away the stain.

O law drummed out by hearts against the still  
Long winter of our intellectual will.

That what has been may never be again.

O flute that throbs with the thanksgiving breath  
Of convalescents on the shores of death.

O bless the freedom that you never chose.

O trumpets that unguarded children blow  
About the fortress of their inner foe.

O wear your tribulation like a rose.

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*Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions  
To all musicians, appear and inspire:  
Translated Daughter, come down and startle  
Composing mortals with immortal fire.*

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*(W. H. Auden, 1907–73)*

### **Vier Lieder aus dem Jungbrunnen (Johannes Brahms)** (Four songs from *The Fountain of Youth*, for sopranos and altos)

These four delightful little pieces for female voices form a self-contained group within Brahms's set of twelve *Lieder und Romanzen*, Op. 44. They were early works written in Hamburg around 1860, at which time Brahms was conducting a women's chorus he had founded. He later revised and published some of the music he wrote for this choir as his Op. 44.

2 1. Nun stehn die Rosen in Blüte,  
da wirft die Lieb ein Netzlein aus.  
Du schwanker, loser Falter,  
du hilfst dir nimmer heraus.

Und wenn ich wäre gefangen  
in dieser jungen Rosenzeit,  
Und wärs die Haft der Liebe,  
ich müßte vergehen vor Leid.

Ich mag nicht sehnen und sorgen,  
durch blühende Wälder schweift mein Lauf.  
Die luftgen Lieder fliegen  
bis in die Wipfel hinauf.

*(Now the roses are in bloom, love casts its net. Fluttering butterfly, you cannot escape it. If I were trapped in the rosy days of youth as love's prisoner, I would die of sorrow. I have no longings or cares, my path runs through flowery woods. My airy songs fly up to the treetops.)*

3 2. Die Berge sind spitz und die Berge sind kalt,  
Mein Schatz steigt zu Berge und ich in den Wald,  
Da tröpfelt das Laub von Regen und Tau,  
Ob die Augen da tröpfeln, wer sieht es genau?

*(The mountains are steep and the mountains are cold. My treasure climbs up the mountain and I through the forest. The leaves there are wet with drops of rain and dew. If the eyes too are wet, who can truly tell?)*

4 3. Am Wildbach die Weiden,  
die schwanken Tag und Nacht,  
Die Liebe von uns beiden  
hat Gott so fest gemacht.

Am Wildbach die Weiden,  
die haben nicht Wort und Ton,  
Wenn sich die Augen besprechen,  
so wissen die Herzen davon.

*(The willows by the stream wave day and night. God has made our love for each other just as deep-rooted. The willows by the stream have no speech; but when the eyes speak, the hearts hear.)*

5 4. Und gehst du über den Kirchhof,  
da findest du ein frisches Grab;  
Da senkten sie mit Tränen  
ein schönes Herz hinab.

Und fragst du worans gestorben,  
kein Grabstein Antwort gibt;  
Doch leise flüstern die Winde,  
es hatte zu heiß geliebt.

*(Paul Heyse, 1830–1914)*

*(If you go over to the churchyard, you will find a fresh grave; there they tearfully buried a dear heart. And if you ask what it died of, the gravestone gives no answer; but the winds whisper, it loved too much.)*

## Vier doppelchörige Gesänge, Op. 141 (Robert Schumann)

(Four songs for double choir)

Choral music formed a not insignificant part of Schumann's output, and he valued choral singing highly enough to have conducted a male-voice choir and instituted a mixed-voice one during the 1840s while he lived in Dresden. It was probably with the Dresden choir in mind that he composed the *Vier doppelchörige Gesänge* in 1849. These, his only works for double choir, were published soon after his death, grouped together as Op. 141, though apparently the fourth of the set, *Talismane*, was conceived as a separate piece. In style, they have much in common with his solo songs, filled with a sense of ardour and Romantic imagination that marks them out as unmistakably Schumannesque.

### 6 1. An die Sterne (*To the stars*)

Sterne, in des Himmels Ferne!  
die mit Strahlen bessrer Welt  
ihr die Erdendämmerung hellt;  
Sterne, in des Himmels Ferne!  
Schau'n nicht Geisteraugen von euch erdenwärts,  
daß sie Frieden hauchen in's umwölkte Herz!

Sterne, in des Himmels Ferne!  
träumt sich auch in jenem Raum,  
eines Lebens flücht'ger Traum?  
Sterne, in des Himmels Ferne!  
hebt Entzücken, Wonne, Trauer, Wehmuth, Schmerz,  
jenseit unsrer Sonne auch ein fühlend Herz!

Sterne, in des Himmels Ferne!  
winkt ihr nicht schon Himmelsruh'  
mir aus euren Fernen zu?  
Wird nicht einst dem Müden auf den goldnen Au'n  
ungetrübter Frieden in die Seele thau'n!

Sterne, Sterne, bis mein Geist den Fittig hebt,  
und zu eurem Frieden schwebt,

hang' an euch mein Sehnen, hoffend, glaubevoll!  
O ihr holden, schönen,  
Könnt ihr täuschen wohl?

(F. Rückert, 1788–1866)

*(Stars in the distant heavens, you who lighten the earthly darkness with rays from a better world; stars in the distant heavens, turn your eyes earthwards to breathe peace into the troubled heart! Stars in the distant heavens, is life's fleeting dream also dreamed in your domain? Stars in the distant heavens, can a feeling heart lift its enchantment, bliss, sorrow, sadness and pain up beyond our sun to you? Stars in the distant heavens! Are you not already showing me distant signs of heavenly peace? Will untroubled peace one day warm the weary soul in paradise? Stars, O stars, until my soul takes wing and soars upward to heavenly peace, until then my hopeful, faithful longing clings to you. Lovely, beautiful ones, could you deceive me?)*

### 7 2. Ungewisses Licht (*Uncertain light*)

Bahnlos und pfadlos, Felsen hinan  
stürmet der Mensch, ein Wandersmann:  
Stürzende Bäche, wogender Fluß,  
brausender Wald, nichts hemmet den Fuß!  
Dunkel im Kampfe über ihn hin,  
jagend im Heere die Wolken zieh'n;  
Rollender Donner, strömender Guß;  
sternlose Nacht, nichts hemmet den Fuß!

Endlich, ha! endlich schimmert's von fern!  
ist es ein Irrlicht, ist es ein Stern?  
Ha! wie der Schimmer so freundlich blinkt,  
wie er mich locket, wie er mir winkt!  
Rascher durchheilet der Wanderer die Nacht!  
hin nach dem Lichte zieht's ihn mit Macht!  
Sprecht wie, sind's Flammen, ist's Morgenroth?  
Ist es die Liebe, ist es der Tod?

(J. C. v. Zedlitz, 1790–1862)

*(Without road or path, man scales the rocks, a wanderer: rushing streams, surging rivers, windswept woods, nothing halts his stride! The darkly massing clouds billow over his head;*



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*rolling thunder, streaming rain, a starless night, nothing halts his stride! At last, at last, a distant light glimmers! Is it a will o' the wisp. Is it a star? Ha! how friendly is its gleam; how it entices and beckons me! The wanderer hastens swiftly through the night, drawn towards the light. Is it fire or the light of dawn? Is it love, is it death?*

**8** 3. Zuversicht (*Assurance*)

Nach oben mußt du blicken,  
gedrücktes, wundes Herz,  
Dann wandelt in Entzücken  
sich bald dein tiefster Schmerz.  
Nach oben mußt du blicken,  
gedrücktes, wundes Herz,  
Froh darfst du Hoffnung faßen,  
wie hoch die Fluth auch treibt;  
Wie wärest du denn verlassen,  
wenn dir die Liebe bleibt!

*(J. C. von Zedlitz)*

*(You must look aloft, oppressed and weary heart, then your deepest pain will soon turn to delight. You must look aloft, oppressed and weary heart, then you can grasp on to hope, no matter how high the floods may reach; how could you be abandoned when love remains to you?)*

**9** 4. Talismane (*Watchwords*)

Gottes ist der Orient!  
Gottes ist der Okzident!  
Nord- und südliches Gelände  
Ruht im Frieden seiner Hände.

Er, der einzige Gerechte,  
will für jedermann das Rechte,  
Sei von seinen hundert Namen  
Dieser höchgelobet! Amen.

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Mich verwirren will das Irren;  
doch du weißt mich zu entwirren.  
Wenn ich handle, wenn ich dichte,  
gib du meinem Weg die Richte!

*(J. W. von Goethe, 1749–1832)*

*(The East is God's! The West is God's! The lands of the north and south rest in his tranquil keeping. His will, the All-righteous One, is justice for all men. Let this one of his hundred names be highly exalted! Amen. I err and stray; yet you can lead me home. When I act, when I write, you guide my footsteps!)*

**10** Lay a garland (*R. L. Pearsall*)

(SSAATTBB)

The intriguing figure of Robert Lucas Pearsall, composer and antiquarian, still largely awaits rediscovery. After early law studies in Bristol, he suffered a minor stroke and thereafter lived the life of a musical dilettante, mostly in Germany where he settled in 1825. Contact with the Cecilian movement there led him to cultivate elements of 'antique' style in his compositions, most of which were choral and small-scale. Of his twenty or so published madrigals, *Lay a garland* (1840) is perhaps the best-known. Despite similarities to Mendelssohn and S. S. Wesley, it is a work of striking individuality and beauty. Pearsall wrote uncommonly well for voices: his choral music has that indefinable 'ring', instantly recognizable in the work of an authentic choral composer.

Lay a garland on her hearse  
Of dismal yew;  
Maidens willow branches wear;  
Say she dièd true,  
Her love was false, but she was firm.  
Upon her buried body lie lightly,  
Thou gentle earth.

*(Beaumont and Fletcher)*

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**11 The splendour falls on castle walls (Frederick Delius)**

(SATB with TB semichorus)

To music-lovers familiar with Benjamin Britten's memorable setting of *The splendour falls* in his Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings, it may come as a surprise that Delius set the same words equally memorably twenty years earlier, in 1923. Both composers responded imaginatively to the line 'the horns of Elfland faintly blowing'. Britten with a real horn, Delius by imitating the sound of horns with a male-voice semichorus that he directs to be placed apart from the main choir. Both composers stamped personal fingerprints on their settings, Britten with his favourite piled-up thirds, Delius with his gently sliding and elusive chromatic harmony. Delius's setting, which deserves to be heard more often, was written for Charles Kennedy Scott's Oriana Madrigal Society, which had given the first performance of Delius's two pieces *To be sung of a summer night on the water* three years earlier.

The splendour falls on castle walls  
And snowy summits old in story:  
The long light shakes across the lakes,  
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.  
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,  
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.  
O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,  
And thinner, clearer, farther going!  
O sweet and far from cliff and scar  
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!  
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:  
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

(Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 1809–92)

## Music of France

### Trois Chansons (Maurice Ravel)

(SATB, with solos)

Ravel's musical response to the horror of World War I (in which he participated as a transport corps driver) was characteristic: rather than wave flags in any obvious manner, in two wartime pieces he asserted the values of French culture as it had been in an earlier and more civilized era. *Le tombeau*

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*de Couperin*, completed in 1917 in its piano version, took the form of a Baroque dance suite, and the *Trois Chansons* (1914–15) paid homage to the Renaissance chanson, a form characterized by its pastoral atmosphere and simple tunefulness. The texts are Ravel's own and just as typical of his personality as the music he wrote for them, *Nicolette* with its wry humour, *Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis* with its tender fairy-tale symbolism (the three colours of the birds being those of the French flag), and *Ronde*, a virtuosic display of tongue-twisting verbal dexterity worthy of Stephen Sondheim (whose *Into the Woods* inhabits a similar imaginative world to the *Trois Chansons*). The inventiveness and skill of Ravel's handling of the *a cappella* medium makes it all the more regrettable that the *Trois Chansons* is his only work for unaccompanied choir.

### 12 1. Nicolette

Nicolette, à la vesprée,  
S'allait promener au pré,  
Cueillir la pâquerette, la jonquille et le muguet.  
Toute sautillante, toute guillerette.  
Lorgnant çï, là, de tous les côtés.

Rencontra vieux loup grognant  
Tout hérissé, l'œil brillant:  
"Hé là! ma Nicolette, viens-tu pas chez Mère-Grand?"  
A perte d'haleine s'enfuit Nicolette  
Laissant là cornette et socques blancs.

Rencontra page joli,  
Chausses bleues et pourpoint gris:  
"Hé là! ma Nicolette, veux-tu pas d'un doux ami?"  
Sage, s'en retourna pauvre Nicolette,  
Très lentement, le cœur bien marri.

Rencontra seigneur chenu,  
Tors, laid, puant et ventru:  
"Hé là! ma Nicolette, veux-tu pas tous ces écus?"  
Vite fut en ses bras bonne Nicolette  
Jamais au pré n'est plus revenue.

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*(Nicolette went down to the meadows in the evening to pick daisies, jonquils and lilies of the valley, skipping merrily and looking this way and that. She met a growling old wolf, bristly and glittering-eyed: 'Hey there, Nicolette, do you want to come and visit Grandma?' Nicolette ran away, breathless, leaving behind her cap and white clogs. She met a handsome page, dressed in grey doublet and blue hose: 'Hey there, Nicolette, do you fancy a nice friend?' Poor Nicolette wisely turned away, very slowly, her heart aching. She met a white-haired lord, wrinkled, ugly, smelly, fat: 'Hey there, Nicolette, how would you like all these gold coins?' The good Nicolette flew into his arms and never went down to the meadows again.)*

### 13 2. Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis (*Three lovely birds of paradise*)

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 cœur tout cramoyi  
(Ton ami z-il est à la guerre)" . . .  
"Ah! je sens mon cœur qui froidit . . .  
Emportez-le aussi."

---

*(Three lovely birds of paradise (my love has gone to the wars!), three lovely birds of paradise passed this way. The first was bluer than the sky (my love has gone to the wars), the second was white as snow, the third vermilion red. 'Lovely birds of paradise, what do you bring?' 'I bring a fond look of azure blue,' 'And I must bestow on your snowy-white brow a kiss that is purer yet.' 'Red bird of paradise, what do you bring?' 'A true heart of crimson red. . .' 'Ah! a chill grips my heart. . . I yield it to you.)*

### 14 3. Ronde (*Roundelay*)

LES VIEILLES  
N'allez pas au bois d'Ormonde,  
Jeunes filles, n'allez pas au bois:  
Il y a plein de satyres, de centaures, de malins sorciers,  
Des farfadets et des incubes,  
Des ogres, des lutins,  
Des faunes, des follets, des lamies,  
Diables, diablots, diabolins,  
Des chèvre-pieds, des gnomes, des démons,  
Des loups-garous, des elfes, des myrmidons,  
Des enchanteurs et des mages, des stryges, des moines-bourrus,  
des cyclopes, des djinns, gobelins, korrigans, nécromans, kobolds . . .

LES VIEUX  
N'allez pas au bois d'Ormonde  
Jeunes garçons, n'allez pas au bois:  
Il y a plein de faunesses, de bacchantes et de males fées,  
Des satyresses, des ogresses  
Et des babaïagas,  
Des centaures et des diablasses,  
Goules sortant du sabbat,  
Des farfadettes et des démons,  
Des larves, des nymphes, des myrmidones,  
Hamadryades, dryades, naïades, ménades, thyades, follettes,  
Lémures, gnomides, succubes, gorgones, gobelines . . .  
Ah! n'allez pas au bois d'Ormonde.

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LES FILLES

N'irons plus au bois d'Ormonde,  
Hélas! Plus jamais n'irons au bois.  
Il n'y a plus de satyres, plus de nymphes, ni de males fées.  
Plus de farfadets, plus d'incubes,  
Plus d'ogres, de lutins,  
De faunes, de follets, de lamies,  
Diables, diablots, diabolots,  
De chèvre-pieds, de gnomes, de démons,  
De loups-garous, ni d'elfes, de myrmidons,  
Plus d'enchanteurs ni de mages, de stryges, de sylphes,  
de moines-bourrus, de cyclopes, de djinns, de diaboloteaux, d'étrits,  
d'aégyrans, de sylvains, gobelins, korrigans, necromans, kobolds . . .  
Ah! N'allez pas au bois d'Ormonde,  
Les malavisées vieilles,  
Les malavisés vieux les ont effarouchés—Ah!

(Maurice Ravel, 1875–1937)

(THE OLD WOMEN: Don't go down to Ormonde Woods, girls, don't go down to the woods: they're full of satyrs, centaurs, wicked wizards, hobgoblins, incubuses, ogres, leprechauns, fauns, sprites, lamias, devils, imps, goat-footed creatures, gnomes, demons, werewolves, elves, myrmidons, magicians, magi, vampires, sylphs, wild monks, cyclops, djinns, goblins, korrigans, necromancers, kobolds . . . don't go down to Ormonde Woods.)

(THE OLD MEN: Don't go down to Ormonde Woods, boys, don't go down to the woods: they're full of female fauns, Bacchantes, wicked fairies, satyresses, ogresses, baba-yagas, centaurettes, she-devils, witches at their sabbath, she-goblins and demons, spectres, nymphs, myrmidons, hamadryads, dryads, naiads, thyads, will o' the wisps, lemures, gnomes, succubuses, gorgons, she-goblins . . . Don't go down to Ormonde Woods.)

(THE YOUNG GIRLS: We'll go no more to Ormonde Woods, alas! We'll never go to the woods again. There are no more satyrs, no more nymphs or wicked fairies, no more hobgoblins or incubuses, ogres, leprechauns, fauns, sprites, devils, imps, goat-footed creatures, gnomes, demons, werewolves, elves, myrmidons, no more magicians, magi, vampires, sylphs, wild monks, cyclops, djinns, little devils, afreets, aëgyrans, sylvans, goblins, korrigans, necromancers, kobolds . . . don't go down to Ormonde Woods, the foolish old men and women have frightened them all away.)

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Trois chansons de Charles d'Orléans (Claude Debussy)

(SATB)

'Caplet, vous n'êtes qu'un vilain', comme disait Charles d'Orléans en parlant de *L'Yver* – thus Debussy wrote in a letter to his friend Andre Caplet in 1908, some evidence, perhaps, that France's great fifteenth-century poet was in his thoughts. In the same year he wrote the second of the *Trois chansons*, Nos. 1 and 3 having been written earlier, in 1898. They were published as a set in 1909, Debussy himself conducting the première in Paris. A minor puzzle has always surrounded the solo in No. 2: the published edition (presumably overseen by the composer) assigns it to a contralto, whereas the manuscript designates it for tenor, more appropriately since the speaker is clearly male. The three pieces make a varied and successful set; as with Ravel, we can only regret that Debussy wrote no more for unaccompanied choir.

15 1. Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder

Dieu, qu'il la fait bon regarder  
La gracieuse, bonne et belle;  
Pour les grans biens que sont en elle,  
Chacun est prest de la louer.  
Qui se pourroit d'elle laisser?  
Tousjours sa beauté renouvelle.  
Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder,  
La gracieuse, bonne et belle!

Par deça ne delà la mer,  
Ne scay dame, ne damoiselle  
Qui soit en tous biens parfaits telle;  
C'est un songe d'y penser.  
Dieu, qu'il la fait bon regarder!

(Lord, how fair you have made this good and gracious lady! Everyone is eager to praise her. Who could grow tired of her when her beauty is always fresh? I know no one in the wide world to compare with her; it is a dream to imagine so.)

16 2. Quant j'ai ouy le tabourin

Quant j'ai ouy le tabourin  
Sonner pour s'en aller au may,  
En mon lit n'en ay fait effray  
Ne levé mon chef du coissin;  
En disant: il est trop matin,  
Ung peu je me rendormiray,  
Quant j'ai ouy le tabourin.

Jeunes gens partent leur butin;  
De Nonchaloir m'acointeray,  
A lui je m'abutineray;  
Trouvé l'ay plus prochain voisin,  
Quant j'ai ouy le tabourin!

*(When I heard the drummer playing to call everyone away to gather the may blossom, I stayed in bed, saying: it's too early, I'll go back to sleep. Let the young folk share their spoils. I shall befriend Melancholy instead, he is a closer neighbour.)*

17 3. Yver, vous n'estes qu'un villain

Yver, vous n'estes qu'un villain;  
Esté est plaisant et gentil,  
En tesmoing de May et d'Avril  
Qui l'accompaigne soir et main.

Esté revest champs, bois et fleurs,  
De sa livrée de verdure  
Et de maintes autres couleurs,  
Par l'ordonnance de Nature.

Mais vous, Yver, trop estes plain  
De nège, vent, pluye et grézil;  
On vous deust banir en essil.  
Sans point flater, je parle plain,  
Yver, vous n'estes qu'un villain!

*(Winter, you're nothing but a lout; summer is pleasant and agreeable, as his heralds, April and May, witness. Summer clothes the fields, woods and flowers in her livery of green and many other colours, at nature's command. But you, winter, are full of snow, wind, rain and sleet; you should be banished. To put it bluntly, winter, you're nothing but a lout.)*

Chansons françaises (Francis Poulenc)

(SATB; Nos. 4 and 6 TTBB)

For Poulenc, as for all his compatriots, the experience of living in occupied France during World War II was traumatic. His patriotism found choral expression in his substantial and complex work of 1943, *Figure humaine* for a cappella double choir, the text of which ends with the word 'liberté'. Then, two years later, he asserted national identity in an altogether different way with the tuneful and charming *Chansons françaises*. These are settings of traditional folk-rhymes; according to Poulenc's biographer Henri Hell, the melodies are the composer's own, although one or two (such as *Margoton*) have become so absorbed into French folklore that they have virtually turned into folk songs.

18 1. Margoton va t'a l'iau avecque son cruchon.

La fontaine était creuse, elle est tombée au fond:  
Aïe, aïe, aïe, aïe se dit Margoton.

Par là passèrent trois jeunes et beaux garçons . . .

Que don'rez-vous la belle qu'on vous tir' du fond . . .

Tirez d'abord, dit-elle, après ça nous verrons . . .

Quand la bell' fut tirée commence une chanson . . .

Ce n'est pas ça la bell' que nous vous demandons . . .

C'est votre petit cœur savoir si nous l'aurons . . .

Mon petit cœur, messir's, n'est point pour greluchons.

*(Margoton went to the well with her jar. The well was deep, she fell to the bottom. Woe, woe, woe is me, cried Margoton, Three handsome lads passed by. What would you give us to pull you out, my beauty? Pull me out first, then we'll see, said she. When she was out, she began to sing. That's not what we want, my beauty. We want to know if we may have your heart. My heart's not for lovers to have, my lads.)*

- 19 2. La belle se sied au pied de la tour,  
Qui pleure et soupire et mène grand dolour.

Son père lui demande: fille, qu'avez-vous?  
Volez-vous mari ou volez-vous seignour?

Je ne veuille mari, je ne veuille seignour,  
Je veuille le mien ami qui pourrit en la tour.

Par Dieu, ma belle fille, alors ne l'aurez vous,  
Car il sera pendu demain au point du jour.

Père, si on le pend, enfouyé-moi dessous;  
Ainsi diront les gens, ce sont loyales amours.

*(The fair maid sat at the foot of the tower, crying, sighing and making moan. Her father asked her: daughter, what's the matter? Do you want a husband, or do you want a lord? I don't want a husband, I don't want a lord, I want my true love who languishes in the tower. Good Lord, my fair daughter, you can't have him, for he is to be hanged tomorrow at dawn. Father, if he is to be hanged, bury me beneath the spot, so the people will say, they were true lovers.)*

- 20 3. *Pilons l'orge, pilons l'orge, pilons l'orge, pilons la.*

Mon père m'y maria, pilons l'orge, pilons la,  
À un vilain m'y donna, tirez vous ci, tirez vous la.

À un vilain m'y donna, pilons l'orge, pilons la,  
Qui de rien ne me donna, tirez vous ci, tirez vous ça.

Qui de rien ne me donna, pilons l'orge, pilons la,  
Mais s'il continue cela, tirez vous ci, tirez vous la,

Mais s'il continue cela, pilons l'orge, pilons la,  
Battu vraiment il sera, tirez vous ci, tirez vous la.

*(Grind the barley, grind the barley, grind the barley, grind it there. My father's married me off to a peasant who won't give me a thing. But if he carries on that way, he'll get a real thrashing.)*

- 21 4. *Clic, clac, dansez sabots, et que crèvent les bombardes,  
Clic, clac, dansez sabots, et qu'éclatent les pipeaux.*

Mais comment mener la danse quand les belles n'y sont pas?  
Allons donc quérir les filles, ben sûr qu'il n'en manquera pas?

Ben bonjour messieux et dames, donn'rez vous la bell' que v'la?

LE PÈRE:

Les filles c'est fait pour l'ménage et pour garder la maison,

Ouais mais pour fair' mariage vous faudra ben des garçons.

Vous n'en avez point fait d'autre, vous patronne et vous patron.

LE PÈRE:

Allez donc ensemble au diable, ça s'ra ben un débarras.

Ah! patron et vous patronne, qu'on s'embrasse pour de bon.

LE PÈRE:

Clic, clac, dansez sabots, et que crèvent les bombardes,

Clic, clac, dansez sabots, et qu'éclatent les pipeaux.

*(Click, clack, hear the clogs dance, let the shawms play fit to burst. Click, clack, hear the clogs dance, let the pipes ring out. But how can we have a dance when there are no girls here? Let's go and look for some girls, there'll be plenty of them, for sure. Good day, master and mistress, would you let us have your fair daughter there?*

*THE FATHER: Daughters were made to raise a family and keep house.*

*But listen, to get married you need some boys. You didn't do anything different, good master and mistress.*

*THE FATHER: Go to the devil, the lot of you, and good riddance.*

*Ah! master and mistress, why not all embrace?*

*THE FATHER: Click, clack. &c.)*

- 22 5. C'est la petit' fill' du prince qui voulait se marier.

*Sus l'bord de Loire mariez-vous, la belle,*

*Sus l'bord de l'eau, sus l'bord de Loire joli matelot.*

Elle voit venir un' barque et quarant' galants dedans.

Le plus jeune des quarante lui commence une chanson.

Votre chanson que vous dites je voudrais bien la savoir.  
Si vous venez dans ma barque, belle, je vous l'apprendrai.  
La belle a fait ses cent toures en écoutant la chanson.  
Tout au bout de ses cent toures la bell' se mit à pleurer.  
Pourquoi tant pleurer, ma mie, quand je chante une chanson?  
C'est mon cœur qu'est plein de larmes par'que vous l'avez gagné.  
Ne pleur' plus ton cœur, la belle, car je te le rendrai.  
N'est pas si facile à rendre comme de l'argent prêté.

*(It was the prince's little daughter who wished to marry. On the banks of the Loire, get married, fair maid, marry the bonny sailor. She saw a boat draw near with forty young men aboard. The youngest of them began to serenade her. 'I'd like to know the song you're singing.' 'If you come aboard I will teach it to you.' The fair maid lingered to listen to the song, but then she began to weep. 'Why do you weep, my sweet, when I'm singing to you?' 'My heart is full of tears because you have captured it.' 'Don't cry, my fair one, for I shall give it back to you.' 'You can't give it back as easily as borrowed money.)*

- 23 6. La bell' si nous étions dedans stu hautbois  
On s'y mangerions fort bien des noix.  
On s'y mangerions à notre loisi, nique nac no muse,  
*Belle, vous m'avez t'emberlif,*  
*T'emberlificoté par votre biauté.*
- La belle si nous étions dedans stu vivier  
On s'y mettrions des p'tits canards nager.  
On s'y mettrions à notre loisi, nique nac no muse.
- La bell' si nous étions dedans stu fourneau  
On s'y mangerions des p'tits pâtés tout chauds.  
On s'y mangerions à notre loisi, nique nac no muse.
- La bell' si nous étions dedans stu jardin  
On s'y chanterions soir et matin,  
On s'y chanterions à notre loisi, nique nac no muse.

*(Pretty maid, if we were in the wood we could eat our fill of nuts. We could eat them to our heart's content. Pretty maid, you have captured me with your beauty. Pretty maid, if we were by the pond we could put little ducks in to swim. We could put them in to our heart's content. Pretty maid, if we were by the oven we could eat little hot pies. We could eat them to our heart's content. Pretty maid, if we were in the garden we could sing all day. We could sing to our heart's content.)*

- 24 7. Ah! mon beau laboureur,  
Ah! mon beau laboureur.  
*Beau laboureur de vigne ô lire lire,*  
*Beau laboureur de vigne ô lire ô la.*
- N'avez pas vu passer Marguerite ma mie?  
Je don'rais cent écus qui dire où est ma mie,  
Monsieur comptez-les là, entrez dans notre vigne.  
Dessous un prunier blanc la belle est endormie.  
Je la poussay trois fois sans qu'elle osat mot dire.  
La quatrième fois son petit cœur soupire.  
Pour qui soupirez-vous, Marguerite ma mie?  
Je soupire pour vous et ne puis m'en dédire.  
Les voisins nous ont vus et ils iront tout dire,  
Laissons les gens parler et n'en faisons que rire.  
Quand ils auront tout dit, n'auront plus rien à dire.

*(Ah! kind sir in the vineyard, have you seen my true love Marguerite pass by? I would give a hundred crowns to know where she is. Sir, hand them over and come into our vineyard. The fair maid lies sleeping beneath a white plum tree. I urged her three times but she would not say a word. The fourth time she gave a sigh. Who do you sigh for, Marguerite my love? I sigh for you and can't deny it. The neighbours have seen us and they will tell all. Let people talk, we'll just laugh at them. When they have told all, they'll have nothing more to say.)*

- 
- 25 8. Les tisserands sont pir' que les évêques,  
Tous les lundis ils s'en font une fête  
*Et tipe et tape et tipe et tape,*  
*Est-il trop gros, est-il trop fin,*  
*Et couchés tard, levés matin,*  
*En roulant la navette le beau temps viendra.*

Tous les lundis ils s'en font une fête  
Et le mardi ils ont mal à la tête.

Et le mardi ils ont mal à la tête,  
Le mercredi ils vont changer leur pièce,

Le mercredi ils vont changer leur pièce,  
Et le jeudi ils vont voir leur maîtresse.

Et le jeudi ils vont voir leur maîtresse,  
Le vendredi ils travaillent sans cesse.

Le vendredi ils travaillent sans cesse,  
Le samedi la pièce n'est pas faite.

Le samedi la pièce n'est point faite,  
Et le dimanche il faut de l'argent, maître.

*(The weavers are worse than bishops. Every Monday they celebrate. And tip and tap and tip and tap, is it too coarse, is it too fine, up early, late to bed, keep the shuttle rolling and the good times will come around. Every Monday they celebrate, Tuesday they recuperate, Wednesday they change their cloth, Thursday they go to see their mistress, Friday they work all day, Saturday the job's not done, Sunday, we want our money, master.)*





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