Parnham Voices – 14 November 2026

The Parish of Wyke Regis, All Saints with St Edmund, 1 Portland Rd, Weymouth DT4 9ES

The Course of True Love

Songs of Courtship, Companionship and Remembrance - Tales of Lovers, Dreamers and Fools

Courtship and Delight

Sing We and Chant It — Thomas Morley (c.1557–1602)
Fair Phyllis I Saw Sitting All Alone — John Farmer (c.1570–1601)
Come Gentle Swains — Michael Cavendish (c.1565–1628)
Come Again, Sweet Love Doth Now Invite — John Dowland (1563–1626)

Reading

Love's Labours Lost

Draw on, Sweet Night — John Wilbye (1574–1638)
Too Much I Once Lamented — Thomas Tomkins (1572–1656)
Weep, O Mine Eyes — John Bennet (c.1575–1614)

Reading

Love renewed

It Was a Lover and His Lass - Thomas Morley (c.1557–1602)

Interval

Love’s Promise

Come Live with Me — William Sterndale Bennett (1816–1875)
Who Shall Have My Lady Fair? — Robert Lucas Pearsall (1795–1856)
My Spirit Sang All Day — Gerald Finzi (1901–1956)

Reading

Love Remembered

An Eriskay Love Lilt —Hebridean Melody *Arranged by Hugh S. Roberton (1874–1952)*
Stars of the Summer Night — John Hatton (1809–1886)
Lay a Garland — Robert Lucas Pearsall (1795–1856)
My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land — Edward Elgar (1857–1934)

Reading

Love Laughs Last

Tea for Two — Vincent Youmans (1898–1946) *Arranged by Guy Turner*
Let's Do It — Cole Porter (1891–1964) *Arranged by Alan Simmons*

The Course of True Love

Songs of Courtship, Companionship and Remembrance – Tales of Lovers, Dreamers and Fools

Love has inspired composers for centuries. They have celebrated it, pursued it, lamented its loss, cherished its memory and occasionally laughed at its absurdities. The music in tonight's programme spans more than four hundred years, yet the emotions it explores remain strikingly familiar.

Our journey begins in the bright world of courtship. The English madrigal composers revelled in stories of young lovers, shepherds, maidens and the excitement of new affection. Yet Shakespeare's famous observation soon proves true. Love brings longing as well as delight, and the path from attraction to happiness is rarely straightforward. The music of Wilbye, Tomkins and Bennet explores disappointment, yearning and heartache with extraordinary honesty.

After these shadows comes renewal. Morley's setting of *It Was a Lover and His Lass* bursts into life with all the optimism of spring. Love returns, hope is restored and the story begins afresh.

Yet courtship is only the beginning. For many, love matures into companionship, commitment and often marriage or lifelong partnership. The programme's central section explores love fulfilled rather than merely desired. Bennett's *Come Live with Me* looks towards a shared life, Pearsall's *Who Shall Have My Lady Fair?* celebrates the successful pursuit of a beloved, and Finzi's radiant *My Spirit Sang All Day* captures the sheer exhilaration of love realised. Together they portray love not as a moment of excitement but as a life shared with another.

As life moves on, love becomes part of memory. The songs of the second half look backwards with tenderness, gratitude and sometimes sorrow. *An Eriskay Love Lilt* and *Stars of the Summer Night* reflect on devotion and remembrance, while Pearsall's *Lay a Garland* introduces a more profound sense of loss. Elgar's *My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land* forms the emotional heart of this section, recalling a love that remains vivid long after it has passed.

For all its joys and sorrows, however, love has a habit of making fools of us all. The programme concludes with the charm of *Tea for Two* and the wit of Cole Porter's *Let's Do It*. Their message is simple: whatever our age, circumstance or station, we all find ourselves caught up in the same adventure.

The course of true love may not always run smooth, but it continues to inspire some of the finest music ever written. Tonight's programme celebrates that journey in all its richness: courtship and companionship, remembrance and laughter, hope and heartbreak.