

**BRIGHTON CONSORT**  
**DIRECTOR: GREG SKIDMORE**

# AMICA MEA

*Renaissance Love Songs*

Motets and madrigals revelling in the joy of love

---

**Sunday, 16th Feb 2025, 7pm**

St Nicholas of Myra  
Brighton, BN1 3LJ

---

---

**Saturday, 22nd Feb 2025, 7pm**

St John sub Castro  
Lewes, BN7 2QA

---

Tickets: £15, £8 concessions (with valid ID), under 12s free

[brightonconsort.org.uk](http://brightonconsort.org.uk) or on the door  
Information: [info@brightonconsort.org.uk](mailto:info@brightonconsort.org.uk)



Brighton Consort: registered charity no. 1096432

**Amica mea**  
**Renaissance Love Songs**

**Brighton Consort**  
**Greg Skidmore**, Musical Director

Sunday, 16 February 2025  
7:00pm

The Church of St Nicholas of Myra  
Brighton

Saturday, 22 February 2025  
7:00pm

The Church of St-John-sub-Castro  
Lewes

For Valentine's Day, Brighton Consort takes you on a journey through music for lovers from the Renaissance. Both sacred and secular music embrace in this concert that is guaranteed to kindle your passions. While love songs throughout the ages have often focussed on either the ardent desire for love or the pain of its loss, our programme instead is a celebration of love when everything is going well! We've banished anguish and torment and instead we revel in being very 'loved up' by this music - in a Renaissance way, of course!

## Concert Programme

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina Pierre de Manchicourt	Osculetur me Osculetur me
Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina Johannes Lupi	Quam pulchra es Quam pulchra es
Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina Cipriano de Rore	Descendi in hortum meum Descendi in hortum meum

## INTERVAL

Orlande de Lassus	Bonjour mon coeur
Jacques Arcadelt Jacques Arcadelt	Bella Fioretta Da bei rami scendea
Claude Goudimel	Bonjour mon coeur
Orlando Gibbons John Wilbye	Ah, dear heart There, where I saw her lovely beauty
Philippe de Monte	Bonjour mon coeur
Francisco Guerrero Rodrigo de Ceballos	Quasi cedrus Hortus conclusus
Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina Francisco Guerrero	Trahe me post te Trahe me post te Virgo Maria

## Programme note

It's Valentine's Day! (Well, it was recently...) While the more cynical among us may think this is just yet another day for us to line the pockets of the greeting card industry, those who know the joy of saccharine, soft-focus, and gooey-eyed romance would never hear of such a thing. For you, The True Romantics, Brighton Consort presents this programme of Renaissance Love Songs.

When programming this concert, I encountered one small problem: it appears that sometimes love goes wrong (I was shocked to learn this!) and when this happens, it makes for really great music! So much of the love poetry written in the Renaissance and set by great composers such as Claudio Monteverdi or Thomas Weelkes is about the pang and ache of a broken heart, or the insanity of unfulfilled desire, or some other unfortunate situation. But this is (or was recently...) Valentine's Day! We can be upset and lovelorn for 364 days of the year, but not today. So I decided to choose music and texts that speak of love when love is great, fresh, new, beautiful, and exciting. We can all use the positivity!

When taking on this task of finding Renaissance music about love when it's going well, a great place to start is, believe it or not, the Holy Bible! The Old Testament book of the Song of Solomon (often known as the Song of Songs) contains beautiful, sensuous, and vivid love poetry that has been a part of the Jewish and Christian religious experience for millenia. During the Renaissance, when the Catholic Church was both the main cultural moderator and financial backer of professional music, composers made use of these texts to experiment with sensuality and expressiveness in music while not having to stray into (even) more salacious subject areas. The intensity of some of this music fits the sometimes extreme nature of these texts but it also expresses the intriguing overlap between religious fervour and romantic desire.

Because the texts themselves are at the forefront, I have chosen throughout tonight's programme pairs of compositions that set the same or very similar texts to highlight how different composers might approach the same starting material. This idea also allows us to explore an interesting practice in the Renaissance of taking small pieces of this poetry, even individual images, and creating new texts out of these 'love poetry building blocks'. You'll notice that the compositions that are paired in tonight's programme are not necessarily settings of *precisely* the same texts, and that ideas are repeated throughout the programme in different orders and in different contexts. Composers in this way sometimes actually *created* their own texts by drawing from the wide range of Song of Songs imagery, a rare practice during the Renaissance.

Within this context, it is perhaps not so remarkable that a composer known in modern times for his serious religious and liturgical music, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, would write and publish, in 1584, an entire volume of motets setting only texts drawn from the Song of Songs. The texts he chose here were strictly biblical, and don't make use of the various liturgical expansions and reimaginings mentioned above, whereas the works chosen to make the pairings in our programme often did. In choosing four of Palestrina's pieces for tonight's programme, we can present a framework for these texts and this tradition of musical settings of Song of Songs poetry built around Palestrina's work. Palestrina was also a prolific composer of secular music, and his 1584 volume can be seen to represent an experiment with writing 'sacred' music in a 'secular' way - and perhaps

vice versa. Given that in 2025 we celebrate 500 years since Palestrina's birth, grounding our programme in the work of Italian Renaissance music's greatest genius is more than fitting!

The Song of Songs repertoire, which constitutes the first half and the later part of the second half, sets Latin texts. In the first part of the second half, however, I've drawn on another often-set text, but this time in French, *Bonjour, mon coeur*. This poem that tells of the joy of a reunited couple was written by Pierre de Ronsard, one of Renaissance France's most celebrated poets. The first stanza of *Bonjour, mon coeur*, is nothing other than a long string of beautiful, tender, and playful greetings. The second stanza (set only by Philippe de Monte) gives some context to these greetings, but the overall effect is clear: the language here is simple and the love is fresh. Lassus and Goudimel wrote similar settings; their short, clear, and largely chordal writing is nevertheless delightful and beguiling. De Monte writes a slightly more complicated piece, but it is again one characterised by repeated material and lively rhythms. This music could not contrast more starkly with the subtly seductive music of the first half.

In between these settings of *Bonjour, mon coeur* come first two Italian and then two English madrigals. Here I found that music by the Italian madrigal genre's founder, Jacques Arcadelt, better satisfied my quest for music 'for love when it's all going really well' than the later, perhaps more tortured geniuses of Marenzio, Gesualdo, or Monteverdi. *Bella Fioretta* is a relatively straightforward but beautiful poem in which a lover questions how to adequately describe the look of his beloved, concluding that it is only paradise itself that can compare. While effective and moving, these sorts of comparison conceits can be found throughout Renaissance poetry. In *Da' be' rami scendea*, however, we get something altogether different, and from the pen of none other than Francesco Petrarca himself. Here is a moment captured in time, a dangled image: the lover describes a vision of the beloved showered in flower petals, describing how each floats through the air and lands. The text leads to the conclusion that here, in this impossible beauty that seems to stop time and last forever, is where 'Love reigns'. Archadelt's setting mirrors this wonderfully in his inventive use of rests and his crescendo to a triumphant proclamation 'Qui regna Amore'!

Our two English madrigals continue with our theme, though these texts only just manage to pry themselves free from the melancholy that characterised so much of Jacobean love poetry. Orlando Gibbons sets a text that appears to complain of separation and a broken heart, but it is in fact a plea whispered at day break after a blissful night together, wishing that this might last longer. John Wilbye's work is more poetically complex and makes use of night and day imagery as well to express the completeness of the poet's love. Both pieces are superlative examples of the musical skill of these two composers to create ravishing and opulent music, full of yearning and longing, but forever assured.

The programme concludes with a return to Song of Songs texts, but with a focus on two Spanish composers. Emotional intensity in religious music is a hallmark of the Spanish Renaissance, typified by the music of Tomás Luis de Victoria. Here, however, we focus on Francisco Guerrero, Victoria's less well known contemporary but still among the leaders of the school, and a little known composer Rodrigo de Ceballos. These two vie with Palestrina for how best to bring our love-fest of a concert to a close, but that honour must go to Guerrero with his amazing setting of *Trahe me post te, Virgo Maria*. In our last piece

tonight, we are briefly able to touch on the most fascinating and overt 'sanctification' of these astonishing love poetry texts yet in their use in Marian devotion, devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary is (and 'paradoxically' doesn't even begin to cover it) worshipped and adored here with words that normally so obviously would be reserved for sensual and romantic desire. The effect is spellbinding. There can be no clearer assertion of the equality of divine and earthly love.

*Programme note by Greg Skidmore  
February 2025*

---

**Brighton Consort**  
Musical Director, Greg Skidmore

<b>Soprano</b>	<b>Alto</b>	<b>Tenor</b>	<b>Bass</b>
Wendy Burdett	Jenny Clemens	Maya Davis	Mike Clemens
Sue Clough	Eleanor Clapp †	Richard Davis	Mark Findlay
Diana Gobel	Belinda Dutch	Nick Jarvis	David Game †
Hannah Loach	Stella Holman	Hugh Jones	John Petley †
Mirella Marlow	Alicia Newell *	Paul Lane	Alessio Santamaria
Pamela Nickels	Liz Petty	David Waterhouse	Nick Tier
	Susie Pontin	Jan White	Mick Venebles
	Michelle Roberts	Stephen White	
	Jan Thompson-Smith	Liz Yeats	

*\* indicates a singer who will only be present on Sunday, 16 February*

*† indicates a singer who will only be present on Saturday, 22 February*

## Amica mea: Renaissance Love Songs Texts & Translations

### Palestrina & Manchicourt

**Osculetur me** osculo oris sui  
Quia meliora sunt ubera tua vino  
Fragrantia unguentis optimis.  
Oleum effusum nomen tuum,  
Ideo adulescentulae  
dilexerunt te.

He will kiss me with a kiss from his mouth,  
Because your breasts are better than wine  
With the scent of excellent perfumes.  
Like poured oil is your name,  
And therefore young women  
have taken pleasure in you.

### Manchicourt also sets the following text, as part of the same piece:

Trahe me post te.  
Curremus in odorem  
unguentorum tuorum.  
Introduxit me rex in cellaria sua.  
Exsultabimus et laetabimur  
super vinum.  
Recti diligunt te.

Draw me along in your wake.  
We will run into the scent  
of your perfumes.  
The king has led me into his wine-store.  
We will rejoice and be glad  
with more pleasure than in wine.  
The righteous love you.

Tota pulchra es, amica mea,  
et macula non est in te.  
Favus distillans labia tua;  
mel et lac sub lingua tua.  
Odor unguentorum tuorum  
super omnia aromata.

You are wholly beautiful, my love,  
and there is no blemish in you.  
Honeycomb spills over your lips;  
Honey and milk lie under your tongue.  
The scent of your perfumes  
is better than all scents.

### Palestrina & Lupi

**Quam pulchra es**  
et quam decora, carissima, in deliciis.  
Statura tua assimilata est palmae  
Et ubera tua botris.  
Dixi: Ascendam in palmam  
Et apprehendam fructus ejus,  
Et erunt ubera tua  
sicut botri vineae,  
Et odor oris tui  
sicut odor malorum.

How beautiful you are,  
And how refined, my dearest, in your delights.  
Your height is very like a palm tree  
And your breasts like ripe fruit.  
I said: I will climb into the palm tree  
And I will take its fruits,  
And your breasts will be  
like ripe bunches of grapes,  
And the scent of your mouth  
like the scent of apples.

### Lupi also sets the following text, as part of the same piece:

Caput tuum ut Carmelus.  
Collum tuum sicut turris eburnea.  
Veni, dilecte me  
Egrediamur in ortum,  
Videamus si floruerunt mala punica.  
Ibi dabo tibi ubera mea.  
Amen.

Your head is like Mount Carmel  
Your neck is like a tower of ivory.  
Come, my darling,  
Let us go out into the garden  
Let us see if the pomegranates are ripe.  
There I will give you my breasts.  
Amen.

### Palestrina & Rore

**Descendi in hortum meum,**  
Ut viderem poma convallium  
Et inspicerem si floruisset vinea  
Et germinassent mala punica.

I went down into my garden  
To see the fruits of the valleys  
And to investigate whether the vine had flourished  
And whether the pomegranates had ripened.

**Rore also sets the following text, as part of the same piece:**

Revertere, revertere, Sulamitis,  
Ut intueamur te.

Return, return, O Shulamite,  
that we might look upon thee.

**Lassus, Goudimel, & De Monte**

**Bonjour mon cœur**, bonjour ma douce vie,  
Bonjour mon œuil,  
bonjour ma douce amie,  
Hé bonjour ma tourterelle, ma mignardise,  
Bonjour mes délices, mon amour,  
Mon doux printemps,  
ma douce fleur nouvelle,  
Mon doux plaisir, ma douce colombelle,  
Mon passereau, ma gente tourterelle.  
Bonjour, ma douce rebelle.

Good day, my heart, good day my sweet life,  
Good day my eye,  
good day, my dear friend,  
Hey, good day my turtle-dove, my sweetness,  
Good day my delight, my love,  
My sweet spring,  
my sweet new flower.  
My sweet pleasure, my sweet pigeon-chick,  
My little sparrow, my sweet turtle dove.  
Good day, my sweet rebel.

**De Monte also sets the following text, as part of the same piece:**

Je veux mourir si plus on me reproche  
Que mon service est plus froid q'une roche,  
De t'avoir laissée, maîtresse,  
pour aller suivre le roi,  
Mendiant je ne sais quoi,  
Que le vulgaire appelle une largesse,  
plutôt perisse honneur, cour et richesse,  
Que pour les biens jamais te relaisse,  
Ma douce et belle déesse.

I want to die if anyone adds more reproach  
That my devotion is colder than stone,  
for I left you, mistress,  
to follow the king  
Begging for I know not what –  
What the common people call 'oodles of dosh'  
But may honour, status and wealth die rather than  
That I should desert you again for profit,  
My sweet, beautiful goddess.

**Bella Fioretta**, io vorrei pur lodarvi,  
Ma come avvien che nel mirar il sole  
Manca la vista nostra  
S'io vo lodar la gran bellezza vostra,  
Mi mancan le parole.  
Sì ch'io non so  
né posso al ciel alzarvi,  
Che dirò dunque che chi vuole saper  
quanto ha di bello il Paradiso  
Miri, bella Fioretta, il vostro viso.

Beautiful Fioretta, I would like to praise you,  
But how does it happen that in looking at the sun  
Our sight fails?  
If I want to praise your great beauty,  
I lack the words.  
As I neither know it myself  
nor can actually lift someone up to heaven,  
I will say to someone who wants to know  
how beautiful Paradise is:  
Let him look, beautiful Fioretta, at your face.

**Da' be' rami scendea**

(dolce ne la memoria)  
una pioggia di fior' sovra 'l suo grembo;  
et ella si sedea  
humile in tanta gloria,  
coverta già de l'amoroso nembo.  
Qual fior cadea sul lembo,  
qual su le trecchie bionde,  
ch'oro forbito et perle  
eran quel dí a vederle;  
qual si posava in terra, et qual su l'onde;  
qual con un vago errore  
girando pareva dir: 'Qui regna Amore.'

A rain of flowers descended  
(sweet in the memory)  
from the beautiful branches into her lap,  
and she sat there  
humble amongst such glory,  
covered now by the loving shower.  
A flower fell on her hem,  
one in her braided blonde hair,  
that was seen on that day to be  
like chased gold and pearl:  
one rested on the ground, and one in the water,  
and one, in wandering vagary,  
twirling, seemed to say: 'Here Love rules'



**Quasi cedrus** exaltata sum in Libano,  
Et quasi cypressus in monte Sion  
Et quasi palma exaltata sum in Cades.  
Et quasi plantatio rosæ in Ierico,  
Quasi oliva speciosa in campis  
Et quasi platanus exaltata sum iuxta aquas.  
In plateis sicut cinnamomum  
Et balsamum aromatizans  
odorem dedi.  
Tota pulchra es, amica mea,  
Et macula non est in te.  
O amica mea, veni de Libano,  
Veni sponsa mea,  
veni coronaberis.

I have been raised as high as the cedar in Lebanon,  
and like a cypress on Mount Sion,  
And raised as high as the palm tree in Cadiz,  
And as high as a bed of roses in Jericho  
Like the lovely olive on the plains  
And raised as high as the plane tree by the water.  
And in open spaces, like the cinnamon  
And the scented balsam,  
I have sent out my perfume.  
You are completely beautiful, my love,  
And there is no blemish in you.  
O my love, come from Lebanon,  
Come, my bride, come;  
You will be crowned.

**Hortus conclusus**, soror mea, sponsa mea,  
Et fons signatus,  
Aperi mihi, o soror mea, amica mea,  
columba mea, immaculata mea,  
Surge, propera, amica mea, et veni.  
Veni, veni, sponsa mea,  
Veni, speciosa mea,  
ostende mihi faciem tuam,  
Favus distilans labia tua,  
Mel et lac sub lingua tua.  
Veni, sponsa mea,  
Veni, coronaberis.

Secret garden, my sister, my bride  
And fountain marked out for me,  
Open to me, my sister, my love,  
my dove, my chaste one.  
Arise, make haste, my love, and come.  
Come, come, my bride,  
Come, my beautiful one,  
show me your face;  
Your honeycomb spills over your lips,  
Honey and milk lie under your tongue.  
Come, my bride,  
Come, you will be crowned.

**Palestrina sets the following text:**

**Trahe me post te.**

Curremus in odorem  
unguentorum tuorum.  
Introduxit me rex in cellaria sua,  
Exsultabimus et laetabimur in te  
Memores uberum tuorum super vinum.  
Recte diligunt te.

Draw me along in your wake,  
We will run into the scent  
of your perfumes.  
The king has led me into his wine-store  
We will rejoice and be glad in you,  
Remembering your breasts, better than wine.  
They rightly take pleasure in you.

**Guerrero sets the following text:**

**Trahe me post te**, Virgo Maria,  
Curremus in odorem  
unguentorum tuorum.  
Quam pulchra es  
et quam decora, carissima, in delitiis.  
Statura tua assimilata est palmae,  
Et ubera tua botris.  
Dixi : ascendam in palmam  
Et apprehendam fructum eius;  
Ubera tua sicut botri vineae,  
Et odor oris tui  
sicut odor malorum.

Draw me along in your wake, Virgin Mary,  
We will run into the scent  
of your perfumes.  
How beautiful you are  
And how refined, my dearest, in your delights.  
Your height is very like a palm tree  
And your breasts like ripe fruit.  
I have said: I will climb into the palm tree  
And I will seize its fruit;  
Your breasts are like ripe bunches of grapes,  
And the scent of your mouth  
like the scent of apples.

## Biographies

**Brighton Consort** was formed by the late Daphne Elston in 1971 and is best known for its ambitious exploration of the rich repertoire of renaissance and early baroque music. Its Musical Directors have included Deborah Roberts, Katie Thomas, James Dixon and the present director Greg Skidmore. Several choir members are also closely involved in the running of the Brighton Early Music Festival. Brighton Consort's programmes have included collaborations with Ensemble Reza, the Paul Nieman Brass Ensemble and Nick Houghton, and the choir has performed in the Voices of London Festival and at various events in the Royal Pavilion, Brighton. Although our core repertoire mainly consists of Renaissance choral music, in order to offer variety to audiences and singers alike, our programmes sometimes include contemporary pieces and items from other musical periods too.

Born in Canada, **Greg Skidmore** arrived in England as an undergraduate at Royal Holloway College, University of London. After graduating with First Class Honours in Music, his post-graduate Choral Scholarship at Wells Cathedral led him to Lay Clerkships at Gloucester Cathedral and Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford. He now lives in London and pursues a varied career as a consort, choral, and solo oratorio singer alongside work as a conductor and workshop leader. He has appeared with *The Tallis Scholars*, *The Sixteen*, *The Cardinal's Musick*, *I Fagiolini*, *Tenebrae*, *Gabrieli Consort*, *Alamire*, *Contrapunctus*, and *Collegium Vocale Ghent*. He can be heard on recordings released by Decca, Deutsche Grammophon, Harmonia Mundi USA, and Gimell Records and in February 2022, Greg made his hundredth appearance with *The Tallis Scholars*. While at Christ Church in Oxford, he began a course of doctoral research in Musicology at the University of Oxford. He founded *The Lacock Scholars*, one of the UK's premier amateur vocal consorts and recently completed major coaching projects with students at the University of York, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and Royal Academy of Music. He has given workshops and masterclasses in the UK, France, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia in association with *The Sixteen*, *I Fagiolini*, and on his own and he is increasingly engaged in Canada as a guest conductor, clinician, and record producer, founding *The Canadian Renaissance Music Summer Schools* in 2018. He has been published in *Early Music* and his writing has appeared in programmes and CD liner notes for *The Tallis Scholars*, *The Sixteen*, *The Cardinal's Musick*, *The Gabrieli Consort*, *Tenebrae*, and *Ex Cathedra*.

## Interested in joining us?

**Brighton Consort** performs mainly Renaissance and early Baroque choral music but programmes sometimes include contemporary pieces and items from other musical periods too. We normally present three concert programmes per year, usually with two performances of each. We rehearse on Wednesday evenings (7:30pm-9:45pm) at St George's Church, Kemptown. Rehearsals take place throughout the year, with a break during July and August. We are always looking to hear from enthusiastic new singers in all voice parts and the best way to inquire about joining us is to get in touch. We'll ask you a little bit about your experience and suitability for what we do, and arrange for you to sing an audition in order to join the choir. We're very open to meeting new people and can't wait to hear from you.

To reach us, please email [info@brightonconsort.org.uk](mailto:info@brightonconsort.org.uk)

---

## More Information

For more information about **Brighton Consort**, to browse through our past projects, and learn more about the choir and our musical director, please [visit our website](#):

[brightonconsort.org.uk](http://brightonconsort.org.uk)

or [email](mailto:info@brightonconsort.org.uk): [info@brightonconsort.org.uk](mailto:info@brightonconsort.org.uk)

We can also be found on [social media](#):

[facebook.com/BrightonConsort](https://facebook.com/BrightonConsort)

[twitter.com/BrightonConsort](https://twitter.com/BrightonConsort)

Join us for **Brighton Consort's** next concert:

[Sowing Tears and Reaping Joy: From mourning to rejoicing](#)

Saturday, 28 June 2025

and

Sunday, 6 July 2025

The venues for these concerts are still being decided. Keep an eye on our website and social media channels, or get in touch with us directly by email to stay in the loop.