



Martin & Shan Graebe

Martin and Shan Graebe sing together in harmony, drawing from a repertoire that leans heavily on English traditional song, though they also slip in a few of the songs that Martin has written. Martin has spent many years researching the life and work of Sabine Baring-Gould and is an acknowledged authority on his folk song collection made in Devon and Cornwall at the end of the Nineteenth Century. Much of Martin's time is spent writing on this work and talking about it (and performing the songs) to various groups, particularly within the community from which the songs came. Shan discovered Cecil Sharp's collection when she was at school and has used song extensively in her work with children with severe learning difficulties. In the last few years she has joined Martin in his research into the Baring-Gould collection as well as sharing her knowledge about the way the voice works through workshops and individual coaching. She was recently involved in the 'Nice Warm Socks' project which produced a CD of songs with supporting materials for teaching children at an early developmental stage. This project was a finalist in the National Lottery competition for arts funded projects in 2007.

What we offer:

- Traditional English songs in distinctive two part harmony
- Talks on the life and work of Sabine Baring-Gould and other aspects of English traditional song
- A unique range of workshops and coaching on the singing voice for performers

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Talks and Workshops

We are happy to accept bookings for folk clubs, folk festivals and other events. As well as singing together in concerts and other formats we are able to offer workshops and talks on topics related to our interests and research in folk song.

Martin is acknowledged to be the leading authority on the Victorian folk song collector, Sabine Baring-Gould. As an introduction to this remarkable man he offers three talks.

“A Dear Lover of Songs”

This talk covers the broad sweep of Baring-Gould’s life and work including biographical details, a review of his writing, an overview of his folk song collection and publication and the story of the recent discovery of previously unknown manuscripts, the study of which has led to a new understanding of his contribution to English traditional song.

“Sweet Nightingales - The real people behind the songs”

Sabine Baring-Gould spent more than fifteen years going among the ordinary people of Devon and Cornwall, asking them about their lives, their stories and their songs. He wrote about many of them in various accounts during those years, and used what he had heard from these people to enrich his own stories. This talk goes behind the stories Baring-Gould told, to find out a little more about the real people who gave him their songs.

“To Widdicombe Fair - Sabine Baring-Gould’s quest for folk-life in Devon and Cornwall”

The songs that Baring-Gould collected were only a part of the story. This talk covers the broader picture of Baring-Gould’s search for folk-life in Devon and Cornwall including folklore, superstitions and beliefs, and it examines how he used the material he obtained to add colour to his novels and non-fiction writing.

Other talks that Martin has given in recent years include

- ‘Devon by Bicycle and Dog-cart’ - The collaboration between Baring-Gould and Cecil Sharp
- ‘Pixies, Padfoots and Popular Antiquities’ - Sabine Baring-Gould and folklore
- ‘When we went a Gypsying’ - Sabine Baring-Gould’s Dartmoor expeditions in search of song
- ‘All the Trees They do Grow High’ - Baring-Gould and the Ballad
- ‘The Folk Next Door’ - Baring-Gould in Cornwall
- ‘Farewell Heat and Welcome Frost’ - Sabine Baring-Gould’s journey to Iceland (1862)

One of these talks, or a special topic by request, could be made available at your festival or seminar. The talks are, generally, fully illustrated and we can bring the necessary equipment, including projector and screen. Some of the talks also include (live) musical examples.

For 2008 Martin is also offering a workshop “Finding Out About Folk Song”. This is an introduction to folk song research for non-experts, suggesting ways of going about research and identifying key sources of information. It has been created in response to singers and enthusiasts who wish to find out more about the origins and background to the traditional songs that they sing.

Martin is also experienced in doing live interviews in front of an audience. The 'Noon Interview' at the Cheltenham Folk Festival, for example, is now in its twelfth year and interviewees have included Cyril Tawney, Waterson-Carthy, Nancy Kerr and James Fagan, Peter Kennedy, Jo and Fi Fraser among others.

Shan is, by training, a speech and language therapist. In recent years she has tutored individuals and small groups at folk song schools and festivals. In response to participants' requests for further information and practical experience, she has developed the following workshops:

How Your Voice Works. This workshop is not a conventional voice work-out. It is an illustrated talk with opportunities to discuss aspects of the voice and to ask questions. This workshop has now been run a number of times and has proved very lively and interactive and has scored highly in subsequent feedback. Running time 50-60 minutes.

Dealing with Nerves. In this workshop Shan offers some thoughts on dealing with nerves and techniques that help to manage nervous energy effectively. Skills in memorising songs are important in this context and will be covered in the workshop, with practical exercises. Running time 50-60 minutes.

Giving your voice carrying power. Participants will hear about different ways of using our voices and how to achieve a strong voice that will carry. This workshop is mostly practical. Running time 50-60 minutes.

Keeping your voice healthy. All singers should have a concern about keeping their voices working well, and what to do when they are experiencing problems. This talk will highlight some of the main issues and explain the reasons behind the advice. Running time 50-60 minutes.

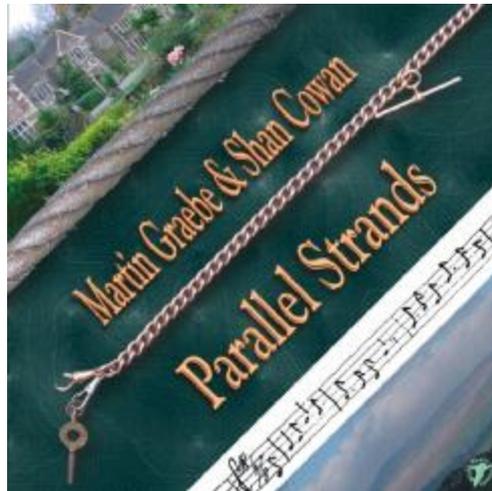
Why does music have such emotional power? This talk explores some of the reasons why we love to make music and respond to it so strongly. There has recently been much fascinating research in fields such as neurology, development, evolutionary history &c. This talk will bring together some of these strands and also offer some practical activities, whilst underlining that the essential mystery of music will always remain. Running time 50-60 minutes.

Each talk is supported by a clearly written 'handout', which will be emailed or sent to participants on request.

Martin and Shan also offer special features that combine songs and readings, based on Sabine Baring-Gould's work. For 2008 we offer two such programmes, each timed to work in a one hour slot:

"Songs of the West". A selection of songs and readings from the Baring-Gould song collection, together with illustrations and other explanation that bring his work to life.

"Shipshape" a programme of songs selected from the many sea-songs that Baring-Gould collected, with readings from his published and unpublished work.



Martin and Shan's CD, 'Parallel Strands', brings together Martin's own songs and several from the Baring-Gould manuscripts. Accompaniments are provided by a great team of musicians including Paul Burgess, Jeff Gillett, Keith Kendrick, Barry Lister, Paul Sartin, and Paul Wilson with additional vocals by Doug Bailey, Lynne Heraud, Barry Lister and Pat Turner. The CD has been produced by Doug Bailey of Wildgoose Records, WGS 323CD. See <http://uk.geocities.com/martin.graebe@btinternet.com> for details

What the reviewers have said:

... truly impressive ... buy the CD and give yourself a treat!

'What's Afoot'

... rich fare indeed ...

Folknews Kernow

... an absolutely gorgeous album

Mardles

... a fascinating and accomplished CD worthy of a place on any serious collector's shelf.

Folk London

Beautifully sung and superbly recorded ... the musical arrangements are among the finest I have ever heard. Very highly recommended

Chris (Yorkie) Bartram, Shreds and Patches

A new CD by Martin and Shan Graebe is in preparation for release by WildGoose in the summer of 2008