

06. Foresters, Sound the Cheerful Horn (Twelve Original English GleeS, c. 1810)

Sir Henry Bishop
(1786-1855)
arr. William Melton

Bishop, Sir Henry Rowley

(born London, 18 November 1786; died London, 30 April 1855)

The son of a Shropshire-born watchmaker and haberdasher, Bishop was already partner in a sheet music business at the age of 13. His first compositions appeared soon afterwards. After a failed attempt at becoming a jockey, Bishop studied harmony in earnest under Francesco Bianchi. He subsequently produced a remarkable series of ballets and operas for the major London theatres, about 130 stage works in all. From 1810 on he also assumed the musical direction of Covent Garden and later at Drury Lane and Vauxhall Gardens. Bishop assisted in the foundation of the Philharmonic Society and became a professor of harmony at the Royal Academy of Music (later also at Edinburgh University). Prince Albert sponsored Bishop's knighthood in 1842, and a professorship at Oxford followed.

A celebrated composer during his day (George Hogarth called him 'the English Mozart'), Bishop's fame faded after his death to the point that he is now remembered chiefly as the composer of 'Home, Sweet Home'. Nonetheless, the great German musicologist Hugo Riemann rated Bishop 'one of the most fruitful of English composers', a full-length biography appeared 75 years after his death, and more recently scholar Nicholas Temperley has emphasised Bishop's 'commanding reputation as the guardian of the best tradition of English song'. A fine example of this tradition is Bishop's evocative "Foresters, sound the cheerful horn", published by the composer in London c. 1810 in the collection *Twelve Original English GleeS*. The song appeared in multiple versions over the next decades, including one from c. 1823 'with accompaniments for pianoforte or harp, and two French horns'.

Text by William Melton