

17th June 2014

Press Release

“The more we learn about war, the more important it becomes to sing about peace.”

In Flanders Fields

English and Flemish songs, stories and poetry from the Great War

An evening with Michael Morpurgo, Coope Boyes and Simpson and the Paul Rans Ensemble to mark the centenary of the First World War on Monday 25th August 2014, 6.30pm Kings Place, 90 York Way, London, N1 9AG

Bestselling author of *War Horse* and *Private Peaceful*, Michael Morpurgo joins the **Coope Boyes and Simpson a cappella trio and the Paul Rans Ensemble from Flanders, Belgium**, for an unforgettable evening of poetry and music marking the centenary of the First World War. The evening is a cooperation between The Representation of the Government of Flanders in the UK and the ‘In Flanders Fields Museum’ in Ieper (Ypres) in Belgium.

Michael will read a selection of war poems, including some by his own grandfather, the eminent Belgian scholar, poet and playwright Emile Cammaerts, accompanied by a selection of English and Flemish songs, both traditional and written by Coope Boyes and Simpson and Paul Rans, capturing the spirit of the Great War.

Coope Boyes and Simpson comprises the award-winning voices of Barry Coope, Jim Boyes and Lester Simpson. They have performed other concerts with Michael Morpurgo for his books including *Private Peaceful*, *The Best Christmas Present in the World* and *On Angel Wings*. Peace has been a recurring theme of their powerful and distinctive singing and song-writing style. It was the strength of their writing about the events of the First World War that first led them to be commissioned by Piet Chielens of the ‘In Flanders Fields Museum’ in

Ypres to perform and compose music for the Flemish arts organisation, *Peace Concerts Passendale* in 1993.

In Flanders Fields combines their own writing with the biting humour of the Tommies' war-time observations and music. Songs like Jim Boyes' *Flanders* and Lester Simpson's *Standing in Line* and Barry Coope's singing of *Robin's Song* were also the reason that the author Michael Morpurgo asked them to join him in concert performances of his novel *Private Peaceful*, with its message of the futility of war and later, in the adaptation of *The Best Christmas Present in the World*, his story about the Christmas Truce of 1914. *In Flanders Fields* is the culmination of this involvement, bringing together newly written songs, existing and first time recordings of songs from Peace Concerts Passendale and songs and music of the "War to end all Wars". (www.coopeboyesandsimpson.co.uk)

This concert will also be the British launch of Coope Boyes and Simpson's new double album, *In Flanders Fields* (No Masters Co-operative NMCD42).

The Paul Rans Ensemble focuses on popular songs and instrumental music from the Low Countries, ranging from medieval times to the present day. Their work includes performing at the 'In Flanders Fields Museum' in Ypres which led to them releasing *Three Scenes of War* (Fréa MWCD 4061) - songs about conflict in Flanders ranging from the 16th century religious wars to the 18th century French-British Wars and World War 1. Their most recent work includes a programme of Flemish traditional and newly written songs about WW1. They have also previously worked with Coope Boyes and Simpson on a successful series of Christmas concerts in Belgium. The Paul Rans Ensemble's line-up is Paul Rans, voice; Philippe Malfeyt, guitar; Piet Stryckers, cello; Paul Van Loey, flutes and An Van Laethem, violin (www.paulrans.com)

To book tickets, call 020 7520 1490 or go to <http://www.kingsplace.co.uk>

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