

16 DECEMBER 2023

# Noel!

Christmas With Truro Cathedral Choir



Truro  
Cathedral  
*sacred space, common ground*

Programme  
£5

## From the Dean-Designate

It is a great joy to welcome you to Cornwall's cathedral, to Truro cathedral, built to the glory of God as a place of worship, encounter and hospitality. Central to that purpose is music and most specifically choral music. We are blessed with many talented musicians who come together to lead us in the worship and praise of Almighty God. The unbroken choral tradition here is part of the great Anglican choral tradition which goes back centuries. Along with the bread and butter of the daily round of 'singing the offices' of the church the choir regularly give concerts, here and elsewhere, produce recordings and contribute to the musical scene in Cornwall.

Advent and Christmas are special times and attending this concert will enrich the journey to the Nativity of Our Lord. Whether you are here for musical or religious reasons, or both, it is my hope that this evening is an evening in which you will be moved and inspired by the rich programme of music and the quality of the musical talents offered by the choir and the music department.

However you are celebrating Christmas this year, may you know the love of God and the blessing of the Christ child in your lives and in your families.

With every good wish

*Dean-designate, Canon Simon Robinson*



## PROGRAMME

**Sir Christèmas – William Mathias (1934 – 1992)**

**The truth from above – Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 – 1958)**

*Soloists: Alfie Edwardes, John Woodworth (treble)*

**I sing of a maiden – Patrick Hadley (1899 – 1973)**

**Of a rose sing we\*\* – Dobrinka Tabakova (born 1980)**

**O magnum mysterium – Morten Lauridsen (born 1943)**

**Audience carol I: The First Nowell**

**Angelus ad virginem – Anonymous 13th century**

*Soloist: Sam Chichester-Clark (tenor)*

*Trio: Colin Wilson (alto), Nico Shaw (tenor), Jacob Dennison (bass)*

**In the bleak midwinter\*\* – Becky McGlade (born 1974)**

*Soloists: Oriel Blount, Bryher Gemmill, Lowenna Watkiss (soprano),*

*Colin Wilson (alto), Bryan Dadson (tenor), Harry Hoyland (bass)*

**Sans Day carol – Traditional Cornish, arr John Rutter (born 1945)**

**Tomorrow shall be my dancing day – John Gardner (1917 – 2011)**

*\*\*Commissioned and premièred by Truro Cathedral Choir*

## INTERVAL

**People look East – Peter Tranchell (1905 – 1987)**

**There is no rose of such virtue – Benjamin Britten (1913 – 1976)**

**Gloria in excelsis Deo – John Taverner (1490 – 1545)**

**The Shepherd's carol – Bob Chilcott (born 1955)**

**Audience carol II: While Shepherds watched**

**Jesus Christ the apple tree – Elizabeth Poston (1905 – 1987)**

**In dulci jubilo – arr Robert Lucas Pearsall (1795 – 1856)**

*Soloists: Joseph Hagle, Joseph Taylor (treble), Poppy Carlton, Celia Stoddart Hunkin (alto),  
Bryan Dadson, Alex Davison (tenor), David Caroe, Charlie Murray (bass)*

**Silent night – arr Philip Ledger (1937 – 2012)**

**Audience carol III: O come, all ye faithful  
arr David Willcocks (1919 – 2015)**

**Ding! dong! Merrily on high – arr Mack Wilberg (born 1955)**

*The audience*

*“should join heartily in the singing of the hymns and verses specially marked for that purpose”!*

## Introduction

Welcome to Truro Cathedral for a celebration of Christmas with the Cathedral Choir. It is a great pleasure to present this varied programme of music from across the centuries; our aim is that you will enjoy hearing both the traditional carols and some more modern settings – hopefully you may leave this evening with some new favourites. Christmas is a time where the sounds of voices resounding in a soaring cathedral are especially evocative, whether it be a single solo chorister introducing *Once in Royal David's City* or a whole congregation joined in song. A big 'thank you' to everyone who has worked so hard to make this evening possible. I hope that the music gets you well and truly into the Christmas spirit!

Our first half starts with Mathias' energetic setting of the 15th-century text *Sir Christèmas*, loudly welcoming a personification of the season – 'Lord Christmas'. We then hear the most simple of settings, Vaughan William's harmonisation of the folk carol *The Truth from above*. Our next two pieces both focus on Mary, the first for chorister voices by Hadley, *I sing of a maiden*, and the second for full choir - an expansive setting by Dobrinka Tabakova of the text *Of a rose sing we*, using a rose as a metaphor for Mary. Tabakova's carol was written for Truro Cathedral Choir and first performed in 2016.

After you also have the opportunity to flex your vocal cords in *The First Nowell*, we then move to the oldest carol in the programme, the 13th-century 3-part *Angelus ad Virginem*, here sung by our Lay Vicars and Choral Scholars. Next is local Cornish composer Becky McGlade's exquisite setting of Rossetti's text *In the Bleak Midwinter*, before we sing John Rutter's sparkling arrangement of the Cornish *Sans Day Carol* and finish the first half with Gardner's playful *Tomorrow shall be my dancing day*.

The second half begins with a cheeky Advent piece by Tranchell, *People look East*, a favourite of our boy choristers. The girl choristers will then sing a setting in 3 parts of *There is no rose* by Benjamin Britten, from his wonderful collection *A Ceremony of Carols*. Originally written for upper voices and harp, this work is a 'must listen' for me every year in December – if you are unfamiliar with it, do go and have a listen! – I have a particular attachment to the wonderful harp interlude. We will then travel to the fields outside Bethlehem, and hear the 16th-century John Taverner's depiction in sound of the angels announcing Christ's birth to the shepherds: *Gloria in excelsis Deo*. This is followed by a complete change of perspective and style, to Chilcott's *The Shepherd's Carol*, now singing from the perspective of a shepherd on the hills that night receiving the good news. We will then all join to sing *While Shepherds watched*.

After this, the choir will sing two wonderful carols (and both personal favourites of mine). Elizabeth Poston's *Jesus Christ the apple tree* seems to make time briefly stand still with its simplicity, and Pearsall's *In dulci jubilo*, one of the most widely-known Christmas choral pieces, intricately weaves its many parts around the famous tune. The full choir will then sing Ledger's beautifully unpretentious arrangement of *Silent Night*, before you all once again have a chance to fill the Cathedral with sound in *O Come, all ye faithful*. We will then round the concert off with Mack Wilberg's fun setting of *Ding! Dong! Merrily on High* – and we might possibly have a little surprise treat for you at the end...!

If you have enjoyed the music this evening, do join us for some of the services taking place over the next few weeks in the Cathedral. Central to Truro's Christmas is the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, a format pioneered in this Cathedral and later exported to King's College, Cambridge, where it has become famous all over the world. These services take place on 23rd and 24th December at 19:00. If, after hearing the choristers' voices this evening, you know of any boy in school Year 2, 3, or 4, or girl in school Year 8, who enjoys singing and might want to be a chorister, do please get in touch at [jab@trurocathedral.org.uk](mailto:jab@trurocathedral.org.uk). You can see later in this programme the details of our exciting Boy Chorister Experience Day taking place on 13th January 2024.

I wish you all a happy and restful Christmas and New Year.

*James Anderson-Besant*



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# WORDS AND PROGRAMME NOTES

## Sir Christèmas

William Mathias was one of Wales' foremost musicians of the twentieth century. Born in Carmarthenshire, he studied at the Royal Academy of Music and returned to Wales to teach at the University College of North Wales, Bangor for almost thirty years. This anonymous carol text is part of his Ave Rex sequence, which was composed for the Cardiff Polyphonic choir in 1969. Mathias conjures the spirit of a mediaeval banquet with vibrant chords in a brisk, dancing rhythm, and the carol opens by greeting the very spirit of the Yuletide season, Sir Christèmas himself. A recurring character of Mummers' plays, folk tales, and even seen reflected in Charles Dickens' Ghost of Christmas Present, this jolly guest to the feast brings all manner of good cheer in announcing Christ's birth to the assembled company, welcoming one and all with flagons of ale in joyful celebration!

Nowell, nowell, nowell,  
Who is there that singeth so?  
Nowell, nowell

I am here, Sir Christèmas, Welcome, my lord Sir Christèmas,  
Welcome to all, both more and less,  
Come near: Nowell

Dieu vous garde, beaux sieurs (God rest ye merry gentlemen), Tidings I you bring:  
A maid hath borne a child full young,  
which causeth you to sing: Nowell

Christ is now born of a pure maid,  
In an ox-stall he is laid,  
Wherefore sing we at a brayde: Nowell

Buvez bien par toute la compagnie (Drink hearty, all the company),  
Make good cheer and be right merry,  
And sing with us now joyfully: Nowell

*Anonymous, 15th century*

## The Truth from above

Although this well-loved Christmas carol is primarily associated with Ralph Vaughan Williams, its origins stretch much further back, and was in print for at least a hundred years before he "collected" it from a Herefordshire village in 1909. Its oldest appearance is from Wolverhampton at the end of the eighteenth century, and by 1823 William Hone included it on his list of "Christmas carols now annually printed" in his book *Ancient Mysteries Described*. There are as many as 16 verses from various sources, but in this arrangement Vaughan Williams has set five; consolidating the story of creation, the fall of man and salvation through Jesus Christ framed as the story of a travelling singer, spreading the Gospel at Christmastide. Vaughan Williams' use of modal harmony not only homages the Tudor composers he so admired, but also lends the same timeless air to the words that suffuses so much of his music reflecting the English countryside.

This is the truth sent from above,  
The truth of God, the God of love,  
Therefore don't turn me from your door,  
But hearken all both rich and poor.

The first thing which I do relate  
Is that God did man create;  
The next thing which to you I'll tell  
Woman was made with man to dwell.

And we were heirs to endless woes,  
Till God the Lord did interpose;  
And so a promise soon did run  
That he would redeem us by his Son.

And at that season of the year  
Our blest redeemer did appear;  
He here did live, and here did preach,  
And many thousands he did teach.

Thus he in love to us behaved,  
To show us how he must be saved;  
And if you want to know the way,  
Be pleased to hear what he did say.

*Traditional English carol*

## I sing of a maiden

An ancient carol that traces its roots back to the fifteenth century (and probably earlier), this beautiful text is matched by Patrick Hadley's gentle two-part setting. While the poem draws on the annunciation for its religious basis, the images of the spring dew that falls on grass and flowers ties the mystery of the immaculate conception into nature and fertility, a kind of spiritual innocence shared through all of God's creation. The final verse speaks directly to Mary's nobility, a recurring theme in mediaeval poetry. The triple time rhythm that makes up the central part of the carol suggests a lullaby, sprinkled with touches of minor harmony. Born in 1899, Hadley studied at Pembroke College Cambridge after serving in the First World War and went on to become a composition teacher at the Royal College of Music, before being appointed a Fellow of Gonville and Caius College.

I sing of a maiden  
That is makeless;  
King of all kings  
To her son she ches.

He came all so still  
Where his mother was,  
As dew in in April  
That falleth on the grass.

He came all so still  
To his mother's bower,  
As dew in April  
That falleth on the flower.

He came all so still  
Where his mother lay,  
As dew in April  
That falleth on the spray.

Mother and maiden  
Was never none but she:  
Well may such a lady  
God's mother be.

*Sloane MS, 15th century*



## Of a rose sing we

Composed for Truro's 2016 Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, this piece was the first work by British-Bulgarian composer Dobrinka Tabakova in her residency with Truro Cathedral, supported by Arts Council England. The words are taken from the fifteenth-century Selden Carol Book, and are a devotional song to the Virgin Mary using the common imagery that associates her with the rose. The text is macaronic, weaving middle English verse with Latin. Tabakova sets the Latin phrases as devotional responses to the English rhyme. The Christmas story is told here not only in thrilling declamation of the Saviour, but in the tender beauty of wonder and awe.

Of a rose sing we: misterium mirabile (miraculous mystery)  
This rose is railed on a ryse,

He hath brought the Prince of price,  
And in this time sooth it is  
Viri sine semine (Without the seed of man)

This rose is red of colour bright,  
Through whom our joye began alight,  
Claro David germine (born of the house of David)

Of this rose was Christ y-born,  
To save mankind that was forlorn,  
And us alle from sin its sore,  
Prophetarum carmine (as foretold by the prophets)

This rose, of flowers she is the flower,  
She will not fade for no shower,  
To sinful men she sent succour,  
Mira plentitudine (In wondrous plenty)

This rose is so fair of hue,  
In maid Mary that is so true,  
Y-born was Lord of all virtue,  
Salvator sine crimine (Saviour without sin)

Of a rose sing we: misterium mirabile

*Anonymous, 15th century*

## O magnum mysterium

Rather than a shout for joy, Laurisdén's setting of this Matins responsory text is much more inward looking; a quiet affirmation of the beautiful majesty of Christ's birth, with just as much emotional intensity as any of the numerous other settings. A work of brilliance through understatement, it reflects on the image of Mary as mother the baby Jesus and ponders the great mystery (magnum mysterium) that God Almighty would choose to come to earth as a vulnerable child, born in a humble manger. The closing "Alleluia" comes out of these modest beginnings and becomes overwhelming in its power.

O magnum mysterium,  
et admirabile sacramentum,  
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum,  
jacentem in praesepe!  
Beata Virgo, cujus viscera meruerunt,  
portare Dominum Christum.  
Alleluia!

*O great mystery,  
and wondrous sacrament,  
that animals should see the new-born Lord,  
lying in their manger!  
Blessed is the Virgin whose womb was worthy to  
bear the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Alleluia!*

*Words from the fourth of nine responsories for Matins on Christmas Day*

**Audience Carol – The first Nowell**

**The first Nowell the angel did say  
Was to certain poor shepherds, in fields as they lay;  
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep  
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.**

**Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell  
Born is the King of Israel.**

**They lookèd up and saw a star,  
Shining in the east, beyond them far;  
And to the earth it gave great light,  
And so it continued both day and night:**

**Nowell, nowell...**

Lower voices

**And by the light of that same star,  
Three wise men came from country far;  
To seek for a king was their intent,  
And to follow the star wherever it went:**

**Nowell, nowell...**

Upper voices

**This star drew near to the north west;  
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest,  
And there it did both stop and stay  
Right over the place where Jesus lay:**

**Nowell, nowell...**

All

**Then enter'd in those wise men three,  
Full rev'rently upon their knee,  
And offer'd there in his presence  
Their gold and myrrh and frankincense:**

**Nowell, nowell...**

**Then let us all with one accord  
Sing praises to our heav'nly Lord,  
That hath made heav'n and earth of naught,  
And with his blood mankind hath bought:**

**Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,  
Born is the King of Israel.**

*English traditional*

## Angelus ad virginem

This popular mediaeval carol can be found in manuscript sources throughout England, Ireland and France dating back to the end of the thirteenth century, and is even named in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, specifically when it is sung by Nicholas the Clerk of Oxenford in the Miller's tale. Originally said to have 27 verses, each one starting with the following letter of the alphabet, the carol recounts the annunciation of the Archangel Gabriel to Mary as depicted in the Gospel of Luke and sung at every evensong as the Magnificat. As is common with mediaeval lyrics, the crucifixion is alluded to, recounting the sacrifice made for humanity's sins as Christ's holy duty, alongside the selfless duty of Mary becoming the mother of God. Soloist, trio and full back row of the choir sing alternately, passing the different strands of the narrative back and forth through the carol.

Angelus ad virginem,  
Subintrans in conclave,  
Virginis formidinem  
Demulcens, inquit "Ave!  
Ave, regina virginum:  
Coeli terraeque dominum  
Concipies et paries intacta  
Salutem hominum;  
Tu porta coeli facta,  
Medela criminum."

"Quomodo conciperem,  
Quae virum non cognovi?  
Qualiter infringerem,  
Quae firma mente vovi?"  
"Spiritus sancti gratia  
Perficiet haec omnia.  
Ne timeas, sed gaudeas  
Secura, quod castimonia  
Manebit in te pura  
Dei potentia."

Ad haec, virgo nobilis  
Respondens inquit ei,  
"Ancilla sum humilis  
Omnipotentis Dei.  
Tibi coelesti nuntio,  
Tanti secreti conscio,  
Consentiens et cupiens videre  
Factum quod audio,  
Parata sum parere  
Dei consilio."

Angelus disparuit  
Et statim puellaris  
Uterus intumuit  
Vi partus salutaris.  
Qui, circumdatus utero  
Novem mensium numero,  
Hinc exiit et iniit conflictum,  
Affigens humero  
Crucem, qua dedit ictum  
Hosti mortifero.

*The angel came to the Virgin,  
entering secretly into her room;  
the Virgin's fear  
calming, he said, "Hail!  
Hail, queen of virgins:  
you will conceive the Lord of heaven and earth  
and bear him, still a virgin,  
to be the salvation of mankind;  
you will be made the gate of heaven,  
the cure of sins."*

*"How can I conceive,  
When I have never known a man?  
How can I transgress  
resolutions that I have vowed with a firm mind?"  
"The grace of the Holy Spirit  
shall do all this.  
Do not be afraid, but rejoice  
without a care, since your chastity  
will remain in you unspoilt  
through the power of God."*

*To this, the noble Virgin,  
replying, said to him,  
"I am the humble maidservant  
of almighty God.  
To you, heavenly messenger,  
and bearer of such a great secret,  
I give my consent, and wishing to see  
done what I hear,  
I am ready to obey  
the will of God."*

*The angel vanished,  
and at once the girl's  
womb swelled  
with the force of the pregnancy of salvation.  
He, protected by the womb  
for nine months in number,  
left it and began the struggle,  
fixing to his shoulder  
a cross, with which he dealt the blow  
to the deadly Enemy.*

Eia Mater Domini,  
Quae pacem reddidisti  
Angelis et homini  
Cum Christum genuisti!  
Tuum exora filium  
Ut se nobis propitium  
Exhibeat, et deleat peccata,  
Praestans auxilium  
Vita frui beata  
Post hoc exsilium.

*Hail, Mother of our Lord,  
who brought peace back  
to angels and men  
when you bore Christ!  
Pray your son  
that he may show favor to us  
and blot out our sins,  
giving us help  
to enjoy a blessed life  
after this exile.*

*Anonymous, 13th century*

### **In the bleak midwinter**

Christina Rossetti's text is another well-loved part of Christmas, usually in its other settings by Gustav Holst or Harold Darke, but this setting by Cornish composer Becky McGlade allows the text to unfurl in its own simplicity, writing for unaccompanied four-part choir. Each verse is set to the the same music, allowing for a direct delivery of text that giving space for the words to take centre stage, forming the narrative alongside the music. The wide voicing of the first chord lends an air of winter chill, and the repetition of the very last line, "give my heart", gently illustrates the devotion central to this wonderful poem.

In the bleak midwinter  
Frosty wind made moan,  
Earth stood hard as iron,  
Water like a stone,  
Snow had fallen snow on snow,  
Snow on snow,  
In the bleak midwinter  
Long ago.

Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him,  
Nor earth sustain;  
Heaven and earth shall flee away  
When He comes to reign:  
In the bleak midwinter  
A stable-place sufficed  
The Lord God Almighty  
Jesus Christ.

What can I give Him,  
Poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd  
I would bring a lamb,  
If I were a wise man  
I would do my part, –  
Yet what I can I give Him,  
Give my heart.

*Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)*

## The Sans Day Carol

John Rutter has become synonymous with Christmas, not only through his commissions for the choir of King's College, Cambridge, but also for his work on the Carols for Choirs books, in which many of his compositions are featured. His sheer ease of setting words and melody is just as obvious in his own original compositions as it is in his arrangements of familiar tunes, such as this very carol. This sparkling arrangement re-clothes an old Cornish carol, collected by W D Watson as it was sung to him by Thomas Beard in the village of St Day in the early 1900s. Rutter varies the music to add character to the verses, from the opening flourish in the accompaniment, to the darker harmonies behind the tenor and bass verse. The words are like another traditional Christmas carol, 'The Holly and the Ivy', where the colours of the berries of the holly bush throughout the seasons form the first part of the rhyming couplet in the verses.

Now the holly bears a berry  
As white as the milk,  
And Mary bore Jesus  
Who was wrapped up in silk.

And Mary bore Jesus Christ,  
Our Saviour for to be,  
And the first tree in the greenwood  
It was the holly.

Now the holly bears a berry  
As green as the grass,  
And Mary bore Jesus  
Who died on the Cross.

And Mary bore Jesus Christ...

Now the holly bears a berry  
As black as the coal,  
And Mary bore Jesus  
Who died for us all.

And Mary bore Jesus Christ...

Now the holly bears a berry  
As blood it is red,  
Then trust we our Saviour  
Who rose from the dead.

And Mary bore Jesus Christ...

*Cornish Traditional Carol*

## Tomorrow shall be my dancing day

Composed for St Paul's Girls' School in 1961, this arrangement uses four of the original eleven verses of this old English carol. While these words are taken from William Sandys' collection from 1833, the words can be found on medieval 'broadsides', large sheets that were printed on one side and usually used as posters or adverts. While the four verses in tonight's performance are centred on Advent to Epiphany, the carol details the entire life of Christ told from a first-person perspective, and alludes to the 'legend of my play' which could refer to the Mystery Play tradition that was popular throughout mediaeval Europe. With a sparkling accompaniment and joyous rhythms, this arrangement really brings the dancing words to life!

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day;  
I would my true love did so chance  
To see the legend of my play,  
To call my true love to my dance;

Sing, oh! my love, oh! my love, my love, my love,  
This have I done for my true love.

Then was I born of a virgin pure,  
Of her I took fleshly substance  
Thus was I knit to man's nature  
To call my true love to my dance.

Sing oh!...

In a manger laid, and wrapped I was  
So very poor, this was my chance  
Betwixt an ox and a silly poor ass  
To call my true love to my dance.

Sing oh!...

Then afterwards baptized I was;  
The Holy Ghost on me did glance,  
My Father's voice heard I from above,  
To call my true love to my dance.

Sing oh!...

*As published in William Sandys' 'Christmas carols ancient and modern', 1833*

## People look East

Tranchell's setting of these well-known words is a world away from the usual carol setting that comes to mind: rather than rearrange the traditional Besançon tune, he instead creates a totally original composition, reminiscent more of music hall songs with a theatre organ style accompaniment. This lighter style gives the carol a jaunty kind of flair, with its opening "oom-pah" organ pedal motif that whisks us through toe-tapping rhythms and surprising key changes to the final flourish, reminding us that there's always time for fun in our Christmas celebration.

People, look East. The time is near  
Of the crowning of the year.  
Make your house fair as you are able,  
Trim the hearth and set the table.  
People, look East and sing today: Love the Guest is on the way.

Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,  
One more seed is planted there:  
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,  
That in course the flower may flourish.  
People, look East and sing today: Love the Rose is on the way.

Birds, though long you've ceased to build,  
Guard the nest that must be filled.  
Even the hour when wings are frozen  
He for fledgling time has chosen.  
People, look East and sing today: Love the Bird is on the way.

Stars, keep watch. When night is dim  
One more light the bowl shall brim,  
Shining beyond the frosty weather,  
Bright as sun and moon together.  
People, look East and sing today: Love the Star is on the way.

Angels, announce to man and beast  
Him who cometh from the East.  
Set every peak and valley humming  
With the word, the Lord is coming.  
People, look East and sing today: Love the Lord is on the way.

*Eleanor Farjeon*



## There is no rose

Originally written for three-part treble chorus and harp, Britten's 'A Ceremony of Carols' is one of the composer's best-known works. The eleven movements are in a mixture of Latin and Middle English texts, tied together with the opening and closing chant of "Hodie Christus natus est" - Christ is born today. This is the third movement, and sets a text that is preserved in the Trinity Carol Roll, one of the oldest surviving sources of English carols set to music dating back to the 1400s. It opens with a slow and deliberate motif in the accompaniment that continues through almost the whole piece underpinning the flourishing vocal parts above. This walking figure leads us as the words illustrate the holy mystery of the nativity and revering Mary as the "mystic rose" that was a recurring image in mediaeval theology. Each verse ends with a Latin salutation, a common feature for carols of the time that allows the text to tie in to liturgical use. At the end of the carol, each salutation is repeated again, with the final "transeamus" melting away, drawing us in to follow the divine journey of God's Son to Earth.

There is no rose of such vertu  
As is the rose that bare Jesu.  
Alleluia.

For in this rose containèd was  
Heaven and earth in litel space,  
Res miranda. (Thing of wonder)

By that rose we may well see  
There be one God in persons three,  
Pares forma. (Equal in form)

The aungels sungen the shepherds to:  
Gloria in excelsis Deo! (Glory be to God on high)  
Gaudeamus. (We rejoice)

Leave we all this werldly mirth,  
and follow we this joyful birth.  
Transeamus. (Let us go)

Alleluia, Res miranda, Pares forma, Gaudeamus, Transeamus

*Anonymous English carol, c. 1420*

## Gloria in excelsis Deo

Although we know almost nothing of his early life, John Taverner is regarded as one of the most important composers of the first half of the sixteenth century. Famous for his mass settings and anthems, he was appointed in 1526 as the first organist and master of the choristers of Christ Church, Oxford, then known as Cardinal College. He left this post by 1530, and retired to Boston, Lincolnshire, where he is buried under the 'Stump', the belltower of the town's parish church, St Botolph's. This noble fragment is the final section of Taverner's motet *Hodie nobis coelorum rex* – Today for us the king of the heavens – and represents the most florid style of late-mediaeval era English music that flourished during the reign of King Henry VIII. The four-part texture features a cantus firmus in the second soprano part, around which Taverner weaves the other three parts in ornate polyphony, adding a rhythmic vitality to the triadic harmony so characteristic of English music of the time.

Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis

Glory be to God on high, and in earth peace to all men

*First respond at Matins on Christmas Day (Sarum rite)*

## The Shepherd's carol

Bob Chilcott began his musical career as a chorister of King's College, Cambridge, under the direction of David Willcocks. He returned as a choral scholar during his degree, and was a tenor in the King's Singers, before turning his focus to composition. This carol is a characteristic example of his simple and engaging style, setting a poem by Clive Sansom for unaccompanied choir. It tells of the shepherds, following the beacon of the star over the manger to meet the Holy Family. The carol begins with a simple melody around which Chilcott weaves a rich texture, building to a celestial climax before returning to the initial pastoral serenity.

We stood on the hills, Lady,  
Our day's work done,  
Watching the frosted meadows  
That winter had won.

The evening was calm, Lady,  
The air so still,  
Silence more lovely than music  
Folded the hill.

There was a star, Lady,  
Shone in the night,  
Larger than Venus it was  
And bright, so bright.

Oh, a voice from the sky, Lady,  
It seemed to us then  
Telling of God being born  
In the world of men.

And so we have come, Lady,  
Our day's work done,  
Our love, our hopes, ourselves,  
We give to your son.

*Clive Sansom*

## **Audience carol – While Shepherds watched**

**While shepherds watched their flocks by night,  
All seated on the ground,  
The angel of the Lord came down,  
And glory shone around.**

**'Fear not,' said he (for mighty dread  
had seized their troubled mind);  
'Glad tidings of great joy I bring  
To you and all mankind.**

**'To you, in David's town this day  
Is born of David's line  
A Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;  
And this shall be the sign:**

**The heavenly Babe you there shall find  
To human view displayed,  
All simply wrapped in swathing bands,  
And in a manger laid.'**

**Thus spoke the seraph; and forthwith  
Appeared a shining throng  
Of angels praising God, who thus  
Addressed their joyful song:**

**'All glory be to God on high,  
And on the earth be peace;  
Good-will henceforth from heaven to men  
Begin and never cease.'**

*Nahum Tate*

## **Jesus Christ the apple tree**

Elizabeth Poston was a talented English composer, pianist and writer of the 20th century. She graduated from the Royal Academy of Music in 1925, and spent most of the 1930s collecting folk songs, much like Ralph Vaughan Williams had at the beginning of the century. She also worked as an advisor during the development of the BBC's Third Programme, which was succeeded by BBC Radio 3 in 1967. This setting of an 18th century English text shows the influence of folk music in the memorable tune and simplicity of harmony, and the sensitive treatment belies the deeper nature of the words, using the image of Christ as the tree of life as found in the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Revelation. Funnily enough, apple trees have long been at the heart of English wassailing traditions, helping bring communities together at winter festivals.

The tree of life my soul hath seen,  
Laden with fruit and always green:  
The trees of nature fruitless be  
Compared with Christ the apple tree.

His beauty doth all things excel:  
By faith I know, but ne'er can tell  
The glory which I now can see  
In Jesus Christ the apple tree.

For happiness I long have sought,  
And pleasure dearly I have bought:  
I missed of all; but now I see  
'Tis found in Christ the apple tree.

I'm weary with my former toil,  
Here I will sit and rest awhile:  
Under the shadow I will be,  
Of Jesus Christ the apple tree.

This fruit doth make my soul to thrive,  
It keeps my dying faith alive;  
Which makes my soul in haste to be  
With Jesus Christ the apple tree.

*From 'Divine Hymns or Spiritual Songs', compiled in 1784 by Joshua Smith, New Hampshire*

### **In dulci jubilo**

This ancient German melody has been sung for many hundreds of years in one form or another. The words were written by the German mystic and Dominican Monk Heinrich Suso in 1328, when he was supposedly visited by angels who sang these words to him. The melody is of similar age, first found in a manuscript dating from around 1400. This carol is one of the best known macaronic texts, in that it mixes Latin with a vernacular language (originally German, but translated to English in this arrangement), and was used in procession at Christmas Eve. This substantial arrangement was produced by Robert Pearsall, a gifted composer of the Nineteenth century in his own right, and was first performed in 1834 by the Carlsruhe Choral Society.

In dulci jubilo (in sweet joy!)  
Let us our homage shew;  
Our heart's joy reclineth  
In praesepio (in a manger)  
And like a bright star shineth,  
Matris in gremio. (in his mother's lap)  
Alpha es et O. (thou art Alpha and Omega)

O Jesu parvule! (O infant Jesus!)  
I yearn for thee alway!  
Hear me, I beseech thee,  
O puer optime! (O child most excellent!)  
My prayer let it reach thee,  
O princeps gloriae, (O Prince of glory!)  
Trahe me post te. (Draw me unto thee!)

O patris caritas (O loving father)  
O nati lenitas! (O forgiving child!)  
Deep were we stained  
Per nostra criminal; (by our crimes)  
But thou hast for us gained  
Coelorum gaudia. (The joys of heaven)  
O that we were there!

Ubi sunt gaudia, (Where are those joys)  
If that they be not there?  
There are angels singing,  
Nova cantica, (New Songs)  
There the bells are ringing  
In regis curia (In the king's court)  
O that we were there!

*Words: Heinrich Suso, Translated by Robert Pearsall*

### **Silent night**

Perhaps the most famous Christmas carol written to date, famously sung in English, French and German across the trenches at the 1914 unofficial Christmas Truce, this simple and tender arrangement by Philip Ledger truly embraces the sentiment that "less is more". Three verses of Father Joseph Mohr's text are set here in a translation prepared by Sir David Willcocks, Ledger's predecessor as director of music of the chapel choir of Kings College, Cambridge, and Ledger uses simple harmonies to clothe Franz Xaver Gruber's melody in a serene mood. The piece is written in C major, and has no alteration to the key by extra chromatic harmony through the whole carol, giving it a grounded and serene air. While the second verse moves the tune to the tenor part, the final stanza returns to the opening harmonies, bringing the carol full circle in holy peace.

Silent night, holy night,  
All is dark, save the light  
Shining where the mother mild  
Watches over the holy child.  
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night,  
Shepherds first saw the sight,  
Heard the angel-song alleluia,  
Loud proclaiming near and far:  
'Christ our saviour is here.'

Silent night, holy night,  
God's own son, Oh how bright  
Shines the love in thy holy face,  
Shines the light of redemption and grace,  
Christ th'incarnate God.

*Josef Mohr, translated by David Willcocks*

**Audience carol – O come, all ye faithful**

**O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,  
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;  
Come and behold him born the King of Angels:**

**O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
Christ the Lord.**

**God of God, light of light,  
Lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;  
Very God, begotten, not created:**

**O come, let us adore Him...**

**Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
Sing, all ye citizens of Heaven above;  
Glory to God in the highest:**

**O come, let us adore Him...**

**Ding! dong! Merrily on high**

No Christmas is complete without the pealing of bells, and Wilberg's arrangement is a real festive tour de force. The tune is taken from a collection of 15th century French secular dances, while Woodward's words come from 1924 (his interests in bell ringing and archaic poetry coming together). Wilberg's sparkling organ part adds a real shine, while the unaccompanied verse, with its "dings" and "dongs" in lower voices, provides a moment of humour in an already jolly carol. The final phrase builds to a huge climax, leaving the carol ringing out like the bells that inspired it.

Ding! dong! merrily on high in heav'n the bells are ringing!  
Ding! dong! verily the sky is riv'n with angels singing!  
Gloria! Hosanna in excelsis!

E'en so here below, below, let steeple bells be swungen,  
And "I-o i-o i-o!" by priest and people sungen!  
Gloria! Hosanna in excelsis!

Pray you, dutifully prime your matin chime, ye ringers!  
May you beautifully rime your evetime song, ye singers!  
Gloria! Hosanna in excelsis!

*G R Woodward*

*Programme notes by Paul-Ethan Bright*

## **Truro Cathedral Choir**

### **Boy Choristers**

Thomas Arnold, Oliver Beale-Walker, Daniel Berdinner, Alfie Edwardes\*, Tristan Gilbert, Joseph Hagley\*, Noah Harrison, Archie Jeffers, Matipa Mawonera, Harris McLachlan, Joseph Taylor, John Woodworth, Albert Wright

### **Girl Choristers**

Matilda Bayliss, Oriel Blount\*, Scarlett Crowdy, Lottie Etherington, Bryher Gemmill\*, Celia Gill, Imogen Hawkins, Farrah Ingham-Dewar, Lilla Kristo-Nagy, Tilly Lloyd Thompson, Lydia Massey, Oriana Mossman, Natalie Phillips, Ella Sausby, Lowenna Watkiss\*

*\*Head Chorister*

### **Altos**

Poppy Carlton, Celia Stoddart Hunkin, Colin Wilson

### **Tenors**

Sam Chichester-Clark, Bryan Dadson, Alex Davison, Nico Shaw

### **Basses**

David Caroe, Jacob Dennison, Harry Hoyland, Sam Lyne-Hall, Charlie Murray



## Truro Cathedral Choir

Truro Cathedral Choir has an unbroken tradition dating back to the 1880s when services took place in a wooden shed while John Loughborough Pearson's Gothic Revival cathedral was under construction. Today, the choir usually performs with its twelve adult professional singers, joined by either its eighteen boy choristers or its eighteen girl choristers.

The twelve adult professional singers comprise seven Lay Vicars (permanent members of the choir) and five Choral Scholars (pre- or post-university students from all over the country and further afield).

The boy choristers are aged 8 to 13, and the girl choristers are aged 13 to 18; all attend Truro School and its preparatory school, where scholarships and bursaries are available, with the aim that selection is based purely on ability.

As well as singing at seven services each week, the choir undertakes regular concerts, broadcasts, webcasts, foreign tours, and CD recordings. In recent years the choir has appeared on BBC1, BBC2, BBC4, and ITV, as well as taking part in regular live broadcasts on BBC Radio 3. In May 2023, Truro's were the first girl choristers in history to sing at a British coronation, performing alongside other world-class musicians for the coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla in Westminster Abbey. The choir's recordings have included single-composer discs of music by Maurice Duruflé, Louis Vierne, Benjamin Britten, Philip Stopford, Gabriel Jackson and Dobrinka Tabakova. A wealth of new music has been written specially for the choir by many of the UK's leading composers.

Truro Cathedral Choir sings at the 5.30pm services most weeks during term time on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The Sunday sung services are at 10.00am and 4.00pm.

Further details about services, concerts, choristerships and choral scholarships can be found at [www.trurocathedral.org.uk](http://www.trurocathedral.org.uk).





## James Anderson-Besant - Conductor



Born in 1998, James Anderson-Besant grew up in Oxfordshire. He started learning the keyboard at primary school with Judith Ward, who ran the choir at St Helen's Church, Benson; James joined the choir and later became its organist. He learnt to play the organ with James Brown at Abingdon School, where he held academic and music scholarships.

After taking a gap year as the Organ Scholar of Gloucester Cathedral, which included teaching the first girl choristers in the Cathedral's history, James then spent four years as Organ Scholar, then Assistant Organist, of St John's College Cambridge. With the College Choir, he accompanied services, broadcasts, recordings and tours under the direction of Andrew Nethsingha, and helped train the choristers. He has broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 and Radio 4, and his playing for St John's appears on many acclaimed CD releases, including Advent Live II, Ash Wednesday, and The Psalms. An organ student of Stephen Farr, James won second prize at the 2019 Northern Ireland International Organ Competition. He graduated in 2020 with a double starred first degree in music, and during the following year supervised Cambridge music students in harmony and keyboard skills.

From 2021-2023, James was Assistant Director of Music at Exeter Cathedral, where he played the organ for the Cathedral's services, and assisted Timothy Noon in the training of the choristers and in the choir's musical rebound from the coronavirus pandemic. He also directed the St Peter's Singers, the cathedral's auditioned voluntary choir.

In 2023, at the age of twenty-four, James was appointed Director of Music and Organist of Truro Cathedral, becoming the youngest cathedral organist in the country. At Truro, James directs the Cathedral Choir in its daily rehearsals and services, and is responsible for all aspects of the Cathedral's musical output. He also conducts the Three Spires Singers. In his spare time he enjoys walking, exploring Cornwall, and reading about history and engineering.

*Photo credit: @LLEPhotography*

## **Andrew Wyatt - Assistant Organist**



Andrew Wyatt is Assistant Director of Music at Truro Cathedral and also directs St Mary's Singers. He works regularly with the cathedral choristers in rehearsals and services and plays the famous Father Willis organ for services and recitals.

Educated at Aldenham School, he studied the organ with Andrew Parnell and gained an Entrance Scholarship to Birmingham Conservatoire where he studied under David Saint and Henry Fairs. Working concurrently with his four-year course, Andrew held the organ scholarship at St Philip's Cathedral in Birmingham. After holding the organ scholarship at Canterbury Cathedral and being awarded associateship of the Royal College of Organists, Andrew became Assistant Organist at Hexham Abbey in September 2012. Alongside regular playing duties, the running of the chamber choir and directing the Riding Mill Choral Society, he continued his studies with Gillian Weir, focusing on the organ works of Olivier Messiaen.

In demand as a recitalist, Andrew has performed all over the country including at St Paul's Cathedral, St Stephen's Church in Walbrook, Blackburn Cathedral, Worcester Cathedral and Hereford Cathedral. He was awarded honorary membership of Birmingham Conservatoire in 2015 and was appointed Assistant Director of Music at Chester Cathedral in November 2016.

### **Supporting us**

If you are an individual or business who would like a closer supportive association with Truro Cathedral Choir, please contact James Anderson-Besant:  
[jab@trurocathedral.org.uk](mailto:jab@trurocathedral.org.uk).

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All boys currently in Years 2, 3, 4 are welcome.

For more information and to book a place, please email [jab@trurocathedral.org.uk](mailto:jab@trurocathedral.org.uk)



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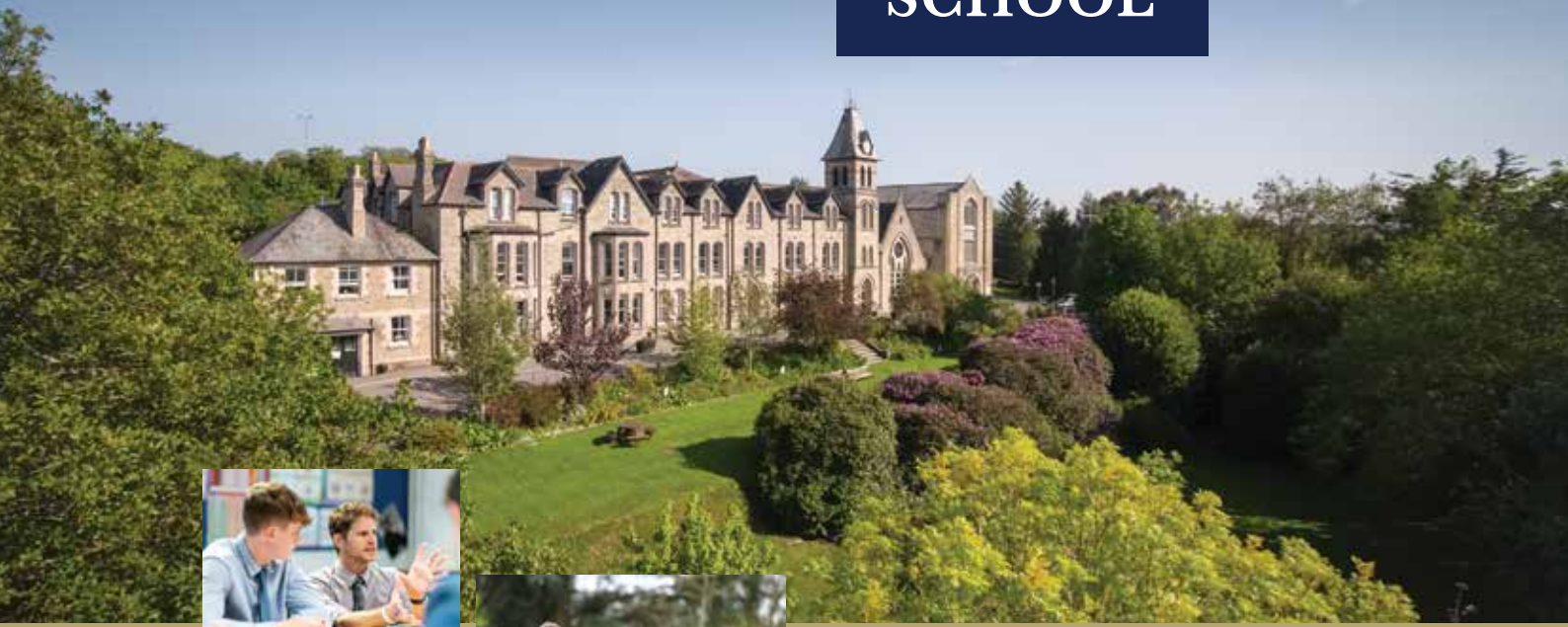


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