

# The Cherwell Singers

Director: John Padley

Organ: Oliver Lallemand

Sopranos: Kate Ashby,  
& Amy Moore

Alto: Dan Collins

Tenor: Mark Bushby

Bass: Andrew Shouler

## MAGNUM MYSTERIUM

Saturday 9 December 2006, 8.00pm

Exeter College Chapel

## PROGRAMME

### *Rejoice in the Lamb*

Benjamin Britten 1913–1976

Britten wrote the festival cantata *Rejoice in the Lamb* in 1943 for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration of St Matthew's Northampton. He took the text from *Jubilate Agno* a long and sometimes seemingly rambling poem by Christopher Smart written while Smart was in a lunatic asylum. The poem has been aptly described as a kind of Benedicite, full of naïve joy and innocence as well as moments of intensity, mystery and wonder, by which Britten's response is inspired.

### *O magnum mysterium*

Morton Lauridsen b1943

Premiered in 1994, *O magnum mysterium* is a superb five minute motet for five-part choir. The mystery and wonder of Christ's birth is captured vividly by the rich harmonies and gradual build-up to the loud climax of faith and celebration followed by a gradual diminuendo to a soft conclusion.

### *Hymn to the Virgin*

Benjamin Britten

*Hymn to the Virgin* was written in 1931 and is a short unaccompanied work for 2 four-part choirs, the second usually a semichorus or group of soloists. The antiphonal exchanges between each choir are extremely effective and Britten shapes the writing and word setting particularly well with the climax at the words of *all she bare the prize* followed by a gentle ending.

### *Variations sur un Noël*

Marcel Dupré 1886–1971

Marcel Dupré studied with Guilmant, Widor, Vierne and Diener. He was well-known as a performer, composer and improviser and succeeded Widor as titular organist of St Sulpice in Paris until his death in 1971. Dupré's compositional output is mainly choral and organ music for liturgical use incorporating much use of plainsong as well as the full range of French improvisatory techniques which this set of variations displays clearly.

### *Messe de Minuit pour Noël*

Marc-Antonin Charpentier 1634–1704

Charpentier was influenced by both French and Italian traditions. He was a prodigious composer producing 35 oratorios, 11 settings of the mass and over 200 motets. The *Messe de Minuit* dates from around 1690 and was probably composed for the church of St Louis in Paris where Charpentier was *maitre de musique*. The setting for the feast of Christmas incorporates 11 Christmas folksongs most of which are dance-like in character reflecting the carol's secular origins. The result is an exuberant and colourful celebration of Christmas.

The Cherwell Singers was founded in 1978 by a group of singers who wished to perform the vocal chamber music repertory, and several of the original singers are still part of the choir. Our repertory covers sacred and secular music from the late Medieval period to 20th-century works (some written especially for the choir), and includes not only central compositions of the choral repertory but many lesser-known pieces. The choir accepts bookings for weddings, dinners and other events, formal and informal, and we welcome enquiries from prospective new members.

Sopranos — Sue Bignal, Kipper Chipperfield, Julia Craig-McFeely,  
Sarah Franks, Claire Gill, Louise Locock, Beatrix Stewart, Joanna Tucker

Altos — Virginia Allport, Jenny Ayres, Caroline Higginbottom,  
Stella Holman, Helen Maidlow, Lizzie Newton, Sally Prime

Tenors — Paul King, Guy Peskett, David Sutton, John Tucker

Basses — Christopher Franks, Neil Herington, Paul Hodges, Simon Jones,  
Simeon Mitchell

Contact the choir: [info@cherwellsingers.org](mailto:info@cherwellsingers.org) or 01865 723056

Visit our website at [www.cherwellsingers.org](http://www.cherwellsingers.org)