

The Cherwell Singers

present

An American Christmas

Festive music from the USA

James Brown conductor

Steven Grahl organ and piano

Sunday, 12th December 2010
The Chapel of St Peter's College, Oxford

Programme

Quem vidistis, pastores?

Daniel Pinkham

Gesù bambino

Pietro Yon

Baritone – Will Dawes

Lux aurumque

Eric Whitacre

organ solo:

Adeste fidelis in an Organ Prelude

Charles Ives

The Angel Gabriel

Emma Lou Diemer

organ solo:

Prelude on the Sussex Carol

Russell Schulz-Widmar

Sussex Carol

arr. Dale Wood

Interval

during which wine will be served

organ solo:

Fanfare on Antioch (Joy to the World)

Gerre Hancock

As it fell upon a night

arr. Katharine K Davis

O magnum mysterium

Morten Lauridsen

organ solos:

Child in the manger

Dale Wood

Of the Father's heart begotten

Wilbur Held

What Child is this?

arr. Mark Reise

A Carol of Christ

Jack Noble White

Christmas Song

Tormé and Wells, arr. Puerling

Double bass – George Coltart

Drums – Frank Hockney

Daniel Pinkham (1923-2006) was an organist and a prolific composer, writing in a wide range of genres and styles. *Quem vidistis, pastores?* is from his Christmas Cantata, which is scored for nine brass instruments, with an alternate organ version.

Pietro Yon (1886-1943) was an Italian organist who, after serving for a time as organist in the Vatican, made his career in the USA, becoming an American citizen. *Gesù bambino* is one of his best-known pieces.

Lux aurumque, by **Eric Whitacre** (1970-), is to words translated into Latin from an English poem by Edward Esch; the musical style is based on building up cluster chords of varying density. Whitacre used this piece for the first of his projects in creating a virtual choir coming together over the Internet.

Before attaining his fortune as an insurance executive and fame as a part-time composer, **Charles Ives** (1874-1954) was organist at several New York churches. The dark and brooding prelude in which *Adeste fideles* (which he misspelt) appears was one of his last organ works; it was written in 1897 while he was studying at Yale, though later revised. The earliest item in this concert, it is also the most modern-sounding, using techniques such as bi-tonality. This piece is perhaps a study for Ives's more famous piece *The Unanswered Question*, which it resembles structurally.

Among her works for instrumental groups, **Emma Lou Diemer** (1927-) has also written many hymns. *The Angel Gabriel* is a setting of a translation of an old Basque carol.

The text of the *Sussex Carol* was first published by Luke Wadding, a 17th-century Irish bishop, but it is not clear if he wrote the words himself. The tune was collected, in Sussex, by Cecil Sharp and Ralph Vaughan Williams. **Russell Schulz-Widmar** (1944-) was Organist and later Professor of Liturgical Music at the Seminary of the Southwest, and his compositions are entirely choral and organ music for the church. The choral setting by **Dale Wood** (1934-2003) is straightforward, with quirky organ interludes.

Gerre Hancock (1934-) has been organist of several major American churches, and is currently Professor of Organ at the University of Texas, Austin. Antioch, the theme of this fanfare, was written by Lowell Mason in 1836 for the hymn Joy to the World, but attributed by him to Handel.

Katharine Davis was a composer who taught in Massachusetts. As it fell upon a night is a setting of old English words using a tune from *Piae Cantiones*, a collection of music published in Finland in 1582.

Morten Lauridsen (1943-) has written mainly choral music, and is one of the most widely performed American composers. The harmonies of *O magnum mysterium* (1994) have added notes giving piquancy to the otherwise simple chord structures.

The carol Child in a Manger is a translation of Gaelic words which were set to a traditional melody on the Isle of Mull. It was only later that the familiar words Morning has Broken were written to enable the tune to be used in the hymnbook Songs of Praise.

Wilbur Held (1914-) has been a prolific composer for the organ. This setting of Of the Father's Heart Begotten is the last of his collection Six Carol Settings.

What child is this? was written by William Chatterton Dix following a near-fatal illness. It was later set to the tune Greensleeves, and tonight's harmonisation is one of the last by **Mark Riese** (1953-1989), best known for his arrangements of standards and show tunes.

Jack Noble White is the director of a handbell choir in Texas and formerly of the Texas Boys Choir. A Carol of Christ is a setting of his own words made in 1990.

The Christmas Song was written in 1944 by **Mel Tormé** and **Robert Wells**. Nat King Cole first recorded it, in 1946 and several times later, and it is reputedly the most performed modern Christmas song. It provides a relaxed ending to our evening.

Words and Translations

Quem vidistis, pastores?

*Quem vidistis, pastores? Dicite, annuntiate nobis in terris quis apparuit.
Natum vidimus, et choros angelorum collaudantes Dominum. Alleluia.*

Whom did you see, shepherds? Speak! Tell us who has appeared on earth.
We saw the child, and choirs of angels praising the Lord. Alleluia.

Gesù Bambino

When blossoms flowered 'mid the snows
Upon a winter night
Was born the Child, the Christmas Rose,
The King of Love and Light.
The angels sang, the shepherds sang,
The grateful earth rejoiced,
And at His blessed birth the stars
Their exultation voiced.
O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Again the heart with rapture glows
To greet the holy night
That gave the world its Christmas Rose,
Its King of Love and Light
Let ev'ry voice acclaim His name,
The grateful chorus swell,
From paradise to earth He came
That we with Him might dwell.
O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Lux aurumque

*Lux,
calida gravisque pura velut aurum
et canunt angeli molliter
modo natum.*

Light,
warm and heavy as pure gold
and the angels sing softly
to the new-born baby.

The Angel Gabriel

The Angel Gabriel from God was sent to Galilee,
unto a virgin fair, whose name was called Mary.
All hail Mary!

Then sing we all, both great and small, Nowell.
We may rejoice to hear the voice of Gabriel.

'Be not afraid, Mary, but do believe in me!
God's own dear Son from Heav'n shall come
And be born of thee.'

Then sing we all, both great and small, Nowell.
We may rejoice to hear the voice of Gabriel.

Sussex Carol

On Christmas night all Christians sing
To hear the news the angels bring.
On Christmas night all Christians sing
To hear the news the angels bring.
News of great joy, news of great mirth,
News of our merciful King's birth.

Then why should men on earth be so sad,
Since our Redeemer made us glad?
Then why should men on earth be so sad,
Since our Redeemer made us glad,
When from our sin he set us free,
All for to gain our liberty?

As it fell upon a night

As it fell upon a night
In the winter weather,
Angels bright in starry height
Began to sing together.

Shepherds sleeping on the plain
Woke to see the glory,
All amazed they stood and gazed
And heard the angels' story.

'Unto you a child is born
In a manger lowly,
Humble, He, yet born to be
The King of Love most holy.

O magnum mysterium

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

What child is this?

What child is this who laid to rest on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds watch are keeping.
This, this is Christ the king whom shepherds guard and angels sing.
Haste, haste to bring him laud: the babe, the son of Mary.

When sin departs before His grace,
Then life and health come in its place.
When sin departs before His grace,
Then life and health come in its place.
Angels and men with joy may sing
All for to see the new-born King.

All out of darkness we have light
Which made the angels sing this night.
All out of darkness we have light,
Which made the angels sing this night:
'Glory to God and peace to men,
Now and for evermore, Amen!'

'In a manger now He lies
Ox and ass before Him;
All the world at last shall come
to worship and adore Him.'

Thought it be a winter night
Love is still appearing!
Through the sound of war and woe
That song we still are hearing!

Happy angels from afar,
Cease your singing never!
'*In excelsis gloria!*'
Forever and forever.

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

A Carol of Christ

Angels at Bethlehem sang on that day,
'Come see the Christ-child asleep on the hay.'
Alleluia! Christ is born today, Alleluia!

Once on a mountain He taught us to love,
Love, as the Father sends down from above,
Alleluia! Christ will lead us, Alleluia!

Then, O so suddenly silencing came,
Evil and selfishness tried to cast blame
on his teaching, and showing the way
to do God's will ev'ry day.

Suffering silently there on the tree,
Giving His life for you and for me,
'Till the end came on that day of gloom,
Faithful ones found him a tomb.

Then on that morning the angel did say,
'He is not here, He is risen this day.'
Alleluia! Christ is risen, Alleluia!
Alleluia! Christ still leads us, Alleluia!

Steven Grahl organ and piano

Steven combines the post of Assistant Organist at New College, Oxford with that of Organist & Director of Music at St Marylebone Parish Church, London and the Principal Conductorship of the Guildford Chamber Choir. A prize-winning graduate of Magdalen College, Oxford (where he was Organ Scholar) and the Royal Academy of Music, Steven gained the Limpus (highest mark) and Dixon (improvisation) prizes in his FRCO examination, and is also a holder of the Worshipful Company of Musicians' Silver Medallion.

James Brown conductor

James was Organ Scholar of Girton College, Cambridge and upon graduating studied organ at the Conservatoire de Musique, Geneva with Lionel Rogg. After two years working as an organist in Texas James returned to England where he is currently Organist of the University Church, Oxford and a lay clerk in New College Choir, with whom he tours to Germany and Italy later this week. James currently studies the organ with Stephen Farr.

James has conducted the Cherwell Singers since 2007.

The Cherwell Singers

Soprano

Esther Anstice
Claire Appleton
Eleanor Baylis
Harriet Publicover
Sreya Rao
Rachel Smith
Beatrix Stewart
Lucy Watson

Tenor

Philip Booth
Jeremy Bryans
Guy Peskett
David Sutton

Alto

Virginia Allport
Rachel Bryans
Katherine Butler
Gillian Hargreaves
Clare Jarvis
Janet McKnight
Jo McLean
Lizzie Newton
Sally Prime

Bass

Neil Herington
Paul Hodges
Simon Jones
Simeon Mitchell
Tim Wainwright

Next concert:

Messe solennelle – Louis Vierne
works by Dupré and Duruflé

Saturday, 26th March 2011
Exeter College Chapel

Please visit our web site to learn more about the choir, and listen to some of our recordings online. Use the web form to register yourself on our email list, to ensure you receive notification and full details of future concerts.

www.cherwellsingers.org