

# The Cherwell Singers

present

## *An American Christmas*

**Festive music from the USA**

|                     |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| <b>James Brown</b>  | conductor       |
| <b>Steven Grahl</b> | organ and piano |

Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup>-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 præsepio.  
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, 26<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.cherwellsingers.org)