

The Cherwell Singers

present

A German Christmas

Ben Bloor

organ

James Brown

conductor

Saturday, 19th December 2020

&

Monday, 21st December 2020

University Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford

Programme

All my heart this night rejoices
Dixit Maria ad Angelum
Machet die Tore weit
O Jesulein süß, O Jesulein mild

Johann Georg Ebeling
Hans Leo Hassler
Andreas Hammerschmidt
Johann Sebastian Bach

(Organ Solo)

Nun komm der heiden Heiland, BWV 659

Johann Sebastian Bach

A Child is Born in Bethlehem
Quem pastores laudavere
Hodie Christus natus est, SWV 456

Samuel Scheidt
Michael Praetorius
Heinrich Schütz

Short interval

Veni Domine
The Shepherds' Cradle Song
Still, still, still
Es ist ein Ros entsprungen

Felix Mendelssohn
Karl Leuner, arr Charles MacPherson
arr. Timothy Brown
Hugo Distler

(Organ Solo)

Adeste fideles, Op 106 iv

Sigfrid Karg-Elert

In dulci jubilo
Silent night, holy night
Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Robert Lucas Pearsall
Franz Gruber, arr. David Willcocks
Felix Mendelssohn, arr. Mack Wilberg

Please refrain from applause between the carols in each group

Ben Bloor organ
James Brown conductor

A German Christmas

Christmas trees, Advent calendars, tinsel, and Christmas markets are just some of the seasonal traditions which began in Germany. Also much beloved at this time of year is the rich repertoire of German Christmas music, which has similarly become a much loved part of our seasonal celebrations.

Tonight the Cherwell Singers present a programme of German Christmas choral and organ music, with composers including Bach, Schütz, Praetorius, Scheidt and Mendelssohn represented. Sung in a mixture of German, Latin and English, plenty of seasonal favourites such as *Silent night*, and *In Dulci Jubilo* are included.

With its strong links to the local German community, which has met here monthly since 1939, and its German-inspired Metzler organ, we are very pleased to be able to present this concert in the Oxford University Church.

We do hope you will enjoy the music we offer tonight, and that the Covid safeguarding measures required to be in place, such as socially distanced seating, do not detract from the evening.

To enable more people to hear this concert, we are repeating it on Saturday and Monday, 19th and 21st December.

James Brown

Notes and Words

The composer **Johann Georg Ebeling** (1637-76) and hymn-writer Paulus Gerhardt (1606-76) worked together in the 1660s as Cantor and Deacon respectively at the church of St Nicolai in Berlin. Ebeling wrote music for more than a hundred of Gerhardt's hymns, which were intended for private devotions rather than congregational use.

All my heart this night rejoices is a felicitous translation of one of Gerhard's hymns by Catherine Winkworth (1827-1878).

All my heart this night rejoices
 As I hear,
 Far and near,
 Sweetest angel voices;
 "Christ is born," their choirs are singing,
 Till the air
 Everywhere
 Now with joy is ringing.
 Hark! A voice from yonder manger,
 Soft and sweet,
 Doth entreat:
 "Flee from woe and danger!
 Brethren. Come! From all doth grieve you,
 You are freed,
 All you need
 I will surely give you."

Come, then, let us hasten yonder!
 Here let all,
 Great and small,
 Kneel in awe and wonder!
 Love him who with love is yearning!
 Hail the star
 That from far
 Bright with hope is burning!
 Thee, dear Lord, with heed I'll cherish,
 Live to thee,
 And with thee,
 Dying, shall not perish;
 But shall dwell with thee for ever,
 Far on high,
 In the joy
 That can alter never.

Hans Leo Hassler (1564-1612) studied in Venice with Andrea Gabrieli, and was a musician for the Fugger family in Augsburg.

He composed *Dixit Maria* as a motet for choir a cappella, setting a verse from Luke's account of the annunciation (Luke 1:38) in the Latin of the Vulgate. He included the motet in his 1591 collection *Cantiones sacrae*.

Dixit Maria ad Angelum:
 Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum
 Mary said to the angel:
 Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word.

Andreas Hammerschmidt (c.1611-1675) ranks alongside the greatest Protestant-Lutheran church music composers. His output encompasses a wide range of the most varied musical forms: sacred concertos and cantatas, motets and instrumental pieces, and secular vocal works.

In *Machet die Tore weit* he sets Psalm 24, verses 7-10, in the German translation of the Bible by Martin Luther. In the middle section, the questions and answers are divided between the high voices asking and the low voices replying. Although from the Old Testament, this text is suitable for the Advent which it is considered to foretell.

Machet die Tore weit
 und die Türen in der Welt hoch,
 daß der König der Ehren einziehe.
 Wer ist derselbige König der Ehren?
 Es ist der Herr, stark und mächtig im Streit.
 Hosianna in der Höhe.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
 and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors;
 and the King of glory shall come in.
 Who is this King of glory?
 He is the Lord, strong and mighty in battle.
 Hosanna in the highest.

When Georg Christian Schemelli published his *Schemelli Gesangbuch* in 1736, he called on his friend **Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685-1750) to provide the figured bass for many of the well-known Lutheran hymn tunes. One of Bach's 69 settings was of ***O Jesulein süß***, a melody known from 1650, possibly written by Scheidt. The realisation of the harmony tonight is from *The New Oxford Book of Carols*.

O Jesulein süß, O Jesulein mild!
Deines Vaters Willen hast du erfüllt,
bist kommen aus dem Himmelreich,
uns armen Menschen worden gleich.
O Jesulein süß, O Jesulein mild!

O Jesulein süß, O Jesulein mild!
Mit Freuden hast du die Welt erfüllt.
Du kommst herab vons Himmels Saal
Und tröstest und in dem Jammertal.
O Jesulein süß, O Jesulein mild!

O Jesulein süß, O Jesulein mild!
Du bist der Lieb ein Webenbild.
Zünd an in uns der Liebe Flamm,
dass wir dich lieben allzusamm.
O Jesulein süß, O Jesulein mild!

O Jesulein süß, O Jesulein mild!
Hilf, dass wir tun alls, was du wilt,
was unser ist, ist alles dein,
ach lass uns dir befohlen sein.
O Jesulein süß, O Jesulein mild!

O little one sweet, O little one mild,
Thy Father's purpose thou hast fulfilled;
Thou came'st from heaven to mortal ken,
Equal to be with us poor men,
O little one sweet, O little one mild.

O little one sweet, O little one mild,
With joy thou hast the whole world filled;
Thou camest here from heaven's domain,
To bring men comfort in their pain,
O little one sweet, O little one mild.

O little one sweet, O little one mild,
In thee Love's beauties are all distilled;
Then light in us thy love's bright flame,
That we may give thee back the same,
O little one sweet, O little one mild.

O little one sweet, O little one mild,
Help us to do as thou hast willed.
Lo, all we have belongs to thee!
Ah, keep us in our fealty!
O little one sweet, O little one mild.

Most of Bach's chorale preludes for organ have been handed down in *ad hoc* collections or individual copies by pupils and others. But ***Nun komm der heiden Heiland*** [*Now come, Saviour of the gentiles*] (BWV 659) is from a volume of chorale preludes prepared by Bach in Leipzig during the last decade of his life. They may be considered as his perfected view of the chorale prelude form and its variety of styles.

Samuel Scheidt (1587-1654) studied with the Dutch composer Sweelinck. He excelled in both Latin-language and German-language sacred works, and he also had a separate reputation on the strength of his vast keyboard music collection *Tabulatura Nova* (1624), and is now considered the first internationally significant German composer for the organ.

A child is born in Bethlehem, Alleluia
And joy is in Jerusalem, Alleluia
Rejoice, rejoice, sing high, sing low, Alleluia
Benedicamus Domino, Alleluia

To Thee, O Lord, be glory paid, Alleluia
Thou Son of Mary, mother-maid, Alleluia
To Holy Trinity give praise, Alleluia
With Deo gracias always, Alleluia

Michael Praetorius (1571-1621) was a German composer, organist, and music theorist. He was one of the most versatile composers of his age, being particularly significant in the development of musical forms based on Protestant hymns. The medieval Christmas hymn *Quem pastores laudavere* was traditionally performed in Germany by four boys in galleries around the church, the main choir singing a different hymn as a “pastoral” response to each “angelic” verse. The third verse of the boys’ hymn is not part of the original, and breaks up what was a single extended sentence structure.

Quem pastores laudavere,
Quibus angeli dixerē:
“Absit vobis iam timere,
Natus est Rex gloriae!”

Nunc angelorum gloria hominibus resplenduit in mundo. Novi partus gaudia virgo mater produxit, et sol verus in tenebris illuxit.

Christus natus hodie ex virgine,
sine virili semine est natus rex.

Ad quem Magi ambulabant,
Aurum, thus, myrrham portabant;
Immolabant haec sincere
Leoni victoriae;

Culpaē sic datur hodie remissio laetatur homo reus.
Lux de caelo claruit pace iam reparata et genitrix permansit illibata.

Christus natus hodie ex virgine,
sine virili semine est natus rex.

Exultemus cum Maria
In coelesti hierarchia:
Natum premant voce pia
Dulci cum melodia;

Magnum est nomen Domini, Immanuel, quod est nobiscum Deus; Redemptori Domino, redempti iubilamus, hic est dies et annus iubilaeus;

Pueri concinite et psallite,
voce pia dicite et plaudite.

Christo Regi, Deo nato,
Per Mariam nobis dato,
Merito resonet vere:
“Laus, honor et gloria”!

Pastores palam dicite in Bethlehem quem genuit Maria. Laus, honor et gloria sit Deo in excelsis, hominibus pax bonae voluntatis.

Sion lauda Dominum cum plausibus,
salvatorem hominum in saecula.

[To] him whom the shepherds praised,
to whom the angels sang:
“Be not afraid,
the King of glory is born!”

Now the glory of angels for mankind shines in the world. The joys of a new birth are brought forth by a virgin mother, and a true sun shines in the darkness.

Christ is born today of a virgin,
a king is born without male seed.

To whom the Magi journeyed,
carrying gold, frankincense, myrrh;
they truly worshipped,
the victorious lion;

Today remission is given from sin; guilty man can rejoice. Light has shone from heaven as peace has been restored, and the mother has remained intact.

Christ is born today of a virgin,
a king is born without male seed.

Let us rejoice with Mary
in the heavenly ranks:
let them extol him who is born
with holy voice and sweet melody;

Great is the name of the Lord, Emmanuel, which means “God with us”. To the redeeming Lord we redeemed rejoice, this is a joyful day and year.

Boys, sing together and strike the harp,
speak with pious voice and praise.

[To] Christ the King, God incarnate,
given to us through Mary,
[to him] let resound with true merit:
“Praise, honour, and glory”.

Shepherds tell them all in Bethlehem who it is that has been born of Mary: Praise, honour, and glory be to God on high, peace to men of goodwill.

Sion praise the Lord with acclaim,
the eternal Saviour of mankind.

From *Puericinium* (Wolfenbüttel, 1621)

Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672) is considered the most important German composer before JS Bach. He studied in Venice with Giovanni Gabrieli during his youth (Gabrieli bequeathed him one of his rings), and the motet *Hodie Christus natus est* is thought to have been written in 1610 while Schütz was still in Venice and under Gabrieli's influence.

Hodie Christus natus est: *Alleluja*.
Hodie Salvator apparuit: *Alleluja*.
Hodie in terra canunt Angeli,
laetantur Archangeli: *Alleluja*.
Hodie exsultant justi, dicentes:
Gloria in excelsis Deo, Et in terra pax,
hominibus bonae voluntatis: *Alleluja*.

Today Christ is born: *Alleluia*.
Today the Saviour appeared: : *Alleluia*.
Today on Earth the Angels sing,
Archangels rejoice: : *Alleluia*.
Today the righteous rejoice, saying:
Glory to God in the highest, And in Earth
peace, good will to men. *Alleluia*.

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1809-1847) was a prodigy, giving his first public concert at the age of 9, and having his first music published at the age of 13. The writer Goethe even compared his early performances favourably with those of the young Mozart, whom he had also heard.

He was a prolific composer in all the main genres. Tonight we are performing *Veni Domine*, a modest 3-part chorus for ladies voices. This is another text which is suitable for Advent rather than Christmas itself.

Veni Domine, et noli tardare.
Relaxa facinora plebi tuae,
et revoca dispersos in terram tuam.
Excita Domine potentiam tuam,
ut salvos nos facias.

Come, Lord, and do not delay.
Come and free Thy people from their misdeeds,
and bring back the dispersed to your land.
Raise up, Lord, Thy power
and make us safe.

(from a late tenth-century manuscript in the abbey of St. Gall)

The Shepherd's Cradle Song is a German lullaby, based on a work published in 1817 by **Karl Leuner** (about whom nothing is known) as part of *Des Hirten Wiegenlied*. It was published in 1912 with music arranged by Charles Macpherson and English translation by Arthur Foxton Ferguson.

Charles Macpherson (1870-1927) was a British organist and composer. He was a chorister at St Paul's Cathedral, and later became organist there.

O sleep thou heav'n-born treasure, thou,
Sleep sound, thou dearest child;
White angel wings shall fan thy brow
With breezes soft and mild.

We shepherds poor are here to sing
A simple lullay to our King.
Lullaby, lullaby,
Sleep, sleep softly, lullaby.

See, Mary has with mother's love
A bed for thee outspread,
While Joseph stoops him from above,
And watches at thy head.

The lambkins in the stall so nigh,
That thou may'st sleep, have hush'd their cry,
Lullaby, lullaby,
Sleep, sleep softly, lullaby.

And when thou'rt big and art a man
Full woe's in store for thee;
For cruel men thy death will plan,
and hang thee on a tree.
So sleep, my baby, whilst thou may,
'Twill give thee rest against that day.
Lullaby, lullaby,
Sleep, sleep softly, lullaby.

Timothy Brown (1946-) is an English choral conductor. When young, he sang in turn at Westminster Abbey, King's College, Cambridge, and New College, Oxford. In 1979 he succeeded John Rutter as Director of Music at Clare College, Cambridge. In 2011 he founded The Zürich Singing Academy, and he now divides his time between Zürich and Cambridge.

Still, still, still is a traditional folk carol which seems to have originated at about the same time as *Silent Night* was written, and both words and music have a somewhat similar character to that carol as well. The words describe the peacefulness of the infant Jesus and his mother as the baby is sung to sleep. The modern *Hochdeutsch* version of the traditional textual variants is attributed to Georg Götsch (1895–1956).

Still, still, still, weil's Kindlein schlafen will.
Maria tut es niedersingen,
ihre keusche Brust darbringen.
Still, still, still, weil's Kindlein schlafen will.

Schlaf, schlaf, schlaf, mein liebes Kindlein, schlaf!
Die Englein tun schön musizieren,
vor dem Kripplein jubilieren.
Schlaf, schlaf, schlaf, mein liebes Kindlein, schlaf!

Groß, groß, groß, die Lieb' ist übergroß.
Gott hat den Himmelsthron verlassen
und muss reisen auf den Straßen.
Groß, groß, groß, die Lieb' ist übergroß.

Hush, hush, hush, the little child wants to sleep!
Maria sings to him,
offers him her chaste breast.
Hush, hush, hush, the little child wants to sleep.

Sleep, sleep, sleep, my dear child sleep!
The angels are making beautiful music,
celebrating the little child
Sleep, sleep, sleep, my dear child sleep.

Great, great, great, the love is enormous!
God has left his heavenly throne
and must travel on the road.
Great, great, great, the love is enormous!

Hugo Distler (1908-1942) was a German organist, choral conductor, teacher and composer. He attended the Leipzig Conservatory from 1927 before becoming the organist at St. Jacobi in Lübeck in 1931. In 1940 he moved to Berlin to teach and conduct at the Hochschule für Musik.

There he became increasingly depressed owing to the deaths of friends, aerial attacks, restrictions placed upon his teaching, a sense of isolation, and the constant threat of conscription into the German Army, all of which led to his suicide at the age of 34 when, it is said, he saw the futility of attempting to serve both God and the Nazis.

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen is the first movement of a choral partita which forms part of his *Die Weihnachtsgeschichte*. We are repeating the movement without words as a memorial to an unfinished life.

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen,
aus einer Wurzel zart,
wie uns die Alten sunen,
von Jesse kam die Art
Und hat ein Blümlein bracht
mitten im kalten Winter,
wohl zu der halben Nacht.

A rose has sprung up,
from a tender root,
As the old ones sang to us,
Its strain came from Jesse
And it has brought forth a floweret
In the middle of the cold winter
When half spent was the night.

Sigfrid Karg-Elert (1877-1933) started his career composing for the piano, but after he was introduced to the harmonium by a publisher he went on to produce one of the most extensive and significant bodies of work for that instrument. Later he also wrote for the organ and other instruments. His setting of *Adeste fideles* is the fourth of a series of six settings for organ of gregorian melodies entitled *Cathedral Windows*.

Robert Lucas Pearsall (1795-1856) was an English composer mainly of vocal music. After an early career as a barrister, he moved to Germany where he extended his interest in composition. It was there that he came across the 13th-century German macaronic carol *In dulci jubilo*, which he translated into macaronic English, and for which he composed the well-known setting we sing tonight.

In dulci jubilo [In quiet 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 the mother's lap]
Alpha es et O. [Thou art Alpha & Omega]
O Jesu parvule! [O tiny Jesus]
My heart is sore for thee!
Hear me, I beseech Thee,
O puer optima! [O best of boys]
My prayer let it reach Thee,
O princeps gloriae! [Prince of glory]
Trahe me post te! [draw me unto thee]

O patris caritas! [O father's caring]
O nati lenitas! [O newborn's mildness]
Deeply were we stained
Per nostra criminal; [by our crimes]
But Thou hast for us gained
Coelorum gaudia: [heavenly joy]
O that we were there!
Ubi sunt gaudia, [where be joys]
If that they be not there?
There are angels singing
Nova cantina; [new songs]
There the bells are ringing
In Regis curia: [at the king's court]
O that we were there!

Franz Xaver Gruber (1797-1863) was an Austrian primary school teacher and village church organist. His carol, *Silent night, holy night*, was not written because the church organ had broken down; this is a myth. It was in 1818 that at the request of his friend, the priest **Josef Mohr** (1792-1848),

Gruber set Mohr's poem, *Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht*. Mohr was a guitar player, and simply wanted a carol with guitar accompaniment to sing at his Christmas service. Over the years Gruber made other arrangements of the music, which eventually became widely known and popular. In 2011 the work was declared an "intangible cultural heritage" by UNESCO.

This setting is by **David Willcocks** (1919-2015), well-known as a former organist of King's College, Cambridge, and also for his carol arrangements.

Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
'Round yon virgin Mother and Child
Holy infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight!
Glories stream from heaven afar;
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Saviour is born!

Silent night, holy night
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth

Hark the Herald Angels Sing is rather a patchwork. The original words by Charles Wesley (1707-1788) opened: *Hark! how all the welkin rings*, but these were changed, often for theological reasons, by several later hands.

The music is from a cantata by **Mendelssohn** written to commemorate the invention of movable-type printing by Johann Gutenberg, adapted to these words by an English musician, William Cummings (1831-1915).

In the spirit of adaptation, we are tonight performing an arrangement made by **Mack Wilberg** (1955-) for the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

Hark! The herald-angels sing "Glory to the newborn king;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled"
Joyful all ye nations rise, Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim "Christ is born in Bethlehem"

Hark! The herald-angels sing "Glory to the new-born king"

Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come, Offspring of a Virgin's womb:
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel

Hark! The herald-angels sing "Glory to the newborn King"

Hail the Heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings, Risen with healing in His wings;
Mild He lays His glory by, Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth

Hark! The herald angels sing "Glory to the new-born king"

(Charles Wesley, et al)

Biographies

Ben Bloor organ

Ben Bloor is the Organist of the London Oratory Church where he accompanies the professional adult choir for weekly Mass and Vespers and oversees the famous Downes/Walker organ. He combines this with a busy freelance recital career and the post of School Organist at Westminster School, where he teaches organ and plays for services in Westminster Abbey.

Previously, he held organ scholarships at Derby Cathedral, St George's Chapel Windsor Castle, New College Oxford and Westminster Cathedral, and was the Assistant Sub-Organist at Rochester Cathedral.

Ben was the winner of the 2012 Northern Ireland International Organ Competition, and a semi-finalist in the inaugural Wadden Sea International Organ Competition held in Denmark in January 2017. He was awarded second prize in the Boston Bach International Organ Competition 2018.

He holds a First-Class Honours degree in Music from the University of Oxford and the Limpus prize for highest marks in the 2013 FRCO examinations. He is a recipient of the Worshipful Company of Musicians' Silver Medal for his contribution to organ-playing.

Ben is a Junior Fellow of the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire where he takes organ lessons with Henry Fairs.

James Brown conductor

James Brown was organ scholar of Girton College, Cambridge before doing further study of organ with Lionel Rogg at the Geneva Conservatoire, Switzerland. After two years as Guest Artist in Residence at the First United Methodist Church, Lubbock, Texas, USA, he returned to England where he was Organist of Dean Close School.

In 2006 James moved to Oxford where he is Organist of the historic University Church, and teaches organ at Abingdon and New College Schools as well as pursuing freelance work as an organist and pianist. He is also a tenor lay clerk in the choir of New College.

James has given recitals in the UK, USA, Belgium and Switzerland, and appeared on both BBC radio and television. He also performs solo classical piano recitals for Cunard, P&O, and Fred Olsen cruise lines.

James has been conducting the Cherwell Singers since 2007.

The Cherwell Singers

Soprano

Christy Callaway-Gale
Stephanie Gilroy *
Elina Screen
Stephanie Sumner-Jones
Lucy Watson
Eve-Marie Wenger (19th)

Alto

Virginia Allport
Jenny Ayres
Elizabeth Kreager
Anna Orłowska
Joanna Poulton

Tenor

Andrew Bennett (21st)
Jack Lovell (19th)
David Read
Alistair Sterling (19th)

Bass

Toby Blundell
Paul Hodges
Simon Jones *
Iain McLean

* Soloists in *Still, still, still*.

If you are interested in joining us please contact James Brown at:
director@cherwellsingers.org

Next Concert

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to mark the centenary of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh

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