

**PEGASUS** has established a reputation as one of London's most versatile chamber choirs. Its members are experienced singers who pursue their passion for choral music alongside careers in other fields.


Pegasus's extensive repertoire embraces sacred and secular music from the Renaissance to the present day. The choir has premiered works by composers including John Tavener and Thomas Adès, and has worked with the London Handel Players under Laurence Cummings and the Southbank Sinfonia under John Rutter. Pegasus has performed at the Tilford Bach Festival and the London Festival of Contemporary Church Music, and presents many concerts in collaboration with charities and music societies. The choir has performed with renowned ballet dancer Carlos Acosta at both the London Coliseum and the Royal Opera House.

Concerts in the past year have included Handel's Israel in Egypt as part of the London Handel Festival, Messiah in conjunction with Handel House Museum, Rachmaninov's Vespers at London's St Martin-in-the-Fields church and a concert to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall in association with Open House weekend in London. In May 2013 Pegasus won the Chamber Choir prize at the Florilège Vocal de Tours International Choral Competition in France, along with a special award for its performance of the music of Poulenc. The choir has featured on BBC television and radio, Channel 4 and Classic FM.

You can find out more about Pegasus and join our mailing list at [pegasusmusic.org.uk](http://pegasusmusic.org.uk) or visit us on [facebook.com/pegasuschoir](https://www.facebook.com/pegasuschoir) or follow us on Twitter @pegasuschoir. If you are indeed a tweeter, please do tweet about this concert to let us know what you think using #PegasusXmas



London Bridge Frost Fair 1683



# FRIENDS & PATRONS CHRISTMAS CAROL CONCERT

SATURDAY 6 DECEMBER 2014

St Giles-in-the-Fields

*The Poets' Church*



## ORDER

**Welcome**  
Sarah Foster,  
Friends & Patrons  
Coordinator

**A Boy was Born, Theme  
and Variation I**  
Benjamin Britten  
sung by Pegasus

**Annunciation & Nativity**  
John Donne  
read by Philip Kirkpatrick,  
trustee

Congregational:  
**Unto Us a Boy is Born**

**Queen Herod**  
Carol Ann Duffy  
read by Rosie Hilal, actor

**Laetentur Coeli**  
William Byrd  
sung by Pegasus

**A Hymn to the Virgin**  
Benjamin Britten  
sung by Pegasus

**A Christmas Childhood**  
Patrick Kavanagh  
read by Christopher Logan,  
actor

Congregational:  
**It Came Upon a Midnight  
Clear**

## NOTES

**Benjamin Britten – A Boy was Born**

Britten wrote *A Boy was Born* when he was just 19 years old and still a student at the Royal College of Music – he dedicated the piece to his father. It is in the form of a musical theme, with several variations setting texts dating mostly from the 15th century and a Christina Rossetti poem from the 19th century. We will sing four movements tonight. The work was originally written for mixed voices and a separate boys' chorus.

The piece in its entirety shows Britten's mastery of choral music, with each movement a self-contained masterpiece in its own right, ranging from the initial theme *A Boy was Born in Bethlehem* to the plangent soprano solo of *Variation IV* and the sweet melancholy of *Variation V* sung entirely by upper voices, which contrasts the words of Christina Rossetti's poem *In the Bleak Mid-Winter* with the early modern English of the Corpus Christi Carol.

**William Byrd – Laetentur Coeli**

William Byrd was an Elizabethan composer and a contemporary of Shakespeare. His five-voice motet *Laetentur Coeli* sets words from the Book of Isaiah which are interpreted as foretelling the excitement of the heavens and earth at the birth of Christ. It is taken from his *Cantiones Sacrae* a collection of some 50 motets in Latin composed between 1575 and 1591 which allowed Byrd to express his commitment to the Catholic cause.

**Benjamin Britten – A Hymn to the Virgin**

Britten wrote this motet when he was 16, even before *A Boy was Born*. It is one of his earliest surviving pieces of sacred music and was first performed at a concert given by the Lowestoft Musical Society in 1931. The anonymous text was taken out of the Oxford Book of English Verse and dates back to around 1300. The

**London Bridge Frost Fair**  
Anon  
read by Naomi Cranston, actor

**A Boy was Born, Variation IV**  
Benjamin Britten  
sung by Pegasus

**A Maiden Most Gentle**  
Andrew Carter  
sung by Pegasus

**Reginald's Christmas Revel**  
Saki  
read by Kammy Darweish,  
actor

**O Virgo Splendens**  
(plainchant)  
sung by Pegasus

**A Boy was Born, Variation V**  
Benjamin Britten  
sung by Pegasus

Congregational:  
**Hark! The Herald Angels Sing**

**A Christmas Carol**  
Charles Ives  
sung by Pegasus

**Mrs Beeton's Christmas  
Plum Pudding**  
John Harle  
sung by Pegasus

**Closing words**  
Neil Constable,  
Chief Executive

unaccompanied piece is written for a chorus and separate solo quartet of voices, and Britten mimics one of the oldest forms of devotional chant by arranging for the two choirs to sing in antiphonal exchange, the first singing in English and the second echoing in Latin.

**Andrew Carter – A Maiden Most Gentle**

Andrew Carter is based at York Minster, but has a worldwide reputation. In his gentle, lilting carol, the verses alternate between unaccompanied and those with organ, and between lower and upper voices. Carter paraphrases words originally written by the Venerable Bede, and the piece contains the well-known "Ave Maria" hymn to the Virgin.

**O Virgo Splendens (plainchant)**

This haunting piece of plainchant, to be sung by our upper voices, is written as a canon. It is taken from the *Llibre Vermell de Montserrat* ("Red Book of Montserrat"), a manuscript collection of devotional texts containing late medieval songs. The 14th-century manuscript was compiled in and is still located at the monastery of Montserrat, just outside Barcelona.

**Charles Ives – A Christmas Carol arranged  
by Matthew Altham**

*A Christmas Carol* by the American composer Charles Ives probably dates from Christmas 1894. It sets a poem by Ives himself and the gentle rocking rhythm is akin to a lullaby. The arrangement we will sing is by our own conductor.

**John Harle – Mrs Beeton's Christmas Plum  
Pudding**

John Harle is a contemporary British composer who is also a leading saxophonist. His setting of Charlotte Cory's words, based on a Mrs Beeton recipe, was originally written for the BBC Singers and contains some unexpected spoken interjections!