



Matthew Altham *Director*

Martin Toyer *Organ*

Friday, 1 December 2017, 7.30pm
St Botolph's Church, Bishopsgate, London

Programme

Carol: Once in Royal David's City

The choir will sing the first two verses;

please stand and join in with the other verses (see text on next page)

Alleluya, a New Work is Come on Hand

Peter Wishart

There Shall a Star from Jacob Come Forth

Felix Mendelssohn

London Snow

Robert Bridges

Read by Claire Bennie

The Holy Boy

John Ireland

Children's Song of the Nativity

Traditional

The Shepherd's Carol

Bob Chilcott

Carol: O Little Town of Bethlehem

Please stand and join in

In the Bleak Midwinter

Harold Darke

The Sussex Carol

arr. David Willcocks

From A Christmas Carol

Read by Serena Wilson

Charles Dickens

As Dew in Aprylle

Peter Warlock

Balulalow

Francis Pott

Sir Christèmas

William Mathias

Reginald on Christmas Presents

Read by Richard Ford

H.H. Munro

Bogoroditse Dyevo

Arvo Pärt

Carol of the Bells

Mykola Leontovych,
arr. Peter Wilhousky

Koppången

Per-Erik Moraeus,
arr. Robert Sund

Carol: The First Nowell

Please stand and join in

Away in a Manger

Traditional

Glory, Glory, Glory to the Newborn King

Traditional, arr. Moses Hogan

ONCE IN ROYAL DAVID'S CITY

The choir sings the first two verses; please join in from verse 3:

3. And our eyes at last shall see
him,
Through his own redeeming
love.
For that child so dear and gentle
Is our Lord in heaven above;
And he leads his children on
To the place where he is gone.

4. Not in that poor lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see him; but in heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high;
When like stars his children
crowned
All in white shall wait around.

O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

1. O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless
sleep
The silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all
the years
Are met in thee tonight.

2. O morning stars together
Proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King,
And peace to men on earth.
For Christ is born of Mary;
And, gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels
keep
Their watch of wondering love.

*3. Third verse choir alone.
Please join in again for the final
verse:*

4. O holy Child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us, we pray,
Cast out our sin, and enter in,
Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell:
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel.

THE FIRST NOWELL

1. The first Nowell the angel did
say
Was to certain poor shepherds in
fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay, keeping
their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was
so deep.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the King of Israel!

2. They looked up and saw a star,
Shining in the east, beyond them
far;
And to the earth it gave great light,
And so it continued both day
and night.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the King of Israel!

3. And by the light of that same
star,
Three wise men came from
country far;
To seek for a king was their intent,
And to follow the star wherever
it went.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the King of Israel!

4. This star drew nigh to the
northwest;
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest,
And there it did both stop and
stay
Right over the place where Jesus
lay.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the King of Israel!

5. Then entered in those wise men
three
Full reverently upon their knee,
And offered there in his presence
Their gold and myrrh and
frankincense.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the King of Israel!

6. Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
That hath made heaven and earth
of naught,
And with his blood mankind has
bought.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the King of Israel!

NOTES ON THE MUSIC

by Samir Savant

We begin our concert with ***Alleluya, a New Work is Come on Hand***, a lively setting of a medieval English verse by British composer Peter Wishart, written in 1952 for the Birmingham Singers' Club. The carol has distinctive tumbling cascades of the refrain "Alleluya", imitating a joyous peal of bells to announce the birth of a saviour that fulfils Old Testament prophecies.

There Shall a Star from Jacob Come Forth is an excerpt from Mendelssohn's unfinished oratorio *Christus* which tells of the three magi arriving in the Holy Land and asking the whereabouts of the new-born king. The kings are represented by a trio of male voices. The chorus that follows ends with the famous chorale "How Brightly Beams the Morning Star".

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After a poem by Robert Bridges, we sing three carols by English composers. John Ireland's ***The Holy Boy*** was written as a piano solo in 1913. The composer adapted it for other musical forces over the following decades, using words supplied by Herbert Brown, Ireland's family solicitor.

The Children's Song of the Nativity is a simple yet effective carol for solo and unison voices. The melody is based on the traditional folk tune "Stowey", named after a small village in Somerset. It was first notated by Ralph Vaughan Williams, who travelled the country collecting old songs to preserve for posterity. The tune may also be familiar to some listeners as the melody of the children's song "When a Knight Won His Spurs".

Bob Chilcott is a popular contemporary composer. ***The Shepherd's Carol*** sets a beautiful poem by Clive Sansom which narrates the experience of the shepherds, drawn by starlight to the baby Jesus. The poignant melody is supported by languid and atmospheric harmonies, creating a sublime marriage of poetic imagery and music.

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We follow "O Little Town of Bethlehem" with two traditional favourites, both by composers who were directors of the choir of King's College, Cambridge. Harold Darke's setting of Christina Rossetti's poem ***In the Bleak Midwinter*** was voted the favourite carol in a poll of choral experts and choirmasters carried out by the *Daily Telegraph* in 2008. David Willcocks's arrangement of ***The Sussex Carol*** is based on another folk tune collected by Vaughan Williams, this time from Horsham in Sussex.

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After a reading from Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, there is a distinctly Celtic flavour to our next three carols. Although Peter Warlock was born at the Savoy Hotel, he had strong links to Wales and indeed Cornwall and Ireland, where he studied Celtic language and culture. ***As Dew in Aprylle*** was written in 1918 and takes its text from a fifteenth-century poem. The repeated phrase "He cam also styлле" refers to the divine nature of Christ's conception and birth – Mary's calmness and restfulness is a metaphor for her virginity.

Balulalow, by contemporary English composer Francis Pott, was premiered in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, where Pegasus has sung as a visiting choir. The text is from an old Scottish lullaby which imagines the words Mary might have sung to her infant child. Pott writes rich harmonies, with the addition of a soprano solo from the second verse, representing the voice of Mary.

Sir Christèmas is a rousing carol by Welsh composer William Mathias. The text is macaronic, i.e. it combines two languages, in this case English and French. The slightly mysterious Sir Christèmas appears to be a combination of Yuletide messenger and master of ceremonies. The carol displays Mathias's typical jagged rhythms and gritty harmonies.

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Following a reading by the inimitable H.H. Munro (known also by his pen name, Saki), we look north and east to three carols originating from colder and snowier places. **Bogoroditse Dyevo** is by contemporary Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, and sets the words of the prayer "Ave Maria" as used in the Russian Orthodox church. This energetic and fast carol is a challenge for any non-native Russian speakers!

Carol of the Bells was composed in 1914 and is based on a Ukrainian folksong with a repeating four-note motif evoking the sound of ringing bells. The composer, Mykola Leontovych, was killed by a Soviet agent in 1921, and his carol would probably be unknown to us were it not for the English lyrics supplied by Peter Wilhousky in the 1930s for American audiences.

Koppången is the name of an area of wetland in the Swedish region of Darlana. The melody of this carol was written by Per-Erik Moraeus in 1998, originally for solo violin, with words added a year later. The version we sing has been adapted for choir by Swedish conductor Robert Sund.

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After "The First Nowell", our concert ends with two carols that are strongly contrasting – but what they have in common is that both are American. When first published in 1880, **Away in a Manger** used the melody now better known as "Home, Sweet Home". The lilting tune we are familiar with today, by American composer William Kirkpatrick, was published in 1895. Its harmonisation, however, is by the quintessential Englishman David Willcocks.

We bring our evening to a close with **Glory, Glory, Glory to the Newborn King**, a stirring arrangement of a spiritual by pianist, conductor and choral arranger Moses Hogan. A reflective opening with a succession of solos focusing on the infant Jesus transitions into a rousing setting of "Go, Tell It On the Mountain".

Pegasus

Now in its 22nd season, Pegasus is one of London's most acclaimed chamber choirs. Under its director, Matthew Altham, the ensemble has developed an extensive repertoire of sacred and secular music ranging from the Renaissance to the present day.

Pegasus presents numerous concerts each year, often in collaboration with charities, music societies and festivals. The choir performs with leading instrumental ensembles, vocal soloists and conductors, and has regular collaborations with the London Handel Orchestra, most recently in Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* for Tilford Bach Society, and Mozart's *Mass in C Minor* for Grayshott Concerts. In May Pegasus made its debut at London's Barbican Hall in Mahler's *Resurrection Symphony*, and over the summer performed in venues ranging from Edwin Lutyens's Goddards house in Surrey to Leicester Cathedral. In September Pegasus gave the London premiere of Colin Riley's *Roads Shining Like River Up Hill After Rain* at St George's, Hanover Square.

In 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 Francis Poulenc. The choir has been featured on BBC television and radio, Channel 4 and Classic FM.

Matthew Altham has been the director of Pegasus since 2001. He began conducting choirs while studying at Oxford University and led performances of music by Poulenc and the major English Renaissance composers. Alongside his work as director of strategy for a business management company, Matthew directs Pegasus, Vox Cordis and the London Bach Players, with whom he has performed on several occasions in Pau, France. He has toured as a conductor to Prague, Tolosa, Arezzo and Antwerp and has broadcast on BBC Radio and Classic FM.

Martin Toyer is a long-time member of Pegasus as singer, pianist, organist and conductor. He began his musical career as organ scholar and director of the chapel choir at Brasenose College, Oxford. Martin is director of music at the Church of Our Lady in St John's Wood, London, and directs Ensemble 42.

Find out more about Pegasus and join our email list at

www.pegasuschoir.org.uk

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Pegasus

Soprano

Sarah Besley
Catherine Jackson
Anna Kirby
Katy McAdam
Madeline Smith
Anne Taylor
Danielle Toyer
Serena Wilson

Alto

Claire Bennie
Rhian Billington
David Gabbe
Kirstin Gillon
Alison Grant
Ali Sheppard

Tenor

John Minett
Samir Savant
David Thomson
Martin Toyer

Bass

James Baer
Dave Brittain
Adrian Collister
Richard Ford
Peter Hatch
Graham Kirk
Graham Wood

COMING UP FROM PEGASUS...

IN THE BEGINNING

Sunday, 21 January 2018, 4.00pm

St George's Church, Bloomsbury, London

Aaron Copland's setting of the biblical creation story, along with works reflecting the seven days of creation by Stanford, Tippett, Whitacre, Tavener and others, conducted by Pegasus's Associate Musical Director, Jessica Norton. Admission is free and unticketed, with a retiring collection.

HANDEL'S ACIS AND GALATEA

Monday, 19 March and Wednesday, 21 March 2018, 7.30pm

St John's Smith Square, London

Pegasus joins the London Handel Orchestra and vocal soloists Lucy Page, Nicholas Pritchard and Edward Grint for two performances of this entrancing opera in its 300th anniversary year. This semi-staged version is directed by Martin Parr and conducted by Laurence Cummings.

For more details, visit www.pegasuschoir.org.uk

*We are grateful to the Priest-in-Charge and Churchwardens
of St Botolph's for permission to use the church tonight,
and to the church staff for their help with the arrangements.*