



A Country Christmas

St Thomas' Church

16th December 2012



Programme

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|---|--|
| 1 I saw a maiden sitting and sing | Edgar Pettman |
| 2 Myn lyking | Richard R Terry |
| 3 There is no rose | anon 15 th C |
| 4 There is no rose | John Joubert |
| 5 Audience: I saw three ships | trad |
| 6 I saw three ships | trad, arr John Rutter |
| 7 Remember, O thou man | Thomas Ravencroft |
| 8 Remember, O thou man | Bob Chilcott |
| 9 Audience: While shepherds watched | 'Winchester Old' after Christopher Tye |
| 10 While shepherds watched | after Handel |
| 11 Sweet was the song | 16 th C arr Thomas Hamond d. 1662 |
| 12 A Celtic carol (Sweet was the song) | Mark Sirett |
| 13 Balulalow | Ian Wells |
| 14 Balulalow (Ceremony of Carols)
<small>solo: Suzanne Smith</small> | Benjamin Britten |
| 15 Audience: O little town of Bethlehem | trad arr Vaughan Williams |
| 16 O little town of Bethlehem | Henry Walford Davies |
| 17 In the bleak midwinter
<small>soloists: Lesley Lambert, Andy Button</small> | Harold Darke |
| 18 Audience: In the bleak midwinter | Gustav Holst |
| 19 Torches | John Joubert |

Please join us for wine and mince pies in the Canterbury Room after the concert

The retiring collection is in favour of Marie Curie Cancer Care and the Thames Valley & Chiltern Air Ambulance Trust.

Audience Carols

I saw three ships

1 All

I saw three ships come sailing in
On Christmas day, on Christmas day
I saw three ships come sailing in
On Christmas day in the morning

2 Ladies and children

And what was in those ships all three?

3 Gentlemen

Our Saviour Christ and his lady

4 Ladies and children

Pray, whither sailed those ships all three?

5 Gentlemen

O they sailed into Bethlehem

6 All

And all the bells on earth shall ring

7 Ladies and children

And all the angels in heaven shall sing

8 Gentlemen

And all the souls on earth shall sing

9 All

Then let us all rejoice amain!

While shepherds watched

1 All

While shepherds watched their flocks by night
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

2 Audience

'Fear not,' said he, (for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind),
'Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.

3 Audience

To you in David's town this day
Is born of David's line
A Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;
And this shall be the sign:

4 Audience

The heav'nly Babe you there shall find
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
And in a manger laid!

5 Choir

Thus spake the seraph: and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels praising God, who thus
Addressed their joyful song:

6 All

'All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace;
Good will henceforth from heaven to men
Begin and never cease.'

O little town of Bethlehem

All

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. 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!

In the bleak midwinter

1 All

In the bleak midwinter
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone:
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter
Long ago.

2 Audience

Our God, heaven cannot hold him
Nor earth sustain:
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When he comes to reign:
In the bleak midwinter
A stable place sufficed
The Lord God almighty
Jesus Christ.

3 All

Angels and archangels
May have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim
Thronged the air:
But only his mother
In her maiden bliss
Worshipped the beloved
With a kiss.

4 All

What can I give him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man
I would do my part,
Yet what I can I give him--
Give my heart.

Programme Notes

There are many definitions of the word 'carol' but broadly it should be simple in spirit, celebratory, narrative or contemplative, often dance-like and usually strophic in form. Our ancient carols have been sung in our English countryside down the centuries and are a fascinating part of our heritage. It is the text which defines a carol rather than the music, and so I have paired settings of the same text with different musical versions to explore how varied generations have responded to the old words.

The first four carols have texts dating from the 15th century. *I saw a maiden sitting and sing* comes from the Sloane manuscript in the British Library but no 15th century musical settings survive. The versions by Pettman and Terry are roughly contemporary - late 19th/early 20th century - but significantly different in style. A genuine 15th century musical setting of *There is no rose of swych vertu* comes in a 15th century roll at Trinity College, Cambridge. The identification of Mary with the rose was a common medieval conceit. Four hundred years later Joubert uses pairs of voices too.

The next four carols date from the 17th century. There are many variant versions in the European folk memory of the story of the Mediterranean journeyings of the supposed relics of the magi. There are as many variants of the tune; the first is from Bramley and Stainer's *Christmas Carols New And Old* c 1878, and the second was arranged by Rutter in 1978. Ravenscroft's setting of *Remember, O thou man* was published in the 'Country Pastimes' section of his 1611 'Melismata' and may be an imitation of rural carol singers; it was still being sung in Thomas Hardy's 'Under the Greenwood Tree' (1872). Bob Chilcott's setting dates from 2003 and is in the very contrasting style of a Christmas spiritual, yet has the same sombre air.

While *shepherds watched their flocks by night*, a paraphrase of Luke 2, vv8-14, first appeared in Tate and Brady's 1700 supplement to their 'New Version of the Psalms of David'. For more than eighty years it was the only Christmas hymn permitted to be used in Anglican churches and was sung to any psalm tune in the correct metre. The words attracted a rich diversity of tunes in the countryside between 1700 and 1861, when 'Hymns Ancient and Modern' published them attached to Winchester Old, a 16th century tune after Christopher Tye. The more cheerful tune the choir will

sing, still common in the US, is derived from an aria in Handel's opera 'Siroe'. The alternative tunes deserve more hearings today.

Nos 11 to 14 have 16th century texts; a rich source. The flowing original version of *Swete was the song the Virgine soong* was probably a consort song, accompanied by lute or viols, rather than a carol. The Canadian composer Mark Sirett, composing this prize-winning setting in 1997, attributes the words to an Irish source. Both colour the text with many chromatic notes. *Balulalow* is a lullaby written by James, Robert and John Wedderburn. The text has proved a popular one, perhaps most famously used by Britten in his 'Ceremony of Carols' (1942). This glorious setting for SSA shapes the lullaby beautifully; Ian Wells' setting, written for Liverpool Anglican Cathedral in 1981, has the same sense of simplicity and flow.

Nos 15 to 19 date from the 19th century. None of them are strictly carols; the words of the first two settings were written by Phillips Brooks, an Episcopalian priest, for the children of his Sunday School. It was inspired by a visit on Christmas Eve 1865 to the field outside Bethlehem where the annunciation to the shepherds was supposed to have taken place. Vaughan Williams arranged a traditional tune from Surrey in 1903 for his version of the hymn. Walford Davies' setting originally consisted of two verses for solo piano and one for choir with an introductory recitative. The poem *In the bleak midwinter* by Christina Rossetti was not designed to be sung; it lends itself perfectly to Darke's exquisite setting whereas Holst struggles to fit the words in - yet his version retains its place in the public's affections.

We cannot finish without a carol from the 20th century, an age when ordinary English people travelled abroad as never before. One of the most popular destinations was Spain, so our final carol comes from Galicia, set to vigorous music by Joubert in 1952.

F Brewitt-Taylor

Choir

Musical Director: Frances Brewitt-Taylor

Accompanist: Simon Brett

Sopranos:

Sandy Boshier, Geraldine Crippen, Ginty Fay, Amanda Hines, Lesley Lambert, Valerie Loveday, Christine Richardson, Audrey Rogers, Angharad Shaw, Suzanne Smith, Susan Terry, Frances Thompson

Contraltos:

Jenny Boyd, Myrtle Campbell, Myra Cottingham, Tanya Hawley, Susan Lee, Marilyn Purdie, Liz Rapple, Mary Rollinson, Jane Ryder, Elma Wishart, Jenny Worthington, Cassie Watcyn-Jones

Tenors:

Andy Button, John Cottingham, Stuart Crippen, Charles Lambert, Graeme Pearce

Basses:

Paul Bradstock, John Burton, Elwyn Hughes, Henry Parkinson, Peter Purdie, Nigel Suffield-Jones, Tom Worthington

Choir Notes

Forthcoming Events

The choir visits Oporto in Portugal in early April. We will be performing a pre-tour concert in St Thomas' on Saturday 23rd March at 7:30pm.

We thank Warmingham Estate Agents for their continued sponsorship of our annual Christmas concert.