

Minehead Choral Society
Advent Concert 2024

Program

First Half:	A Great and Mighty Wonder King Jesus Hath a Garden It Came Upon The Midnight Clear	Germanus / Praetorius Woodward / Wood Sears / Sullivan
	Magnificat 1. Magnificat anima mea 2. Of a Rose, a lovely Rose 4. Et misericordia 6. Esurientes 7. Gloria Patri	John Rutter
Second Half:	Once in Royal David's City The Shepherds Farewell Torches Hark the Herald Angels Sing Navidad Nuestra • The Annunciation • The Pilgrimage • The Nativity • The Shepherds • The Three Kings • The Flight O Come all ye Faithful Ding Dong Merrily on High	arr. Willcocks Hector Berlioz Joubert arr. Willcocks Ramirez arr. Willcocks arr. Charles Wood

I am delighted that we are tonight reunited by the wonderful soprano soloist, Stephanie Berner as we sing some Advent favourites, the glorious “Magnificat” and introduce our Minehead audience to the Latin American “Navidad Nuestra”, where we will be joined by guitarist Sebastian Tesouro. There is an opportunity for the audience to join in, so please sing up and enjoy the evening!

John Rutter “Magnificat”

John Rutter is widely known as a great choral composer, a distinguished editor and arranger of choral music, as well as a renowned conductor. He was born in London in 1945 and received his first musical education as a chorister at Highgate School. He went on to study music at Clare College, Cambridge, becoming the Director of Music. After he gave up the Cambridge post to allow more time for composition, he founded the Cambridge Singers as a professional chamber choir dedicated to recording, and he now divides his time between composition and conducting.

Together with numerous choral and instrumental works, John Rutter is well known for co-editing four volumes of the *Carols for Choirs* series with Sir David Willcocks

He wrote his **Magnificat** in 1990, based on the familiar passage of text from St Luke chapter 1, verses 46-55. This poetic outpouring of praise, joy and trust in God is ascribed by Luke to the Virgin Mary on learning that she was to give birth to Jesus. The Magnificat is a familiar canticle in the Catholic office of Vespers and in Anglican evensong, with numerous musical settings written.

The association of the text with the Virgin Mary inspired Rutter to write an extended setting of the Magnificat, incorporating three additional elements into the standard Latin text. Particularly memorable is his haunting setting of the beautiful 15th century poem, 'Of a Rose, a lovely Rose', which uses the image of a rose as an allegory for the Blessed Virgin Mary and her powers to intercede for mankind. The other two supplementary texts are the Sanctus from the Ordinary of the Mass, and a Marian antiphon, 'Sancta Maria' (Holy Mary).

The Magnificat opens with a rhythm infectious in its drive and energy, the first few lines of the canticle 'My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour' are expressed beautifully by the full choir, ending with a rousing "**Magnificat**". The second movement "**Of a Rose, a Lovely Rose**" features all of the sections of the choir in varying combinations that colour the 15th century English text beautifully. We are omitting third movement "Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est" and go straight into "**Et misericordia**" (and His mercy is on them that fear him) a duet for soprano and choir, tonight sung by the lovely Stephanie Berner. This movement features the soloist repeating the opening text of the piece as a descant, the choice of solo voice strengthening the associations with the Virgin Mary. By omitting the fifth movement, "Fecit potentiam" we move straight into "**Esurientes**" (He hath filled the hungry with good things) is a beautiful soprano solo supported by the choir (they also get a chance to sing the enchanting melody!). The final movement, "**Gloria Patri**", is set to the music of the third movement, before being interrupted by a final contemplative singing of the antiphon 'Sancta Maria' by the soprano soloist, and the *Magnificat* concludes with the music from the opening of the entire piece and a rousing Amen.

INTERVAL

On the eve of Advent, our second half follows the pattern of a traditional Christmas concert opening with the well-loved "**Once in Royal David's City**", words by C.F.Alexander, tune by H.J.Gauntlett and arranged by David Willcocks. Please join in after the solo first verse!

*1. Once in royal David's city
stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her baby
in a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little child.*

**2. He came down to earth from heaven,
who is God and Lord of all,
and his shelter was a stable,
and his cradle was a stall;
with the poor and mean and lowly,
lived on earth our Saviour holy.**

**3. And, through all his wondrous childhood,
he would honour and obey,
love and watch the lowly maiden
in whose gentle arms he lay:
Christian children all must be**

mild, obedient, good as he.

**4. For he is our childhood's pattern,
day by day like us he grew;
he was little, weak and helpless,
tears and smiles like us he knew.
and he feeleth for our sadness,
and he shareth in our gladness.**

**5. 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.**

**6. Not in that poor lowly stable,
with the oxen standing round,
we shall see him; but in heaven,
set at God's right hand on high;
where like stars his children crowned,
all in white shall wait around.**

In 1850, Hector Berlioz wrote a brief work for chorus and orchestra titled *L'adieu des bergers* (“**The Shepherd’s Farewell to the Holy Family**”), depicting the blessings and farewell of a group of shepherds as Mary and Joseph flee with the infant Jesus to escape the murderous edict of King Herod. This later formed the core of his oratorio *L’Enfance du Christ*. Keeping briefly to this French theme, our next piece is a simple but rousing, Galician Carol “**Torches**” arranged by John Joubert. We follow this with the rousing “**Hark the Herald Angels Sing**”, music by Mendelssohn, arranged by David Willcocks.

**1. 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 newborn King!"**

**2. Christ by highest heav'n 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!"

3. Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!

**Hail the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings
Ris'n 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 newborn King!"**

The next work will be unfamiliar to many, its catchy tunes and rhythms reflecting popular Hispanic American characteristics. “**Navidad Nuestra**” – Our Nativity was created by Ariel Ramirez for a *criollo retable* – a native tableau – where each moment of the Mystery of the Incarnation is expressed in a popular manner. Each episode of the Navidad is given a distinctive voice: a *chamame* for the Annunciation to Mary; a *huella pampeana* for the pilgrimage of Joseph and Mary, a *vidala catamarquena* for the Birth of Christ, the Adoration of the Shepherds is done in *chaya riojana* rhythm and that of the Three Kings in *takirari* temp, the Flight of the Sacred Family is a *vidala tucumana*. Felix Luna was the poet who collaborated with Ariel Ramirez in the elaboration of the songs of the Navid Nuestra, combining his lyrics with the popular melodies to create the balance of Hispanic American characteristics without losing its universal content.

Our last participation carol is the great “**O Come all Ye Faithful**” arranged by David Willcocks. Tonight, as is traditional, we will save the last verse for Christmas Day!

**O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem.
Come and behold Him, born the King of angels;**

*O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.*

**God of God, Light of Light,
Lo, He abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Son of the Father, begotten, not created;**

*O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.*

**See how the shepherds, summoned to His cradle,
Leaving their flocks, draw nigh to gaze;
We too will thither bend our joyful footsteps;**

*O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.*

**Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation;
O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;**

*O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.*

Our concert concludes with a fun and rousing “**Ding Dong Merrily on High**” Having battled bravely with numerous time changes, key changes and unexpected melodic and harmonic interpretations in the Rutter and the unfamiliar genre of the Navidad Nuestra, the choir (and the organist and conductor!) get to enjoy themselves with this piece to finish our concert.

We hope you enjoy the concert, have a very Happy Christmas!

Marcus Capel
November 2024