

**The
West
Somerset
Singers** present...



A Christmas Rose

Saturday 7th December 2019

Taunton Baptist Church

The West Somerset Singers

warmly welcome you to Taunton Baptist Church this evening for our performance of

A Christmas Rose

Musical Director: Anne-Marie Twort

Organist and Accompanist: John Bodiley

Accompanist: Mike Wager

Soloist: Liam Atherton

Oboist: Poppy Webb-Taylor

PROGRAMME

PART ONE

Sing with joy at Christmas – (the Stella Natalis) – Karl Jenkins

There is no rose of such virtue – John Joubert

Cantique de Jean Racine – Gabriel Fauré (ed. A Millington)

Liam Atherton accompanied by Mike Wager

* ***Miracle of miracles*** – From *Fiddler on the Roof*,
composer Jerry Bock

* ***Empty chairs at empty tables*** – From *Les Misérables*,
composed by Claude De-Michel Schönburg

* ***Proud of your boy*** – From *Aladdin*, composed by Alan
Menken

Poppy Webb-Taylor accompanied by John Bodiley

Solo for Oboe and Piano in F Minor – Gaetano Donizetti

Lullay – Karl Jenkins

The Rose – Ola Gjeilo

Audience and choir: Good King Wenceslas – arr. R Jacques

The Snow – Elgar (arr. Pointer)

INTERVAL
Please join us for light refreshments

PART TWO

Do you hear what I hear? – Noel Regney & Gloria Shayne

Bethlehem Down – Peter Warlock

Mary did you know? – Words and Music by Mark Lowry
and Buddy Greene (arr. Roger Emerson)

Poppy Webb-Taylor accompanied by John Bodiley

Fantaisie Pastorale – Paul Pierné

Sleep, child of winter – Karl Jenkins

Audience and Choir: Tres Magi de Gentibus – C.S. Lang

There is no rose – Philip Stopford

Ding! dong! Merrily on high – arr. Mack Wilberg

We wish you a merry Christmas – arr. John Rutter

Programme Notes

Stella Natalis — Sir Karl Jenkins

Born in Penclawdd, Gower, on 17 February 1944, Sir Karl Jenkins is one of the most performed living composers in the world. Educated at Gowerton Grammar School, Cardiff University and the Royal Academy of Music, London, *The Armed Man: A Mass For Peace* alone has been performed over 2000 times in 20 different countries since the CD was released while his recorded output has resulted in seventeen gold and platinum disc awards.

Stella Natalis (star of birth or origin), from which tonight's pieces are taken, is a work in twelve movements celebrating different aspects of Christmas.

Jenkins uses a variety of texts, from Old Testament quotes to Zulu chants and sets them to a mixture of traditional folk melodies, lullabies and African rhythms.

There is no rose — John Joubert

The text is a Carol from the early 1400's. The Rose is an allusion to Mary, the Mother of God. "Vertue" is an ancient word, associated with power, not purity. It is a reference to life-force, particularly within a plant, whose growth and transformation of buds into flowers were seen as miraculous.

Dylan Thomas also refers to it in "The Force that through the green fuse drives the flower". Joubert composed the piece in 1954, when he was Lecturer in Music at Hull University.

Cantique de Jean Racine — Gabriel Fauré

In 1865 the 19-year old Gabriel Fauré entered this piece into a composition competition in Paris and won First Prize. The text is a paraphrase of a much longer hymn for Matins and was written by the French writer Jean Racine in 1688. Fauré possibly chose Racine's rather florid French over the original Latin to suit his Romantic style of long, sweeping melodies. Set in the richly sonorous key of Dflat Major, the piece uses the words in a restrained and stylish setting.

“Word of God... one with the Most High....
Cast your eyes upon us
O Christ, look with favour on your people.....
May they go forth filled with your Gifts...”

Cantique was first performed in 1866 (with Fauré at the organ), when the new organ at Montivilliers Abbey was dedicated, with Cesar Frank conducting.

The Rose — Ola Gjeilo

Ola Gjeilo (b.1977) is a Norwegian composer who studied at the Juilliard School and now lives in New York. His compositions for piano and for choir have been recorded by Voces8 and Royal Holloway Choir.

In The Rose, Gjeilo sets a text by Christina Rossetti. Using the folk-influenced triple time, the piece shifts from 4, then 3, then finally 2, beats in a bar as if racing towards the final chords when the Rose “ unfolds her glowing heart” and “sets the world on fire”. Here the final chord of E Major overcomes the preceding E minor tonality. The simple melody floats amongst flowing harmonies, which enhance the mysterious multiple meanings in the poetry.

The Snow — Sir Edward Elgar

Sir Edward Elgar was an English composer and master of orchestral writing. He was born in 1857 and his birthplace, Broadheath in Worcestershire, is now a National Trust property and well worth a visit!

The Snow is a part-song written in 1894 and sets words by Elgar's wife, Alice. It is dedicated to Harriet Fitton of Malvern. She was a fine pianist who often played, with Elgar on the violin, at local concerts and the piece was originally written for female voices accompanied by piano and 2 violins.

Elgar had travelled widely in Europe and was familiar with the burgeoning Romanticism of Wagner and Liszt. The Snow has 3 verses, and the harmony shifts abruptly from E minor to E major. The accompaniment reflects the whirl and fall, then thaw of snow and reflects Elgar's mastery of orchestral writing.

Do you hear what I hear? — Noël Regney and Gloria Shayne Baker

Born Léon Schlienger on 19 August 1922, World War II veteran and French songwriter, Noël Regney composed the Christmas standard "Do You Hear What I Hear?" in 1962.

Bethlehem Down — Peter Warlock

Peter Warlock was born in London in 1894. He was an English composer, critic, and editor known for his songs and for his exemplary editions of Elizabethan music.

Bethlehem Down was composed in 1927. Peter Warlock and

his friend, Bruce Blunt, decided that they would have a “large” night out in London but were hampered by their lack of funds. They learned that the Daily Telegraph was holding a Carol Competition, so Blunt rapidly drafted the 4 verses which Warlock set to music. The pair shared the First Prize cheque and duly celebrated.

Warlock was greatly interested in Medieval English composers like Tallis and this influenced his setting of Blunt’s poem. The music is timeless, a model of quiet homophony (all parts moving together). There are no dynamics, only the ebb and flow of the melody. Warlock’s chromatic harmony centres on D minor, a key of great beauty and poignancy and leads us far away from typical festive jollity to a place of quiet contemplation.

Mary Did You Know? — Mark Lowry

Born in Houston, Texas in 1958 Mark Lowry is a singer, songwriter, author, and humourist. In 1984, when asked to write a script for a church Christmas play, Lowry wrote a series of questions that he would like to ask Mary, the mother of Jesus. These questions were used in between the scenes of the play.

There is no Rose — Philip Stopford

Philip Stopford (b.1977) is an English sacred music choral composer and choir director. He began his musical career as chorister at Westminster Abbey. He held the post of Organ Scholar at Truro and Canterbury Cathedrals and Keble College, Oxford, where he read music. In 2016 Philip was appointed Director of Music at Christ Church, Bronxville in the USA. This simple setting of the ancient carol was first performed at Bath Abbey on 16 December 2015.

Ding! Dong! Merrily on high — Mack Wilberg

Former professor of music at Brigham Young University, Mack Wilberg is active as a composer, arranger, guest conductor, and clinician throughout the United States and abroad. He is Music Director of The Tabernacle Choir who have recorded many of his compositions and arrangements.



The Choir

Sopranos

Vivienne Barrett*
Marianne Bray
Carole Collins*
Diana Davies
Alison Edwards
Rosemary Harris
Christine Knapman
Vivienne Lewis
Pat Moore
Pat Phillips
Julie Pope
Hilary Shaw
Betty Stone
Pam Whittaker

Altos

Judi Boobyer
Gill Brown
Alix Cathcart
Joanna Day
Judy Donovan
Janet Hall
Louise Hayden
Pippa Moat
Cathie Pilgrim
Sheila Ruff
Tesh Setter
Sue Sutton

Tenors

David Bridges (guest)
Mike Hawkins
John Page
David Taylor
Mike Wager

Basses

John Gillard
David Greig
Bob Hart
Keith Taylor
Bob Town

*singing the solo parts of *Sing with joy at Christmas*

Biographies

Musical Director — Anne-Marie Twort

Anne has sung in a variety of choirs since the age of 10.

She took up the post of Music Director at St George's RC Church, Taunton in 2003, initially leading the choir and in more recent years the music group as well. She is also an active member of the RSCM Somerset Branch committee.

Anne enjoys playing the trombone and having played in various brass, military and jazz bands she now plays for pleasure.

Organist and Accompanist — John Bodiley

John taught English professionally in comprehensive schools and adult education but, following organ lessons from Michael Nicholas and Stephen Cleobury at St. Matthew's Church, Northampton, he held posts as organist in parish churches in Oxfordshire and Bedfordshire.

A later move to teach in Lancaster brought another organist's job and he was also the conductor of two choral societies. Following early retirement in Somerset, he has been the organist of St. Mary's Church, Bridgwater, and Holy Trinity Church, Taunton. He was the accompanist at Richard Huish College for ten years and the accompanist to Bridgwater Choral Society. After a second retirement, he plays occasionally in a number of churches in the area.

Accompanist — Mike Wager

Mike was a music scholar at Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, Bristol, where he studied Music to A Level and piano to Grade 8. Since graduating in French from Exeter University, he has been a modern languages teacher for 35 years, during which time he has supported numerous school orchestras, choirs and instrumentalists on the piano.

Mike is one of the musicians at Taunton Baptist Church.

Soloist — Liam Atherton

Liam is 15 years old and attends the Castle School in Taunton where he is part of the choir, orchestra and plays the piano to grade 6. He enjoys musical theatre and jazz music particularly. Recently, he has sung with Taunton Male Voice Choir in a concert at SPACE. He has also appeared as Quaxo in Taunton Amateur Operatic Society's production of *Cats* and Rapunzel's *Prince in Into The Woods*. Tonight is Liam's first performance with the West Somerset Singers.

Oboist — Poppy Webb-Taylor

Poppy Webb-Taylor studied oboe at Wells Cathedral School as a music specialist with Liz Fyfe before gaining her place at the Royal College of Music where she is now a third year undergraduate and an Ian Evans Lombe scholar. Here she has had many opportunities to perform and take part in master classes with internationally renowned players, such as Jacques Tys and Juliana Koch. As well as solo performances she combines her time with regular chamber music in The Albert Quintet. Most notably, they have performed in The Royal Opera House as well as several concerts in the RCM.

They have also taken part in the Illuminate Festival, which is dedicated to showcasing women composers.

As an orchestral player, Poppy frequently performs with the Echo Ensemble and Kings College London Symphony Orchestra. Venues with the Echo Ensemble include the Bodleian Library in Oxford and The Elgar Room in the Royal Albert Hall.

Currently, her professors include John Anderson and Olivier Stankiewicz for oboe and Christine Pendrill for cor anglais.



CAROLS FOR AUDIENCE

Good King Wenceslas

(All)

Good King Wenceslas looked out
On the feast of Stephen
When the snow lay round about
Deep and crisp and even
Brightly shone the moon that night
Though the frost was cruel
When a poor man came in sight
Gath'ring winter fuel.

(Men)

“Hither, page, and stand by me
If thou know'st it, telling
Yonder peasant, who is he?
Where and what his dwelling?”

(Ladies)

“Sire, he lives a good league hence
Underneath the mountain
Right against the forest fence
By Saint Agnes' fountain.”

(Men)

“Bring me flesh and bring me wine
Bring me pine logs hither
Thou and I will see him dine
When we bear him thither.”

(Ladies)

Page and monarch forth they went
Forth they went together
Through the rude wind's wild lament
And the bitter weather.

(Ladies)

"Sire, the night is darker now
And the wind blows stronger
Fails my heart, I know not how,
I can go no longer."

(Men)

"Mark my footsteps, good my page
Tread thou in them boldly
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly."

(All)

In his master's steps he trod
Where the snow lay dinted
Heat was in the very sod
Which the Saint had printed
Therefore, Christian men, be sure
Wealth or rank possessing
Ye who now will bless the poor
Shall yourselves find blessing.

Tres Magi de Gentibus

1. Eastern monarchs, Sages Three,
Come with gifts in great plenty.
Worship Christ on bended knee --
Cum Virgine Maria.

2. Gold, in honour of the King,
Incense to the Priest they bring,
Myrrh, for time of burying --
Cum Virgine Maria.

3. On that dreadful day, the last
He forgive our sinful past
To his mercy cling we fast
Cum Virgine Maria.

4. His the praise and glory be,
Laud and honour, victorie,
Power supreme! and so sing we
Cum Virgine Maria.

5. On the feast-day of His birth,
Set on thrones above the earth,
Angels change in holy mirth
Cum Virgine Maria.

6. Thus, to bless the One in Three,
Let this present company
Raise the voice of melody --
Cum Virgine Maria.

Thank you all for coming along to listen to our music!

The *West Somerset Singers* would like to thank **Taunton Baptist Church** for their hospitality.

Special thanks also to **Mike Wager** for accompanying the choir during their Monday evening rehearsals.

With our thanks to the following libraries for loan of the music copies; Bournemouth, Essex, Kent, Plymouth, Warwickshire and Yorkshire. Thanks also to Somerset performing Arts Library, Royal School of Church Music, St George's RC Church Taunton, St. George's Church Wilton and Anne-Marie Twort.

Rehearsals for our Spring concert begin at Taunton School on **Monday 13th January 2020**. We are a friendly, welcoming choir who offer try-out sessions for beginners and returners. We would be delighted to have some new members for all voice parts — particularly tenors and basses! For more information contact our Secretary, Mrs Chris Knapman, on 01823 335 303.

More opportunities to hear the West Somerset Singers...

Saturday 14th December 2019

The choir will be singing carols from 2pm-4pm
at Dunster Castle

Saturday 16th May 2020

Spring concert – A celebration of English composers
7.30pm at St George's Church, Billet Street, Taunton