



THE NEW CHAMBER CHOIR

conducted by Paul Hudson

The New Chamber Choir was formed in 2012 by a group of friends and musicians who had sung together in various other choirs across the region – some in church or chapel choirs, some in specialist early music groups, and some in large choral ensembles. They wanted to create a choir which would ‘have a go at anything’ – which could switch from medieval plainsong to jazz, or from madrigals to musicals. And they wanted to share their enjoyment with as large an audience as possible.

Singers are invited to join NCC: they all sing in other choirs, all read music, and bring a wealth of varied musical experiences. The group meets for ‘workshop days’ every few weeks and uses these days to explore and develop the repertoire.

Most of the choir’s repertoire is unaccompanied choral music, with all the voices or with smaller groups or soloists, but increasingly the group is making use of piano, organ or harpsichord accompaniment and uses other instruments whenever they are available.

NCC has given concerts across the region. It has sung traditional Anglican Evensong, and full choral Mass. It performs regularly for the National Trust in Clumber Chapel. The choir has twice toured France, giving a series of concerts in northern Provence.

The New Chamber Choir is always on the lookout for new singers. If you are interested, or would like to find out more, do get in touch. If you have the relevant experience you will be welcome to come along to one of our workshop days so that we can get to know you, and you us. Contact the choir via its website: www.newchamberchoir.co.uk



*Celebrate
Christmas*

THE NEW CHAMBER CHOIR

The Marble Saloon, Wentworth Woodhouse

Saturday, December 10th 2022 at 6.30pm

Choir: Bethlehem Down
words by Bruce Blunt (1899-1957)
music by Philip Heseltine (1894-1930), known as Peter Warlock

Reading: The Bird of Dawning from *Hamlet, Act 1*
by William Shakespeare

Reading: Safe
by James Walker

Choir: 'Lo, how a rose e'er blooming'
original chorale by Michael Praetorius (1571-1621),
adapted and arranged by Justin E. Lehman (b. 1986)

Choir: 'There is no rose'
'As dew in Aprille'
'This little babe'
from 'Ceremony of Carols' by Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Reading: The Cratchits' Christmas
from 'A Christmas Carol' by Charles Dickens

Choir: Carol of the Bells
music by Mykola Leontovych (1877-1923)

All: Good King Wenceslas (*words overleaf*)

Choir: 'Lullaby, my sweet little baby'
music by William Byrd (1540-1623)

Choir: 'Lully, Lulla, Lullay'
words: Coventry Carol (16th century); music by Philip Stopford (b. 1977)

Reading: Goodwill to Men—Give Us Your Money
by Pam Ayres

Choir: A Spotless Rose
15th century German carol; music by Paul Mealor (b. 1975)

***Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus lay down His sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay -
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.***

*The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes.
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes.
I love thee Lord Jesus, look down from the sky.
And stay by my side until morning is nigh.*

*Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay
Close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care.
And fit us for Heaven to live with Thee there.*

***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, gathering winter fuel.***

(verse 2: choir)

*Page and monarch, forth they went, forth they went together,
Through the cold wind's wild lament and the bitter weather.*

(verse 4: choir)

*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,
You who now will bless the poor shall yourselves find blessing.*

Rutter has been described as "the most celebrated and successful composer of carols alive today". His first published carols date back to his time as a student in Cambridge, where he met Sir David Willcocks with whom he collaborated on five volumes of the extraordinarily successful *Carols for Choirs* series. **The Donkey Carol** was written for the choir of St. Alban's School, and is unusual in that it is in 5/8 time. It is the only piece The New Chamber Choir sings with a backing track!

Sir John Tavener's setting of William Blake's poem **The Lamb** was written in 1982 and is often performed as a Christmas carol. Its popularity is reflected in the fact that there are 37 commercially available recordings!

Mack Wilberg is the director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and is known around the world for his soul-stirring arrangements, which bring a renewed energy to well-known melodies. *The Virgin Mary Had a Baby Boy* is for SATB and piano with optional percussion and double bass. This is a Christmas carol with a calypso rhythm that you can dance to! This carol originates from the West Indies—and one day we want to perform it with steel drums.



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 to-night.

*How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming;
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him, still
The dear Christ enters in.*

*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.*

*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.*

Choir: 'Tomorrow shall be my dancing day'
16th century English carol; music by John Gardner (1917-2011)

Choir: The Twelve Days of Christmas
traditional English tune, collected by Frederic Austin in 1909,
arranged by Ian Humphris

All: Away in a manger (*words overleaf*)

Choir: In the bleak mid-winter
words: Christina Rossetti (1830-1894); melody: Gustav Holst (1874-1934)
music by Ola Gjeilo (1978-)

Reading: King John's Christmas
by A.A. Milne

Choir: La Marche des Rois (March of the Kings)
original words in Occitan by Joseph Domergues (18th century)
melody of 'Marche de Turenne', possibly by Lully (1632-1687)

Choir: Donkey Carol
words and music by John Rutter (b. 1945)

Choir: The Lamb
words by William Blake (1757-1827); music by John Tavener (1944-2013)

All: O little town of Bethlehem (*words overleaf*)

Reading: Christmas Fruit Cake
Anonymous

Choir: The Virgin Mary had a Baby Boy (The Calypso Carol)
West Indian, arranged by Mack Wilberg (1955-)

Heseltine, best known as a composer of vocal music, used the Warlock name (reflecting his interest in occult practices) for all his published musical works. Warlock wrote ***Bethlehem Down*** to finance an "immortal carouse" (a heavy bout of drinking) with his friend, the journalist Bruce Blunt, on Christmas Eve 1927. He submitted the carol to *The Daily Telegraph's* annual Christmas carol contest and won. The words are now used throughout the Anglican church during Christmastide and Epiphany.

In 2016 Justin E. Lehman, then a student at Utah Valley University, wrote an arrangement of ***Lo, How a Rose*** (a 16th century German melody) as a composition exercise for his course, and posted it on Youtube. We spotted it and were taken with his simple but effective use of two choirs and piano. We traced him (via Facebook), and asked if we could perform it. To date, we are the only group to have sung it.

Benjamin Britten completed ***A Ceremony of Carols*** on the transatlantic sea crossing from the US to England in 1942. It was originally written for three-part children's chorus and harp. There are 11 short movements (we sing three of them), each one a setting of a short poem in Middle or Early English. Many of the movements are written as rounds or call-and-response pieces – lyrically simple for the sake of the children performing.

In 1914 the Ukrainian Republic Choir, commissioned Leontovych to create a song based on the traditional Ukrainian folk chant called "Shchedryk". It was first performed in Kyiv, but did not catch on in Ukraine. Twenty years later it was re-arranged with new Christmas lyrics in English, and became hugely popular. ***Carol of the Bells*** has been recorded in over 150 versions for varying vocal and instrumental compositions. The Swingle Singers' version of the song was used to promote champagne; the song appears in the film *Home Alone*; the Muppets' 2009 parody version went viral - and Christmas visitors to Meadowhall will recognise it as the looped song from the main Christmas tree! We sing Leontovych's original version, with English words.

William Byrd was organist to Queen Elizabeth's Chapel Royal. ***Lullaby my sweet little baby*** is probably an adapted part-song, originally intended for a solo voice and four instruments (normally viols). We sing only the first section, which is a simple lullaby to baby Jesus.

Stopford is a product of the English cathedral music tradition, and is renowned for his beautiful choral music. His version of ***Lully, Lulla, Lullay***, to the words of the 16th century Coventry Carol has a simple beauty.

Paul Mealor is from Wales, and is considered one of the world's most performed living composers. A large proportion of his output is for chorus, both a cappella and accompanied. His motet *Ubi Caritas et Amor* was performed at the wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton in 2011. He later composed the song "Wherever You Are", which became the 2011 Christmas number one in the UK Singles Chart. ***A Spotless Rose*** is the fourth of a set of madrigals on rose texts.

Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing-day is an English carol, dating almost certainly from the 16th century. The phrase "to see the legend of my play" may be a reference to a mystery play of the late medieval period. Numerous composers have made original settings of it or arranged the traditional tune, though John Gardner's 1965 version, written for St. Paul's, is perhaps the best known. The verses of the hymn tell the story of Jesus in his own voice. Jesus' life is characterized as a dance - a device later used in the hymn "Lord of the Dance".

The Twelve Days of Christmas, whose words were first published in 1780, is a traditional English carol. A large number of different melodies have been associated with the song, of which the best known is a traditional folk melody arranged by the English composer Frederic Austin in 1909 - here re-arranged for unaccompanied choir. Interesting facts:

-the 1780 version has "four colly birds"—*colly* being a regional English expression for "coal-black". This word must have been unknown to many even then: other versions have "canary", "colour'd", "curley", and "corley" birds. Austin altered the fourth day's gift to "calling" birds;

-in the northern counties of England, the song was often called the "Ten Days of Christmas", as there were only ten gifts.

Ola Gjeilo is one of the most frequently performed choral composers. His a capella settings of well-known Christmas carols have been recorded by Voces8 and Tenebrae—two of the best choirs in the world. Although Norwegian by birth, it is perhaps Ola's adopted country of America that has most influenced his style. His setting of ***In the bleak mid-winter*** uses Holst's well-known melody, and adds thick harmonies and rich textures rather like a film score.

Every year, on the Feast of the Epiphany, in towns and villages of Provence there are popular parades – "Marches of the Kings" – where citizens dress up as The Three Kings and progress to the local church. The Kings are joined by characters dressed in Provençal costumes - shepherds, riders, drummers, tradesmen. Often the parade is accompanied by a march called *Marche de Turenne*, which some scholars suggest is by the 17th century composer Lully. This is the tune that has become one of the most popular Christmas songs for French-speaking choirs. We sing it here in French, as ***La Marche des Rois***.