

Christmas Concert

Programme Notes

1. Antonio Vivaldi **“Magnificat”**

1. Magnificat
2. Et Exultavit
3. Et Misericordia
4. Fecit Potentiam
5. Deposuit Potentes
6. Esurientes Implevit
7. Suscepit Israel
8. Sicut Locutus
9. Gloria

Readings: **“Christmas”** - John Betjeman
 “Goodwill towards men” - Pam Ayres

2. Carol Selection

1. O Little Town of Bethlehem – Brooks / Chilcott
2. Good King Wenceslas – Neale / Chilcott
3. I Saw Three Ships – Simpson

Reading: **“Christmas in the trenches”**

3. Joseph Haydn **“Te Deum”**

INTERVAL

1. **Once In Royal David’s City**
2. Away in a Manger - Murray / Chilcott
3. It Came Upon the Midnight Clear – Willis/Burnap/Wilberg
4. **Hark The Herald Angels Sing**
5. See amid the winter’s snow – Goss / Wright
6. We Three Kings – Hopkins / Wright
7. **O Little Town of Bethlehem**
8. Silent Night – Gruber / Chilcott
9. Ding Dong Merrily on High - Wilberg
10. **O Come All Ye Faithful**
11. Joy to the World – Handel / Mason / Wilberg
12. We Wish You a Merry Christmas – Arthur Warrell

Programme Notes

We are tonight introducing two lesser known works to our repertoire, Vivaldi’s “Magnificat” and Haydn’s “Te Deum”. We are interspersing these with readings and new arrangements of favourite carols and hope you will enjoy the opportunity to have a good sing with us in the second half, joining in with the four great traditional carols “Once in Royal”, “Hark the Herald”, “O Little Town” and “O Come All Ye Faithful”.

Magnificat – Antonio Vivaldi (1675-1741)

Although most often remembered for the Four Seasons and other instrumental works, Vivaldi's choral music contains a beautiful mix of the instrumental style many love while paying close attention to the overall mood of the text. His best known choral work is probably the Gloria in D, but the *Magnificat* on tonight's program is just as brilliant with all the dramatic fire and contrast of his concertos.

Written for his pupils at the orphanage at Ospedale della Pieta di Venezia, it contains beautiful solos, duets and trios along with triumphant choral movements. Vivaldi masterfully rings the changes from movement to movement, with the opening *“Magnificat”* being imposing in its choral homophony. The aria that follows

"*Et exultavit*" is sprightly counterpoint and gives our soloists a chance to shine. The chorus that follows, "*Et misericordia*", is pulsing chromaticism with daring harmonies and sudden modulations whilst the following "*Fecit Potentiam*" returns to full chords from the choir and a *Presto* semi-quaver accompaniment. The "*Deposuit*" forcefully puts down the mighty and raises up the humble with the whole chorus and accompaniment in unison. The beautiful duet "*Esurientes Implevit*" is balanced with a light continuo whilst the short "*Suscepit Israel*" provides contrast from phrase to phrase. The sprightly "*Sicut Locutus*" returns to a contrapuntal style while the final climatic "*Gloria*" incorporates choral harmonies, chromatic changes and the use of counterpoint to bring the work to a glorious finish.

We are singing the original RV610, Vivaldi composed five further items (RV 611) for specific pupils of the Ospedale to replace parts of the original manuscript.

1. Magnificat

My soul magnifies the Lord.

2. Et exultavit

and my spirit has rejoiced In God my saviour. For he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: For behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he who is mighty has done great things to me; and holy is his name.

3. Et misericordia

and his mercy is on them who fear him from generation to generation.

4. Fecit potentiam

He has shown strength with his arm; He has scattered the proud, even the arrogant of heart.

5. Deposuit potentes

He has deposed the mighty from their seats, and exalted the humble.

6. Esurientes

The hungry he has filled with good things; and the rich he has sent empty away.

7. Suscepit Israel

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy.

8. Sicut locutus

As it was spoken to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed for ever.

9. Gloria

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.

Te Deum – Joseph Haydn (1732 – 1809)

This magnificent choral drama in three parts was a commission from Empress Marie Therese, the wife of Franz I of Austria. Haydn was a frequent visitor to the imperial palace in Vienna and the *Te Deum* was composed around 1799, with its first performance in 1800 at Eisenstadt, the home of the Esterhazy family, Haydn's patron.

The *Te Deum* is a choral work throughout, without the solo sections that are heard in Haydn's masses and other sacred works. Two lengthy *Allegro* passages surround a central *Adagio*, effectively making the work a concerto for chorus and orchestra (tonight, we are accompanied by the indomitable Sue Donovan!).

The opening theme in the *Allegro*, in the traditional festive key of C major, is sung by the chorus in unison. The *Adagio* at *Te ergo quaesumus* opens with a thunderous unison C and proceeds, mysteriously, in C minor with the harmonies moving chromatically to stunning, if brief, effect. The final *Allegro* returns to the same cheerful mood as the first passage, concluding with a stirring double fugue on the words *In te Domine speravi*. A coda-like section, distinguished by overlapping instrumental and choral phrases with syncopated rhythms, brings the piece to glorious close.

Latin text

Te Deum laudamus:
te Dominum confitemur.
Te aeternum Patrem
omnis terra veneratur.
Tibi omnes Angeli;
tibi caeli et universae Potestates;

English translation of the Book of Common Prayer

We praise thee, O God
we acknowledge thee to be the Lord
All the earth doth worship thee
the Father everlasting.
To thee all the angels cry aloud
the heavens and all the powers therein.

Tibi Cherubim et Seraphim
incessabili voce proclamant:
Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus
Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra
maiestatis gloriae tuae.
Te gloriosus Apostolorum chorus,
Te Prophetarum laudabilis numerus,
Te Martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus.
Te per orbem terrarum
sancta confitetur Ecclesia,
Patrem immensae maiestatis:
Venerandum tuum verum et unicum Filium;
Sanctum quoque Paraclitum Spiritum.
Tu Rex gloriae, Christe.
Tu Patris sempiternus es Filius.
Tu ad liberandum suscepturus hominem,
non horruisti Virginis uterum.
Tu, devicto mortis aculeo, aperuisti
credentibus regna caelorum.
Tu ad dexteram Dei sedes, in gloria Patris.
Iudex crederis esse venturus.

Te ergo quaesumus, tuis famulis subveni:
quos pretioso sanguine redemisti.

Aeterna fac cum sanctis tuis in gloria numerari.
Salvum fac populum tuum,
Domine, et benedic hereditati tuae.
Et rege eos, et extolle illos usque in aeternum.
Per singulos dies benedicimus te;
Et laudamus Nomen tuum in saeculum, et in saeculum
saeculi.
Dignare, Domine, die isto sine peccato nos custodire.
Miserere nostri domine, miserere nostri.
Fiat misericordia tua,
Domine, super nos, quemadmodum speravimus in te.
In te, Domine, speravi:
non confundar in aeternum.

To thee cherubim and seraphim do continually cry
Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord God of Sabaoth; heaven and earth
are full of the majesty of thy glory.
The glorious company of apostles praise thee.
The goodly fellowship of the prophets praise thee.
The noble army of martyrs praise thee.
The Holy Church
throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee;
the father of an infinite majesty;
thine honourable true and only Son;
also the Holy Ghost the comforter.
Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ.
Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.
When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man,
thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.
When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death,
thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all
believers.
Thou sittest at the hand of God in glory of the
Father.
We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge.

We therefore pray thee, help thy servants,
whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.

Make them numbered with thy saints in glory
everlasting
O Lord save thy people
and bless thine heritage.
Govern them and lift them up for ever.
Day by day we magnify thee;
and worship thy name, ever world without end.
Vouchsafe, O Lord to keep us this day without sin.
O Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us.
O Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us, as our trust is
in thee.
O Lord in thee have I trusted let me not be
confounded

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.

We follow this well-known carol with two modern versions of well-known carols, taken from “Carols for Choirs 5” edited by Bob Chilcott and David Blackwell. The American tune for “**Away in a Manger**” flows into a lyrical setting of “**It Came Upon the Midnight Clear**”.

We then all sing 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!"**

Our next choir items are two traditional carols with interesting arrangements, giving all parts a chance to shine. We depart slightly from the chronological progress of the story of the nativity, but the works fit together better musically. We share with you “**See Amid the Winter’s Snow**” and the favourite “**We Three Kings**”.

The third participation carol is the traditional English tune, arranged by Vaughan Williams “**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. How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him, still
The dear Christ enters in.**

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

The next couple of choir carols provide a complete contrast to each other. The well-known “**Silent Night**”, with a new arrangement by Bob Chilcott, introduces a beautiful descant for the sopranos, whilst the Mack Wilberg arrangement of the traditional French “**Ding dong! Merrily on high**” will give us all a challenge to get the dings and the dongs in the right place...

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.*

The next carol is a favourite, upbeat celebration “**Joy to the World**”, written by Lowell Mason, based on Handel’s tune and arranged by Mack Wilberg. Our concert concludes with us unashamedly singing one of our favourite arrangements, a vigorous setting of the “**A Merry Christmas**”, a traditional West Country Carol arranged by Arthur Warrell. The choir, organist and conductor get to enjoy themselves with this piece; not as easy as it sounds, but terrific fun!

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

Marcus Capel

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