

Minehead Choral Society – Christmas Concert
Saturday 25th November 2023

Tonight we sing selections from Charpentier's Mess De Minuit and some favourite Advent and Christmas carols. We will enjoy a selection of John Rutter arrangements, the glorious Vaughan Williams Fantasia on Christmas Carols and provide an opportunity for everyone to join in and sing lustily with the choir. I am delighted to welcome our soloist, David Joycey and flautist Nicole Willis.

Programme:

1. Marc-Antoine Charpentier Messe De Minuit pour Noël
 Kyrie
 Christie
 Gloria
 Sanctus
 Benedictus

2. John Rutter Carols

 1. Angel's Carol
 2. Candlelight Carol
 4. Love Came Down
 5. Mary's Lullaby
 7. Shepherd's Pipe Carol

INTERVAL

1. **It Came Upon The Midnight Clear**
2. Gabriel's Message (Basque Carol)
3. The Holly and The Ivy
4. **Hark the Herald Angels Sing**
5. O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
6. Ding Dong Merrily on High
7. **While Shepherds Watched**
8. Fantasia on Christmas Carols arr. Vaughan Williams
9. **O Come All Ye Faithful**
10. The Twelve Days of Christmas

1. Messe de Minuit pour Noël Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1634 - 1704)

The *Messe de Minuit pour Noël*, or *Midnight Mass*, written in the early 1690s, is the ninth of twelve settings of the Ordinary by Marc-Antoine Charpentier.

Charpentier studied in Italy where he spent three years studying with his most famous teacher, Carissimi, with whom he acquired valuable first-hand experience of opera and oratorio - both relatively new forms at that time. On returning to his native Paris he put these skills to effective use, composing a number of operas and bringing the dramatic oratorio to France for the first time. He began a long association with Moliere's troupe until 1686. He was appointed Maitre de Musique at St. Paul-St. Louis, the principal Jesuit church in Paris, and in 1698 ascended to the Sainte-Chapelle, a position of high prestige, second only to the royal chapel at Versailles.

Charpentier's output of sacred music was prodigious, comprising some thirty-five oratorios, eleven settings of the Mass, over two hundred motets and the well-known *Te Deum*. Charpentier was particularly drawn to writing Christmas music, producing instrumental carols, Latin oratorios on Christmas themes, French pastorales and a Christmas mass - the delightful *Messe de Minuit pour Noël*. This piece dates from around 1690 and was probably composed for the great Jesuit church of St. Louis in Paris.

The *Midnight Mass* takes much of its melodic invention from old French noëls -- popular carols of the day which rose from secular roots. The use of popular carols in church music had long been an accepted practice. In England carols were more often sung than played, but in France *noëls* figured prominently in the substantial French organ repertoire. The liturgy of Midnight Mass permitted the singing and playing of these Christmas folksongs, and by Charpentier's time quite complex instrumental arrangements were commonplace. However, Charpentier's idea of basing a whole mass on these songs was completely original. Altogether there are eleven *noëls*, most of which are dance-like in character, reflecting the carol's secular origins. In addition to the carol melodies that he adapted to fit various parts of the mass text, Charpentier also composed new material, such as the slow sections 'Et in terra pax' at the beginning of the Gloria.

John Rutter Carols

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. Tonight we perform 5 of the carols from his "10 carols for mixed voices", providing a contrast of styles and backgrounds, traditional Latin text, words by Christina Rossetti (Love Came Down) and new and exciting settings by this great man.

1. Angel's Carol
2. Candlelight Carol
4. Love Came Down
5. Mary's Lullaby
7. Shepherd's Pipe Carol

Messe de Minuit pour Noël - Marc-Antoine Charpentier

Text and Translation

Kyrie

Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy.
Lord have mercy.

Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus
bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te, benedicimus te,
adoramus te, glorificamus te.
Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.
Domine Deus, rex coelestis, Deus
pater omnipotens.
Domine fili unigenite Jesu Christe,
Domine Deus, agnus Dei, filius patris.
Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere
nobis.
Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe
deprecationem nostram.
Qui sedes ad dexteram patris,
miserere nobis.
Quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus
Dominus, tu solus altissimus,
Jesu Christe, cum sancto Spiritu in
gloria Dei patris. Amen.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth
peace to men of good will.
We praise you, we bless you, we worship
you, we glorify you.
We give thanks to you for your great glory.
O Lord God, Heavenly King, God the
Father Almighty.
O Lord, the only-begotten Son Jesus Christ.
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father.
You who take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
You who take away the sins of the world,
hear our prayer.
You who sit at the right hand of the
Father, have mercy on us.
For you alone are holy, you alone are
Lord, you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in the
glory of God the Father. Amen.

Sanctus

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus
Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.
Osanna in excelsis.

Holy, holy, holy Lord God of
Hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.

Benedictus

Benedictus qui venit in nomine
Domini.
Osanna in excelsis.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the
Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

INTERVAL

Our second half follows the pattern of a traditional Christmas concert, with a mixture of carols for audience participation interspersed with favourite carols.

**1. It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth
To touch their harps of gold;
"Peace on the earth, good will to men
From heaven's all-gracious King" –
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing**

**2. Still through the cloven skies they come
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its Babel-sounds
The blessed angels sing.**

**3. Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love song which they bring; –
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing!**

**4. And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
— Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
— With painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours
— Come swiftly on the wing; —
Oh, rest beside the weary road
— And hear the angels sing!**

**4. For lo! the days are hastening on
By prophet bards foretold,
When, with the ever circling years
Shall come the age of gold;
When Peace shall over all the earth,
Its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world give back the song,
Which now the angels sing.**

We next enjoy an unusual and challenging arrangement of “**Gabriel’s Message**”. This Basque Christmas folk carol with text from Luke Chapter 1 v26-38 describes the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary by the Archangel Gabriel that she would become the mother of Jesus Christ the Son of God. The next carol is a rightly popular traditional

British folk carol **“The Holly and the Ivy”** . Since medieval times the plants have carried a Christian symbolism with holly representing Jesus and ivy His mother, the Virgin Mary.

We follow these 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!"**

Our next choir item is the hauntingly beautiful **“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”**. This is an ancient hymn based on a series of plainchant antiphons attached to the Magnificat at Vespers over the final days before Christmas, with origins in the 8th century. Tonight, we pair this with a secular French dance tune from the 16th century with words by the English composer George Ratcliffe Woodward, first published in the Cambridge Carol Book in 1924. **“Ding Dong Merrily on High”** is a joyful celebration of Woodward’s love of church bell ringing.

Our third participation carol is a traditional Christmas carol describing the Annunciation to the Shepherds and attributed to the Irish lyricist, Nahum Tate (1700) **“While Shepherds Watched”**

1. **While shepherds watch'd their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.**

2. **“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. **“To you, in David’s town this day,
Is born of David’s line
The Savior who is Christ the Lord,
And this shall be the sign:**

4. **The heav’nly Babe you there shall find
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
And in a manger laid.”**

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

6. **“All glory be to God on high
And on the earth be peace.
Goodwill henceforth from heav’n to men
Begin and never cease.**

Our penultimate choir piece is the glorious “**Fantasia on Christmas Carols**” by Vaughan Williams. Written in 1912 for baritone and chorus, the work incorporates English folk carols collected by Vaughan Williams and his friend Cecil Sharp, “The truth sent from above”, “Come all you worthy gentlemen” and the Sussex Carol “ON Christmas night all Christians sing”. I am delighted to welcome long standing support of the Minehead Choral Society, David Joycey as our soloist for tonight, alongside our flautist Nicole Willis. *The Flute accompaniment arrangement is by kind permission of Stainer Bell Ltd.*

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 **with lowly fear;**
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;
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 cumulative song first printed in “Mirth without Mischief”, a children’s book published in 1780. It is likely that it originated from a children’s memory and forfeit game and this humorous arrangement allows us to have some fun and bring the concert to a close as we anticipate the joys of the Christmas season ahead,

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

Marcus Capel
December 2023