

**Minehead Choral Society**  
**Christmas Concert 2018**

**Program**

First Half:	Magnificat	John Rutter
	1. Magnificat anima mea	
	2. Of a Rose, a lovely Rose	
	3. Quia fecit mihi magna	
	4. Et misericordia	
	5. Fecit potentiam	
	6. Esurientes	
	7. Gloria Patri	
Second Half:	<b>Once in Royal David's City</b>	arr. Willcocks
	The Shepherds Farewell	Hector Berlioz
	Torches	Joubert
	<b>Hark the Herald Angels Sing</b>	arr. Willcocks
	Fantasia on Christmas Carols	Ralph Vaughan Williams
	<b>See Amid the Winter's Snow</b>	
	Fall before the Manger	Peter Brown
	Zither Carol	arr. Sargent
	<b>O Come all ye Faithful</b>	arr. Willcocks
	Ding Dong Merrily on High	arr. Charles Wood

**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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> century English text beautifully. In the third movement the tenors and basses announce 'For He that is mighty hath magnified me' "**Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est**" accompanied by splendid fanfares on the organ which eventually subside, and the passage flows to '*et sanctum nomen eius*' (and Holy is His name) and then the Gregorian *Sanctus*. This segues into "**Et misericordia**" (and His mercy is on them that fear him) a duet for soprano and choir, tonight sung by the lovely Jackie Butterworth. 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.

The Fifth movement concerns the Lord's strength "**Fecit potentiam**" (he hath shewed strength with his arm). The setting is muscular in its harmony and angular in its melodies. A short and intense fugue ensues, then the text moves to the Lord 'scattering the proud' (*Dispersit superbos*) which we hear as the choir scatters down the musical scale one part at a time. After the basses, tenors and altos in turn put the mighty 'down from their seat' (*Deposuit*), the violence of the first half of the movement stops abruptly and Rutter sets the words 'he hath exalted the humble and meek' (*et exaltavit humiles*) exquisitely. The penultimate movement "**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

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!"**

Ralph Vaughan Williams wrote his "**Fantasia on Christmas Carols**" in 1911, using the words and tune from three traditional English carols *The Truth sent from above* (Hertfordshire), *Come all you worthy gentlemen*, (Somerset), *On Christmas night* (Sussex) and the tune from *There is a fountain* (Hertfordshire); together with fragments of other well known carol tunes. He dedicated the work to Cecil Sharp who collected many folk songs from around the country. The work has a varied and atmospheric texture, with the choir singing the words, humming with closed lips, vocalising 'ah' and singing with half-closed lips, a short 'uh' sound. Peter Thompson will be performing the tenor solo throughout the piece.

Our third participation carol is the traditional Goss Carol "**See Amid the Winters Snow**"

**1. See amid the winter's snow  
Born for us on earth below  
See the tender Lamb appears  
Promised from eternal years**

*Hail, thou ever-blessed morn  
Hail, redemption's happy dawn  
Sing through all Jerusalem  
Christ is born in Bethlehem*

**2. Lo, within a manger lies  
He who built the starry skies;  
He who throned in height sublime  
Sist amid the cherubim**

*Hail, thou ever-blessed morn...*

**3. Say, ye holy shepherds, say  
What your joyful news today  
Wherefore have ye left your sheep  
On the lonely mountain steep?**

*Hail, thou ever-blessed morn...*

**4. as we watched at dead of night  
Lo, we saw a wondrous sight  
Angels singing "Peace on Earth"  
Told us of the Saviours Birth**

*Hail, thou ever-blessed morn...*

**5. Sacred infant, all divine  
What a tender love was thine**

**Thus to come from highest bliss  
Down to such a world as this  
Hail, thou ever-blessed morn...  
6. Teach, O teach us Holy Child,  
By thy face so meek and mild  
Teach us to resemble thee  
In thy sweet humility  
Hail, thou ever-blessed morn...**

Our next carol is in memory of a previous musical director, Peter Brown. He led the choral society for many years and composed many pieces for it. Tonight we sing his lovely “**Fall Before the Manger**” dedicated to his wife, Dorothy. We follow this with a Czech carol, the **Zither Carol**.

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 some of Rutter’s other works, 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  
December 2018