

The West Somerset Singers



Saturday 4th December, 2010



*The West Somerset Singers
welcome you and present*

*A Feast of
Seasonal Music*



Programme

Two Chorales from the Christmas Oratorio – J.S. Bach

1. And there were Shepherds (Recit.)
2. Break Forth, O Beauteous, Heavenly Light (Chorale)
3. Beside Thy Cradle Here I Stand (Chorale)

Christmas Oratorio – Camille Saint-Saëns (English version N.H. Doyle)

1. Prelude
There Were Shepherds (Recitative and Chorus)
2. Glory Be Unto God (Chorus)
3. Patiently, Patiently Have I Waited For The Lord (Solo)
4. In My Heart I Believe (Solo & Chorus)
5. Blessed, Blessed Is He Who Cometh (Duet)
6. Wherefore Do The Heathen Clamor? (Chorus)
7. My Soul Doth Magnify (Trio)
8. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia (Chorus)
9. Arise Now, Daughter of Zion! (Chorus)
10. Praise Ye The Lord Of Hosts (Chorus)

— INTERVAL OF 15 MINUTES —

I Saw Three Ships - arr. John Rutter (Choir)

Myn Lyking - R.R. Terry (Choir)

Good King Wenceslas (All)

Programme

1st & 2nd Movements from Suite Antique for Flute and Piano—John Rutter (performed by Nick and Elaine Thomas)

Here is the Little Door—Herbert Howells (Choir)

Jesus Christ The Apple Tree – Elizabeth Poston (Choir)

O Leave Your Sheep — French Carol arr. C.H. Kitson / Translation Alice Raleigh (Choir)

Annunciation—Patrick Hawes. (Piano solo performed by Rachel Robinson)

The Huron Carol — arr. Eleanor Daley (Choir)

My Dancing Day— arr. Bob Chilcott (Choir)

O Holy Night – Adolphe Adam (Solo and Choir)

In The Bleak Mid Winter – Harold Darke (Soloists and Choir)

The 12 Days of Christmas – arr. John Rutter (Choir)

The Taunton Carol (A Lovely Lady Sat and Sang) - arr. Wilfred Mack. Collected by R.L. Tongue (Choir)

O Little Town of Bethlehem (All)

Silent Night (Choir – All / Guitar.Accomp.)

Selected Programme Notes

Unless otherwise stated, these notes are edited from entries in the on-line encyclopaedia wikipedia.org

Two Chorales from The Christmas Oratorio – J.S. Bach

An oratorio by Johann Sebastian Bach intended for performance in church during the Christmas season. It was written for the Christmas season of 1734 incorporating music from earlier compositions, including three secular cantatas written during 1733 and 1734 and a now lost church cantata, BWV 248a. The date is confirmed in Bach's autograph manuscript. The author of the text is unknown, although a likely collaborator was Christian Friedrich Henrici (Picander).

Christmas Oratorio – Camille Saint-Saëns

Charles Camille Saint-Saëns (9 October 1835 – 16 December 1921) was a French Late-Romantic composer, organist, conductor, and pianist, known especially for *The Carnival of the Animals*, *Danse macabre*, *Samson and Delilah*, *Piano Concerto No. 2*, *Havanaise*, *Introduction and Rondo capriccioso*, and his *Symphony No. 3* (Organ Symphony).

While an organist at Madeleine, Saint-Saëns wrote the oratorio in less than a fortnight, completing it ten days before its premiere on Christmas 1858.

***Jesus Christ the Apple Tree* (also known as *Apple Tree*) i**

A poem purportedly written by an unknown New Englander in the 18th century. It has been set to music by a number of composers, including Jeremiah Ingalls (1764–1838) and Elizabeth Poston (1905–1987).

The first known publication of *Jesus Christ the Apple Tree* was in 1784 in *Divine Hymns, or Spiritual Songs: for the use of Religious Assemblies and Private Christians* by Joshua Smith, a lay Baptist minister from New Hampshire. The song may be an allusion to the description of an apple tree in Song of Songs 2:3, and apple trees were commonly grown in early New England.

Selected Programme Notes

Annunciation—Patrick Hawes

Patrick Hawes was born in Lincolnshire in 1958. He studied at St Chad's College, University of Durham before working as a teacher of music and English, being appointed composer in residence at Charterhouse School, where he produced a children's opera and several other choral works, some in partnership with his brother, Andrew. He was Classic FM's Composer in Residence for 2006–2007. He currently lives on the Norfolk coast, and draws influence from the beauty of nature, English literature, and his Christian faith. Less well known is that Patrick Hawes is a keen organist and holds the Fellowship award from the Royal College of Organists. Patrick wrote the Highgrove Suite for the Prince of Wales which premiered at Prince Charles' Gloucestershire home in June 2010. *Annunciation* is from Patrick's album *Towards The Light*. (Edited from Wikipedia and www.patrickhawes.com)

Huron Carol (or Twas in the Moon of Wintertime)

A Canadian Christmas hymn (Canada's oldest Christmas song), written in 1643 by Jean de Brébeuf, a Jesuit missionary at Sainte-Marie among the Hurons in Canada. Brébeuf wrote the lyrics in the native language of the Huron/Wendat people; the song's original Huron title is "**Jesous Ahatonhia**" ("*Jesus, he is born*"). The song's melody is based on a traditional French folk song, "Une Jeune Pucelle" ("A Young Maid"). The well-known English lyrics were written in 1926 by Jesse Edgar Middleton.

The English version of the hymn uses imagery familiar in the early 20th century, in place of the traditional Nativity story. This version is derived from Brebeuf's original song and Huron religious concepts. In the English version, Jesus is born in a "lodge of broken bark", and wrapped in a "robe of rabbit skin". He is surrounded by hunters instead of shepherds, and the Magi are portrayed as "chiefs from afar" that bring him "fox and beaver pelts" instead of the more familiar gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The hymn also uses a traditional Algonquian name, Gitchi Manitou, for God. The original lyrics are now sometimes modified to use imagery accessible to Christians who are not familiar with Native-Canadian cultures.

Selected Programme Notes

O Holy Night (Cantique de Noël)—Adolphe Adam

A well-known Christmas carol composed by Adolphe Adam in 1847 to the French poem "Minuit, chrétiens" (Midnight, Christians) by Placide Cappeau (1808–1877), a wine merchant and poet, who had been asked by a parish priest to write a Christmas poem. Unitarian minister John Sullivan Dwight, editor of Dwight's Journal of Music, created a singing edition based on Cappeau's French text in 1855. In both the French original and in the two familiar English versions of the carol, the text reflects on the birth of Jesus and of mankind's redemption.

***In The Bleak Mid Winter*—Harold Edwin Darke**

Dr **Harold Edwin Darke** (29 October 1888 – 28 November 1976) was an English composer and organist born in Highbury, London.

In the Bleak Midwinter was voted the greatest Christmas carol of all time in a poll of choral experts and choirmasters, published in December 2008. Although the lyrics were written as a poem by English poet Christina Rossetti before 1872, it was published posthumously in Rossetti's *Poetic Works* in 1904 and became a Christmas carol after it appeared in *The English Hymnal* in 1906 with a setting by Holst.

A Lovely Lady Sat and Sang (The Taunton Carol)

Arranged by Wilfred Mack

Collected in 1906 by **Ruth L. Tongue** from a Quantock farmer near Crowcombe with the following explanation...

“This is sometimes called the “Taunton Carol” because it was sung to me in Taunton Market in 1906 by an old Quantock farmer. It is a variant of the medieval carol “This Endris Night” and was known in the North of England 200 years ago. Old Quantock labourers could sing it 60 years ago but since they have gone it has been forgotten.”

Selected Programme Notes

Ruth Lyndall Tongue has been described both as “a remarkable woman” and “a true eccentric”. Though belonging to the gentry class and educated in music and drama, she was passionately attached to country life and believed herself to have a special rapport with the craftsmen and labourers of her native county of Somerset. She claimed (although possibly incorrectly) that she had been born between midnight on a Friday and cockcrow on a Saturday, that this gave her psychic gifts, and that therefore many people had confided tales, songs, and magical lore to her when she was a very young child. She was a collector and animal lover but also an enigma. Her family moved to Hertfordshire while she was still a child. She moved back to Somerset in 1954 and lived in an isolated cottage on the Quantocks (Crowcombe) where she became immersed in her folklore. Ruth died in 1981.

(Edited from information provided by www.answers.com and *Songs and Stories of Ruth Tongue Self Styled Folklorist from Somerset* by M.B.Rhodes)

Biographies

Musical Director—Nick Thomas

Nick has recently retired as Head of Music at Kingsmead School, Wiveliscombe to spend more time on his own wide and varied musical interests. He is a multi instrumentalist concentrating mainly on flute, piano and piano accordion. He was until recently musical director and organist at St George’s C of E Church, Wilton. He has performed and worked with many groups in the Taunton area including Orchestra West, and many local operatic societies.

Nick regularly plays accordion, flute and whistle with his folk band *Tranters Folly*. He greatly enjoys making music, and in particular bringing out the best in other performers - be they adults or young people.

Biographies

Organist—Alex Davies

Alex Davies studied at Trinity College of Music London where his organ teachers included John Winter and Sean Farrell. On completion of his Bmus he was awarded a scholarship to pursue post graduate studies in organ with Roger Sayer at Rochester Cathedral. Whilst studying at college he won the Cardnell organ prize and was organ scholar to St Augustine's Queens Gate and St. Alfege in Greenwich.

He has performed in concerts, and given recitals at venues throughout London including; Marylebone Parish Church, Royal Naval College Chapel, Royal Festival Hall, Southwark Cathedral. In 2003/4 he worked at Blackburn Cathedral as organ scholar assisting the busy music department, accompanying services and playing in concerts and recitals.

Pianist – Rachel Robinson

Rachel Robinson has been playing the piano from a young age. After finishing a degree in music she taught piano until she became a full time mum a couple of years ago. Rachel has enjoyed accompanying various performers from singers to instrumentalists. She also plays the French horn with Somerset County Orchestra.

Rachel accompanies the choir during their Monday evening rehearsals.

Baritone—Jonathan Lee

Jonathan has a varied and busy musical career. Having a PhD in music composition from The University of Exeter, studying with Michael Finnissy, he also taught for a number of years at the musical theatre school Stage By Stage as the singing coach and musical director. He currently teaches music scholars at the University, and works for the charity Changing Tunes, leading music sessions in prisons. Soon he will be working for Trinity Guildhall as an examiner specializing in percussion and has received commissions from the London Irish Symphony Orchestra, the University of Exeter and the BBC. He is also a published children's author and illustrator.

Biographies

Soprano—Hilary Gooch

As a child Hilary sang for many years in her Church choir in the village of Alne, North Yorkshire. She read English at Somerville College, Oxford but always retained her love of singing. She now lives in Somerset. She has sung in a number of operas with local amateur opera groups, including Eurydice in 'Orpheus in the Underworld', Anna in 'Nabucco', Adina in 'L'Elisir D'Amore' and Adele in 'Die Fledermaus'. She has also sung leading roles in Gilbert and Sullivan operettas.

Hilary is a frequent soloist with the Taunton Deane Male Voice Choir, travelling to different venues in the South West. She has taken part in Masterclasses with Donald Maxwell, and is currently studying singing with Margaret Kingsley.

Tenor—Chris Davies

Chris learned to love singing in the chapels and rugby clubs of his native South Wales. He sang in his first major choral works and opera chorus at University. On coming to Taunton in 1972 with his wife Katy (his built-in great accompanist) to take up work as a social worker they were lucky to be in at the very beginning of Somerset Opera. Over 10 years or more, Chris has sung principal roles including Tamino, Canio, Alfredo (Traviata), Lysander, and Don Ramiro (Cenerentola). He currently sings with Amici, and enjoys performing relaxed ballads.

Chris is semi-retired, and runs his own business which helps Councils in Wales and in London with social services issues. He is a non-Executive Director of Somerset Care, Chair of Taunton Music Trust (which runs Orchestra West), and Trustee of the Somerset Community Foundation. He has just been appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of Somerset.

Carols

Good King Wenceslas

1. (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.

2. (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."

3. (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."**
(All) Page and monarch forth they went
Forth they went together
Through the rude wind's wild lament
And the bitter weather.

Carols

4. (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."**
5. (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.

Carols

O little town of Bethlehem

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.

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.

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.

Carols

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.

Silent Night, Holy Night

Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child
Holy Infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds first saw the light
Heard Resounding clear and long
Far and near the angel song
Christ, the Saviour is here
Christ, the Saviour is here.

Silent night, holy night
Son of God, oh how bright
Love is smiling from Thy face
Peals for us the hour of grace
Christ our Saviour is born.
Christ our Saviour is born.

Acknowledgments

The West Somerset Singers would like to thank **St George's C of E, Wilton** for their hospitality.

Thank you also to **Rachel Robinson** for accompanying the choir during their Monday evening rehearsals.

Thank you to **Somerset Libraries Arts and Information** for supplying the music copies.

The West Somerset Singers meet on Monday evenings for two terms in the Gwyn Williams room at Taunton School. Our next rehearsal will take place on Monday 10th January 2011 at 7.30pm. New members very welcome—telephone Sue Sutton, Secretary on (01823) 432157.

**For further information please visit our website
www.westsomersetsingers.org.uk**

History

The *West Somerset Singers* is a mixed voice adult choir founded in 1945 by Arthur Temple, head of music at Taunton School.

The intention was for the choir to perform unusual works in contrast to Taunton Choral Society. At this time the choir had twenty four singers drawn mostly from the music staff of local schools and concentrated on cameo, unusual and frequently modern works.

Arthur Temple's friend, the baritone Henry Cummings, became Patron and joined the choir in both religious and secular works. The great Soprano, Isobel Baillie, was also a soloist in those days and works such as E.J. Moerans '*Songs of Springtime*' and Malcolm Sargent's '*The Second Crucifixion*' appeared in the programmes.

Arthur Temple conducted the choir for the first fifteen years or so handing over to the leading soprano, Elizabeth Rowe. Three years later, the remarkable Bob Tullett, the musical director at Bishop Fox's School, took on the baton. He coached the choir to success at Bath Music Festival.

Over the years the choir has seen a few changes in conductor including Chris Banks, Richard Barrell and Dawn Lankester but Arthur Temple's original concept of performing little known works has largely been maintained.

In 1994 the choir became a registered charity. Its Committee is elected annually at the AGM and comprises Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, NFMS representative and not more than six other members including a librarian and publicity officer.

The West Somerset Singers celebrated their Diamond Jubilee in December 2005 with a concert at St Mary Magdalene Church, Taunton with a repertoire including Charpentier '*Midnight Mass*', Buxtehude '*The New-born Infant*' and Vivaldi '*Gloria*'.

