



NORTHAM CHORAL SOCIETY



presents a

Christmas Concert

***Saturday 9th December 2023 at 7.30pm
in the Parish Church of St. Mary, Bideford***

<i>Musical Director</i>	<i>Malcolm Pike</i>
<i>Organ/Piano</i>	<i>Chris Beechey</i>

Admission: £5.00

Interval refreshments included

HMRC Charity Number XT18388

<https://northamchoral.org.uk>

***Supported by Bideford Bridge Trust
and Bideford Town Council***

***Northam Choral Society wishes to thank St Mary's Church
for permission to use the Church for our Christmas Concert***

***A retiring collection will be held for the Choir's chosen charity,
Bideford Musical Memory Cafe***

PROGRAMME

<i>ALL</i>	<i>Unto us is born a Son</i>	<i>In programme</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>The First Christmas</i>	<i>Barnby</i>
	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Ian Wicks</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>The Angel Gabriel</i>	<i>Pike</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>Love Came Down at Christmas</i>	<i>Thiman</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>Gabriel to Mary came</i>	<i>Irish Tune</i>
<i>ALL</i>	<i>As with Gladness Men of Old</i>	<i>In programme</i>
<i>Chris Beechey</i>	<i>Variations on 'Adeste Fidelis'</i>	<i>Marcel Dupré</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>Rise up now, ye Shepherds</i>	<i>French Tune</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>Poverty</i>	<i>Welsh Tune</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>Shepherds in the Fields Abiding</i>	<i>French Tune</i>
<i>ALL</i>	<i>O Little Town of Bethlehem</i>	<i>In programme</i>

Interval & Refreshments

<i>ALL</i>	<i>God Rest you Merry, Gentlemen</i>	<i>In programme</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>A Little Child there is Yborn</i>	<i>Archer</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>O Come, O Come, Emmanuel</i>	<i>French Tune</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>Shepherd's Pipe Carol</i>	<i>Rutter</i>
	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Christine Holmes</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>Jesu Sweet</i>	<i>Wicks</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>Birthday Carol</i>	<i>Willcocks</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>Hush, my Dear, Lie Still</i>	<i>French traditional</i>
<i>ALL</i>	<i>It Came upon the Midnight Clear</i>	<i>In programme</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>Sussex Carol</i>	<i>Willcocks</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>A Spotless Rose</i>	<i>Howells</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>I Saw Three Ships</i>	<i>English traditional</i>
<i>ALL</i>	<i>Hark the Herald Angels Sing</i>	<i>In programme</i>

ALL: Unto Us is Born a Son

1. *Unto us is born a Son,
King of quires supernal.
See on earth his life begun,
Of lords the Lord eternal,
Of lords the Lord eternal.*
2. *Christ, from heav'n descending low,
Comes on earth a stranger;
Ox and ass their owner know,
Be-cradled in the manger,
Be-cradled in the manger.*
3. *This did Herod sore afracy,
And grievously bewilder,
So he gave the word to slay
And slew the little childer,
And slew the little childer.*
4. *Of his love and mercy mild
This the Christmas story;
And O that Mary's gentle child
Might lead us up to glory,
Might lead us up to glory.*
5. *O and A, and A and O
Cum cantibus in choro,
Let our merry organ go
Benedicamus Domino,
Benedicamus Domino.*

CHOIR: The First Christmas

We begin our concert with a collection of four carols by Joseph Barnby (1828-1896) who was an English composer and conductor. He held several prestigious positions including Precentor of Eton College and Principal of the Guildhall School of Music. Amongst his many compositions are 246 hymn tunes(!) and the ever-popular part song "Sweet and Low". The titles of these carols are "The Annunciation", "The Message to the Shepherds", "Cradle Song of the Blessed Virgin" and "Gloria in Excelsis". Be prepared to hear stylistic snatches of his famous contemporary Arthur Sullivan!

READING

CHOIR: The Angel Gabriel

Our Musical Director wrote this carol for the choir last year to provide a different setting of the popular words from St. Luke's gospel, telling of the angel's visit to Mary. The music, in chordal style, is written to fit speech patterns as far as possible.

CHOIR: Love Came Down

Eric Thiman (1900-1975) was born in Ashford, Kent. He was mostly self-taught but achieved a Fellowship of the Royal College of Organists in 1921 and a London Doctorate (DMus) in 1928. He was Professor of Harmony at the Royal Academy of Music and later Dean of the Faculty of Music at London University. He wrote around 1300 pieces many of which are part-songs, anthems and carols. Our carol has an opening verse for sopranos followed by a four-part one and finally a unison stanza.

CHOIR: Gabriel to Mary Came (*Angelus ad Virginem*)

This is a mediaeval carol telling of the Angel Gabriel's visit to Mary to tell her that she would give birth to Jesus. It probably reached Ireland via French friars in the thirteenth century. It is found in several manuscripts from that period and is notably referenced by Chaucer in "The Miller's Tale" where Nicholas sings it to his own psalter accompaniment. David Willcocks has provided this simple but lovely arrangement.

ALL: As with Gladness Men of Old

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| 1. <i>As with gladness men of old
Did the guiding star behold,
As with joy they hailed its light,
Leading onward, beaming bright,
So, most gracious God, may we
Evermore be led to thee.</i> | 4. <i>Holy Jesu, every day
Keep us in the narrow way;
And, when earthly things are past,
Bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide,
Where no clouds thy glory hide.</i> |
| 2. <i>As with joyful steps they sped
To that lowly manger bed,
There to bend the knee before
Him whom heaven and earth adore,
So may we with willing feet
Ever seek thy mercy seat.</i> | 5. <i>In the heav'nly country bright
Need they no created light:
Thou its light, its joy, its crown
Thou its sun which goes not down:
There for ever may we sing
Alleluyas to our King</i> |
| 3. <i>As they offered gifts most rare
At that manger rude and bare,
So may we with holy joy,
Pure and free from sin's alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to thee our heavenly King.</i> | |

Chris Beechey - organ

Variations on 'Adeste Fidelis' by Marcel Dupré

CHOIR: Rise Up Now, ye Shepherds

This carol is based on a manuscript from the Middle Ages called "The Towneley Mysteries". The jolly tune is French but the composer is not known. In this version, which has four verses, the tune is heard in the soprano and bass parts and after each stanza there is a "Glory in the highest" refrain.

CHOIR: Poverty

This beautiful Welsh carol has a traditional melody called “Olwen”. The text has been translated by Katherine Roberts, wife of the Reverend Robert Roberts who served as Master of the Choir School at Westminster Abbey. Like so many Welsh tunes it is simple but eminently singable!

CHOIR: Shepherds in the Fields Abiding

This bouncy piece uses an old French dance tune called “Gloria”, which is adapted from the 1519 carol “Quem vidistis, pastores”. The words have been translated by the Reverend George Woodward (1848-1934), a gifted linguist who translated from French, Greek, German and Latin! The form is, once more, strophic with an extended “Gloria” refrain.

ALL: O Little Town of Bethlehem

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| 1. <i>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.</i> | 3. <i>How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is giv’n!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heav’n.
No ear may hear his coming;
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him,
Still The dear Christ enters in.</i> |
| 2. <i>O morning stars together
Proclaim thy 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 wond’ring love.</i> | 4. <i>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.</i> |

INTERVAL

ALL: God Rest you Merry, Gentlemen

- 1. God rest you merry, gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born upon this day,
To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray:
O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.*
- 2. From God our heavenly Father
A blessed angel came,
And unto certain shepherds
Brought tidings of the same,
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by name:
O tidings...*
- 3. The shepherds at those tidings
Rejoiced much in mind,
And left their flocks a-feeding
in tempest, storm and wind,
And went to Bethlehem straightway
This blessed babe to find;
O tidings...*
- 4. But when to Bethlehem they came,
Whereat this infant lay,
They found him in a manger,
Where oxen feed on hay;
His mother, Mary, kneeling
Unto the Lord did pray:
O tidings...*
- 5. Now to the Lord sing praises,
All ye within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas
All others doth deface:
O tidings...*

CHOIR: A Little Child there is Yborn

Malcolm Archer was born in 1952 and is a well-respected composer, organist and conductor. He held Directorships at Bristol, Wells and St. Paul's Cathedrals. In this carol he shows his expertise in writing singable melodies with catchy rhythms and a fun organ part!

CHOIR: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

This popular carol has a lovely modal 15th century tune with words translated from the Latin "Veni, veni, Emmanuel", which dates back to monastic life in the 9th century. This arrangement is by Paul Harris (b.1951), the organist and Director of Music at Coventry Cathedral for many years before, more recently, becoming Director of Music for Stagecoach Theatre Arts.

CHOIR: Shepherd's Pipe Carol

The music of John Rutter (b.1945) appears in most carol concerts and he remains our most popular choral composer. This carol is typical of him with its joyful melodies, catchy syncopation and varied texture and harmony. As always it provides an enjoyable challenge and is great fun to perform.

READING

CHOIR: Jesu Sweet

The words are anonymous and thought to be mediaeval in origin. They depict a moment of lament by Mary for her newborn son and the lowly circumstance of his coming into the world in a stable, surrounded by simple beasts such as ox and ass, and without warmth, wraps or clothing. She pulls her baby gently to her breast perhaps with a sense of the ordeals that await him in life and holds him close. The melody and harmony of the carol were written by Iain Wicks sometime around 1987, with the choice of words and final arrangement as a carol being devised in collaboration with his brother Andrew sometime later. This will be the first performance.

CHOIR: Birthday Carol

David Willcocks (1919-2015) was a much-loved conductor, organist and composer best known for his association with King's College, Cambridge and the many "Carols from King's" for the BBC, which he directed. He also edited the series of "Carols for Choirs" books which we all still use every Christmas! This happy carol abounds with tricky rhythms and subtle variations.

CHOIR: Hush, My Dear Lie Still

This haunting French traditional carol has a lovely modal melody which is treated to a set of seven variations, again by David Willcocks. The words come from a 1720 collection called "Divine and Moral Songs for Children", a set of eight songs by Isaac Watts (1674-1748), a Congregational minister and hymn writer.

ALL: It Came upon the Midnight Clear

1. *It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth
To touch their hearts of gold:
Peace on the earth, goodwill to men
From heav'n'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 heav'nly music floats
O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hov'ring 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. *For lo! The days are hastening on,
By prophet-bards foretold,
When, with the ever circling years,
Comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendours fling,
And the whole world send back the song
Which now the angels sing.*

CHOIR: Sussex Carol

Here we have another David Willcocks arrangement, this time of a well-known carol first published in 1684 by the seventeenth century Irish bishop Luke Wadding. It was popularised by the folk song collector Ralph Vaughan Williams who heard it sung in 1919 by Harriet Verall from Horsham in Sussex, thus the carol's name. It has been arranged many times but this version, in typical Willcocks fashion, mixes unison, four part and accompanied solo singing in a joyful setting.

CHOIR: A Spotless Rose

Herbert Howells (1892-1983) was another English composer, organist and teacher. He held posts at the Royal Academy of Music and St. Paul's Girls School and produced a range of orchestral, chamber and choral works, many of the latter still being regularly performed in cathedral and church Evensongs up and down the country. This carol from 1919 has words from the fourth century and the lovely tune is supported by rich, slow-moving harmonies.

CHOIR: I Saw Three Ships

John Rutter appears again, this time in a tongue-in-cheek arrangement of another English traditional tune. The words are first found in print in the seventeenth century and the melody was later probably used for the words "As I sat on a sunny bank", which was popular in Cornwall. The humour is apparent throughout; listen for lots of "la, la, la" and some not-so-accurate whistling by the chaps!

ALL: Hark the Herald Angels Sing

- 1. Hark the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born king;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled:
Joyful all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies,
With th'angelic host proclaim,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.
Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born 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 th'incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King.*

- 3. Hail the new-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Risen 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 new-born King.*

Malcolm Pike

Malcolm was educated at Eton College Choir School and City of London school for Boys before embarking on his musical career, firstly at the Royal Academy of Music and subsequently at King's College, London University from where he graduated. He then enjoyed a fruitful year at Reading University doing his PGCE but spending much of his time arranging and conducting concerts!

He was appointed Director of Music at Pierrepont School in Surrey in 1973 and was for many years Musical Director of Farnham Operatic Society and Opera Omnibus in Haslemere. He also ran his own choir and composed for the staff and students.

He moved to Westonbirt School for Girls in Gloucestershire in 1992 and his Chapel Choir appeared on television and gave regular public concerts.

An accident in 2004 led to him being granted early retirement and in 2005 he retired to West Wales where he ran a chamber choir and for several years conducted the Teifi Chamber Orchestra in Cardigan.

In the summer of 2015 Malcolm moved to Bradworthy and for three years was the Musical Director of Torridge Male Voice Choir before joining Northam Choral Society in 2019.

Chris Beechey

Chris recently retired from teaching after thirty-four years at Grenville College/Kingsley School. In that time, he held various posts from Head of History, Housemaster and Head of Performance. In 2017 his School Choir at Kingsley won the title Devon Schools' Choir of the Year. He studied the organ at Lancaster University with Ian Hare as part of his first degree and has been Organist and Director of Music of a number of parish churches. He took over the post at St. Mary's Bideford in March 2020. He and his wife, Pam, have accompanied Northam Choral Society since 2020.

A few words about our chosen charity:

The Home Instead Bideford Musical Memory Cafe supports people living with dementia and their families and carers. The group meets twice a month on the second and fourth Friday mornings at Robins Nest, Bideford. It is a safe and friendly gathering that provides friendship, activities and refreshments plus a 45-minute musical session where members sing and join in musical activities. The Cafe is free, has over 35 members, 10 volunteers and a coordinator.

Members of the choir singing this evening are:

Soprano

<i>Sally Anderson</i>	<i>Thelma Clarke</i>	<i>Margaret Murray-Palmer</i>
<i>Elizabeth Backway</i>	<i>Mary Dendle</i>	<i>Jackie Page</i>
<i>Mo Channon</i>	<i>Janet Elliott</i>	<i>Sue Ticehurst</i>
<i>Wendy Chiles</i>	<i>Rachel Hutchins</i>	<i>Sylvia West</i>
	<i>Helen Morrison</i>	<i>Jan Wicks</i>

Alto

<i>Sue Chope</i>	<i>Helen Holwill</i>	<i>Anne McKiernan</i>
<i>Margaret Cracknell</i>	<i>Anne Humpris</i>	<i>Jeannie Smith</i>
<i>Ro Day</i>	<i>Jane Kivlin</i>	<i>Jen Mills</i>
<i>Christine Holmes</i>	<i>Heather Laugharne</i>	<i>Di Warmington</i>
	<i>Jean Ley</i>	

Tenor

<i>Melanie Beckett-Gregg</i>	<i>Graham Hill</i>	<i>Iain Wicks</i>
<i>Clarice Harwood</i>	<i>Donato Luongo</i>	

Bass

<i>Michael Crouch</i>	<i>Roger Fursdon</i>	<i>John Humphris</i>
<i>Michael Elliott</i>	<i>Peter Goodall</i>	<i>Tony Nicholls</i>

Rehearsal Pianists

Chris Beechey
Pam Beechey

NORTHAM CHORAL SOCIETY

An article in the North Devon Journal of 17th November 1859 shows that a Choral Society was formed 'for the practice of good secular and sacred music' to complement an evening school opened by the vicar. The society comprised the village choir and young men and women who could 'sing by note'. Today's choir is still open to those who can sing by note -although no audition is required - and concerts are given twice a year.

New members are always welcome and anyone who enjoys singing may come along to St Mary's Church, Bideford - where we are currently rehearsing - on a Tuesday evening at 7.30pm.

*Thank you for supporting us this evening. We wish you a very
happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.*

*Our next concert with the Hartland Chamber Orchestra is on 27th
April 2024 in the Baptist Church, Westward Ho! and will include
Handel's Coronation Anthems.*

