

Sing Noel

Welcome to *Serendipity: the choir's* fourth annual Christmas concert. As with most concerts, we offer, as our Christmas present to you, an eclectic mix of Christmas music.

Our concert today opens with *African Noel*, just one piece that will take you on a whirlwind trip to Christmas in various lands. Written in “patrol” style, as we sing imagine a bright and colourful African procession passing by, with its infectious rhythms and harmonies. *Cold December's Winds* is a traditional Catalonian carol of indescribable beauty – please enjoy it with us. Stopping briefly in Catalonia, we sing *Fum, Fum, Fum*, a sharp contrast of energy and rhythm. No Christmas would be complete without a rendition of the Austrian carol *Stille Nacht (Silent Night)*, here set in a sumptuous and tender arrangement by Andrew Carter. Hailing from Germany is *In Dulci Jubilo*, which legend says was originally sung by angels to the 14th century mystic Heinrich Suso. It is presented here in Pearsall's classic arrangement for double choir – surely one of the greatest carol arrangements ever made. From England, we present *I saw three ships* in a simple, yet delightfully effective arrangement by Ed Lojeski.

The majority of today's concert is made up of old carols, sometimes sporting new clothes, but using mediaeval texts. *The Coventry Carol*, originally written for the Pageant of Shearman and Tailors in the 15th century, was part of a traditional telling of the Christmas story performed by guildsmen in England. From Benjamin Britten's sublime *A Ceremony of Carols* comes two pieces for upper voices alone, *As Dew in Aprille* and *This Little Babe*. Written at sea in 1942 amidst the danger of U-boat wolfpacks, the works transcend the darkness that shrouded the world at that time. From Hubert Parry, a man more famous for his setting of Blake's *Jerusalem* comes *Welcome, Yule!*, an arrangement the captures the joy of the holiday season that in the 15th century was marked by the observances of Saints' days. Also sporting new arrangements of traditional texts are *Make We Merry* by Kayron Lee Scott, *A Child is Born in Bethlehem* by Philip Stopford, and *Hodie! (Today!)* by John Leavitt. All three are energetic settings that are at once both mediaeval and modern.

John Rutter is probably one of the best known of choral music's modern composers and while his output covers both sacred and secular repertoire, it is for his carols that he is best known. The *Shepherd's Pipe Carol* is one of his earliest compositions and its changing time signatures and rhythms and complex harmonies make it a rewarding sing, while *Carol of the Children* shows Rutter's gift for writing simple yet elegant music and thought-provoking lyrics. *Hay Ay,!* is the most recent of the trio of his music and takes an old English text and provides a suitably joyous piece for the festive season.

Firmly in the 'new carol' category is *Jingle Bells*, here set by Ray Charles, which will transport us (presumably in a one-horse open sleigh) to a winter wonderland while *Rise and Shine* is a gospel-style spiritual by Todd Jolly – and very jolly it is!

And finally, in every *Serendipity: the choir* concert, there is one piece that defies classification. From the great Victorian-age composer Sir John Stainer, more famous for his oratorio *The Crucifixion*, comes the anthem *How Beautiful Upon the Mountains*. Only one word can describe this work – ‘gorgeous’. Do enjoy....

Sing Noel Repertoire

trad. African arr. Johnson/RAC

Sir C Hubert H Parry

trad. Catalanian arr. Brazzola

Scott arr. KAF

Stopford arr. KAF

Stainer

Rutter arr. KAF

15th century arr. Shaw

Britten

arr. Charles

Old German arr. Pearsall

Rutter arr. KAF

Gruber arr. Chilcott/RAC

Leavitt arr. KAF

Rutter arr. KAF

trad. English arr. Lojeski

Catalonian carol arr. Wilberg/KAF

Jolly arr. RAC

African Noël

Welcome, Yule!

Cold December's Winds

Make We Merry

A Child Is Born In Bethlehem

How Beautiful Upon the Mountains

Hay, Ay

Coventry Carol

a) As Dew In Aprille

b) This Little Babe

Jingle Bells

In Dulci Jubilo

Shepherd's Pipe Carol

Stille Nacht

Hodie!

Carol of the Children

I Saw Three Ships

Fum, Fum, Fum

Rise and Shine