

*THE
DUNSFORD
SINGERS*

(a Teign Valley choir)

“TOGETHER AT CHRISTMAS”

Musical Director: Tim Pithers

Accompanist: Carol Galton

Sunday 4th December, Dunsford Church

Saturday 10th December, TVCH, Christow



*Thank you to our generous sponsor, Barry Clarke
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CHOIR and AUDIENCE

Once in Royal David's City Number 10 CHOIR TO SING FIRST VERSE

Poem 1: Snow by Gillian Clarke (b 1937)

Read by Jan Middleton

A poem that sets the scene for winter, and the sensory experiences we associate with the Christmas season. The reference to women pleading with soldiers at a frontier is a timely reminder of those parts of the world where war seeks to destroy the message of peace and goodwill.

CHOIR: The Sussex Carol This lilting, celebratory carol dates from the late 1600s but was not written down until the early 20th century when composer Ralph Vaughan Williams heard it being sung by Harriet Verall of Monk's Gate in Sussex.

CHOIR: The Truth From Above Another Vaughan Williams arrangement of a traditional English folk tune from Herefordshire. Originally there were ten verses, relating the story of mankind's fall from grace and how we were redeemed by Jesus Christ. It's a stately and glorious carol.

Poem 2: Angels' Song by Charles Causley (1917 - 2003)

Read by Francis Leversedge, Giles Frampton, Mike Wimpenny/Liz Robin

With his family links to Trusham, Causley is much admired in the Teign Valley. Here, three angels speak to the shepherds, offering a clear, accessible and joyful message about what they will find if they go to Bethlehem.

CHOIR: Adam Lay y Bounden arr Boris Ord Dating from 1400, this is a lovely example of one of the first carols sung in English, the language of the ordinary people. It was probably performed by itinerant minstrels at the royal court and homes of lords. Its text is firmly rooted in medieval Christian beliefs: Adam is supposed to have remained in bonds from his death until the birth of Christ: "*four thousand winters*". The tone of the lyrics suggest incredulity that: "*all was for an apple*", though it must be, for educated men tell us so: "*as clerkes finden written in their book*". The song concludes that this all led to the birth of Christ, which made Mary the Queen of Heaven, so we had better all sing to celebrate! In 1957 organist Boris Ord created this fabulous arrangement for the choir of King's College, Cambridge.

Poem 3 Holly by Seamus Heaney (1939 - 2013)

Read by Toria Wimpenny

Heaney offers a boyhood memory: ranging about the countryside searching for holly, getting drenched and cut by the thorns, when he feels he *should* have been crunching through pristine snow and coming home with branches laden with bright red berries. Indeed, the holly he remembers sounds rather sinister! Years later, in the warmth of his adult home, he reflects upon how expectations change. Although he labels himself 'a doubter' he searches for meaning in his reading, and hopes to find something that will cut through his uncertainties, like holly and ice.

CHOIR : The Holly and the Ivy

It's likely that the words to this carol are medieval, layering the Christian message over the symbols of a Pagan Yuletide. Jesus' life is referenced through the holly's natural attributes, and the refrain seems to swing us right back to the Tudor world of hunting, merry-making and music. This arrangement is full of surprises for singers: syncopated rhythms and runs of notes where you least expect them!

CHOIR: Angels From the Realms of Glory

This is an old French melody with words from the early 1800s. We have chosen to sing a fresh arrangement by the conductor Reginald Jacques (1894 -1969).

Poem 4: A Sonnet for the Annunciation

Written and read by Jan Middleton

Choir: There Is No Rose

This is one of the songs from Benjamin Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols*. It was composed in 1942, on Britten's sea voyage from the USA to England. Originally scored for boy's voices, it has since become classic Christmas SATB choral favourite. *There Is No Rose* is a poem from the early fifteenth century, celebrating the Virgin Mary, speaking of how heaven and earth meet in the 'little space' of her womb, and weaving the everyday English of the common people with formal Latin of the Church.

Res Miranda; a thing to be wondered at

Paresforma: of equal form (Jesus is God in persons three)

Gaudeamus: let us rejoice

Transeamus: let us be changed (by following Christ)

Choir: The Angel Gabriel

The provenance of this gorgeous, lilting carol is the Basque region of France, where the tune was first recorded as far back as the 13th century. The Devon-born Victorian writer Sabine Baring-Gould translated it into English, adding his own evocative and rather gorgeous Pre-Raphaelite description of the Archangel: "*his wings as drifted snow; his eyes as flame*". Edgar Pettman (1866 -1943) created this beautiful arrangement,

CHOIR AND AUDIENCE: O Little Town of Bethlehem Number 9

INTERVAL

Poem 5: What the Donkey Saw by Una Fanthorpe (1929 - 2009)

Read by Francis Leversedge

Una Fanthorpe sent poems in Christmas cards to her friends, from 1974 to 2002. She looks at the Christmas story from quirky, witty angles, often offering alternatives to the perceived narrative. Here, the Donkey reflects quietly upon the over-crowding in Bethlehem and the inn, and makes a poignant observation about the part he will play in Jesus' story.

CHOIR: In the Bleak Midwinter arr Darke (1888 - 1976)

Christina Rossetti's iconic poem was set to stylish music by Harold Darke in 1909, as a Christmas gift to Margaret Agnes Calkin, whose grandson, Ian, lives in Dunsford. The Calkin family preserve the original manuscript as a family treasure. In 2008 it was voted the greatest Christmas carol of all time by BBC Music Magazine.

CHOIR: Bethlehem Down

In 1927 the Daily Telegraph launched its annual Christmas carol competition. Composer Peter Warlock and his journalist/poet friend Bruce Blunt submitted their entry to fund a proposed *immortal carouse* (in other words, a heavy drinking session!) on Christmas Eve. They won. Despite this rather dubious background, the music is sublime and the pensive lyrics tug at the heartstrings: "*Here He has peace, and a short while for dreaming*"

Poem 6: At Nine of the Night by Charles Causley

Read by Sarah Maybin

On a magical winter's night, when the Westcountry moorland world is silvered by snow, a sense of timelessness pervades the air. A stable boy melts into a personification of Christmas – maybe Sir Christemasse, or St Nicholas; a ghost of Christmas past or the promise of Christmas to come ...

CHOIR: All Bells in Paradise John Rutter (b 1945)

A gentle but uplifting carol, first performed in 2012. A sense of hushed awe leads to glorious optimism as the words and music take us from the silence of winter to the bells of paradise sounding in majesty to welcome the birth of Jesus.

CHOIR: What Sweeter Music Robert Herrick, vicar of Dean Prior (the church right next to the A38) wrote the words in the mid 1600s and it was sung to King Charles I at Whitehall. **John Rutter** created a beautiful new arrangement in 1988. It celebrates everything that any choir strives to achieve at Christmas - singing carols as best we can!

CHOIR AND AUDIENCE: Unto Us is Born a Son carol sheet insert

POEM 7 Ring Out, Wild Bells by Alfred, Lord Tennyson
Read by Giles Frampton

For centuries, campanologists have made their way to parish churches to ring out the old year and ring in the new. It is said that Tennyson was inspired by the bells of Waltham Abbey, one stormy New Year's Eve. This poem dates from 1840, the year he became Poet Laureate. Its message resonates very powerfully today, as we turn our faces towards 2023 and hope for better times for our world.

CHOIR: Carol of the Bells

The melody, based on four haunting, bell-like notes, was developed in 1916 by Ukrainian composer Mykola Leontovich and entitled *Shchedryji* - a folk song of winter, telling of the bountiful times to come in the summer. Traditionally, young girls would go from house to house on New Year's Eve, singing of good fortune. The Ukrainian National Chorus took it to different countries between the world wars, and in America new lyrics led to its popularisation as 'The Carol of the Bells'. It has since become a Christmas classic (and the soundtrack to many a Christmas advert!).

CHOIR and AUDIENCE O Come All Ye Faithful Number 1

CHOIR AND AUDIENCE: Hark the Herald Angels Sing Number 6

Poem 8: BC- AD by Una Fanthorpe
Read by Liz Robin

A thoughtful contemplation upon the moment when 'Before Christ' shifted into 'Anno Domini'.

Choir: Still, Still, Still

We finish with a tender carol from Salzburg in Austria - a lullaby sending a message of pure joy, acknowledging that the greatest gift to mankind comes in the form of a tiny baby.

Tim Pithers: Tim is passionate about community and student music-making and firmly believes that classical music should be made as accessible as possible to performers and audiences alike. He undertook his degree in Music and French at Exeter University, where he studied violin with Mary Eade, composition with Joe Duddell and specialised in musical direction. Tim has studied conducting with Denise Ham, Dominic Grier and Rodolfo Saglimbeni at the George Hurst Conductors' Course at Sherborne Summer School of Music and at the newly established Girton Conducting Course. He enjoys working with ensembles of varying degrees of experience and aims to develop ambitious projects for amateur groups. As well as holding the role of Musical Director of the Dunsford Singers, Tim is currently Conductor of the Dartmouth Orchestra, Exeter University Symphony Orchestra, EU Symphonic Wind Orchestra, and two occasional groups: orchestra+ (the South west's first LGBT symphony orchestra, and EX4 Chamber Orchestra. Recent concert highlights include Dvorak's 8th and 9th Symphonies and 'Cello Conceto; Mozart's 35th Symphony (Haffner); Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf, Tchaikovsky's 2nd Symphony and Percy Grainger's iconic work for wind band – Lincolnshire Posy.

Carol Galton: We are delighted that Carol has joined the Dunsford Singers as our official accompanist. A pianist and cellist, she came to England from South Africa as a post-graduate student. Carol became a primary school teacher in Devon, much valued for her teaching diploma from the Royal School of Music and her co-ordination of children's music-making at all levels. She continues to teach piano and cello. As well as being a sought-after accompanist and performer, Carol is also a keen vegetable grower!