



FCC
FORTISMERE COMMUNITY CHOIR

BRITTEN

A Ceremony of Carols

RUTTER

Jesus Child

**AUDIENCE
CAROLS**

**Fortismere Community Choir
Fortismere Youth Choir & Junior Choir
St Andrew's Church, Muswell Hill
Sunday, 8th December 2024**

FC **SO**
FORTISMERE COMMUNITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

WAGNER

*Prelude and Liebestod
from Tristan und Isolde*

ELGAR

Sea Pictures

BRAHMS

Symphony No.1

CONTRALTO **ANNABELLA-VESELA ELLIS**
CONDUCTOR **THOMAS GREGORY**

SATURDAY 15TH MARCH 2025 AT 7 PM



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**FORTISMERE
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Programme Notes: Mattie Morgan & Laura Druce

With thanks to **Fr Andy Coates** and **St Andrew's Church**

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Programme

Britten – *A Ceremony of Carols*

Audience carol – *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

Born on Christmas Day

That's What Christmas Means to Me

Winter Song

~~~ **INTERVAL** ~~~

Audience carol – *God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen*

Rutter – *Jesus Child*

Audience carol – *The First Nowell*

*Silent Night*

*White Winter Hymnal*

Audience carol – *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*

Richards – *A Merry Little Christmas*

Audience carol – *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

## **Fortismere Community Choir**

Conductor: Cathal Garvey | Accompanied by John Eady

## **Fortismere Junior and Youth Choirs**

Conductor: Laura Druce | Accompanied by Louis Barnett & John Eady

# Programme Notes

## **A Ceremony of Carols, Op.28 – Benjamin Britten (1913 – 1976)**

Performed by Fortismere Community Choir

Nina Kopparhed – Soprano

Maria Khokhar – Mezzo-soprano

Andrew Morton – Tenor

Zahava Rosenthal – Harp

This hugely popular work by Britten was inspired by his discovery of ‘The English Galaxy of Shorter Poems’ and was composed in part while returning by ship to Britain from the United States during World War II. It is an unusual setting for voices and harp; Britten had intended to write a harp concerto and so had been studying the instrument. He originally set the piece for just treble voices, but the following year a version for all four voices was published, written by Julius Harrison, and this is the version we are performing tonight. The ‘carols’ are largely the product of 15th and 16th century writers, most of whom are anonymous. They retain their unique flavour by Britten's extensive use of old English language.

The work opens and ends with the choir processing to plainsong, and the sections in between deal with the traditional stories surrounding the birth of Christ. The piece in its entirety shows Britten's mastery of choral music, with each movement in contrast with the next, ranging from the sonorous solos of *That Yonge Childe* and *In Freezing Winter Night* through the smooth polyphony of *Balulalow* and *There is no Rose* to the animation of *I Sing* and *This Little Babe*.

## Audience carol – O Little Town of Bethlehem

1. 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.

2. 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 wond'ring love.

3. 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.

4. 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.

## Born on Christmas Day

Performed by Fortismere Junior Choir

This song is a gospel-soul ballad about the familiar Christmas story. It starts peacefully and builds to a powerful and joyful chorus. It is sometimes performed by children's choirs in America and was recorded by its co-writer Robert Peabo Bryson, who has won two grammys for his work. You may know his voice from 'Tonight, I Celebrate My Love' with Roberta Flack or 'Beauty and the Beast' with Celine Dion. His co-writer was the producer Keith Andes who was classically trained in piano and choral arrangement, has sold over 150 million



records and worked with Prince, Michael Jackson, Mary J Blige, and Smokey Robinson to name a few.

## **That's What Christmas Means to Me**

Performed by Fortismere Junior Choir

This was written by choir leader Laura Druce with the help of Weston Park Primary School students who were simply asked to say what Christmas meant to them. It follows the narrative arc of a child in the lead up to Christmas, on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and ends as the child falls asleep at the end of Christmas Day. Although it is not overtly religious, it reminds us to ask for peace, love and kindness, to think of others and to feel gratitude for what we have, whatever Christmas means to us. It was originally performed by combined Haringey schools' choirs in the Wigmore Hall at a Christmas concert.

## **Winter Song**

Performed by Fortismere Junior and Youth Choirs

Xavi Branford – cello | Lina Hachimi Idrissi – violin

This is a seasonal song co-written and co-sung originally by Sara Bareilles and Ingrid Michaelson. It has a modal folk feel, and was a minor hit record in Canada (2008) and in Ireland (2011) but has since grown by word of mouth. It tells of the depth of winter, the storms rolling in from the sea and the lack of growth in the cold. The singer is calling home her love, becoming 'a beacon in the night' and asks whether love is still alive. The final verse offers hope and belief that the seasons will change and summer days will come again.

~~~ INTERVAL ~~~

The bar will be open during the interval for mulled wine, drinks and festive treats.

Audience carol – God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen

1. God rest you merry, gentlemen,
let nothing you dismay,
remember Christ our Saviour
was born on Christmas Day
to save us all from Satan's pow'r
when we were gone astray.

*O tidings of comfort and joy,
comfort and joy;
O tidings of comfort and joy.*

2. From God our heav'nly 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 of comfort and joy ...

3. The shepherds at those tidings
rejoiced much in mind,
and left their flocks afeeding,
in tempest, storm, and wind,
and went to Bethlehem straightway,
this blessed Babe to find.

O tidings of comfort and joy ...

4. But when to Bethlehem they come,
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 of comfort and joy ...

5. Now to the Lord sing praises
all you within this place,
and with true love and brotherhood
each other now embrace;
this holy tide of Christmas
all other doth deface.

O tidings of comfort and joy ...

Jesus Child – John Rutter (b.1945)

Performed by Fortismere Community Choir

John Rutter viewed the Christmas Carol service as the highlight of his musical year and his music is now synonymous for many with the festive season. He grew up not far from here, and was educated just down the road at Highgate School. This carol shows the influence of Caribbean music which became widely popular in Britain from the 1950s. It was composed in the early 1970s and dedicated to ‘Simon Lindley and the boys of St Alban’s School Choir.’ *Jesus Child* is a rare carol in the repertoire in that it does not suggest cold and frost and generally seasonal weather – at least from a European perspective.

Audience carol – The First Nowell

1. The first Nowell the angels did
say Was to certain poor shepherds in
fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay keeping their
sheep, On a cold winter’s night that
was so deep:

*Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the King of Israel!*

2. They looked up and saw a star,
Shining in the east, beyond them far;
And to the earth it gave great light,
And so it continued both day and
night:

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell ...

3. And by the light of that same star
three wise men came from country
far;
To seek for a king was their intent,
and to follow the star wherever it
went.

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell ...

4. Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heav’nly Lord,
That hath made heav’n and earth of
nought,
And with his blood mankind hath
bought:

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell ...

Silent Night

Performed by Fortismere Youth Choir

Silent night, written by Franz Gruber and Joseph Mohr, was first performed on Christmas Eve in 1818 in a church in Oberndorf, Austria. Since then it has become so well loved that it is the world's most recorded Christmas carol. This version is arranged by Dr Charlie Beale who is an international choral conductor and jazz educator. He is passionate about stylistic diversity in choral singing and here, he arranges this traditional carol with slow, jazz harmonies. The piano part contains suggested notes only but will be fully improvised by Louis Barnett tonight. There are also improvised vocal sections creating a meditative soundscape and a fresh approach to a familiar favourite.

White Winter Hymnal

Performed by Fortismere Youth Choir

Xavi Branford – percussion

Originally, the song was written by Robin Pecknold of the indie folk band Fleet Foxes but many people have covered the song including *a cappella* band Pentatonix, which is the version tonight's performance is based on. Despite its cheerful tone, the words are rather mysterious and full of imagery. It centres around a group of children playing in the snow with red scarves 'tied round their throats' and a boy called Michael, who falls in the snow. Pecknold says he wrote the song about a time at school when his group of friends left him. He stated that he intended the music to be like *Whistle While You Work* from Snow White – 'something to hum along to as you do the dishes.'

Audience carol – 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 God-head 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 heav'n-born Prince of
Peace!
Hail the Sun 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 new-born King.*

Arranged by Goff Richards – A Merry Little Christmas

Performed by Fortismere Community Choir

Jingle Bells!

Here's wishing you a merry little Christmas.

Have yourself a merry little Christmas, let your heart be light,
Next year all our troubles will be out of sight.

Have yourself a merry little Christmas, make the Yuletide gay,
Next year all our troubles will be miles away.

Once again as in olden days, happy golden days of yore,
Faithful friends who were dear to us will be near to us once more.

Someday soon we all will be together if the fates allow,
Until then, we'll have to muddle through somehow,
So have yourself a merry little Christmas now.

Sleigh bells ring, are you list'nin'?'
In the lane snow is glist'nin',
A beautiful sight, we're happy tonight,
Walkin' in a winter wonderland!

Oh! the weather outside is frightful,
But the fire is so delightful,
And since we've no place to go,
Let it Snow! Let it Snow! Let it Snow!

It doesn't show signs of stopping
And I brought some corn for popping;
The lights are turned way down low
Let it Snow! Let it Snow! Let it Snow!

I'm dreaming of a White Christmas,
With ev'ry Christmas card I write.
May your days be merry and bright
And may all your Christmases be white.

Dashing thru' the snow in a one horse open sleigh
O'er the fields we go laughing all the way,
Bells on "Bobtails" ring making spirits bright
What fun it is to ride and sing a sleighing song tonight.
Oh! Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells, jingle all the way
Oh what fun it is to ride on a one horse open sleigh.

Audience carol – O Come, All Ye Faithful

1. 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!

2. God of God, Light of Light,
Lo, He abhors not the virgin's womb;
Very God, begotten not created;

O come, let us adore Him ...

3. Sing, choirs of angels; sing in
exultation;
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above!
Glory to God, all glory in the
highest!

O come, let us adore Him ...

4. Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be all glory giv'n!
Word of the Father, now in flesh
appearing!

O come, let us adore Him ...

Fortismere Choirs

Fortismere Community Choir started in 2009 and has recently been relaunched together with Fortismere's Junior and Youth Choirs. All the choirs rehearse at Fortismere on Wednesdays during term times. The Community Choir is an un auditioned choir and is welcoming new members to join us from January onwards. A love of singing and the ability to learn and hold a line are the only requirements! Visit www.fortismeremusiccentre.co.uk for more information or email fmcinfo@fortismere.org.uk to arrange to attend one or two rehearsals to try us out. All the choirs enjoy a close working relationship with each other as well as with Fortismere Community Symphony Orchestra and other ensembles at Fortismere Music Centre.

Tonight's Singers:

COMMUNITY CHOIR

Mari-Wyn Burley, Monica Dobson, John Eady, Bethany Fraser, Thomas Gregory, Liz Hanchet, Dave Harris, Sally Holt, Nick Hughes, Maria Khokhar, Nina Kopparhed, Mattie Morgan, Andrew Morton, Anna Mullen, Yuki Okuyama, Chris Olise

YOUTH CHOIR

Sam Balint-Kurti, Beatrice Cohn, Holly Cook, Maeve Curry, Evelyn Gormley, Sylvie Hammersley-Fox, Freya Kilgallan, Megan Liu, Sóirse Metrusty-Fox, Carl Peanberg King, Sol Smith, Butterfly Thomas-Robinson, Nicole Tieku

JUNIOR CHOIR

Persephone Cornish, Anika Das, Diana Davletshina, Agam Duek, Ofir Duek, Rafael Grant Weeks, Timothy Hill, Ayeisha Kimon-Henry, Mila Law, Melanija Marjanovic, Rhys Oh, Aiden Opitek, Lenny Pavlo Farade, Sophie Poormand, Louis Rogers, Ann Rounce

Cathal Garvey (interim Musical Director, Fortismere Community Choir) began his career as chorus master for most of Ireland's major opera companies, working on over fifty productions. He moved to the UK in 2009 to take up the position of Chorus Master with Grange Park Opera. Since then, he has conducted many orchestras such as London International Orchestra and Covent Garden Chamber Orchestra, as well as successively holding the posts of Musical Director of Newbury, Billingshurst, and Wokingham Choral Societies. He is currently Musical Director of Reading Symphony Orchestra. Cathal teaches orchestral conducting to postgraduates at the Royal Academy of Music. He was appointed Honorary Associate of the Royal Academy of Music (Hon ARAM) in 2019.



Laura Druce (Musical Director, Fortismere Youth and Junior Choirs) is a choir conductor, composer, songwriter and music educator working in London. She teaches singing and piano in Haringey schools and has a long track record of running youth choirs. She has conducted and had works performed at The Royal Albert Hall, The Wigmore Hall, The Bafta Theatre, Alexandra Palace Theatre and the 100 Club. She has composed music for BBC documentaries and a short film. Before devoting her time to music, Laura was an award-winning radio producer at BBC Radio 4 producing programmes such as Desert Island Discs and Loose Ends and afterwards ran her own production company making many audio documentaries and podcasts.



John Eady (répétiteur) studied music at King's College London, the Royal Academy of Music and cello at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. In 2002 he started to learn the organ at the St Giles International Organ School and in 2006 he became a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists. He is a freelance cellist and organist, manages his string quartet named Four Strings Attached, and is organist at St Magnus the Martyr, London Bridge.



Our soloists

Swedish soprano **Nina Kopparhed**'s performances have been described in the media as 'the quality of music making was compelling.. the music came alive'. Operatic role highlights include The Governess in Britten's *Turn of the Screw* and Susanna in Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, plus recordings including Mozart's *Mass in C Minor*. Nina is also the soprano soloist on the award-winning *A mouthful of Aqueducts* from Stewart Lane's album *Radio Ghosts*.



Maria Khokhar is a recent graduate of the University of Cambridge, where she sang with the Chamber Choir of Corpus Christi College. She now holds a Scholarship at St Saviour's Church, Pimlico alongside singing with the Bach Choir in London. Previous performances include Susanna (Carlisle Floyd), Thamos, *King of Egypt* (Mozart) and *La Naissance d'Osiris*.



Andrew Morton studied Music and French at the University of Manchester. Alongside his degree, Andrew performed regularly with Kantos Chamber Choir, Ad Solem, and was a deputy Lay Clerk at the Manchester Cathedral. He is currently completing his masters in Solo Voice Ensemble Singing at the University of York. He is now based in London and is embarking on an exciting career as a freelance singer, specialising in choral and small ensemble singing, solo oratorio, and pop singing.



Zahava Rosenthal is a lawyer and harpist. She read Music at St Peter's College, Oxford, where she was an instrumental scholar and first performed Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols*. When not advising her clients on their estate planning, she plays a diverse range of orchestral music. Recent performances have included Wagner's *Das Rheingold* and Rachmaninoff's *Isle of the Dead*.





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