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SCO CHORUS IN GREYFRIARS KIRK

19-20 December 2023



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SNOW ON SNOW

SCO CHORUS IN GREYFRIARS KIRK

19 & 20 December, 7.30pm, Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh

GILES SWAYNE	Magnificat
GUSTAV HOLST	In the bleak midwinter
PETER WARLOCK	Bethlehem Down
HELEN LEACH	Touch of Heaven (from Letters from the Owl House) – solo cello
CECILIA MCDOWALL	Now may we singen
JAY CAPPERAULD	The Night Watch (<i>SCO Chorus commission: world premiere</i>)
JOHN TAVENER	The Lamb
JOHN TAVENER	Chant – solo cello
FRANCIS POULENC	Quatre motets pour le temps de Noël: O magnum mysterium Quem vidistis pastores Videntes stellam Hodie Christus natus est
J S BACH	Sarabande (from Suite No 4 in E-flat) – solo cello
SALLY BEAMISH	In the Stillness
TRAD arr RUTTER	Wexford Carol
ERIC WHITACRE	Lux Aurumque

SCO Chorus

Gregory Batsleer Chorus Director

Philip Higham Cello

The concert will last approximately 1 hour, 15 minutes. Please note there will be no interval.

We request that you save applause until the end of the performance.



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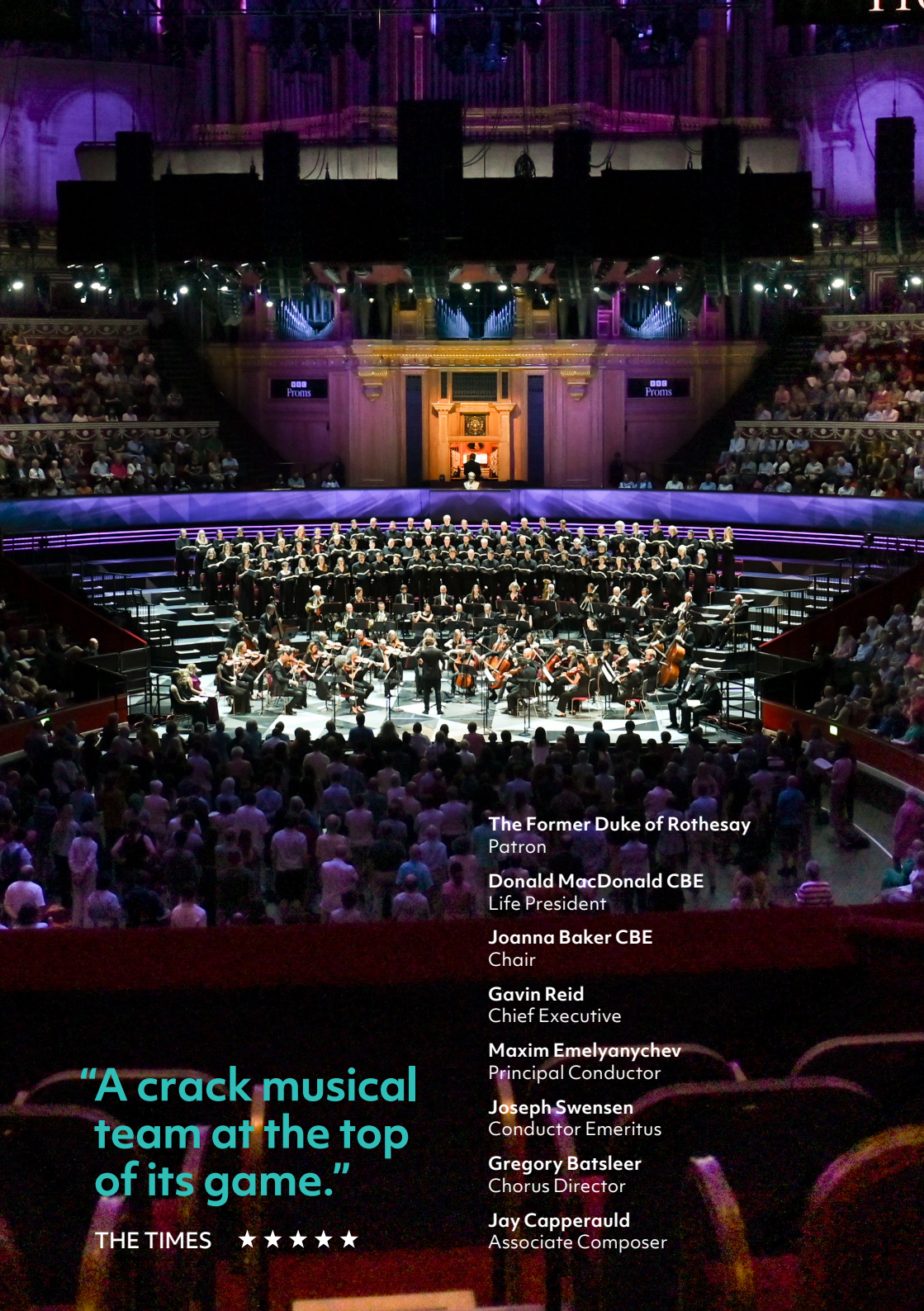
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WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO HEAR

Music for contemplation, and music for celebration – both come together in tonight's rich mix of seasonal choral works that combine the spiritual and the secular, interspersed with a trio of reflective pieces for solo cello.

Giles Swayne is one of Britain's senior musical voices, and has devoted much of his career to a rich catalogue of choral music – it was his pioneering 1980 work *CRY*, for 28 solo voices and electronics, that really put him on the musical map. After studies with Messiaen and Birtwistle, among others, Swayne immersed himself in African music, first in Gambia and southern Senegal in 1981-2, and later in Ghana, where he lived from 1990 to 1996.

His 1982 *Magnificat* (which Swayne himself calls '*Magnificat I*' – he's actually written four settings) is one of his earliest pieces to be inspired by African sounds. The Senegalese work song melody with which Swayne opens the piece might seem like an odd match for an ancient Christian hymn employing words from the Virgin Mary in praise of God. But it captures the excitement and celebration of the season marvellously – and complex interlocking rhythms, chants and syncopations all later contribute to the piece's sense of abundant joy.

From Senegal to Gloucestershire, and specifically to the village of Cranham, where

Gustav Holst is reputed to have written his melody that transformed Christina Rossetti's 1872 poem 'In the bleak midwinter' into one of our most enduring carols. (It was that village, too, that gave Holst's melody its name – and it's a line from Rossetti's verse, of course, that gives tonight's concert its title.)

Holst's setting was requested by Ralph Vaughan Williams in 1906, as an addition to *The English Hymnal* that he was editing at the time. Holst conceived it specifically for congregational singing, transforming the irregular lines and unconventional structure of Rossetti's original into something with a sense of natural flow for singing voices. And though Rossetti's poem has been questioned for its theological accuracy (we might wonder at the idea of frost and frozen ground in the Middle East, even in December), Holst's melody displays just the kind of moving nobility we might expect from the composer who'd go on to write the famous 'Jupiter' theme from *The Planets*, which was itself transformed into a hymn of a rather different flavour, 'I Vow to Thee, My Country'.

And from noble reserve, we move to drunken hedonism in tonight's next piece – not that you'd know it from Peter Warlock's subtle, elegant music. Warlock was a fascinating character, a composer and writer with a strong interest in the occult (hence his *nom de plume* Warlock – his real name was Philip Heseltine). He found himself somewhat penniless in the run-up to Christmas 1927, and hatched a plan with co-conspirator Bruce Blunt, a journalist and poet, to ease their seasonal financial stresses by winning the *Daily Telegraph's* annual Christmas carol competition. Their explicit aim, Blunt later remembered, was to embark on an 'immortal carouse' (in other words, a heavy Christmas of drinking and partying) – which, after



Cecilia McDowall

Cecilia McDowall studied at the University of Edinburgh, and over the past few decades has emerged as one of the UK's most distinctive musical voices.

triumphing in the contest, is exactly what they did.

It's somewhat ironic, then, that Warlock's 'Bethlehem Down' is so thoughtful, introspective, calming and apparently timeless. He blends rich harmonies from the early 20th century with some distinctive backward glances to Tudor music, of which he was especially fond. The result is a carol that sounds at once ancient and modern – and which has understandably been called one of Warlock's finest pieces.

We come right up to date with tonight's next piece. Composer, clarinettist and teacher Helen Leach was born in Hawick in the Scottish Borders, and took the position of composer in residence at Marchmont House, near Duns, from May 2022. 'Touch of Heaven' is one movement from her *Letters from the Owl House* suite of pieces for solo cello, which she wrote as a result of the residency, inspired in particular by the rich birdlife she

encountered at Marchmont – especially its resident owls.

There's a local connection, too, with tonight's next composer. Born in London, Cecilia McDowall studied at the University of Edinburgh, and over the past few decades has emerged as one of the UK's most distinctive musical voices, winning several composition awards across her wide-ranging output that has a particularly strong focus on choral music. It's not hard to see why: her music has an easy lyricism and immediacy that speaks directly to many listeners, without ever compromising on craft or originality.

McDowall wrote her 'Now may we singen' in 2006, using a 15th-century text and conjuring music to reflect the playfulness of the words, with bell-like sounds, unpredictable rhythms and a distinctively medieval flavour to some of its harmonies – and, it has to be said, an infernally catchy chorus that may well stay with you long after tonight's concert.



Jay Capperauld

Ayrshire-born Jay Capperauld is the SCO's Associate Composer... His choral work *The Night Watch* is receiving its very first performances in these concerts.

We stay in the present day with tonight's next piece. Ayrshire-born Jay Capperauld is the SCO's Associate Composer: his *The Origin of Colour* launched this Season's concerts back in September, and his brand new theatrical piece for children (and grown-ups) *The Great Grumpy Gaboon* gets its first performances in February. His choral work *The Night Watch*, commissioned by the SCO Chorus, is receiving its very first performances in these concerts. Capperauld writes about the piece:

'The Night Watch is inspired by a poem of the same name by Scottish poet Niall Campbell which expresses his personal experiences as a new father. This tender and heartfelt text captures a nocturnal dreamscape of half-sleep and earnest attempts to comfort and sooth 'this boy I love, calling for me to come out, into the buckthorn field of being awake.'

'This new work attempts to capture the dream-like haze of Campbell's words which build into climactic moments of wakefulness, crying and

soothing that leave us with the intimate, gentle musings between parent and child.'

John Tavener was a fascinating, deeply idiosyncratic figure in recent British music (he died in 2013, after gaining huge popularity in the final decades of his life). He was a close friend of the now King Charles III, and a profoundly spiritual figure immersed in the rites of the Eastern Orthodox Church and other mystical faiths, while also maintaining a passion for classic cars – he reputedly owned a vintage Rolls Royce, a Jaguar and a Bentley during his lifetime.

His music emerged from the freewheeling experimentalism of the 1960s, but by the time he wrote *The Lamb* – tonight's next piece – in 1982, he was seeking to reconnect through music with a sense of the divine. He said in a 1999 interview: 'We seem to have lost our contact with the primordial, the idea of, call it divine revelation as opposed to something that's learnt by the human intellect, something

that, if you lay yourself completely open and you just open your heart completely, something will actually come into it.'

The Lamb sets a brief poem from William Blake's 1789 *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, considering Christ as the Lamb of God. Tavener wrote it as a birthday present for his then three-year-old nephew Simon, reputedly in just 15 minutes during a car journey from Devon to London. When you encounter the radiant simplicity of *The Lamb's* music, that makes a lot of sense. It's built on an uncomplicated, chant-like melodic idea, heard at the very start, which is soon accompanied by an exactly upside-down version of itself. Tavener expands his musical mirroring later in melodies that are perfect palindromes, turning back on themselves to return to where they began, interspersed with warm, four-voice choruses that grow increasingly slow as the piece progresses. The composer wrote in his own programme note: 'Blake's child-like vision perhaps explains *The Lamb's* great popularity in a world that is starved of this precious and sacred dimension in almost every aspect of life.'

It was 13 years later, in 1995, that Tavener wrote his brief *Chant* for solo cello, a piece that shares a lot of *The Lamb's* slow-moving, mystical qualities. The composer conceived the work as a memorial to a friend, writer and translator Philip Sherrard, and there's a clear sense of lament in the cello's winding melody, set entirely in the instrument's upper range.

We leap back in time almost half a century for tonight's next piece. 'A musical clown of the first order' is how musicologist Martin Cooper pithily described Francis Poulenc in 1951, the same year the composer wrote his *Quatre motets pour le temps de Noël*. It's an apt description of a musician born into

immense wealth who delighted in hanging out in Parisian bars and cafés as one of a loose composer collective dubbed Les Six (alongside Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud and Germaine Tailleferre), a gang that idolised Erik Satie and Jean Cocteau for their iconoclastic aesthetics, and gleefully stuck two fingers up at the serious-minded refinement of the French impressionist composers who had preceded them (though Poulenc maintained a quiet reverence for Claude Debussy).

By 1951, however, Poulenc had changed. He was raised a devout Catholic, and rediscovered his faith to some extent with his 1933 *Organ Concerto*. The turning point came in 1936, however, when his close friend and fellow composer Pierre-Octave Ferroud was killed in a gruesome traffic accident in Hungary, aged just 36. Shocked, Poulenc made a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Rocamadour in southern France, prompting a serious turn towards piety and devotion in several overtly religious works – even if many of them returned to the dashing wit of his earlier music.

Poulenc wrote his four brief Christmas Motets between November 1951 and May 1952, and each portrays a scene from the nativity story. The slow, somewhat austere 'O magnum mysterium' announces the coming of the baby Jesus, floating a soprano melody over restrained accompaniment from the lower voices. The quicker, brighter 'Quem vidistis pastores dicite' introduces us to the shepherds, and the Magi travel under a starlit night in the quietly magical 'Videntes stellam'. Poulenc saves his joy and celebration for the dancing rhythms of the exuberant closing 'Hodie, Christus natus est'.

We don't know much for certain about the six suites that JS Bach wrote for solo cello:

they probably come from between 1717 and 1723, when he worked as music director at the Köthen court of Prince Leopold, a talented and enthusiastic musician. They might seem like simple, single-melodic-line pieces, but they're in fact astonishingly complex and subtle in their construction: not for nothing did musicologist Wilfrid Mellers describe them as 'music wherein a man has created a dance of God'.

Suite No 4 is probably the most technically demanding of the six, and its slow, stately Sarabande shows Bach's enormous skill at suggesting we're listening to more than one instrument, with an almost continuous bassline supporting its elegant upper melody, in music of deep introspection and reflection.

Though born in London, composer and viola player Sally Beamish has had a long relationship with Scotland, and with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in particular. She lived north of the border from 1990 until 2018, and played as the SCO's principal violist, as well as writing no fewer than 11 pieces for the orchestra, several of them as composer in residence from 1998 to 2002. Beamish's 2007 *In the Stillness* is a simple, heartfelt carol setting a poem by Scottish writer Katrina Shepherd about a small parish church in a snowy landscape, evoking all the hushed expectation of the coming festivities.

Tonight's penultimate piece has an ancient history. The Wexford Carol – also known as the Enniscorthy Carol – is a traditional Irish tune thought to date back to the Middle Ages. It was noted down by Irish author and musicologist William Gratton Flood, organist at St Aidan's Cathedral in Enniscorthy, Co Wexford, and sent to Ralph Vaughan Williams for possible inclusion in the *Oxford Book of Carols* in 1928. Eminent British choral

Sally Beamish has had a long relationship with Scotland, and with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in particular. She lived north of the border from 1990 until 2018, and played as the SCO's principal violist, as well as writing no fewer than 11 pieces for the orchestra

composer and conductor John Rutter made his nimble setting in 1978, for the anthology *Carols for Choirs 3*, and shows off his choir's abilities across several contrasting, ever-changing textures, all within an atmosphere of quiet reverence.

We close the concert with music to evoke all the mystery and wonder of the season. Nevada-born composer and conductor Eric Whitacre is one of today's most revered figures in choral music, and his 2000 *Lux aurumque* (or 'Light and Gold') achieved worldwide renown through his 2009 online Virtual Choir project. It's a strange, mystical piece that sets a miniature poem by reclusive writer Edward Esch (who's been rumoured to be Whitacre himself), and brings tonight's concert to an ethereal, intensely beautiful conclusion.

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TEXTS

GILES SWAYNE (b. 1946)

Magnificat

Text: Vulgate | The Book of Common Prayer, 1662

Magnificat anima mea Dominum
Et exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.
Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae;

Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes
generationes.

Quia fecit mihi magna, qui potens est, et
sanctum nomen eius,

Et misericordia eius a progenie in progenies
timentibus eum.

Fecit potentiam in brachio suo;
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui;

Deposuit potentes de sede,
et exaltavit humiles;

Esurientes implevit bonis
et divites dimisit inanes,

Suscepit Israel puerum suum, recordatus
misericordiae suae,

Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,
Abraham et semini eius in saecula.

Gloria Patri, et Filio,
et Spiritui Sancto

Sicut erat in principio, et nunc et semper
et in saecula saeculorum.

Amen.

My soul doth magnify the Lord
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded the lowliness of his
handmaiden:

For behold, from henceforth, all generations
shall call me blessed.

For he that is mighty hath magnified me: and
holy is his Name.

And his mercy is on them that fear him,
throughout all generations.

He has showed strength with his arm;
he hath scattered the proud in the imagination
of their hearts.

He hath put down the mighty from their seat:
and hath exalted the humble and meek.

He hath filled the hungry with good things:
and the rich he hath sent empty away.

He remembering his mercy hath holpen his
servant Israel:

As he promised to our forefathers, Abraham
and his seed for ever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever
shall be, world without end.

Amen.

GUSTAV HOLST (1874 - 1934)

In the Bleak Midwinter

Text: Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

In the bleak midwinter,
frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron,
water like a stone;
snow had fallen,
snow on snow, snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter,
long ago.

Our God, heaven cannot hold him,
nor earth sustain;
heaven and earth shall flee away
when he comes to reign:
in the bleak midwinter
a stable place sufficed
the Lord God almighty
Jesus Christ.

Enough for him, whom cherubim
worship night and day,
a breastful of milk
and a mangerful of hay:
enough for him whom angels fall down before,
the ox and ass and camel
which adore.

Angels and archangels
may have gathered there,
cherubim and seraphim
thronged the air;
but his mother only
in her maiden bliss
worshipped the Beloved
with a kiss.

What can I give him,
poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd,
I would bring a lamb,
If I were a wise man,
I would do my part,
yet what I can I give him
give my heart.

PETER WARLOCK (1894 – 1930)

Bethlehem Down

Text: Bruce Blunt (1899–1957)

'When He is King we will give Him the King's gifts,
Myrrh for its sweetness, and gold for a crown,
Beautiful robes', said the young girl to Joseph,
Fair with her first-born on Bethlehem Down.

Bethlehem Down is full of the starlight
Winds for the spices, and stars for the gold,
Mary for sleep, and for lullaby music,
Songs of a shepherd by Bethlehem fold.

When He is King they will clothe Him in gravesheets,
Myrrh for embalming, and wood for a crown,
He that lies now in the white arms of Mary,
Sleeping so lightly on Bethlehem Down.

Here He has peace and a short while for dreaming,
Close huddled oxen to keep Him from cold,
Mary for love, and for lullaby music
Songs of a shepherd by Bethlehem fold.

HELEN LEACH

Touch of Heaven (from Letters from the Owl House, 2022)

Solo Cello

CECILIA MCDOWALL (b. 1951)

Now may we singen

Text: 15th century English

This babe to us that now is born,
Wonderful works He hath ywrought,
He would not loss what was forlorn,
But boldly again it brought;

*And thus it is
Forsooth ywis,
He asketh nought but that is His.
Now may we singen as it is.
Quod puer natus est nobis.*

This bargain loved He right well,
The price was high and bought full dear.
Who would suffer and for us feel
As did that Prince withouten peer?

*And thus it is
Forsooth ywis,
He asketh nought but that is His.
Now may we singen as it is.
Quod puer natus est nobis.*

His ransom for us hath ypaid;
Good reason have we to be His.
Be mercy asked and He be prayed,
Who may deserve the heavenly bliss.

*And thus it is
Forsooth ywis,
He asketh nought but that is His.
Now may we singen as it is.
Quod puer natus est nobis.*

To some purpose God made man;
I trust well to salvation.
What was His blood that from Him ran
But 'fence against damnation?

*And thus it is
Forsooth ywis,
He asketh nought but that is His.
Now may we singen as it is.
Quod puer natus est nobis.*

Almighty God in Trinity,
Thy mercy we pray with whole heart,
Thy mercy may all woe make fell
And dangerous dread from us to start.

*And thus it is
Forsooth ywis,
He asketh nought but that is His.
Now may we singen as it is.
Quod puer natus est nobis.*

JAY CAPPERAULD (b. 1989)
The Night Watch (*SCO Chorus commission: world premiere*)
Text: Niall Campbell (b. 1984)

It's 1 a.m. and someone's knocking
at sleep's old, battered door – and who
could it be but this boy I love,
calling for me to come out, into
the buckthorn field of being awake –
and so I go, finding him there
no longer talking – but now crying
and crying, wanting to be held;
but *shhh*, what did you want to show
that couldn't wait until the morning?
Was it the moon – because I see it:
the first good bead on a one-bead string;
was it the quiet – because I owned it,
once – but found I wanted more.

JOHN TAVENER (1944 – 2013)

The Lamb

Text: William Blake (1757-1827)

Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee,
Gave thee life and bid thee feed.
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice!
Little Lamb who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb I'll tell thee!
He is called by thy name,
For He calls himself a Lamb.
He is meek and he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child and thou a lamb,
We are calléd by His name.
Little Lamb, God bless thee!
Little Lamb, God bless thee!

JOHN TAVENER (1944 – 2013)

Chant

Solo cello

FRANCIS POULENC (1899 – 1963)
Quatre motets pour le temps de Noël

O Magnum Mysterium

O magnum mysterium
et admirabile sacramentum
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum
jacentem in praesepio.
Beata Virgo cujus viscera
meruerunt portare Dominum Christum.

Quem vidistis pastores

Quem vidistis pastores dicite:
annuntiate nobis in terris apparuit.
Natum vidimus,
et chorus Angelorum collaudantes Dominum;
Dicite quidnam vidistis,
et annuntiate Christi Nativitatem.

Videntes stellam

Videntes stellam Magi
gavisi sunt gaudio magno:
et intrantes domum
obtulerunt Domino aurum,
thus et myrrham.

Hodie Christus natus est

Hodie Christus natus est:
hodie Salvator apparuit:
hodie in terra canunt Angeli,
laetantur Archangeli:
hodie exultant iusti, dicentes:
Gloria in excelsis Deo, alleluia.

O Magnum Mysterium

O great mystery
And inexplicable wonder
That animals should see the Lord
Lying in the manger.
Blessed is the Virgin whose body
Was worthy to bear Christ the Lord.

Quem vidistis pastores

What have you seen, shepherds? Speak
and proclaim to us, who has appeared on earth.
We have seen a newborn child
and a choir of angels praising the Lord.
Tell, what you have seen
And proclaim Christ's birth.

Videntes stellam

When the wise men saw the star,
they were filled with great joy.
They went into the house
and offered the Lord gold,
frankincense and myrrh.

Hodie Christus natus est

Christ is born to us today;
the Saviour has appeared;
angels sing on earth today,
archangels rejoice,
today the righteous exult, saying:
Glory to God most high, allelujah.

J.S. BACH (1685 – 1750)
Sarabande from Suite no 4 in E-flat
Solo cello

SALLY BEAMISH (b. 1956)
In the Stillness
Text: Katrina Shepherd

In the stillness of a church
Where candles glow,
In the softness of a fall
Of fresh white snow,
In the brightness of the stars
That shine this night,
In the calmness of a pool
Of healing light,

In the clearness of a choir
That softly sings,
In the oneness of a hush
Of angels' wings,
In the mildness of a night
By stable bare,
In the quietness of a lull
Near cradle fair,

There's a patience as we wait
For a new morn,
And the presence of a child
Soon to be born.

IRISH TRAD. ARR JOHN RUTTER (b. 1945)
The Wexford Carol

Text: Anon (12th, 15th or 16th century)

Good people all, this Christmas time
Consider well and bear in mind
What our good God for us has done,
In sending his beloved Son.
With Mary holy we should pray
To God with love this Christmas Day;
In Bethlehem upon that morn
There was a blessed Messiah born.

The night before that happy tide
The noble Virgin and her guide
Were long time seeking up and down
To find a lodging in the town.
But mark how all things came to pass:
From every door repelled, alas!
As long foretold, their refuge all
Was but an humble oxen stall.

Near Bethlehem did shepherds keep
Their flocks of lambs and feeding sheep;
To whom God's angels did appear,
Which put the shepherds in great fear.
'Prepare and go,' the angels said,
'To Bethlehem, be not afraid;
For there you'll find, this happy morn,
A princely babe, sweet Jesus born.'

With thankful heart and joyful mind
The shepherds went the babe to find,
And as God's angel had foretold
They did our Saviour Christ behold.
Within a manger he was laid,
And by his side the virgin maid,
Attending on the Lord of life,
Who came on earth to end all strife.

Good people all, this Christmas time,
Consider well and bear in mind
What our good God for us has done,
In sending his beloved Son.

ERIC WHITACRE (b. 1970)

Lux Arumque

Text: Charles Anthony Silvestri (b. 1965) based on an English text 'Light and gold' by Edward Esch (b. 1970)

Lux,
calida gravisque pura velut aurum
et canunt angeli molliter
modo natum.

Light,
warm and heavy as pure gold
and the angels sing softly
to the new-born baby.



Chorus Director

GREGORY BATSLEER



Gregory Batsleer is acknowledged as one of the leading choral conductors of his generation, winning widespread recognition for his creativity and vision. Since taking on the role of SCO Chorus Director in 2009 he has led the development of the Chorus, overseeing vocal coaching, the SCO Young Singers' Programme and the emergence of regular *a capella* concerts. As well as preparing the Chorus for performances with the Orchestra, he has directed their recent successful appearances at the East Neuk, Glasgow Cathedral and St Andrews Voices Festivals, at Greyfriars Kirk, and on the SCO's 2022 Summer Tour.

In 2021 Gregory took up the position of Festival Director for the London Handel Festival. He leads the programming and development of the Festival, fulfilling its mission to bring Handel's music to the widest possible audiences. Since 2017 he has been Artistic Director of Huddersfield Choral Society and was Chorus Director with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra from 2015 - 2021.

As Guest Conductor Gregory has worked with many of the UK's leading orchestras and ensembles. Recent highlights include performances with the Royal Northern Sinfonia, RSNO, National Youth Choir of Great Britain, Orchestra of Opera North, Manchester Camerata, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra and London Symphony Chorus, as well as SCO.

From 2012 to 2017, he was Artistic Director of the National Portrait Gallery's Choir in Residence programme, the first ever in-house music programme of any gallery or museum in the world. He has curated and devised performances for the Southbank Centre, Wilderness Festival and Latitude and collaborated with leading cultural figures across a variety of different art forms. Gregory is the co-founder and conductor of Festival Voices, a versatile ensemble dedicated to cross-art collaboration.

As a non-executive director, Gregory sits on the board of Manchester Camerata. His outstanding work as a choral director was recognised with the 2015 Arts Foundation's first-ever Fellowship in Choral Conducting.

Gregory's Chair is kindly supported by Anne McFarlane

SCO CHORUS



The Scottish Chamber Orchestra Chorus, under the direction of Gregory Batsleer since 2009, has built a reputation as one of Scotland's most vibrant and versatile choirs. Widely regarded as one of the finest orchestral choruses in the UK, it celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2021.

Members enjoy the unique opportunity to perform with one of the world's leading chamber orchestras, working with international conductors including Maxim Emelyanychev, Harry Christophers, Richard Egarr, Andrew Manze, John Storgårds and Sir James MacMillan.

The Chorus appears regularly with the Orchestra in Scotland's major cities. Recent concerts have covered a wide range of music including Handel Coronation Anthems, MacMillan *Seven Last Words from the Cross*, Stravinsky Mass, Handel *Messiah* and *Theodora*, Haydn *Seasons* and *Creation*, a rare performance of Vaughan Williams *Flos Campi* and the premiere of *The Years* by Anna Clyne, SCO Associate Composer 2019-2022. The 2023-24 Season features the world premiere of *Composed in August* by Sir James MacMillan.

The SCO Chorus also appears on its own in a *capella* repertoire, both digital and live, including an acclaimed performance of Tallis' *Spem in Alium* at Greyfriars Kirk in 2020, and concerts as part of the SCO's 2022 Summer Tour including the premiere of Anna Clyne's *The Heart of Night*. Its annual Christmas concerts have quickly established themselves as a Season highlight.

Other notable out-of-Season appearances have included critically-acclaimed performances with the SCO at the BBC Proms in Handel's *Jephtha* in 2019 and in Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in 2023. Also in 2023, the Chorus appeared at the Edinburgh International Festival in a semi-staged performance of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* conducted by Maxim Emelyanychev.

Our Young Singers' Programme was established in 2015 to nurture and develop aspiring young singers. It is designed for young people with a high level of choral experience and ambitions to further their singing with a world-class ensemble.

Further information at sco.org.uk

The SCO Chorus Young Singers' Programme is kindly supported by the Baird Educational Trust.

Cello

PHILIP HIGHAM



Philip Higham enjoys a richly varied musical life: a passionate chamber musician, equally at home in concerto, duo and unaccompanied repertoire, he especially relishes Classical and German Romantic music, in which he is frequently and happily immersed as principal cellist of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. He has appeared frequently in recital at Wigmore Hall and at other prominent venues and festivals both at home and abroad, and is regularly broadcast on BBC Radio 3. His two solo recordings for Delphian Records, of Britten and Bach Suites, have received considerable praise, the Britten chosen as Instrumental Disc of the Month in *Gramophone* Magazine during 2013.

Born in Edinburgh, Philip studied at St Mary's Music School with Ruth Beauchamp and subsequently at the RNCM with Emma Ferrand and Ralph Kirshbaum. He also enjoyed mentoring from Steven Isserlis, and was represented by YCAT between 2009 and 2014. In 2008 he became the first UK cellist to win 1st prize at the International Bach Competition in Leipzig, and followed it with major prizes in the 2009 Lutoslawski Competition and the Grand Prix Emmanuel Feuermann 2010.

Philip plays a cello by Carlo Giuseppe Testore, made in 1697. He is grateful for continued support from Harriet's Trust.

Philip's Chair is kindly supported by The Thomas Family

Biography

SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA



The Scottish Chamber Orchestra (SCO) is one of Scotland's five National Performing Companies and has been a galvanizing force in Scotland's music scene since its inception in 1974. The SCO believes that access to world-class music is not a luxury but something that everyone should have the opportunity to participate in, helping individuals and communities everywhere to thrive. Funded by the Scottish Government, City of Edinburgh Council and a community of philanthropic supporters, the SCO has an international reputation for exceptional, idiomatic performances: from mainstream classical music to newly commissioned works, each year its wide-ranging programme of work is presented across the length and breadth of Scotland, overseas and increasingly online.

Equally at home on and off the concert stage, each one of the SCO's highly talented and creative musicians and staff is passionate about transforming and enhancing lives through the power of music. The SCO's Creative Learning programme engages people of all ages and backgrounds with a diverse range of projects, concerts, participatory workshops and resources. The SCO's current five-year Residency in Edinburgh's Craigmillar builds on the area's extraordinary history of Community Arts, connecting the local community with a national cultural resource.

An exciting new chapter for the SCO began in September 2019 with the arrival of dynamic young conductor Maxim Emelyanychev as the Orchestra's Principal Conductor. His tenure has recently been extended until 2028. The SCO and Emelyanychev released their first album together (Linn Records) in November 2019 to widespread critical acclaim. Their second recording together, of Mendelssohn symphonies, was released in November 2023.

The SCO also has long-standing associations with many eminent guest conductors and directors including Andrew Manze, Pekka Kuusisto, François Leleux, Nicola Benedetti, Isabelle van Keulen, Anthony Marwood, Richard Egarr, Mark Wigglesworth, John Storgårds and Conductor Emeritus Joseph Swensen.

The Orchestra's current Associate Composer is Jay Capperauld. The SCO enjoys close relationships with numerous leading composers and has commissioned around 200 new works, including pieces by the late Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Sir James MacMillan, Anna Clyne, Sally Beamish, Martin Suckling, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Karin Rehnqvist, Mark-Anthony Turnage and Nico Muhly.

Pulsant proudly supporting SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

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SCOTTISH
CHAMBER
ORCHESTRA

BE PART OF OUR FUTURE

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From world-class music-making to pioneering creative learning and community work, we are passionate about transforming lives through the power of music and we could not do it without regular donations from our valued supporters.

If you are passionate about music, and want to contribute to the SCO's continued success, please consider making a monthly or annual donation today. Each and every contribution is crucial, and your support is truly appreciated.

For more information on how you can become a regular donor, please get in touch with **Hannah Wilkinson** on **0131 478 8364** or **hannah.wilkinson@sco.org.uk**

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