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The Time of Snow

*Viva La Musica*

*Chamber Choir*

*Musical Director: Beth Williams*

*Accompanist: Peter Williams*

Sunday 1st December, 7.30pm

St Lawrence Church, Gotham

The first half of this evening’s concert explores a number of themes. We open with traditional advent texts about preparing for the coming of Christ (*Wachet Auf!*) and the reversal of Adam’s sin (Jesus Christ the Apple Tree), followed by a set in which we reflect on the Virgin Mary (*There is no Rose)* and the Annunciation (*Ecce Concipies* and *Bogoroditse Dyevo)*.

Former Archbishop Rowan Williams’ *Advent Calendar*, and Bob Chilcott’s *The Time of Snow* provide a bridge between these sacred works and the next secular section, which takes winter as its theme. Both works use the stark winter of a European Advent and Christmas to enhance their message. *The Time of Snow* uses the season as a metaphor for the time before Christ’s birth, and at the song’s climax, we hear the words ‘but with the beauty of this birth came the renewal of the earth’.

The end of the first continues this wintry theme: *Blow, Blow Thou Winter Wind* is one of many songs from Shakespeare’s *‘*As You Like It’, in which the jolly Lord Amiens muses on ingratitude and false friendship: far worse, he decides, than the ‘teeth’ of the winter wind.

After an extract from Philip Pullman’s ‘Northern Lights’, which describes Lyra’s first sighting of the Aurora Borealis, we hear a musical description of this phenomenon by Norwegian composer, Ola Gjeilo. He uses a text from the Song of Songs. In his words, “this piece is about a ‘terrible’, powerful beauty, although the music is quite serene on the surface.”

We end the first half with two traditional songs: *Good King Wenceslas* and *Wassail:* a jovial drinking song from the West Country New Year ritual, which involves singing and drinking to Apple Trees to ensure a good cider crop. We hope this sets the mood for mulled wine and mince pies in the interval!

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The second half of our programme visits various Christmas scenes: after the bells are rung, the Shepherds and Wise Men follow the star to Bethlehem in *Star Carol* and *Follow That Star.* We have included *The Lamb* as a tribute to the recently deceased composer John Tavener. His deceptively simple setting of William Blake’s poem expresses a child-like wonder at Jesus’ existence.

We now see Mary and Jesus in the stable, hearing her lullabies (*That Yongë Child* and *Balulalow). Mary’s Burden* looks ahead to Jesus’ death, an idea which is also reflected in Warlock’s *Bethlehem Down,* where the gifts offered turn into dark omens of the future*:* ‘Myrrh for its sweetness and gold for a crown’ becomes, in the third verse, ‘Myrrh for embalming and wood for a crown’.

For the end of the concert, we return to rejoicing and celebration, *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen* a medley of some modern favourites and finally, the lively *Sussex Carol.*

Items in **bold** are audience carols – please do join in! Words are on a separate sheet.

See below for texts and translations of choral items.

Wachet Auf! J. S. Bach, ed. John Rutter

*The Advent Calendar Rowan Williams*

Jesus Christ the Apple Tree Elizabeth Poston

Ecce concipies Jacobus Handl

Bogoroditse Dyevo Arvo Pärt

There is no Rose Howard Skempton

The Time of Snow Bob Chilcott

Blow Blow Thou Winter Wind John Rutter

*Extract from Northern Lights Phillip Pullman*

Northern Lights Ola Gjeilo

**Good King Wenceslas**

Wassail Ralph Vaughan Williams

Interval – please enjoy some mulled wine and mince pies!

Ding dong! Merrily on High 16th C French, arr. Wood

The Lamb John Tavener

**Star Carol**  John Rutter

Follow That Star Peter Gritton

*Mary’s Burden Eleanor Farjeon*

2 movements from *A Ceremony of Carols:*

That Yongë Child – solo: Jeni Beasley Balulalow – solo: Sue Cooke Benjamin Britten

Bethlehem Down Peter Warlock

**God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen** English Trad. Arr Willcocks

*Reindeer Report*  *U. A. Fanthorpe*

Christmas Medley Various, arr. Andrew Goff

Sussex Carol English Trad. Arr Willcocks

*Viva La Musica* would like to thank you for your support and wish you a peaceful Advent, Happy Christmas and prosperous New Year!

Texts and translations

**Wachet Auf!**

Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme, Der Wächter sehr hoch auf der Zinne, Wach auf, du Stadt Jerusalem! Mitternacht heißt diese Stunde; Sie rufen uns mit hellem Munde: Wo seid ihr klugen Jungfrauen? Wohl auf, der Bräutgam kömmt; Steht auf, die Lampen nehmt! Alleluja! Macht euch bereit Zu der Hochzeit, Ihr müsset ihm entgegen gehn!

Zion hört die Wächter singen, Das Herz tut ihr vor Freuden springen, Sie wachet und steht eilend auf. Ihr Freund kommt vom Himmel prächtig, Von Gnaden stark, von Wahrheit mächtig, Ihr Licht wird hell, ihr Stern geht auf. Nun komm, du werte Kron, Herr Jesu, Gottes Sohn! Hosianna! Wir folgen all Zum Freudensaal Und halten mit das Abendmahl.

“Wake, arise,” loud call the voices of Watchmen so high in the tower, “Wake up, you town Jerusalem!”

Midnight’s hour is now approaching; They call to us with lucid voices: Where are the clever virgins now?

 Behold, the bridegroom comes; Rise up, your lanterns take! Alleluia! Prepare yourself For the wedding, You must arise and go to him!

Zion hears the watchmen singing, The maidens’ hearts with joy are springing, They wake and quickly to Him go.

Their Friend comes in Heav’nly splendour, With graceful strength, with mercy tender, Their light is bright, their star doth glow. Now come, thou worthy One; Lord Jesus, God’s own Son! Hosanna! We follow all To that glad hall To our Lord’s table we are called.

**Northern Lights**

Pulchra es amica mea, suavis et decora sicut Jerusalem, terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata. Averte oculos tuos a me quia ipsi me avolare fecerunt.

**Ecce Concipies**

*Ecce concipies et paries filium, et vocabis nomen ejus Jesum.*

*Hic erit magnus, et filius Altissimi vocabitur. Super solium David et super regnum ejus sedebit*

*Et regnabit in domo Jacob in aeternum et regni ejus non erit finis.*

Thou art beautiful, O my love, sweet and comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army set in array. Turn away thy eyes from me, for they have made me flee away.

Behold, thou shalt conceive and bear a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus.

He shall be great and shall be called the son of the Most High. He shall sit upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom

And he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

**Bogoroditse Dyevo**

*Bogoróditse Dyévo, ráduisya,*

*Blagodátnaya Maríye, Gospód s tobóyu.*

*Blagoslovyéna ty v zhenákh, i blagoslovyén plod chryéva tvoyevó, yáko Spása rodilá yesí dush náshikh.*

Virgin Mother of God

Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, for you gave birth to the saviour of our souls.

**That Yongë Child**

That yongë child when it gan weep, With song she lulled him asleep; That was so sweet a melody It passèd alle minstrelsy. The nightingalë sang also: Her song is hoarse and nought thereto: Whoso attendeth to her song, And leaveth the first then doth he wrong.

**Balulalow**

O my deir hert, young Jesus sweit, Prepare thy creddil in my spreit, And I sall rock thee in my hert,And never mair from thee depart.

But I sall praise thee evermoir, With sangis sweit unto thy gloir; The knees of my heart sall I bow, And sing that richt Balulalow!