

Bollington Festival *Choir*

Sunday 3rd December 2017

Bollington Arts Centre

Olwyn Bloor, Dot Graham, Lynne Patrick *sopranos*

Mary Halloran *alto*

Steve Thorpe, Paul Yandell *tenor*

Mike Bell *bass*

Steve Thorpe *flute*

Ambrose Smith *oboe*

Stephen Goldby *clarinet*

Judith Smith *bassoon*

Warren Temple *tubular bell*

Rosalind Hall *piano*

Donald Judge *conductor*

Sopranos: Olwyn Bloor, Sandra Chorlton, Sue Cooper, Val Cutter, Marianne Day, Lynne Froggatt, Dot Graham, Jenny Kendal, Jean Ransley, Marcia Rowlands, Sarah Rutherford, Christine Winton

Altos: Claire Barnett, Pat Bell, Sally Bence, Chris Brear, Anthea Burdus, Adrienne Fox, Liz Goodwin, Mary Halloran, Pat Hill, Barbara Kleiser, Lynn Knowling, Jane Lewis, Irene Mills, Liz Molloy, Cherry Smith, Judith Smith, Jenny Thorpe, Janet Welch, Geraldine Yandell

Tenors: Jim Kendon, David Ransley, Gordon Rowlands, Roger Taylor, Steve Thorpe, Paul Yandell

Basses: Mike Bell, Stephen Goldby, Francis Graham-Smith, Philip Hodgkinson, Steve Kleiser, Richard Murphy, John Powell, Gordon Price, Ian Ray, Ambrose Smith, Craig Stagg, David Ward

Texts and translations: *Oratorio de Noël* is sung in Latin and *La cloche de Noël* in French. Full texts and translations of those are on the final sheet of the programme. All the other pieces are sung in English.

Shackleford Pianos Cheshire



The accompaniments are played on the Arts Centre's Feurich piano, which is tuned and maintained by Shackleford Pianos Cheshire, by way of their sponsorship of the Arts Centre and our concert.

The Festival Choir is grateful to North Cheshire Wind Orchestra and its treasurer Gordon Robson for the loan of the D5 Tubular bell essential for *La cloche de Noël*, and to Warren Temple for playing its single note so many times!

Many thanks to Kim Creasey for lighting and to volunteers running Front of House and the Bar.

In 1964 the mills that had made Bollington a successful town were closing. Concerned by the effect on his neighbours and patients, John Coope, a GP, keen musician and lover of the Arts, inaugurated a Festival which aimed to bring the community together and give them a common purpose. Many of the groups started then including the Choir (which John conducted for the next 37 years), the Brass Band and the Festival Players are still going strong 53 years later. The next Festival is in May 2019 and planning is already well under way. The Choir has always had a sense of adventure and often performs unfamiliar or new music alongside the more traditional. There are no auditions and anyone who comes along on a Tuesday night is made very welcome. Your next opportunity to sing with us is in *Messiah for All* at St Oswald's Church, 7.30 on Tuesday 12th December in aid of their organ fund. On Tuesday 9th January 2018 we begin rehearsals for some beautiful music by Haydn and Mozart for a concert on March 25th.

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Longer choral works on the theme of Christmas are surprisingly rare, so it's a shame this one is little known and seldom performed. The original accompaniment is for strings, organ and harp, but we're using piano with some of our members playing wind instruments in the opening Prelude, reprised in a subsequent number. No fewer than seven of our own choristers sing vocal solos, and some passages for soloists have been reassigned to the whole choir.

Saint-Saëns was born just eight years after the death of that musical revolutionary, Beethoven, and lived long enough to be infuriated by those revolutionaries Stravinsky and Schönberg. He was a child prodigy, discovered to have perfect pitch at the age of three. Aged ten, he made his public debut, playing Mozart's *Piano Concerto K450* and Beethoven's *3rd Concerto* in the same concert. Years later, he was one of the first established classical composers to write for the movies. Some of his music gained popularity via the film *Babe (Organ Symphony)* and the TV series *Jonathan Creek (Danse Macabre)*. He was one of the earliest composers to make aural recordings of his own music.

As a composer, he stuck to his guns. Debussy was harsh about his compatriot, declaring: "I cannot bear sentimentality, nor forget that its name is Saint-Saëns." Comments damning him with faint praise include, "Saint-Saëns is the only great composer who wasn't a genius" and "bad music well written". But Berlioz, Liszt and Rossini recognised his talent – as did Tchaikovsky, who praised his "briskness, wit, and originality." Saint-Saëns shares with Tchaikovsky a talent for direct and melodious music underpinned by meticulous craftsmanship and inspired thematic and formal development. The pair became friends when Saint-Saëns visited Russia in 1875. He helped bring Tchaikovsky to Paris in the late 1880s, but as Saint-Saëns explained in a very apologetic letter, he had no idea Tchaikovsky had arrived. He out when the Russian called, and his aged and forgetful mother neglected to pass on his visiting card. Tchaikovsky was too unwell to travel to Moscow on his friend's next visit there, so their next meeting was in England in 1893, when they received honorary doctorates at Cambridge on the same day, and shared concert platforms in London.

Saint-Saëns was scathing about 20th century modernism, but in younger days promoted innovative contemporaries such as Liszt, Schumann and Wagner. While he considered the latter's music to be "bizarre, superior and powerful", he proclaimed that he himself was not "of the Wagnerian religion." Not that his own opera *Samson and Delilah* was free from controversy: in England, the Lord Chancellor banned all but concert performances for thirty years until 1909, deeming that the *Bacchanale* was tolerable to the ears, but not to the eyes.

Saint-Saëns famously banned performances of his own innovative and witty *Carnival of the Animals*, only allowing *The Swan* to be played, as like Ravel and *Bolero*, he considered it too popular and a distraction from his serious work. Not that his music ever seems too serious, and there's a wealth of it to explore – two earlier symphonies, concerti, including five for piano, and chamber music such as the delightful *Septet* for trumpet, strings and piano.

Saint-Saëns revered Bach, and was a young man of 23 when he modelled the *Oratorio de Noël* on Bach's cantatas, with an opening Prélude (which Bach would have called a Sinfonia), recitatives, arias, solo ensembles, choruses and even a rousing final chorale. He completed its ten movements in ten days in 1858, while he was organist at *La Madeleine*, one of the most prestigious posts in France. Oddly, he wrote very little for solo organ, probably because he improvised so fluently. Liszt heard him play and declared him the greatest organist in the world. Though his music wasn't to everyone's taste, as this brief conversation shows:

The Vicar: Monsieur Saint-Saëns, you play very severe music. Don't forget that many of our congregation are subscribers to l'Opéra Comique!

Saint-Saëns: When you speak from the pulpit, Monsieur l'Abbé, as they speak on the stage, I will play what is played at l'Opéra Comique!

As well as being an outstanding pianist and organist, a respected teacher, and no mean composer, Saint-Saëns was profoundly interested in science and the natural world: he was an amateur entomologist, botanist and astronomer, and he wrote extensively on the subject of acoustics.

After the INTERVAL, the second half of our concert is a sequence of Christmas carols with a strong French connection, sung in English. Please join us in singing the two for which the words are provided. The carols frame a new piece for the Choir by its conductor Donald Judge, who will play three short Noël's by the French Baroque keyboard player Louis-Claude Daquin, rather like a palette-cleansing sorbet between courses. Continuing the foodie comparison, we finish with a lollipop!

O come, O come Emmanuel has a 15th century French tune here arranged by David Willcocks, legendary conductor, composer and for many years organist and choirmaster at King's College Cambridge.

All: O come, O come, Emmanuel, redeem thy captive Israel
That into lonely exile drear has gone far from the face of God's dear Son.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Men: O come, Thou Branch of Jesse, draw the quarry from the lion's claw.
From the dread caverns of the grave, from nether Hell thy people save. *Rejoice etc.*

Ladies: O come, O come thou Day-Spring bright! Pour on our souls thy healing light.
Dispel the long night's ling'ring gloom, and pierce the shadows of the tomb. *Rejoice etc.*

All: O come, O come Adonai who in thy glorious majesty
From that high mountain clothed with awe gavest thy folk the elder law. *Rejoice etc.*

A maiden most gentle arranged by Andrew Carter, a composer now in his eighties who lives and works in York.

Hush my dear arranged by David Willcocks. Both melodies are French in origin.

Louis-Claude Daquin 1694-1777: Noël in D Daquin's family were Italian immigrants to France, changing their name d'Aquino to d'Aquin or Daquin. Another child prodigy, Louis-Claude performed for Louis XIV at the age of 6. He was much in demand at court, and was organist at many prestigious churches including Notre-Dame in Paris. He published twelve *Noëls* for organ, some with pedals and some just for manuals. They are extensive variations on Christmas folk carol melodies which would have been familiar to his audiences. The first of three brief extracts from the set features a melody much like *Hush my dear*, but in the major key.

Donald Judge **La cloche de Noël** *poem by Jean-Jacques Ampère*

The composer writes: **La cloche de Noël** was written in July 2017 for this concert, while Ampère's atmospheric and disturbing poem was written in 1858 – the same year as Saint-Saëns wrote his Oratorio. I discovered it on the Internet while searching for a suitable French text on the theme of Christmas, and it immediately brought two visual images to my mind: Van Gogh's *Church at Auvers* which illustrates our concert poster, and Edvard Munch's *The Scream*, with its iconic, agonised figure at loggerheads with the world, on a bridge at a nightmarish sunset. The poem not only demanded to be set, but to become a musical drama akin to a scene in an oratorio or opera. Keeping the text in the original French seemed essential, and the sounds, rhythms and rhymes of the poem influenced the creation of the music as much as its emotions.

The setting calls for SATB soloists (the tenor plays the protagonist of the poem but also joins the others as a semi chorus), SATB choir, sometimes divided, piano, and a single bell tuned to the note D. The piece I wrote for the Choir's 2016 Christmas concert, *Some say...* set another nightmare, from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and used a structural device of the note E being present throughout the piece. Here, the bell is allowed some rest, but when sounding, serves a similar purpose. It's sometimes joyous, but often a monotonous call to the faithful echoing through a moonlit, but sad and unsettling landscape. Meanwhile, much of the music's melody and harmony comes from the arpeggio and chord-cluster frequently heard from the piano.

Ampère was born in Lyon, the son of the famous physicist after whom the unit of electrical current is named. His grandfather and namesake, a wealthy businessman, had perished on the guillotine during the Revolution, while his mother died in his infancy. Jean-Jacques didn't share his father's scientific flair, but benefited from his open-

mindedness, love of education, and bank balance. He embarked on an extensive tour of Scandinavia to study folkloric music and poetry. Back in France, he became a lecturer in literature at the Sorbonne, a professor at the Collège de France, and a member of the Académie française. He continued to travel widely, introduced Dante to the French, and his magnum opus was the four volume *L'Histoire romaine à Rome*. He also found time to write novels and poetry.

Christmas can be a difficult time for those who are poor, lonely, depressed or grieving, and Ampère's poem captures this brilliantly. The protagonist is filled with doubts and melancholy. This setting creates a musical drama with the friends and the members of the congregation hinted at given their own voice. Sometimes they contradict him, but often take up his words and share his pain. They invite him: *Venez! Priez!* (Come! Pray!) and counter his exhortation not to pray for him with a commitment to do exactly that!

The structure of the piece – more complex than that of the poem – became evident as composing progressed. I hope that the different musical elements are distinctive enough in mood, and repeated sufficiently, to make the journey easier to follow. Essentially, most of it is a rondo – an arch form A B A C A D A C A B A. "A" is the "refrain" – the first two lines of the poem, but set in reverse order, so that the first words sung are the title. This refrain is repeated not three times as in the poem, but eight – though each one is slightly different in texture. Most of the refrains are a little rondo themselves – with line 1 of the poem sandwiched between two hearings of line 2.

The B sections are faster and agitated as the lonely figure expresses his tortured thoughts. The C sections are majestic and joyful, with antiphonal effects, telling of the wonders of the Nativity. But the first hearing is *forte*, and the second *piano*, the accompaniment to agonised musings from the protagonist.

Following the arch structure is a fugal section, begun by the solo tenor, its melody based on the middle of the refrain and setting the final line of the third verse, beginning *Pleurez...* (Weep...) The chorus joins him, but twice interrupts with the Nativity music (C) which is finally heard again in all its *fortissimo* glory. But the joy is short lived. The gloomy bell returns, the grieving continues, and the piece ends with a *pianissimo* and truncated final refrain.

Daquin: Noël Suisse This Noël in A minor exists in this version with a dotted rhythm and another in 6/8 time.

Ding dong merrily on high also of French origin, arranged by David Willcocks.

Christmas night arranged by John Rutter, another much loved and respected choirmaster and composer. The melody, an elegant dance tune from Dijon-born Thoinot Arbeau's *Orchésographie*, a compendium of social dance published in the 16th century. This melody may be familiar from Peter Waqrlock's *Capriol Suite*.

Hector Berlioz: The shepherds' farewell This is the best known number from Berlioz' oratorio *l'Enfance du Christ*.

Daquin: Noël in G

O come all ye faithful arranged, and with descant by, David Willcocks. It can't claim a French connection, although the earliest version of the original Latin words, *Adeste Fidelis*, may have been written by King John IV of Portugal (1604–1656)!

ALL: 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.... Christ the Lord.*

See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle, Leaving their flocks, draw nigh with lowly fear;
We too will thither bend our joyful footsteps; *O come let us adore him.... Christ the Lord.*

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation; Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest; *O come let us adore him.... Christ the Lord.*

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born that happy morning, Jesu, to Thee be glory given.
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing. *O come let us adore him.... Christ the Lord.*

The Twelve Days of Christmas arranged by John Rutter. Believe it or not, this melody of this archetypal English Christmas song, a folk carol listed in the Roud Catalogue, is thought to have originated in France!

Texts and Translations: Oratorio de Noël

1. **Prelude** in the style of J S Bach

2. **Recitative and chorus**

Tenor: Et pastores erant in regione eadem vigilantes et custodientes vigilias noctis super gregem suum.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

Alto: Et ecce Angelus Domini stetit juxta illos, et claritas Dei circumfulsit illos, et timuerunt timore magno. Et dixit illis Angelus:

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them:

Soprano: Nolite timere! Ecce enim evangelizo vobis gaudium magnum, quod erit omnipopulo: quia natus est vobis hodie Christus Dominus in civitate David. Et hoc vobis signum: Invenientes infantem pannis involutum, et positum in praesepio.

Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

Baritone: Et subito facta est cum Angelo multitudo militiae coelestis laudantium Deum, et dicentium:

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying:

Chorus: Gloria in altissimis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis! *Luke 2:8-14*

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

3. **Air**

Alto: Expectans expectavi Dominum. Et intendit mihi. *Psalms 40:1*

I waited patiently for the Lord and he inclined unto me.

4. **Air and chorus**

Tenor: Domine, ego credidi, quia tu es Christus, Filius Dei vivi, qui in hunc mundum venisti. *John 11:27*

Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

5. **Duet (soprano and bass) and chorus**

Benedictus, qui venit in nomine Domini! Deus Dominus, et illuxit nobis. Deus meus es tu, et confitebor tibi. Deus meus es tu et exaltabo te. *Psalms 118:26-28*

Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord. The Lord is God, and he has given us light. You are my God, and I will give thanks to you: You are my God, I will praise you.

6. **Chorus**

Quare fremuerunt gentes et populi meditati sunt inania? *Psalms 2:1* Gloria Patri, gloria Filio, gloria Spiritui Sancto. Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? Psalm 2:1 Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

7. **Trio (Soprano, tenor, basse)**

Tecum principium in die virtutis tuae in splendoribus Sanctorum. *Psalms 110:3*

With you is sovereignty in the splendour of holiness on the day of your birth.

8. **Quartet (Alto solo and chorus)**

Alleluja. Laudate coeli, et exulta terra, quia consulatus est Dominus populum suum; et pauperum suorum miserebitur. *Isaiah 49:13*

Alleluia. Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth. For the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

9. Chorus (*originally quintet and chorus*)

Consurge, filia Sion. Alleluja. Lauda in nocte,
in principio vigiliarum. Alleluja.
Lamentations 2:19

Egrediatur ut splendor justus Sion, et Salvator
ejus ut lampas accendatur. Alleluja. *Isaiah 62:1*

10. Chorus

Tollite hostias, et adorate Dominum in atrio
sancto ejus. Laetentur coeli, et exultet terra a
facie Domini, quoniam venit. Alleluja.

La cloche de Noël (1858)

L'air est froid; dans les cieux la lune brille et fuit;
La cloche de Noël résonne dans la nuit.

Irai-je dans le temple où s'assemblent mes frères?
Irai-je vers le Dieu qui consolait mes pères?
Non, le temple est ouvert aux enfants de la foi,
Et le Dieu qui console est étranger pour moi.
Non, je ne prierai point; que me fait la prière?
Moi, j'écoute le vent siffler dans la bruyère.

L'air est froid; dans les cieux la lune brille et fuit ;
La cloche de Noël résonne dans la nuit.

Voici la nuit du Christ, la nuit miraculeuse:
A cette heure, du ciel la voix mystérieuse
Plane sur le berceau des enfants nouveau-nés ;
Mais cette voix n'est pas pour les infortunés ;
S'ils regardent le ciel il devient noir et sombre,
Et des bruits effrayants les menacent dans l'ombre.

L'air est froid; dans les cieux la lune brille et fuit;
La cloche de Noël résonne dans la nuit.

Ne priez point pour moi dans le temple rustique,
Ne priez point pour moi dans la chapelle antique,
Ô vous tous qui priez, ne priez point pour moi.
Seulement, si, le coeur saisi d'un vague effroi,
Vous arrêtez vos pas auprès du cimetière,
Pleurez, pleurez les morts et leur froide poussière.

L'air est froid; dans les cieux la lune brille et fuit;
La cloche de Noël résonne dans la nuit.

Jean-Jacques Ampère (1800-1864)

*Arise, daughter of Zion. Hallelujah. Praise
God in the night: in the beginning of the
watches. Alleluia.*

*Until Zion's righteousness thereof go forth as
brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp
that burneth. Alleluia.*

*Bring an offering and come into his courts. Let the
heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad, before the
Lord: for he cometh. Alleluia.*

The Christmas bell

*The air is cold; in the heavens the moon shines and flees;
The Christmas bell echoes in the night.*

*Shall I go to the temple where my brethren assemble?
Shall I go to the God who consoled my fathers?
No, the temple is open to the children of faith,
And the consoling God is foreign to me.
No, I will not pray; what does prayer do for me?
I listen to the wind whistling in the heather.*

*The air is cold; In the heavens the moon shines and flees;
The Christmas bell echoes in the night.*

*This is the night of Christ, the miraculous night:
At this hour, from the sky, the mysterious voice
Floats over the cradle of newborn children;
But this voice is not for the unfortunate;
If they look at the sky it becomes black and dark,
And frightening noises threaten them in the shadows.*

*The air is cold. In the heavens the moon shines and flees;
The Christmas bell echoes in the night.*

*Pray not for me in the rustic temple,
Do not pray for me in the antique chapel,
O all of you who pray, do not pray for me.
Only, if, with a heart filled with a fright,
You stop at the cemetery,
Weep, mourn the dead and their cold dust.*

*The air is cold; In the heavens the moon shines and flees;
The Christmas bell echoes in the night.*