

David Cooke BA (hons), BMus (hons), ALCM

David studied music at Liverpool and Oxford Universities. He specialised first in the early 16th Century keyboard repertoire, and then in the music of the later Middle Ages.

As an instrumentalist, David studied the trombone, piano and harpsichord. He has also performed widely as a player of several early wind instruments.

In recent years David has conducted productions of several operas including The Magic Flute, La Bohème, and Handel's Semele. He is presently also Musical Director of the Wycombe Philharmonic Choir & Orchestra, the Chiltern Hundreds Bach Choir and the Chorleywood Chamber Orchestra.

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THE DAMON SINGERS

Soprano:
Helen Baker
Helen Cooke
Ann Crisp
Jane Featherstone-Witty
Penny Fray
Barbara McGillivray
Rachel Meldrum
Marianne Michael

Alto:
Alison Davidson
Eleanor Greenhalgh
Madeleine Greenhalgh
Anne MacDowell
Louise Pearce
Madeleine Symes
Uli Wright

Tenor:
Simon Beattie
Chris Turner
Andy Scott

Baritone:
Martin Cunningham
Sebastian Gibbs
John Reuter

Bass:
Patrick Lunt
Patrick Martin

Have you got what it takes?

The Damon Singers are always on the lookout for new recruits... Not that we plan to grow much larger than we currently are, but from time to time members move away from the area, or their circumstances change...

If you would like to talk to us, and join us for an evening, please contact the Secretary, Patrick Lunt.

Phone: 01494 712583
Mobile: 07768 566588
email: patrick@patricklunt.com

Dates for your diary 2016

23rd April	Spring concert	<i>Venue tba</i>
9th July	"Pudding concert"	United Reformed Church, Chesham
16th July	Concert	St. Faith's Church, Newton Longville
11th December	Christmas concert	White Hill Centre, Chesham

The Damon Singers

directed by David Cooke

Christmas concert:

Kings & Angels

All proceeds to



British Red Cross

Europe Refugee Crisis Appeal

Sunday 13th December 2015
The White Hill Centre, Chesham
7.30 p.m.

PROGRAMME

I saw three ships

arr. Sir David Willcocks (1919–2015)

Soloists: Rachel Meldrum, Helen Baker & Simon Beattie

This evening's concert is entitled 'Kings & Angels'. The connection with our first piece may not be immediately apparent, until you discover that the curious text—after all, how could three ships sail into Bethlehem?—in fact relates to the journeyings of the relics of the Magi: from Constantinople to Milan then, in 1162, to Cologne, where they remain to this day. The arrangement we're performing is also suitably 'Kingly': it was written by David Willcocks, Director of Music at King's College, Cambridge 1957–74 (and, as you'll hear later on, a great arranger of carols), who died earlier this year.

Carol for All: Ding dong! merrily on high

This seemingly age-old carol is actually anything but. It was created in 1924 by another Cambridge musician, Charles Wood (1866–1926), and marries a secular 16th-century French dance tune with words written by Wood's friend and collaborator G. R. Woodward (1848–1934), a Liverpoolian cleric with antiquarian tastes.

Poem: Dorothy L Sayers 'Carol'

The Angel Gabriel

Basque traditional arr. Edgar Pettman (1866–1943)

'Gabriel's Message', as this carol is often known, was first collected in the 1890s, in a late 19th-century French drive to document Basque folk music. The English translation is by Anglican clergyman Sabine Baring-Gould (of 'Onward, Christian soldiers' fame), here arranged by Pettman, organist of St James's, Piccadilly.

Reading

Hodie Christus natus est

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c.1525–1594)
Palestrina's 1575 setting of the Christmas Day antiphon ('Today Christ is born. Today the Saviour appeared. Today on Earth the Angels sing, Archangels rejoice. Today the righteous rejoice, saying: Glory to God in the highest. Alleluia.') splits the choir into two groups, one SSAB, the other ATTB. Listen out for the cries of

'Noe, noe' (i.e. 'Nowell') echoing between the two choirs.

Damons Diminished in 15th-century mode: Ecce quod natura

Anon. 15th century, ed. David Cooke

Madeleine Symes, Simon Beattie, Martin Cunningham

This early English carol appears in a number of sources, most notably the Bodleian Library's Selden manuscript dating from the second quarter of the 15th century. It is written in the sweetly mellifluous style characteristic of English music from this period. In the second verse, David has provided a third vocal part using the harmonic practices of the time. 'See how Nature changes her laws: A pure virgin gives birth to the Son of God. See, a new joy. See, a new wonder. A virgin bears a son.'

'Amoroso'

Helen Cooke - dulcimer; Alison Davidson - harp; David Cooke - psaltery

The music for this piece — possibly an Italian dance — survives as a single line of melody. This is typical for the 15th Century. Any other instrumentalists were left to improvise suitable backing, often based on the idea of a drone.

Where riches is everlastingly

Peter Warlock (1894–1930)

This is one of 'a couple of silly carols' that Warlock, being hard up as usual, dedicated to a rich uncle in the hope of being rewarded with some cash for Christmas. Unfortunately, all that came back was a letter of thanks... When Uncle Evelyn died three years later, leaving over a million pounds, Warlock got nothing. While its title in this context may seem somewhat ironic, the setting, of a 16th-century text, is far from silly but is a joyfully exuberant celebration of Christ's nativity.

Carol for All: We three kings of Orient are

The only carol from the Pennsylvania clergyman John Henry Hopkins' collection *Carols, Hymns and Songs* (1865) to have become widely known (and its words altered by generations of choirboys along the way...!). Hopkins wrote both the words and the tune, but tonight's arrangement is by David Willcocks.

All sing vv 1 & 5 & all refrains; V2 Ladies; V3 Men; V4 Choir alone)

Poem: Dorothy L Sayers 'The Three Kings'

The Three Kings *Jonathan Dove (b.1959)*

Soloists Rachel Meldrum & Helen Baker

Back to King's: this setting of a Dorothy L. Sayers poem (from her first published book, a collection of poems from 1916) was commissioned by King's College, Cambridge for its Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols in 2000. Dove writes: 'Sayers achieves a surprising emotional power and mystery by portraying the youngest king, the nearest to childhood, as the saddest, bringing a gift of myrrh which anticipates Christ's passion and death; it is the oldest king, nearest to the grave, who brings golden toys. I have tried to catch this surprise in the music: the first two verses are simple and ballad like, while the third verse suddenly opens up like a treasure chest of twinkling gold.'

Appeal on behalf of the **British Red Cross**

INTERVAL

'Im Advent' (from *Sechs Sprüche*)

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

This is the fifth of Mendelssohn's six sentences for the church year, composed in 1846, only a year before his untimely death. 'Let us rejoice: the Saviour whom God has promised us draws near. The name of the Lord be praised for ever. Alleluia!'

Carol for All: Lo! he comes with clouds descending

Charles Wesley's classic Advent hymn, which dates from the 1750s, received its tune early on. The composer, Martin Madan (1726–1790), had originally gone to hear Wesley preach so he could study the Methodist's mannerisms for a later impersonation at a drinking club to which he belonged. But he was converted, became a minister, and served as chaplain at a women's hospital in London, for which he wrote *Lo! he comes* in 1769. The last verse is in an arrangement by David Willcocks.

Reading

The Three Kings *Peter Cornelius (1824–1874)*

Soloist: Martin Cunningham

Cornelius was a poet as well as a composer, and

set his own poem 'Die Könige' ('The Kings'), for solo voice, in 1859. When Franz Liszt saw the piece he suggested using the famous 16th-century chorale 'How brightly shines the morning star' to accompany it.

Mit hjerte alltid vanker

Carl Nielsen (1865–1931)

Quartet: Rachel Meldrum, Louise Pearce, Andy Scott, Patrick Martin

Octet: Penny Fray, Helen Baker, Eleanor Greenhalgh, Madeleine Greenhalgh, Simon Beattie, Chris Turner, Sebastian Gibbs, Patrick Lunt

This year is the 150th anniversary of the birth of the Danish composer Carl Nielsen. While celebrated internationally as one of the greatest 20th-century symphonists, in his homeland he is also treasured for his smaller-scale songs and choral pieces. This 1914 setting of words by the great 18th-century Danish hymn-writer Hans Adolph Brorson is perhaps Nielsen's best-known Christmas piece in which, rather than a lowly stable, the poet offers Jesus his heart, soul and mind as a dwelling place. We believe this performance may be the Damons' first attempt to sing in Danish...

An Olde Rhyme *Peter Gritton (b.1963)*

The contemporary singer and composer Peter Gritton imagines what might have happened to the Christmas nursery rhyme if Bach had got hold of it! With a bit of jazz thrown in...

Carol for All: Good King Wenceslas

The carol commemorating the 10th-century martyr Wenceslas, Duke of Bohemia (posthumously declared a king when he was made a saint), is, like *Ding dong! merrily on high*, a fusion of old and new. The tune is taken from a 16th-century Finnish song book which came into the hands of Victorian hymn-writer J. M. Neale in 1853; the following year Neale republished the tune with his own words, thus creating the carol we know today.

My Guardian Angel *Judith Weir (b.1954)*

Weir became Master of the Queen's Music last year, a position broadly comparable to Poet Laureate. Her setting of a short text by William Blake, which 'celebrates the increased incidence of public appearances by angels at Christmas time', was first performed in 1997 by The Joyful Company of Singers and the Spitalfields Festival audience.