

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

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

As well as the Damon Singers, David is presently also Musical Director of the Wycombe Philharmonic Choir & Orchestra, the Chiltern Hundreds Bach Choir and the Chorleywood Chamber Orchestra.

The Damon Singers

THE DAMON SINGERS

Soprano

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

Alto

Madeleine Greenhalgh
Malavika Legge
Anne MacDowell
Louise Pearce
Maddy Symes
Karen van Oostrum
Uli Wright

Tenor

Simon Beattie
Duncan Passey
Chris Turner

Baritone

Martin Cunningham
Sebastian Gibbs

Bass

Roderick Holburn
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.

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Mobile: 07768 566588

email: patrick@patricklunt.com

Dates for your diary

1st April 2017 Spring concert
United Reformed Church, Chesham

15th July 2017 60th anniversary concert
St Mary's Church, Chesham

14th October 2017 Autumn Concert
St Michael's Church, Beaconsfield

10th December 2017
Christmas concert *White Hill Centre*

14th April 2018 Spring concert
14th July 2018 Pudding concert
9th December 2018 Christmas concert



The White Hill Centre, Chesham

Sunday 11th December 2016
7.30 p.m

About tonight's charity

Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) provides medical aid where it's needed most. It is independent, neutral and impartial. It is funded by individuals like you. It works in over 60 countries, providing medical care where the need is greatest. The Damon Singers are delighted to have chosen to support MSF this Christmas, and hope you will want to, too.



Registered charity no. 1118442

ALL PROCEEDS TO



Programme

Nowell sing we *Gabriel Jackson*
(b.1962)

The words for our opening piece, and the title of our concert, come from the Trinity Carol Roll in Cambridge, an important manuscript source for early English carols. You'll hear the original setting later; this one was commissioned for Truro Cathedral Choir in 2006.

Carol for All: Once in Royal David's City

Behold that Star
Thomas W. Talley (1870–1952)
arr. Bob Chilcott (b.1955)

Soprano solo Helen Baker
Baritone solo Martin Cunningham
Talley, the son of an ex-slave, was a chemistry professor who also collected African American folksongs. This one, however, he wrote himself; he 'knew a great many jubilee songs, but none pertained to Christmas'. Our version tonight was originally arranged for the City Chamber Choir in 2003.

Reading: Ann Crisp

Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen
German traditional, arr. David Cooke

Soprano solo Rachel Meldrum
The first two pieces this evening were completely new to the choir. This arrangement is new to everyone, and receives its premiere tonight. Both words and melody are 15th- or early 16th-century; in medieval iconography, the Tree of Jesse is often depicted as a rose. You may know Herbert Howells's carol-anthem, which sets the same text: 'A spotless rose is blowing / Sprung from a tender root ...'

Nowell sing we *English 15th century*
Simon Beattie, Martin Cunningham, Patrick Martin

This setting comes from the Trinity Roll, a source for the earliest surviving polyphonic music written in English. It is what's known as a macaronic: verse which mixes the vernacular (here, Middle English) with Latin, a common feature of early English carols.

Fum, fum, fum *Spanish traditional*
arr. Alice Parker & Robert Shaw

One of the best-known Spanish carols in the English-speaking world, 'Veinticinco de diciembre' ('The 25th of December') is a dance song, the 'fum, fum, fum' in imitation of a drum or the strumming of a guitar.

Bring a Torch, Jeannette, Isabella
French traditional
arr. Alice Parker & Robert Shaw

Un flambeau, Jeannette, Isabelle! comes from Provence, where torches have always played an important part in Christmas celebrations. It is an old carol, and was first published in 1553.

The Huron Carol
Here, in 'Canada's first Christmas carol', the Christmas story is transposed to among the country's First Nations people: 'Gitchi Manitou' is the Great Spirit of the Algonquian tribes. The text was written by a French missionary in the 17th century; this arrangement is by contemporary Canadian composer, Eleanor Daley.

Carol for All:
It came upon the midnight clear

Reading: Malavika Legge

While shepherds watched
Daniel Read (1757–1836)

There are literally hundreds of tunes known for this famous 18th-century carol. Why? Congregational singing was virtually unknown before then, and carols were viewed as something to be sung on the village green, not in church. *While shepherds watched*, however, is a biblical paraphrase (Luke 2: 8–14), and was thus the only legally authorised Christmas hymn for about 80 years. We explored a few of the many settings back in 2010, including one by the improbably-named Supply Belcher. Like him, Read was one of the First New England School, the earliest American composers of classical music.

Appeal on behalf of MSF

INTERVAL

Love came down at Christmas
Richard Lloyd (b.1933)

Lloyd was Organist at Hereford, then Durham Cathedral, and has written a lot of church music. Here he sets the well-loved poem by Christina Rossetti (1830–1894), sister of the painter Dante Gabriel, who, as children, used to come and visit their grandfather, the writer Gaetano Polidori, at Holmer Green. Perhaps she came to Chesham, too?

Carol for All: The First Nowell

"Pearce on Earth" Trio
A trio of kings *arr. John Whitworth*
We wish you a merry Christmas
arr. Derek Hasted

Snow for Christmas
Simon Beattie (b.1975)

Aldiborontiphoscophornio
John Wall Callcott (1766–1821)

The first piece was written for the Damons in 2008, setting a poem by the Irish poet Bernard O'Donoghue. The second is rather silly: all this year we have been marking Callcott's 250th anniversary. We couldn't find a Christmas piece by him, then came across this, which is dated 31 December 1799. It's a bit of New Year's Eve high jinks, and features two unpronounceable names taken from a 1734 opera parody, *The Tragedy of Chrononhotonthologos: being, the most Tragical Tragedy, that ever was Tragediz'd by any Company of Tragedians*, by 'Benjamin Bounce' (i.e. the poet Henry Carey).

Carol for All:
As with gladness men of old

Reading: Patrick Lunt

The Christmas Song
Mel Tormé (1925–1999)
& Robert Wells (1922–1998)
arr. Peter Gritton

According to one poll the most-performed Christmas song ever, this was actually conceived in the blisteringly hot summer of 1944, in an effort 'to stay cool by thinking cool'.

All hayle to the dayes *arr. David Cooke*
Another world premiere, and one in which you get to take part! The song itself is a 17th-century broadside ballad, 'merrily shewing how to drive the cold Winter away'.

Programme notes: Simon Beattie