

*The
Damon Singers*

Carol Concert 2019

"A Rose in Winter"

7.30pm, Sunday December 8th 2019

The White Hill Centre

White Hill, Chesham

Proceeds to
"Mind the Gap"



The
Damon
Singers

A choir for Chesham since 1957

‘Im Advent’ (from *Secbs Sprüche*)

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

We open with a work for double choir: ‘Im Advent’ 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: O come, O come, Emmanuel

Es ist ein Ros’ entsprungen

Michael Praetorius (1571–1621)

Both the words and the melody are believed to have originated in the diocese of Trier in the 15th or early 16th century. The text survives in a variety of forms, with as many as 22 verses and the first line variously as either *Ros’* (rose) or *Reis* (shoot); in medieval iconography, the Tree of Jesse is often depicted as a rose. Praetorius’s original 1609 setting had only two verses; the third here is a 19th-century addition by the Lutheran hymn-writer Friedrich Layritz.

There is no Rose

John Joubert (1927–2019)

The words here come from the 15th-century Trinity Roll manuscript in Cambridge, a source for the earliest surviving polyphonic music written in English, and this time the rose is Mary, rather than her son. You will hear the original version later in the concert. This setting dates from 1954, when Joubert, born in South Africa and died only this year, was working at the University of Hull. 65 years on, it has become a classic of the Anglican choral repertoire.

A Spotless Rose

Herbert Howells (1892–1983)

This famous ‘carol-anthem’, dedicated by the 27-year-old composer to his mother, is 100 years old this year. Incongruously, Howells said that the idea for the piece came to him while watching trains shunting on the Bristol–Gloucester line from his cottage window. The text is an English version of Praetorius’s by Catherine Winkworth (1827–1878), a leading translator of German hymns. *Solo: Martin Cunningham*

Reading

Es ist ein Ros’ entsprungen

Melchior Vulpius (c.1570–1615)

The first two verses of the carol, set as a four-part canon by Vulpius (a latinised form of his German surname, Fuchs, ‘fox’), in 1599. It’s sung here by upper voices.

There is no Rose

Jonathan Lane (b.1958)

This is the first time the Damons have sung something by Lane, himself a keen amateur singer and a composer of unaccompanied choral works. Like Joubert’s, a simple, meditative setting, with a solo quartet, performed tonight by Claire Hunter, Liz Sheppard, Simon Beattie, and Andrew Scott.

CAROL FOR ALL: It came upon the midnight clear

Reading

Lord of the Dance

arr. Sir David Willcocks (1919–2015)

We offer this arrangement of the popular hymn as a centenary tribute to Sir David Willcocks, for many years director of music at King's College, Cambridge, and an important arranger of Christmas carols. Sydney Carter's 1963 hymn melds a tune of the Shaker tradition, in which dancing was a spiritual activity, with words inspired by a statue of the Hindu deity Shiva as Nataraja (lord of the dance) which stood on his desk.

INTERVAL

The Rose in the Middle of Winter

Bob Chilcott (b.1955)

Another Damons premiere, and another Willcocks celebration: an 8-part carol commissioned by the Bach Choir to mark his 90th birthday in 2009. The words were written specially by the poet—and Chilcott's longtime collaborator—Charles Bennett, who notes: 'If we want to find a moral in the carol, perhaps we might frame it as follows: until such time as a rose, bird, or child comes to dance in our soul, we may as well sing.'

CAROL FOR ALL: While shepherds watched

Reading

There is no Rose of swych vertu

English, 15th century

Trio: Sheila Falland, Simon Beattie, and Martin Cunningham

Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen

arr. David Cooke

Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen

Vulpius

Snow for Christmas

Simon Beattie (b.1975)

We divide the choir for this group, reprising David's 2016 arrangement for the sopranos and altos (solo: Rachel Meldrum), before the gents get their turn with two more verses from Vulpius ('inns were costly; no lodging was to be found except an old stable, where the air was cold') and a piece written for us in 2008, setting a short poem by Bernard O'Donoghue.

Reading

Here is the Little Door

Howells

Howells's radiant carol takes us to Epiphany, and the visit of the Magi. He wrote it in 1918, entitling it 'A Carol of Gifts', to words by Frances Chesterton (1869–1938), the wife of the writer G. K. Chesterton. It's a local piece, too: the Chestertons lived in Beaconsfield and the young Howells composed it on a visit there.

The Twelve Days of Christmas

arr. Andrew Carter

The original song derives from a traditional forfeits game which was played on Twelfth Night: each player would have to remember and recite the objects named by the previous players and then add one more. This arrangement is by the popular English composer Andrew Carter (and with help from Saint-Saëns, Strauss, Tchaikovsky, the Song of the Volga Boatmen, and a certain Scottish instrument...). *Solos: Helen Baker and Andrew Scott*

CAROL FOR ALL: Hark! the herald angels sing

Dates for your diary:

25 April 2020: Spring Concert, at St Mary's Church, Chesham HP5 1HY

4 July 2020: Summer 'Pudding' Concert, United Reformed Church, Chesham HP5 1BX

3 October 2020: Autumn Concert, at St Peter & St Paul's Church, Great Missenden HP16 0BA

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 currently Musical Director of the Wycombe Philharmonic Choir & Orchestra.

THE DAMON SINGERS

Soprano: Helen Baker, Helen Cooke, Ann Crisp, Jane Featherstone-Witty, Dorothy Freedman, Sophie Hamilton, Claire Hunter, Barbara McGillivray, Rachel Meldrum, Kate Pickup

Alto: Katie Francis, Caroline Greenwood, Sheila Jalland, Malavika Legge, Anne MacDowell, Marianne Michael, Louise Pearce, Liz Sheppard, Madeleine Symes, Karen van Oostrum, Uli Wright

Tenor: Simon Beattie, David Freedman, Duncan Passey, Chris Turner

Baritone: David Blair, Martin Cunningham, Andrew Scott, Paul Sheppard

Bass: Sebastian Gibbs, David Harmer, Roderick Holburn

Chesham's local choir since 1957, the Damon Singers were founded "To sing for pleasure, for others, and ourselves". We now have over 30 members, from different musical and professional backgrounds, who enjoy coming together on Wednesday evenings to rehearse for three or so performances a year. We sing a varied repertoire of *a cappella* choral music, ranging from medieval polyphony to pop songs and pretty much anything in between!

We don't intend to get any bigger, but from time to time vacancies do arise. If you'd like to consider singing with us, please contact Jane Featherstone-Witty on 01494 762232.