



SCHOLA
Cantorum of Oxford

The Chamber Choir of Oxford University

Steven Grahl
Conductor

George Balfour
Conducting Scholar

Christmas with Schola Cantorum

Monday 1 December 2025, 8pm
Pusey House Chapel
St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LZ

From the Chairman of the Trustees



Schola Cantorum of Oxford, the Chamber Choir of Oxford University, is delighted to be presenting this concert of music for Advent and Christmas. Schola Cantorum provides a great musical experience for its members, but also gives audiences in Oxford access to a wonderful range of choral repertoire – both sacred and secular. The choir sets out to challenge the best young singers from across the University to perform to the highest standards, and to provide an outstanding musical performance experience.

The choir has an enviable and unbroken 60-year history and has played a pivotal role in the development of an astonishing number of singers and choral conductors of the last six decades, building an international reputation through extensive tours and recordings.

If you would like to receive regular information about its concerts, please email us at admin@schola-cantorum.net or use the QR code below to sign up via our website at www.schola-cantorum.net.

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Schola Cantorum of Oxford acknowledges with gratitude the generous support of the Roger and Ingrid Pilkington Trust.



PROGRAMME

Jean L'Héritier (1480-1551)

Alma redemptoris mater

AUDIENCE CAROL

Once in Royal David's City

READING

Samuel Scheidt (1587-1654)

A child is born in Bethlehem

John Rutter (*b.1945*)

What sweeter music

AUDIENCE CAROL

O little town of Bethlehem

READING

Richard Dering (1580-1630)

Quem vidistis, pastores

Trad. arr. Willcocks

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day

AUDIENCE CAROL

God rest you merry, gentlemen

READING

Joanna Marsh (*b.1970*)

O magnum mysterium

Peter Gritton (*b.1963*)

Follow that star!

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Hodie Christus natus est

AUDIENCE CAROL

O come all ye Faithful

READING

arr. Gritton

Have yourself a merry little Christmas

arr. Warrell

We wish you a merry Christmas

Please switch off mobile phones

Photography is not permitted during the performance

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

ALMA REDEMPTORIS MATER - Jean L'Héretier

Alma redemptoris mater,
quæ pervia cæli porta manes,
et stella maris,
succurre cadenti,
surgere qui curat populo:

Tu quæ genuisti, natura mirante,
tuum sanctum Genitorem
Virgo prius ac posterius,
Gabrielis ab ore
sumens illud Ave,
peccatorum miserere.

*Loving mother of the redeemer,
you who remains the accessible gateway of
heaven, and star of the sea,
give aid to a falling people
who strive to rise:*

*You who begot your holy Creator,
while all nature marvelled,
Virgin before and after,
from the mouth of Gabriel
receiving that "Ave",
have mercy on sinners.*

AUDIENCE CAROL

ONCE IN ROYAL DAVID'S CITY

CHOIR ONLY: Once in Royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her baby
In a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little child.

He came down to earth from heaven
Who is God and Lord of all,
And his shelter was a stable,
And his cradle was a stall;
With the poor and mean and lowly
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

ALL: And through all his wondrous childhood
He would honour and obey,
Love and awatch the lowly maiden,
In whose gentle arms he lay:
Christian children all must be
Mild, obedient, good as he.

For he is our childhood's pattern,
Day by day like us he grew,
He was little, weak and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us he knew:
And he feeleth for our sadness,
And he shareth in our gladness.

Not in that poor lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see him; but in heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high;
When like stars his children crowned
All in white shall wait around.

Words: Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-95)

Music: H J Gauntlett (1805-76), arr. A H Mann (1850-1929)

A CHILD IS BORN IN BETHLEHEM - Samuel Scheidt

A child is born in Bethlehem,
Alleluia, alleluia,
And joy is in Jerusalem,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

To thee, O Lord, be glory paid,
Alleluia, alleluia,
Thou Son of Mary, mother, maid,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Rejoice, rejoice, sing high, sing low,
Alleluia, alleluia,
Benedicamus Domino,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

To Holy Trinity give praise,
Alleluia, alleluia,
With *Deo gracias* always
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

WHAT SWEETER MUSIC - John Rutter

What sweeter music can we bring
Than a carol for to sing
The birth of this our Heavenly King?
Awake the voice! awake the string!

We see him come, and know him ours,
Who with his sunshine and his show'rs
Turns the patient ground to flow'rs.

Dark and dull night, fly hence away,
And give the honour to this day
That sees December turn'd to May

The darling of the world is come,
And fit it is, we find a room
To welcome him, to welcome him.

Why does the chilling winter's morn
Smile, like a field beset with corn?
Or smell like a meadow newly shorn
Thus, on the sudden? Come and see
The cause, why things thus fragrant be:

The nobler part of all the house here,
is the heart
Which we will give him; and bequeath
This holy, and this ivy wreath,
To do him honour; who's our King,
And Lord of all this revelling.

'Tis he is born, whose quick'ning birth
Gives life and lustre, public mirth,
To heaven, and the under-earth.

What sweeter music can we bring
Than a carol for to sing
The birth of this our Heavenly King?

Words: Robert Herrick (1591-1674)

AUDIENCE CAROL

O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.

O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King,
And peace to men on earth;
For Christ is born of Mary;
And, gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming;
But in the world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him, still
The dear Christ enters in.

O holy child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in,
Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell:
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel.

Words: Phillips Brooks (1835-1893)

Music: traditional arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

QUEM VIDISTIS PASTORES - Richard Dering

Quem vidistis pastores dicite,
annunciate nobis,
in terris quis apparuit?
Natum vidimus
et choros angelorum
collaudantes Dominum.
Alleluia.

*Whom did you see, shepherds, tell us
proclaim to us,
who has appeared on earth?
'We saw a new-born child
and a choir of angels
praising the Lord.'
Alleluia.*

TOMORROW SHALL BE MY DANCING DAY - arr. David Willcocks

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day:
I would my true love did so chance
To see the legend of my play,
To call my true love to my dance;
*Sing, O my love, O my love,
my love, my love:
This have I done for my true love.*

Then was I born of a virgin pure,
Of her I took fleshly substance;

Thus was I knit to man's nature
To call my true love to my dance:
Sing, O my love, etc.

In a manger laid, and wrapp'd I was,
So very poor, this was my chance,
Betwixt an ox and a silly poor ass,
To call my true love to my dance.
Sing, O my love, etc.

Words: English traditional

AUDIENCE CAROL

GOD REST YOU MERRY, GENTLEMEN

God rest you merry, gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas day,
To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray:
O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.

From God our heav'nly Father
A blessed angel came,
And unto certain shepherds
Brought tidings of the same,
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by name:
O tidings of comfort and joy, etc.

The shepherds at those tidings
Rejoicèd much in mind,
And left their flocks a-feeding,
In tempest, storm, and wind,
And went to Bethlehem straightway
This blessèd Babe to find:
O tidings of comfort and joy, etc.

But when to Bethlehem they came,
Whereat this infant lay,
They found him in a manger,
Where oxen feed on hay;
His mother Mary kneeling,
Unto the Lord did pray:
O tidings of comfort and joy, etc.

Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas
All others doth deface:
O tidings of comfort and joy, etc.

Words: English traditional carol

Music: traditional arr. David Willcocks (1919-2015)

O MAGNUM MYSTERIUM - Joanna Marsh

O magnum mysterium
et admirabile sacramentum,
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum,
jacentem in praesepeio!

Beata Virgo,
cujus viscera meruerunt portare
Dominum Jesum Christum.
Alleluia.

*O great mystery,
and wonderful sacrament,
that animals should see the newborn Lord,
lying in a manger!*

*Blessed is the virgin,
whose womb was worthy to bear
the Lord Jesus Christ.
Alleluia.*

FOLLOW THAT STAR - Peter Gritton

One dark and stormy evening,
Through the wind and rain,
There came a sight worth seeing,
'cause it wasn't gonna happen again:
Three Kings.

They'd seen a bright light in the sky,
Without knowing who, what, when, where, why,
They grabbed their gifts and off they went,
Three Kings.
They don't know what they do,
just follow that star.

They had to find the little town,
It was not easy to be found.
They don't know what they do,
just follow that star.

Words and music by Peter Gritton

HODIE CHRISTUS NATUS EST - Francis Poulenc

Hodie Christus natus est:
hodie Salvator apparuit:
hodie in terra canunt Angeli,
laetantur Archangeli:
hodie exsultant iusti, dicentes:
Gloria in excelsis Deo, alleluia.

*Today Christ is born:
today the Saviour appears:
today Angels sing on earth,
Archangels rejoice:
today the just rejoice, saying:
Glory to God in the highest, alleluia.*

AUDIENCE CAROL

O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL

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,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

God of God,
Light of Light,
Lo! He abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Very God,
Begotten not created:
O come, let us adore him...

Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation.
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above;
Glory to God,
In the highest:
O come, let us adore him...

Words: 18th century Latin hymn tr F.Oakley

Music: Composer unknown (probably 18th c.) arr. David Willcocks

HAVE YOURSELF A MERRY LITTLE CHRISTMAS - arr. Peter Gritton

Have yourself a merry little Christmas,
let your heart be light,
Next year all our troubles will be out of sight.

Have yourself a merry little Christmas,
make the yuletide gay,
Next year all our troubles will be miles away.

Once again as in olden days,
happy golden days of yore,
Faithful friends who were dear to us
will be near to us once more.

Some day soon we all will be together,
if the fates allow,
Until then we'll have to muddle through somehow,
So have yourself a merry little Christmas now.

Words and music by Hugh Martin and Ralph Blanc

A MERRY CHRISTMAS - arr. Arthur Warrell

We wish you a merry Christmas,
We wish you a merry Christmas,
We wish you a merry Christmas
And a happy New Year.

Good tidings we bring
To you and your kin;
We wish you a merry Christmas
And a happy New Year.

Now bring us some figgy pudding,
Now bring us some figgy pudding,
Now bring us some figgy pudding,
And bring some out here.

Good tidings we bring
To you and your kin;
We wish you a merry Christmas
And a happy New Year.

For we all like figgy pudding,
We all like figgy pudding,
For we all like figgy pudding,
So bring some out here.

Good tidings we bring
To you and your kin;
We wish you a merry Christmas
And a happy New Year.

And we won't go til we've got some,
And we won't go til we've got some,
And we won't go til we've got some,
So bring some out here.

Good tidings we bring
To you and your kin;
We wish you a merry Christmas
And a happy New Year.

Words: traditional West country carol

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BIOGRAPHIES

Steven Grahl (Conductor)



Steven Grahl is a sought-after conductor and keyboard player, and has been Conductor of Schola Cantorum of Oxford since 2017. Since January 2024, he has also been Director of Music at Trinity College, Cambridge.

Steven served as Organist and Tutor in Music at Christ Church, Oxford, and Associate Professor of Music at Oxford University from 2018 to 2023. He was also Musical Director of Benson Choral Society. From 2014 to 2018 he was Director of Music at Peterborough

Cathedral, where he was responsible for training the Cathedral Choir, and for the re-pitching of the Hill Organ, on which instrument he has recorded a solo CD. Peterborough Cathedral Choir's recording of Cheryl Frances-Hoad's *EvenYouSong*, made under Steven's direction, was released to critical acclaim in December 2017. He also held positions as Assistant Organist at New College, Oxford, and as Organist and Director of Music at St Marylebone Parish Church, London.

Steven was an interpretation finalist in the International Organ Competitions at St Albans (UK) in 2011, and in Dudelange (Luxembourg) in 2013, and completed his term as President of the Incorporated Association of Organists in 2019. He is a prize-winning graduate of Magdalen College, Oxford, and the Royal Academy of Music. He gained the top prizes in the FRCO examination, and is also a holder of the Worshipful Company of Musicians' Silver Medallion. In 2010, he was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music.

George Balfour (Conducting Scholar)



George Balfour is the senior organ scholar at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford where he is studying music. As head chorister at St John's College Cambridge, he sang with the choir on international tours, CD recordings, and radio broadcasts. During his time at Chetham's School of Music he had the opportunity to direct the student chamber choir and worked with the Manchester Cathedral choir as organ scholar. He continued conducting during his gap year as

organ scholar at Southwell Minster where he regularly directed the Cathedral Choir and was also appointed director of the West Trent Choir, performing a range

of services and concerts in the Nottingham area. Since coming to Oxford, he has played a pivotal role in the training of the choristers for the Cathedral choir. Last academic year, he was appointed director of the Christ Church College choir, directing weekly services and occasional concerts. He also directs the Cathedral choir when required, and is taught by Helen Smee.

Schola Cantorum of Oxford



Schola Cantorum of Oxford, conducted by Steven Grahl, is the Chamber Choir of Oxford University. The choir was founded by László Heltay in 1960 and has built a reputation as Oxford's premier concert choir, engaging deeply with complex repertoire and commissioning new music for chamber choir. Schola's mission is to provide an outstanding musical training for young singers and choral conductors.

Schola has worked with many of the foremost musicians of the last six decades and has built an international reputation through extensive tours and recordings. Alumni who have gone on to successful musical careers include John Mark Ainsley, Emma Kirkby, Christine Rice, Susan Gritton, Ian Bostridge and Roderick Williams – many came to Oxford to study other subjects but developed their musical talents during their time in Schola.

Engagements in 2026 include the première of a commission from American composer Nico Muhly for the opening of the new performance facilities of the Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities at Oxford University, a collaboration with the Raschèr Saxophone Quartet as part of the Oxford Festival of the Arts, and the opening concert of the Herrenchiemsee Festspiele in Germany with Italian period-instrument orchestra Europa Galante under their director, Fabio Biondi.

Schola Cantorum gratefully acknowledges the support of the Roger & Ingrid Pilkington Trust.

Schola Cantorum of Oxford

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George Balfour
Charlie Gollop
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Concerts in 2026

'Serenade to Music'

Settings of William Shakespeare, including texts from his Sonnets, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Tempest*.

Saturday 21 February
St Mary Moorfields, London

and

Sunday 26 April
Levine Auditorium, Trinity College, Oxford

'Es Devlin and Nico Muhly: 360 Vessels'

A Choral Installation

Saturday 25 April
Great Hall, Schwarzman Centre, Oxford

'Splendour and Majesty'

with His Majestys Sagbutts and Cornetts

Saturday 16 May
Sohmen Concert Hall, Schwarzman Centre, Oxford

'Signs, Symbols and Secrets'

with the Raschèr Saxophone Quartet

Friday 12 June
University Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford

Vivaldi: Gloria and Magnificat

with Fabio Biondi and Europa Galante

Wednesday 15 July
Herrenchiemsee Festival, Germany

Further details available at schola-cantorum.net