

THE CHOIR OF



ST JOHN'S  
CAMBRIDGE

**ADVENT LIVE VOLUME 3**  
NETHSINGHA | HERBERT



# ADVENT LIVE – VOLUME 3

[1]	<b>Lo! The desert-depths are stirr'd *</b>	Cheryl Frances-Hoad (b. 1980)	[2.07]
[2]	<b>Advent Calendar</b>	Philip Ledger (1937-2012)	[2.38]
[3]	<b>Telling *</b>	Helen Grime (b. 1981)	[2.48]
[4]	<b>There is no rose</b>	Francis Pott (b. 1957)	[6.13]
[5]	<b>Herr Christ, der ein'ge Gottes-Sohn, BWV 601</b>	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)	[1.27]
[6]	<b>Pan fo'r stormydd garwa'n curo</b>	John Raymond Williams (1928-2018)	[1.50]
[7]	<b>Hymn – O come, O come, Emmanuel!</b>	Tune: Veni Emmanuel Adapted by Thomas Helmore (1811-1890) Descant: David Hill (b. 1957)	[3.19]
[8]	<b>Nowel, nowel. Owt of your slepe</b>	Anonymous, 15th century	[2.33]
[9]	<b>Drop down, ye heavens, from above</b>	Judith Weir (b. 1954)	[1.55]
[10]	<b>Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland, BVW 659</b>	Johann Sebastian Bach	[4.14]
[11]	<b>There is no rose</b>	Simon Preston (1938-2022)	[2.49]
[12]	<b>Hymn – Come, thou long-expected Jesus</b>	Tune: Cross of Jesus John Stainer (1840-1901) Descant: Christopher Robinson (b. 1936)	[1.56]
[13]	<b>O virgo virginum *</b>	Harry L'Estrange (b. 2008)	[2.27]
[14]	<b>One star, at last</b>	Peter Maxwell Davies (1934-2016)	[3.11]
[15]	<b>Antiphons – O Dayspring; O King of the nations</b>	Traditional	[1.48]
[16]	<b>Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme, BWV 645</b>	Johann Sebastian Bach	[4.11]
[17]	<b>Adam lay ybounden</b>	Peter Warlock (1894-1930)	[1.19]
[18]	<b>Gottes Sohn ist kommen, BWV 600</b>	Johann Sebastian Bach	[1.03]
[19]	<b>Hymn – On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry</b>	Tune: Winchester New Descant: Christopher Robinson	[2.29]
[20]	<b>Antiphon – O Emmanuel</b>	Traditional	[0.57]

[21] **Adam lay ybounden**

Philip Ledger

[2.20]

[22] **A Gallery Carol**

John Gardner (1917-2011)

[2.11]

\* *Composed for the College Choir*

Total timings:

[56.27]

THE CHOIR OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

JAMES ANDERSON-BESANT ORGAN (2020)

OLIVER WASS HARP <sup>TRACK 1</sup>

JOSEPH WICKS ORGAN (2021)

GEORGE HERBERT DIRECTOR (2021) & ORGAN (2020 & 2022)

ANDREW NETHSINGHA DIRECTOR (2020 & 2022)

*Each work was recorded live as part of the St John's College Advent Service in the following years*

**2020** 4, 7, 9, 12, 13, 15, 20, 22 | **2021** 3, 6, 8, 19, 21 | **2022** 1, 2, 5, 10, 11, 14, 16, 17, 18

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## ADVENT

Is there something about being human which makes the purple seasons of the Church year the ones that most grip us? Those seasons are Lent and Advent. Both, in their different ways, are periods of preparation for, or anticipation of, the two great festive seasons—Easter and Christmas, respectively. Nevertheless, however seriously we try to whoop it up for those festal days, the apparently-introspective character of Lent and Advent seems to grab Christian

believers more potently. It may be part of the same psychology which relishes the hell scenes in Milton's 'Paradise Lost' more than the scenes in heaven.

At its best—i.e. when this is not a symptom of some inner dis-ease or neurosis—this speaks to a kind of spiritual seriousness and candour which can be fruitful and healthy (and realistic). Interestingly, many find Lent a lot easier to invest in than Advent, even though their culminating festivals are not matchingly celebrated.



The Rev'd Andrew Hammond

For most Christians, Christmas is much more straightforwardly a time to party than Easter.

In terms of their traditional practices and spiritual focus, Lent and Advent have distinctly different perspectives. Put at its simplest, we look inwards in Lent and outwards in Advent (only the looking-forward is common to both).

In Lent, apart from the best-known and often-trivialised practice of giving something up, we dare to look inside ourselves, in a way which recalls what Jesus was doing during his forty-day self-sequestering in the wilderness of Judea.

In Advent, the traditional themes relate powerfully to our journeys of faith, but not by looking inwards. Those themes are death, judgment, heaven and hell: themes of ultimate seriousness. Of course contemplating them is an activity of our inner lives, with massive consequences both for our self-knowledge and our ethical intentions. But you could say that if Lent is about our behaving, Advent is more about our believing.

In fact the season is almost over-supplied with themes and strands. As well as those four ultimate things, there are the figures in the key bible narratives: Mary and John the Baptist. She will deliver the Incarnation; he will prepare the way. There are the prophecies of the Old Testament to revisit, most especially those of Isaiah. There are even modern quartets of themes, for those perhaps too squeamish to face the traditional one: hope, love, joy, peace, for example.

All these elements of the season of Advent find their expression in a rich body of music. And

whichever of them you settle on, all of them are ways into the mystery and wonder of Christmas itself: that celebration of our belief that God thought being human was so amazing, he became one.

The Rev'd Andrew Hammond  
Chaplain  
St John's College, Cambridge

## PROGRAMME NOTES

Advent, the coming of Christ, is a season rich in promise. Small treats in Advent calendars prime children for Christmas festivities – to the consternation of traditionalists, who treat it as a period of penitence and self-examination. In fact, the early Church knew no Advent. The idea of a period of preparation for Christ's coming seems to have emerged in fourth-century Spain. By the fifth century, the Gallic church required fasting from 11 November to Christmas Day – thereby setting up a 'quadragesima', a forty-day period similar to Lent. The Roman church, in contrast, limited fasting to five Sundays, while Milan insisted on six. By the time of Gregory the Great – c. 600 – four Advent Sundays were recognised, a position now generally accepted. Indeed, the Catholic church has until recently



Martin Ennis

maintained an emphasis on the austere: traditionally, weddings were banned during Advent, and services contained no festive music.

Set against the radical shifts of past centuries, recent changes to the celebration of Advent in Cambridge colleges are modest. Since most students spend Christmas far from the River



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The Rev'd Dr Mark Oakley leading the service, 26th November 2022

Cam, most colleges have abandoned a purely ascetic regime in favour of a richer diet. Thus, Advent carol services in Cambridge normally begin with austere reflective music and end in rejoicing.

For his last Advent CD as Director of Music at St John's College, Andrew Nethsingha traces a similar course, beginning in 'the desert depths' (Frances-Hoad) and ending with shepherds 'proclaiming the birthday of Jesus our King' (Gardner). Because the disc contains music from three Advent carol services (2020, 2021 and 2022), the progress is not strictly linear. It nonetheless describes a journey, from darkness to light.

Cheryl Frances-Hoad's **Lo! The desert-depths are stirr'd** was commissioned by St John's College for the 2020 Advent carol service, though its premiere was delayed until 2021 by the Covid-19 pandemic. The piece exists in two versions – one for a *cappella* voices, one (the version heard here) for choir accompanied by a solo harp. The harp is rarely heard within the Anglican liturgy, despite numerous references to the instrument in the Book of Psalms, and the sound-world created by Frances-Hoad's

piece inevitably evokes memories of Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols*. Moreover, both composers delight in creating unusual effects from simple material such as scales and juxtaposed triads. The text of 'Lo, the desert depths' is taken from the 1736 hymn 'Jordanis oras praevia' by Charles Coffin (1676–1749), who was Rector of the University of Paris at the time.

**Advent Calendar** was written by Philip Ledger (Director of Music at King's College, Cambridge, from 1974 to 1982) as a memorial to George Guest, who died in 2002. Guest was intensely proud of his Welsh heritage, so it was appropriate that Ledger chose a poem by another Welshman, Rowan Williams, for this short carol. Williams's evocative four-stanza text inspired another modified strophic form. However, the sharp contrasts of Williams's final stanza led Ledger to insert a caesura after 'toss him free', and the piece ends peacefully with a brief reverie on 'He will come like child'. When asked once about the qualities he most prized in choristers, Ledger claimed that he looked for 'good *pianissimos*, perfect intonation and texture; not stabbing *staccatos* or long-sustained *fortissimos*.' This setting of 'Advent Calendar' seems designed to draw these qualities from a choir.

Helen Grime, a Scottish composer who teaches at the Royal Academy of Music in London, has made her name primarily with instrumental music, including pieces for chamber ensembles and concertos for violin, piano, percussion, clarinet and trumpet. **Telling**, Grime's first piece for unaccompanied choir, is original and assured. Indeed, the claim that Grime has 'as precise an ear as any contemporary composer' (Paul Driver) is as true of this miniature as of any of the more lavishly scored instrumental works. Commissioned by St John's College and first performed at the 2021 Advent carol service under the direction of George Herbert, 'Telling' is a setting of an anonymous sixteenth-century text. It begins by looking forward to the birth of Christ but rapidly turns to contemplation of the cross, with the words 'His blood so red for thee was shed ...' stated three times. Grime described the piece, which is built out of a sequence of discrete phrases, as evolving 'through a series of variations punctuated by a repeated refrain'.

The first setting of **There is no rose** on this CD was composed by Francis Pott, a graduate of Magdalene College, Cambridge. The text is taken from a fifteenth-century manuscript held yards from St John's, in the Wren Library

of Trinity College. As with several other carols in the so-called Trinity Carol Roll, 'There is no rose' combines verses in English with refrains in Latin. In his setting, Pott adopts a modified strophic approach. The first stanza is set as melody and accompaniment, with the main line assigned to the trebles. The melody then migrates to the tenors, with the other parts singing to 'ah'. In the third stanza, trebles and tenors are in canon. Initially, the imitation is strict, but as the music becomes more exultant, the close relationship between canonic parts gradually loosens. The music builds to what Pott called 'a free climactic passage evoking the songs of praise sung by the angels' before subsiding. The final stanza ends with hushed 'alleluias' that eventually return us to the tonic chord. The piece was premiered in December 2012 by Matthew Berry's choir Commotio, an ensemble that has done much to promote Pott's choral music.

**Herr Christ, der ein'ge Gottes Sohn** (Lord Christ, the only son of God) is one of four Advent chorale preludes placed at the beginning of J. S. Bach's *Orgel-Büchlein* (Little Organ Book) to reflect Advent's traditional position at the start of the church year.<sup>1</sup> Like much of Bach's keyboard output, the *Orgel-Büchlein*

was pedagogical in intent: as explained by the composer on the title page, it was designed to show students the different ways in which they could treat chorale melodies, while developing facility in pedal playing. This was the first Bach project that can be described as having encyclopedic intent. However, the collection was never completed: the autograph suggests Bach intended to include 164 chorale preludes, of which only about a quarter were written. 'Herr Christ' is typical of Bach's procedure in the *Orgel-Büchlein*: it is short (ignoring repetitions, the setting lasts only ten bars); it presents the chorale melody in the top voice, largely unadorned and without interpolations; it is in four voices; and it is motivically consistent (in this case, the pedal has a five-note figure, perhaps derived from J. G. Walther's setting of the same chorale, that dominates the part-writing of the accompanying voices). Though the piece might serve as an introduction to the singing of the chorale, it is unlikely Bach used it for this purpose. In his day, introductions to congregational hymns were mostly improvised, and the contrapuntal intricacy of a miniature such as this would be more likely to distract listeners than remind them of a familiar melody.

Raymond Williams's **Pan fo'r stormydd garwa'n curo** (When the fierce storms rage) was first recorded by the Choir of St John's College in 1988 as part of a disc of Welsh choral music conducted by George Guest, Director of Music at St John's from 1951 to 1991. (The same recording featured a young Andrew Nethsingha as Organ Student.) 'Pan fo'r stormydd garwa'n curo' is a setting of verse by Gwynne Williams, a leading advocate of Welsh culture. The poem's two stanzas are set virtually identically: in each case, two four-bar phrases centred on A minor, albeit with modal touches, are followed by two phrases broadly in A major. The work is almost entirely homophonic, and its powerful effect depends largely on the subtle voicing of chords.

For many, **O come, O come, Emmanuel!** is the quintessential Advent hymn, its passionate cries for redemption seemingly reaching back millennia. However, the earliest authenticated version of the text, which is based on the Advent Antiphons, dates from 1710, when it appeared in Latin in a Cologne hymnal. The first English translations are found in the middle of the nineteenth century, and the familiar words used here were written by Thomas Alexander Lacey for *The English*

*Hymnal* of 1906. The tune, which has separate origins, is first found in a fifteenth-century missal; it was coupled with an English version of the text in the *Hymnal Noted* (1851), a marriage that now appears indissoluble. In this performance, the last verse features a choral descant by David Hill, Andrew Nethsingha's immediate predecessor as Director of Music at St John's.

Words and music of **Nowel, nowel. Owt of your slepe** are taken from the Selden Carol Book, an anonymous fifteenth-century manuscript held in Oxford's Bodleian Library. The Selden Carol Book and the Trinity Carol Roll (see above) are among the main sources for fifteenth-century English carols. This carol consists of six verses, set for three overlapping male voices, interspersed with 'burdens' (or refrains, in modern parlance). The burdens are built on just one word, 'nowel', which also appears as the last word of the last verse – in other words, as the culmination of the poem's narrative. The original manuscript fails to indicate which voice or voices should sing the burdens; nor is it clear how the notational signs in the manuscript, the *signa*, are to be interpreted. The carol is performed here in an edition by Jason Smart that realises the canonic potential of the music.

Judith Weir's **Drop down, ye heavens, from above** was written for the Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge, and first performed at their Advent carol service in December 1984. The text is taken from the Advent Prose, and the setting is built round the associated chant, a melody of limited range that the singers are invited to perform like plainsong. Initially, trebles and basses sing in octaves, and the only other active part, the altos, functions as little more than harmonic enhancement. As the piece moves towards its central climax, the main melodic line shatters the octave ambitus within which plainsong frequently moves, and the accompaniment grows richer. However, the added voices never challenge the supremacy of the chant, particularly as they often run in parallel. The piece ends as it began, with hints of harmony wreathing a treble–bass duet.

**Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland**, BWV 659, is taken from a group of chorale preludes put together by J. S. Bach during his time as Kantor of Leipzig's Thomaskirche. This collection, commonly known as the 'Leipzig Chorale Preludes' or 'The Great Eighteen', contains pieces written years earlier in Weimar. That Bach chose to gather them together, typically

making small adjustments in the process, is an indication of the value he placed on them. The piece recorded here is the first of three settings based on the famous Advent chorale 'Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland' (Come now, o saviour of the gentiles). These were probably intended to illustrate three contrasting approaches to the same melody. The second setting, BWV 660, features a decorative version of the chorale in the right hand, while left hand and pedal provide two interlocking and motivically similar bass lines. The third, BWV 661, is an amalgam of chorale prelude and fugue, with the chorale melody thundering out in the pedal's lowest octave. The version heard here, BWV 659, offers a highly ornate version of the chorale in the right hand, accompanied by a walking bass in the pedal, and inner voices derived from the chorale melody. The individual lines of the chorale are separated by interludes, and at the end the melody line opens out in an expressive peroration over a pedal point that surely references Buxtehude's chorale prelude on the same chorale, BuxWV 211. Was this one of the works Bach heard Buxtehude play when he visited Lübeck in the winter of 1705–06? Quite possibly. As Bach noted, his journey to North Germany was 'not without profit'.

Simon Preston, one of the most gifted church musicians of his generation, wrote his setting of **There is no rose** in 1971, shortly after he was appointed Organist of Christ Church, Oxford. Preston differs from earlier setters of the poem – notably Benjamin Britten (in *A Ceremony of Carols*) and John Joubert (in a free-standing carol) – in frequently stating English and Latin words simultaneously. In fact, the text is sometimes presented out of order: for example, 'gaudeamus' (fourth stanza) appears before 'pari forma' (third stanza), and both Latin fragments are heard before the English words to which they respond. Textures, styles and tempos vary markedly throughout. However, most of the carol is in five parts, with divided basses. This affords a rich harmonic palette that, at times, comes close to jazz.

**Come, thou long-expected Jesus** was published in 1744 by Charles Wesley, widely regarded as the greatest hymn-writer of the prolific Wesley family. (He is thought to have composed over 6,000 hymns.) Like many of Wesley's texts, it builds on Biblical passages though, in this case, elements from the Book of Haggai are combined with a prayer that includes 'born your people to deliver, born a child and yet a King, born to reign in us forever', words



that appear almost verbatim in the hymn. The tune, taken from John Stainer's 1887 oratorio *The Crucifixion*, is known as 'Cross of Jesus'. The descant is by Christopher Robinson, Director of Music at St John's College from 1991 to 2003.

Harry L'Estrange may well be the youngest composer ever recorded by the Choir of St John's College: he was only twelve years old when **O virgo virginum** was first performed by the Choir in 2020. As the son of composers who specialise in church music, and as a chorister at St John's, Harry was well acquainted with the sounds of choirs, and this short piece, which is constructed in AABA' form, handles choral textures with confidence. The text, addressed to the 'Virgin of Virgins', is sometimes added to the canonical seven Advent antiphons, texts traditionally sung or recited either side of the Magnificat at Vespers on the seven days leading up to Christmas.

Peter Maxwell Davies once claimed that meeting the Orcadian poet George Mackay Brown, author of the words of **One star, at last**, 'changed my whole existence'. Maxwell Davies abandoned London for the Orkneys in 1970, and on his first visit he came across Brown's *An Orkney Tapestry* in a Stromness bookshop.

Captivated by its 'most wonderfully poetic evocation' of the place, he stayed up all night to read it. By coincidence, poet and composer met the following day, and a close friendship developed that lasted until Brown's death in 1996. 'One star, at last' was written some years after the initial encounter – the score is marked 'Basel, September 1984' – and it was premiered by the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, as part of that year's Service of Nine Lessons and Carols. Maxwell Davies's response to Brown's verse is chaste: he eschews obvious opportunities for word-painting, preferring to capture the atmosphere of Brown's resonant words in poignant harmonies.

The seven canonical Advent Antiphons are sometimes called the 'Great Os', as all the texts begin with the acclamation 'O'. Each of the antiphons apostrophises Christ: the three recorded here are addressed to Oriens, Rex gentium and Emmanuel – dayspring (or light of the east), King of the nations and Emmanuel (the Hebrew name that translates as 'God be with us'). Taken together, and read backwards, the first letters of the seven antiphons' principal nouns form an acrostic that spells out 'ero cras' – Latin for 'I shall be [with you] tomorrow'. When 'O virgo virginum' is added as an eighth

antiphon, 'ero cras' is converted into 'vero cras' (truly tomorrow). On this recording, the words of **O Dayspring, O King of the nations** and **O Emmanuel** are sung to the traditional Gregorian chants.

**Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme**, BWV 645, is taken from a collection known as the 'Schübler Chorale Preludes' after the name of the publisher who issued them a year or so before Bach's death in 1750. Five of the collection's six pieces are known to be transcriptions of cantata movements that Bach composed some twenty years earlier, during his first decade as Thomaskantor. (The origin of the sixth is unclear.) 'Wachet auf', sometimes translated as 'Sleepers wake', is based on the fourth movement of BWV 140, an Advent cantata thought to date from 1731. In the cantata, the chorale melody was taken by the tenor voice (presumably a soloist), with the figurative upper melody assigned to *tutti* violins and violas. The organ version required little adjustment: the organist's right hand takes over the upper-string line, while the left hand plays the chorale melody, and the orchestral bass is transferred to the pedals. Though the melody will be immediately recognised by anyone familiar with Bach's music, the style of

the movement was unusual for the early 1730s. The right-hand part – which seems to take its inspiration from the penultimate line of the chorale, 'we all follow to the chamber of joy' (Freudensaal) – is full of unexpected progressions. Repeated leaps from dissonance to dissonance, unusual in the high Baroque, are compounded by a disconcerting relationship between right-hand part and chorale melody. The phrase structures are largely independent, and it is almost as though Bach went out of his way to create a melody that ignores or even contradicts the chorale around which it is draped. Meanwhile, the pedal, with its repeated notes and simple rhythms, is almost rustic in effect. Many of the elements found here – largely periodic phrasing in the right hand, emotively charged leaps, and relatively simple harmonic functions – hint at the 'empfindsam' (expressive) idioms that became prevalent a decade or so later during the so-called preclassical period.

The poem **Adam lay ybounden** can be traced back to an early fifteenth-century manuscript held in the British Library. Though it is now a staple of Advent and Christmas seasons, the text appears not to have attracted much attention before the early twentieth century. Composers

who set it include Benjamin Britten, John Ireland and Giles Swayne, whose version of ‘Adam lay ybounden’ was written for the 2009 Advent carol service at St John’s. The most celebrated of the free-standing settings was composed by Boris Ord in 1957, shortly before the directorship of the Choir of King’s College, Cambridge, passed from Ord to David Willcocks. Peter Warlock’s ‘Adam lay ybounden’ was first published exactly a century ago, in 1923, as part of a group of five unison songs with piano accompaniment – a format possibly selected as a way of reconciling complex harmony with singability. It is not clear whether ‘Adam lay ybounden’, like Warlock’s more famous carol ‘Balulalow’, was originally intended for unison or solo singing. The form of Warlock’s setting might be described, once again, as modified strophic. However, each stanza is so short – the entire piece lasts little more than a minute – that the impression is one of gradual melodic mutation and of accrued harmonic riches. Warlock’s setting appears to have influenced Boris Ord’s 1957 version – so much so that Ord’s carol could almost be considered a reworking. The second phrases of the two settings are virtually identical, and both versions draw heavily on modal harmonies – unsurprising in the case of Warlock, who was very

interested in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century music. In this setting, however, the line between early music and jazz is surprisingly porous.

**Gottes Sohn ist kommen**, BWV 600, (or ‘Gott durch deine Güte’, to give Bach’s alternative title) is similar to ‘Herr Christ, der ein’ge Gottes Sohn’ in texture and scale. However, it is the first of the *Orgel-Büchlein* chorale preludes to include canonic writing. In this case, the chorale, stated in the top voice, is answered one bar later in the pedal. Perhaps to enable the canon to shine through, the other voices have distinctive and consistent profiles: the alto moves in continuous quavers, while the left hand, the real bass, has a stream of uninterrupted crotchets. Uniquely in the collection, Bach notes the stops to be used – ‘Prinzipal 8 Fuß’ in the manuals and ‘Trompete 8 Fuß’ in the pedal. The word ‘canon’ suggests strict imitation. However, Bach takes liberties where slavish repetition would have created intolerable dissonance, and the attentive listener will detect several deviations, particularly in rhythm.

**On Jordan’s bank the Baptist’s Cry** is a nineteenth-century translation by Revd John Chandler of the Charles Coffin hymn used in Cheryl Frances-Hoad’s ‘Lo, the desert depths

are stirr’d’. The words are sung here to ‘Winchester New’, a tune that derives from a late seventeenth-century Hamburg publication. As so often, hymns that appear to be creations of the Anglican church reveal, on closer inspection, polyglot and polytemporal origins. On this recording, the last verse of the hymn features another descant by Christopher Robinson.

The second version of **Adam lay ybounden** on this CD was composed in 1980, towards the end of Philip Ledger’s tenure as Director of Music at King’s College, Cambridge. If Boris Ord’s setting seems indebted to Peter Warlock, Ledger’s version builds in several respects on Ord’s. Both use minor keys with modal inflections, and the rhythms of the two composers’ principal melodies are similar. However, Ledger treats the last line of the text, ‘Deo gratias’, as a refrain, which appears at the end of each of the four stanzas. Paradoxically perhaps, this disruptive gesture heightens rather than undercuts the overall strophic effect.

John Gardner enjoyed a varied career as composer, conductor and teacher. He worked for a time at the Royal Opera House, and it is no surprise that his oeuvre includes four

operas as well as many pieces of theatre music. He will be remembered for ‘Tomorrow shall be my dancing day’, one of the most popular carols of recent decades. **A Gallery Carol** was written a few years later, in 1970, and, as with the earlier piece, its effect depends largely on snappy syncopations, allied here to a certain jazzy swagger. Both works can be performed in different versions: ‘Tomorrow shall be my dancing day’ features optional percussion, while ‘A Gallery Carol’ is written in such a way that male voices can be omitted. (A glance at the dedication – ‘To Neville Atkinson and the Choir of the Perse Girls’ School, Cambridge – helps explain this.) The carol is a setting of an anonymous eighteenth-century text in four stanzas that looks forward to Christmas – indeed, to Epiphany.

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In 2001, former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams published ‘A Reflection on Advent’ in a collection of essays titled *Darkness Yielding*. This title was intended to invoke the seasons of the church year from Advent to Easter – in effect, the entire span of Christ’s life on earth. However, the phrase takes on new meaning when applied to this sequence of Advent music from St John’s. The final part



of Andrew Nethsingha's Advent trilogy concludes not with John the Baptist crying in the desert but with three wise men bearing 'myrrh, incense and gold' for the new-born Christ. The darkness of winter has yielded to rejoicing.

© Dr Martin Ennis  
Cambridge, June 2023

## CONDUCTOR'S POSTSCRIPT

The three Advent Carol Services featured in the third volume of our series are all unusual in their different ways. Advent 2020 occurred during the second pandemic lockdown. We went ahead with our live Advent broadcast, with the lower voices all socially distanced and with no congregation whatsoever in the building. The album includes three hymns, giving a chance to sample both the year without congregation and also a full Chapel. In *O come, O come Emmanuel*, you can hear the choir being very determined in the face of adversity, trying to sound like a whole congregation!

Preparations for Advent 2021 were going well, but then several choristers had to isolate and I went down with Covid two days before the

service. The choir performed with only ten choristers. An adult soprano was on standby, just in case, but she sang only a few phrases in the service. My exceptional Senior Organ Scholar, George Herbert, agreed to conduct at very short notice. I was sorry to miss the service, not least because that year-group had one of the two best sets of trebles of my 15 1/2 years at St John's. However, lying in bed listening to my choir conducted by George live on the radio was one of the proudest and most moving moments of my career. In our recent album *The Tree* I wrote of the thrill of training the choir to the best of my ability in 2019 and then hearing it taken to a much higher level of artistry by my teacher, Christopher Robinson. It is lovely that *Advent Live – Volume 3* can document a similar process from 2021; again I poured my heart and soul into the choir, and then I marvelled as a genius musician added many more layers of beauty. One time it was my teacher, the other time it was my pupil! I've had similar experiences with other organ scholars such as Glen Dempsey. Speaking of the next generation - in our 2020 broadcast it was wonderful to perform a piece written by one of our choristers, Harry L'Estrange.

Advent 2022 was an unexpectedly significant occasion for me, because it turned out to be the end of my time working at St John's. I was proud that it was also the very first Advent Carol Service in which we had girls and women singing in the choir as well as boys and men. The Advent commission that year was Iain Farrington's *Nova Nova*, recently released on our *New Millennium* album. The premiere of our 2020 commission by Cheryl Frances-Hoad had to be postponed until October 2021 because of the pandemic, but it features on this disc alongside the 2021 commission by Helen Grime.

Former King's Director of Music Philip Ledger (with whom my late father played piano duets in *Toad of Toad Hall* in the 1950s!) died in November 2012. His setting of Advent Calendar was composed in memory of his great St John's colleague, George Guest, who died in November 2002. It was moving to pay tribute to both men as we performed the piece in November 2022. The carol by Simon Preston, later to be one of my predecessors at Westminster Abbey, was included in our 2022 service a few months after the composer's death. In my time as Organ Scholar at St John's in the 1980s the choir often sang the exquisite

carol *Pan fôr stormydd garwa'n curo*. Coming exactly forty years after the first Advent broadcast, the performance in 2021 was given added atmosphere as a storm raged audibly outside the building. The text felt especially poignant at a time when many migrants were drowning whilst trying to reach our shores.

The acoustic of the Chapel at Advent varies from year to year, as does the sound of the choir itself. I am grateful to Dave Rowell and Matthew Bennett for their great skill in creating a consistent sound picture across the whole album. By the time this album is released it will nearly be time to enjoy Christopher Gray's first Advent Carol Service broadcast, as the next chapter of this wonderful choir's history is beginning. May this great tradition continue for many many decades to come!

Andrew Nethsingha

## ALBUM ARTWORK

The artwork for this album features a coiled snake that alludes to the serpent from Genesis, whose encouragement to eat an apple from the Tree of Knowledge precipitated the Fall of Man. In the Advent Service, this is the first in a series of decisive moments of the biblical narrative that lead us on to the coming of the Christ, whose sacrifice is an atonement for human sin (as the carol Adam lay ybounden states, “Ne had the apple taken been/ne had never our lady a-been heavenè queen”). It could also signify the ‘Bronze Serpent’ (Hebrew ‘Nehushtan’) raised by Moses to protect the Israelites in the Book of Kings, which is later referred to by Jesus in John’s Gospel: “And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”



A group of choristers singing Hildegard of Bingen's *O pastor animarum* at the 2020 Advent Carol Service, 28th November 2020



© James Beddoe

The choir perform Cheryl Frances-Hoad's *Lo! The desert-depths are stirr'd* with harpist Oliver Wass, 26th November 2022

## TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

**1** **Lo! The desert-depths are stirr'd**  
*Cheryl Frances-Hoad (b. 1980)*

Lo! The desert-depths are stirr'd,  
 And the reeds of Jordan quiver;  
 At the Baptist's herald word,  
 Shake the shores of that old river.

Nearer comes the Preacher's cry,  
 Deeper sounds his voice and deeper,  
 Telling that the Christ is nigh,  
 In a tone to rouse the sleeper.

By their Maker's coming feet  
 Moved, the earth, the air, the ocean  
 Joyously His advent greet,  
 With a strangely yearning motion.

Cleanse the heart—a highway strew  
 For the Godhead hither faring;  
 Cleanse the home—a dwelling, due  
 To the mighty Guest, preparing.

Jesu, Thou our solace art,  
 Thou our strength and our salvation;  
 Wither'd grass, from Thee apart,  
 Fades away man's feeble nation.

Lift the lost, with hand of health,  
 Whom the plague is fast consuming;  
 Lift the veil—in all its wealth,  
 Lo! The beauteous world is blooming.

Thou, who comest man to free,  
 Son, be Thine all praise for ever:  
 Thine with Sire and Spirit be  
 Laud through ages ending never.

*Charles Coffin (1676-1749)*

**2** **Advent Calendar**  
*Philip Ledger (1937-2012)*

He will come like last leaf's fall.  
 He will come.  
 One night when the November wind has flayed  
 the trees to bone,  
 and earth waves choking on the mould, the soft  
 shroud's folding.

He will come like frost.  
 He will come.  
 One morning when the shrinking earth opens  
 on mist,  
 to find itself arrested in the net of alien, sword-  
 set beauty.

He will come like dark.  
He will come.  
One evening when the bursting red December  
sun draws up the sheet  
and penny-masks its eye to yield the star-snowed  
fields of sky.

He will come,  
will come like crying in the night,  
like blood, like breaking as the earth writhes to  
toss him free.  
He will come.  
He will come like child.

Rowan Williams (b. 1950)

### [3] Telling

Helen Grime (b. 1981)

Soon must I sing with rejoicing,  
For the time it is run.  
Of a wee child all undefiled,  
The King of Heaven's Son.

*His blood so red for thee was shed,  
The price it was not small,  
Remember well that which I tell,  
And come when Jesu call.*

Man stands in doubt, and seeks about,  
Where that they mayst Him see.  
Idols they set, riches to get,  
Fashioned from the stone and tree.

### Refrain

Mankind I call which lies in thrall,  
For love He made thee free,  
To pay the debt the price was great,  
From Hell He ransomed thee.

### Refrain

Anonymous, 16th century  
after Michael Finnissy (b. 1946)

### [4] & [11] There is no rose

[4] Francis Pott (b. 1957) & Simon Preston  
(1938-2022)

There is no rose of such virtue  
As is the rose that bare Jesu. *Alleluia.*

For in this rose contained was  
Heaven and earth in little space. *Res miranda. [A  
marvellous thing]*

By that rose we may well see  
There be one God in persons three. *Pares forma.*  
[*Equal in form*]

The angels sungen the shepherds to:  
Gloria in excelsis Deo. *Gaudeamus.*  
[Glory to God in the highest. *Let us rejoice*]

Then leave we all this worldly mirth,  
And follow we this joyful birth. *Transeamus.*  
[*Let us follow*]

Anonymous, 15th century

### [6] Pan fo'r stormydd garwa'n curo

John Raymond Williams (1928-2018)

Pan fo'r stormydd garwa'n curo, Arghwydd Iôr  
Tyred a gostega ymchwydd gwyllt y môr  
Fel y gallom ninnau uwch terfysgoedd byd  
Glywed dros y tonnau lais dy gariad drud.

*When the harsh storms rage, O Lord,  
Come and silence the wild surge of the sea –  
So that we ourselves, above the tumults of the world,  
Hear, across the waves, the voice of thy precious love.*

Pan fo'r nos heb seren, a phob bron yn brudd  
Tyred Di â'r awen, wna ein nos yn ddydd

Fel y gallom weled llwybrau'r nefoedd wen  
A chael nerth i gerdded atat ti, Amen.

*When the night is without stars, and when sadness reigns  
Come, and make our night into day:  
So that we may see paths to heaven,  
And that we may have the strength to walk to thee.  
Amen.*

Gwynne Williams (b. 1937)

### [7] Hymn – O come, O come, Emmanuel!

Tune: *Veni Emmanuel*  
*Melody 'Adapted from a French Missal' by*  
*Thomas Helmore (1811-1890)*  
*Descant: David Hill (b. 1957)*

O come, O come, Emmanuel!  
Redeem thy captive Israel,  
that into exile drear is gone  
far from the face of God's dear Son.

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, thou Wisdom from on high!  
Who madest all in earth and sky,  
creating man from dust and clay:  
to us reveal salvation's way.

O come, O come, Adonai,  
who in thy glorious majesty  
from Sinai's mountain, clothed with awe,  
gavest thy folk the ancient law.

O come, thou Root of Jesse! draw  
the quarry from the lion's claw;  
from those dread caverns of the grave,  
from nether hell, thy people save.

O come, O come, Emmanuel!  
Redeem thy captive Israel,  
that into exile drear is gone  
far from the face of God's dear Son.

*Cologne 1710, based on the ancient Advent Antiphons  
Translation by Thomas Alexander Lacey (1853-1931) and others*

**[8] Nowel, nowel. Owt of your slepe**  
*Anonymous, 15th century*

Nowel! Owt of your slepe aryse and wake,  
For God mankynd nowe hath ytake,  
Al of a maide without eny make;  
Of al women she bereth the belle.

And thorwe a maide faire and wys,  
Now man is made of ful grete pris;  
Now angelys knelen to mannys servys,  
And at this tyme al this byfel.

Now, blessyd brother, graunt us grace  
A domesday to se thy face.  
And in thy courte to have a place,  
That we mow there synge Nowel.

*Anonymous, 15th century*

**[9] Drop down, ye heavens, from above**  
*Judith Weir (b. 1954)*

Drop down, ye heavens, from above,  
and let the skies pour down righteousness.  
Comfort ye, comfort ye my people;  
my salvation shall not tarry.  
I have blotted out as a thick cloud, thy  
transgressions:  
Fear not, for I will save thee;  
For I am the Lord thy God,  
the holy one of Israel, thy redeemer.  
Drop down, ye heavens, from above,  
and let the skies pour down righteousness.

*From the Advent Prose*

**[11] See [3]**

**[12] Come, thou long-expected Jesus**  
*Tune: Cross of Jesus  
John Stainer (1840-1901)  
Descant: Christopher Robinson*

Come, thou long-expected Jesus,  
Born to set thy people free,  
From our fears and sins release us,  
Let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth thou art,  
Dear desire of every nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver,  
Born a child and yet a king,  
Born to reign in us for ever,  
Now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal Spirit,  
Rule in all our hearts alone;  
By thine all-sufficient merit  
Raise us to thy glorious throne.

*Charles Wesley (1707-1788)*

**[13] O virgo virginum**  
*Harry L'Estrange (b. 2008)*

O virgin of virgins,  
how shall this take place?  
Neither before thee was there  
any like thee, nor after.

*O virgo virginum,  
quomodo fiet istud?  
Quia nec primam similem visa es  
nec habere sequentem.*

*Advent antiphon for 23 December*

**[14] One star, at last**  
*Peter Maxwell Davies (1934-2016)*

Fix on one star, at last.  
Any star  
In the circling star blizzard.  
That star will take you  
Whithersoever  
To Death and Birth and Love.

Folded it is now, the Dove.  
Furled, star folded,  
The black rain falls,  
The bitter floods rise still.

What hand will take the branch from the  
Dove's beak?

We stand, three vagrants at the last door.  
A black fist lingers, a star on withered wood.

*George Mackay Brown (1921-1996)*

[15] **Antiphons – O Dayspring;  
O King of the nations**  
*Traditional*

O Day-Spring, Brightness of Light Everlasting,  
and Sun of Righteousness:  
come and enlighten him that sitteth in darkness  
and the shadow of death.

O King of the Nations, and their desire;  
the Corner-Stone who makest reconciliation:  
come and save mankind, whom thou hast  
formed of clay.

*Traditional*

[17] & [21] **Adam lay ybounden**  
[17] *Peter Warlock (1894-1930) &*  
[21] *Philip Ledger (1937-2012)*

Adam lay ybounden,  
Bounden in a bond;

Four thousand winter  
Thought he not too long.

And all was for an apple,  
An apple that he took,  
As clerkè finden  
Written in their book.

Ne had the apple taken been,  
The apple taken been,  
Ne had never our lady  
A-been heavenè queen.

Blessèd be the time  
That apple taken was.  
Therefore we moun singen  
*Deo gracias! [Thanks be to God!]*

*Anonymous, 15th century*

[19] **Hymn – On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry**  
*Tune: Winchester New*  
*Adapted from a chorale in 'Musicalisches Hand-  
Buch' Hamburg (1690)*  
*Descant: Christopher Robinson (b. 1936)*

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry  
announces that the Lord is nigh;  
come then and hearken, for he brings  
glad tidings from the King of kings.

Then cleansed be every Christian breast,  
and furnished for so great a guest!  
Yea, let us each our hearts prepare  
for Christ to come and enter there.

For thou art our salvation, Lord,  
our refuge and our great reward;  
without thy grace our souls must fade,  
and wither like a flower decayed.

Stretch forth thine hand to heal our sore,  
and make us rise, to fall no more;  
once more upon thy people shine,  
and fill the world with love divine.

All praise, eternal Son, to thee  
whose advent sets thy people free,  
whom, with the Father, we adore,  
and Spirit blest, for evermore.

*Charles Coffin (1676-1749)*  
*Translation by John Chandler (1808-1876)*

[20] **Antiphon – O Emmanuel**  
*Traditional*

O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the  
desire of the nations:  
come and save us, O Lord our God.

*Traditional*

[21] See [17]

[22] **A Gallery Carol**  
*John Gardner (1917-2011)*

Rejoice and be merry  
In songs and in mirth!  
O praise our Redeemer;  
All mortals on earth!  
For this is the birthday  
Of Jesus our King,  
Who brought us salvation,  
His praises we'll sing!

A heavenly vision  
Appeared in the sky;  
Vast numbers of angels  
The shepherds did spy,  
Proclaiming the birthday  
Of Jesus our King,  
Who brought us salvation,  
His praises we'll sing!

Likewise a bright star  
In the sky did appear,  
Which led the wise men  
From the East to draw near;  
They found the Messiah,  
Sweet Jesus our King,



Who brought us salvation,  
His praises we'll sing!

And when they were come,  
they their treasures unfold,  
And unto him offered  
Myrrh, incense and gold.

So blessed for ever  
Be Jesus our King,  
Who brought us salvation,  
His praises we'll sing!

*Anonymous, 18th century*



© James Beddoe

The choir process in to *O come, O come Emmanuel*, 26th November 2022

## THE CHOIR OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE 2020

### Trebles

Adam Ahmad  
Felix Bamford  
Angus Crichton-Stuart  
Joshua Davidson  
George Ducker  
Lorenzo Granado  
Gabriel Gritten  
Caspar Johnson  
Kevin Ke  
Harry L'Estrange  
Charles Lipscomb  
Kieran McGurran  
Jonathan Mews  
Lucas Nair-Grepinet  
Ivan Popov  
Samuel Smith  
Ewan Tatnell  
Montague Tatnell

### Altos

Alasdair Austin  
Francis Bamford  
Richard Decker  
Alec D'Oyly

### Tenors

James Gant  
Joseph Hancock  
Archie Inns<sup>20</sup>  
Euan O'Connor  
Louis Watkins

### Basses

Gregory Bannan  
Thomas Butler  
Alexander Hopkins  
David McIntyre  
Alexander Semple  
Max Todes  
George Vines<sup>15</sup>

### Assistant Organist

James Anderson-Besant

### Herbert Howells Organ Scholar

George Herbert  
(Tracks 7 & 12 only)

### Director of Music

Andrew Nethsingha

*Both organists played for this service*

*Numbers indicate soloist credits for  
each track*

## THE CHOIR OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

### 2021

#### Trebles

Felix Bamford  
Joshua Davidson  
George Ducker  
Nicholas Garcia  
Lorenzo Granado  
Caspar Johnson  
Kevin Ke  
Kieran McGurran  
Ivan Popov  
Samuel Smith

#### Soprano

Molly Noon

#### Altos

Alasdair Austin  
Francis Bamford  
Richard Decker  
Alec D'Oyly

#### Tenors

James Gant <sup>8</sup>  
Joseph Hancock  
Hamish MacGregor  
Euan O'Connor  
Carlos Rodríguez Otero <sup>8</sup>

#### Basses

Thomas Butler  
Alexander Hopkins <sup>8</sup>  
David McIntyre  
Alexander Semple  
Max Todes  
George Vines

#### Organist

Joseph Wicks \*

#### Junior Organ Scholar:

Alexander Trigg

#### Director

George Herbert

\* *This organist was playing at the service*

*Numbers indicate soloist credits for each track*

## THE CHOIR OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

### 2022

#### Trebles

Ingrid Birchall  
Arthur Cobb  
Amelia Crichton-Stuart  
Angus Crichton-Stuart  
Nicholas Garcia  
Gabriel Gritten  
Martha Gritten  
Caspar Johnson  
Kevin Ke  
Charles Lipscomb  
Kieran McGurran  
Ivan Popov  
Samuel Smith  
Montague Tatnell  
Aiden Wee

#### Altos

Alasdair Austin  
Olivia Hawkins  
Alice Hilder-Jarvis  
Alice Markham  
Matthew Monaghan

#### Tenors

James Gant  
Joseph Hancock  
Theodore Horch  
Garbhan McEnoy  
Carlos Rodríguez Otero <sup>2</sup>

#### Basses

George Butler  
Jonathan Hatley  
David McIntyre  
John Moore  
Henry Montgomery  
Alexander Semple  
Max Todes

#### Assistant Organist

George Herbert \*

#### Herbert Howells Organ Scholar

Alexander Robson

#### Director of Music

Andrew Nethsingha

\* *This organist was playing at the service*

*Numbers indicate soloist credits for each track*



© James Beddoe

George Herbert and Alex Robson, 26th November 2022

The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge is one of the finest collegiate choirs in the world, known and loved by millions from its broadcasts, concert tours and recordings. Founded in the 1670s, the Choir is known for its distinctive rich, warm sound, its expressive interpretations and its breadth of repertoire. Alongside these musical characteristics, the Choir is particularly proud of its happy, relaxed and mutually supportive atmosphere. The Choir is directed by Christopher Gray who follows a long line of eminent Directors of Music, recently Dr George Guest, Dr Christopher Robinson, Dr David Hill and Andrew Nethsingha.

The Choir is made up of around 20 Choristers and Probationers from St John's College School and around 15 Choral Scholars who are members of St John's College, its primary purpose being to enhance the liturgy and worship at daily services in the College Chapel. The Choir has a diverse repertoire spanning over 500 years of music. It is also renowned for championing contemporary music by commissioning new works, including recent compositions by Judith Bingham, Julian Anderson, Anna Semple, Katrina Toner, Ignacio Mañá Mesas and Cecilia McDowall. Each term, the Choir is joined by its period instrument

ensemble St John's Sinfonia to perform Bach Cantatas in a liturgical setting.

The Choir brings the 'St John's Sound' to listeners around the world through its weekly webcasts (available at [www.sjcchoir.co.uk](http://www.sjcchoir.co.uk)). The Choir has also live-streamed video broadcasts of Chapel services on Facebook, in association with Classic FM. In addition to regular radio broadcasts in this country and abroad, the Choir releases multiple recordings each year. In May 2016 the College launched its 'St John's Cambridge' recording label (in conjunction with Signum Classics). Since then 16 Choir albums have been released. These include single composer albums of Jonathan Harvey (BBC Music Magazine Award winner), Ralph Vaughan Williams and Michael Finnissy, the latter of which was a finalist in the 2021 Gramophone Awards. There have also been three 'Magnificat' albums of varied Evensong Canticles, an anthem compilation *Locus Iste*, a compendium of 21st-century works *New Millennium*, masses by Poulenc and Kodály, a live anthology *The Tree*, a Psalms collection, and seasonal albums for Advent, Christmas and Ash Wednesday.

The Choir also performs concerts outside of Cambridge and tours internationally each year. Recent destinations have included the USA, the Netherlands, France, Sweden, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Hong Kong and Singapore. It also performs regularly in the UK, with venues including Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Royal Albert Hall and Royal Festival Hall, London.

### JAMES ANDERSON-BESANT

Born in 1998, James Anderson-Besant grew up in Oxfordshire. He started learning the keyboard at primary school with Judith Ward, who ran the choir at St Helen's Church, Benson; James joined the choir and later became its organist. He learnt to play the organ with James Brown at Abingdon School, where he held academic and music scholarships.

After taking a gap year as Organ Scholar of Gloucester Cathedral, which included teaching the first girl choristers in the Cathedral's history, James then spent four years as Organ Scholar, then Assistant Organist, of St John's College Cambridge. With the College Choir, he accompanied services, broadcasts, recordings and tours under the



James Anderson-Besant

direction of Andrew Nethsingha, and helped train the choristers. He has broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 and Radio 4, and his playing for St John's appears on many acclaimed CD releases, including *Advent Live II*, *Ash Wednesday*, and *The Psalms*. A student of Stephen Farr, James won second prize at the

2019 Northern Ireland International Organ Competition. He graduated in 2020 with a double starred first degree in music, and during the following year supervised Cambridge music students in harmony and keyboard skills.

From 2021-2023, James was Assistant Director of Music at Exeter Cathedral, where he played the organ for the Cathedral's services, and assisted Timothy Noon in the training of the choristers and in the choir's musical rebound from the coronavirus pandemic. He also directed the St Peter's Singers, the cathedral's auditioned voluntary choir.

In 2023, at the age of twenty-four, James was appointed Director of Music and Organist of Truro Cathedral, becoming the youngest cathedral organist in the country. At Truro, James directs the Cathedral Choir in its daily rehearsals and sung services, and manages the Cathedral's busy music department. He also conducts the Three Spires Singers. In his spare time he enjoys walking, exploring Cornwall, and reading about history and engineering.

### GEORGE HERBERT

George was born in Manchester in 2001, and his passion for music was kindled in earnest when he became a chorister at Manchester Cathedral. He joined Chetham's School of Music at this time too, where he studied the trumpet after leaving the cathedral choir. George spent four years at St John's College, Cambridge, first as an organ scholar studying Music and German, and latterly as Assistant Organist.

In these roles, George accompanied St John's College Choir in its daily sung liturgy, as well as its broadcasts, recordings and tours. He also regularly directed the choir, including live on BBC Radio 3 in its Advent Carol Service in 2021. As Assistant Organist, he was musical director of Aquila, the college's all - female a cappella group. George is now the Assistant Director of Music at the Chapel Royal, Hampton Court Palace. As an undergraduate, George was a pianist in Pembroke College's Lieder Scheme, taking regular classes with Joseph Middleton. In 2021 he won first prize and the accompanist's prize in Clare College's biennial song competition, and in 2023 he won the Northern Ireland International Organ Competition. He is a passionate



George Herbert

environmentalist, and wrote his final year dissertation on 1980s East German environmental policy and foreign relations. George is now living in London and working as a freelance pianist, organist and director. He works regularly as an accompanist with the Royal Academy of Music, Kantos Chamber

Choir and Tenebrae, and has enjoyed recent collaborations with the Gabrieli Consort (Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*), the Royal Northern College of Music (Bernstein's *Mass*) and English National Opera (Britten's *Peter Grimes*/Ruders' *The Handmaid's Tale*). He looks forward to upcoming organ recitals at Westminster Abbey and the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin.

## JOSEPH WICKS

Joseph Wicks is a prize-winning organist, conductor and tenor. His principle work is with The Gesualdo Six, an award-winning vocal ensemble who tour the world giving concerts and workshops, and whose recordings for Hyperion Records receive international acclaim. Other recent work has included concerts with Alamire, La Nuova Musica, Polyphony, Tavener Consort and Tenebrae. Joseph also conducts his choir The Beaufort Singers in a handful of concerts a year including at the Boxgrove Choral Festival which he founded in 2018.

Before turning fully freelance, Joseph spent two years as Assistant Director of Music at Truro Cathedral where he recorded two CDs and appeared on three broadcasts for BBC Radio 3



Joseph Wicks

(including a live concert broadcast of Duruflé's *Requiem*) as well as on ITV's 'Britain's Got Talent'. He was also Musical Director of St Mary's Singers with whom he performed many ambitious works for an amateur chamber choir including Bach's *St John Passion*. Prior to this Joseph was Assistant Organist of St John's College,

Cambridge, having been its Herbert Howells Organ Scholar. Joseph accompanied the world-famous College Choir in services, on broadcasts and tours to countries across the world, and appears on six CDs for Signum Records.

Joseph enjoyed an upbringing steeped in the Anglican choral tradition, from becoming Bishop's Chorister of Salisbury Cathedral, then a Sixth Form Organ Scholar at Lancing College, to being appointed Organ Scholar at Hereford Cathedral. He is a Limpus prize-winning Fellow of the Royal College of Organists and has given recitals across the UK, notably in St Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, Westminster Cathedral and King's College Cambridge.

**[www.joseph-wicks.co.uk](http://www.joseph-wicks.co.uk)**



**ANDREW NETHSINGHA**  
FORMER DIRECTOR OF MUSIC  
ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

Performing in North America, South Africa, the Far East, and throughout Europe, Andrew Nethsingha was Director of Music at St John's College, Cambridge from 2007 to 2022. He is now Organist and Master of the Choristers at Westminster Abbey. He directed the music at the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

He helped to set up the recording label, 'St John's Cambridge', in conjunction with Signum Classics. The first release on this label, *DEO* (music by Jonathan Harvey), was a 2017 BBC Music Magazine Award winner. Eight recent albums have been 'Editor's Choice' in Gramophone Magazine.

Andrew Nethsingha was a chorister at Exeter Cathedral, under his father's direction. He later studied at the Royal College of Music, where he won seven prizes, and at St John's College, Cambridge. He held Organ Scholarships under Christopher Robinson at St George's Windsor, and George Guest at St John's, before becoming Assistant Organist at Wells Cathedral. He was subsequently Director of Music at Truro and



Andrew Nethsingha

Gloucester Cathedrals, and Artistic Director of the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival.

Andrew's concerts conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra have included: Mahler's *8th Symphony*, Beethoven's *9th Symphony*, Britten's *War Requiem*, Brahms' *Requiem*, Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*

and *The Kingdom*, Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*, Poulenc's *Gloria* and Duruflé's *Requiem*. He has also worked with: the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, London Mozart Players, Britten Sinfonia, Orchestra of St Luke's (New York), Aarhus Symfoniorkester, and BBC Concert Orchestra. Venues have included the BBC Proms, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Verbier Festival, Tokyo Suntory Hall, Konzerthaus Berlin, and Singapore Esplanade.

**OLIVER WASS, HARP**

Oliver Wass holds a First Class Masters Degree from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, where he studied with Imogen Barford. He graduated from the University of York with a First Class Honours degree in Chemistry.

He has won the Suoni d'Arpa International Competition in Italy, the International Harp Competition of Slovenia, and the Jury Prize at the International Harp Competition in Szeged, Hungary. In May 2016 he became the first harpist ever to win the Guildhall Gold Medal – the Guildhall's most prestigious prize. Previous winners of the competition include Jacqueline du Pré, Bryn Terfel and Tasmin Little.



Oliver Wass

He has performed every major harp concerto, including *Lyra Angelica* with the Philharmonia Orchestra, the *Mozart Flute and Harp Concerto* with The Mozartists at the Wigmore Hall, and he has directed the *Handel Harp Concerto* in the Barbican Hall.



He has given recitals at the Purcell Room and Wigmore Hall, where he was praised by Seen and Heard International for his “tremendous dynamism” and “remarkable range of timbres and warmth of tone”.

His flute, harp and viola trio, The Pelléas Ensemble, have a busy performing schedule, and released their debut album on Linn Records.

He spent his teenage years making fireworks in his parents’ basement, which is – remarkably – still surviving.

## Acknowledgements

The Choir thanks those who continue to support the ‘St John’s Cambridge’ recording label through The Album Recording Fund, in particular Mr Archie Burdon-Cooper..

## Publishers:

Chester (Frances-Hoad, Grime, Maxwell-Davies)

Encore (Ledger)

Novello (Pott, Weir)

OUP (Gardner, Ledger, Preston, Warlock)

Recorded live in St John’s College Chapel, Cambridge, UK on the following dates:

Sunday 29th November 2020

Sunday 28th November 2021

Sunday 27th November 2022

Producers – Chris Hazell & Matthew Bennett

Engineers – Simon Eadon & Dave Rowell

Editing – Matthew Bennett

Mixing & Mastering – Dave Rowell

Dean – The Rev’d Dr Mark Oakley

Project Manager – James Beddoe

Cover Image – OROA Design

Design and Artwork – Woven Design

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## AWARD-WINNING RECORDINGS FROM THE CHOIR OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

Latest Release



Gramophone  
Editor's Choice

### ***New Millennium*** SIGCD750

A collection of contemporary choral and organ works all by living composers, many of which were commissioned especially for the Choir

Shortlisted (Choral)  
Gramophone  
Awards 2023

### ***Magnificat 3*** SIGCD742

"What a wonderful performance: the dynamics, the contrasts, the utter confidence of the singing... Excellent solos, boys in great fettle, acoustic well-captured. It's a fine series, this: anyone who's ever sung or loved this kind of Anglican church music should be impatient for more" *BBC Radio 3 Record Review*

"This ongoing series has not only been a beautifully prepared and sung tribute to the Anglican canticle tradition, but also to Andrew Nethsingha's brilliant leadership of music at St John's" *Gramophone*

Gramophone  
Critics' Choice &  
Editor's Choice

### ***The Psalms*** SIGCD721

"The diction of the Choir of St. John's College, Cambridge is so exquisitely perfect that one can take dictation from it, yet there is absolutely no sense of metronomic stiffness... Choral singing at this level of perfection can never be taken for granted" *Fanfare*

Europadisc  
Easter Highlight

"Nethsingha and the Choir of St John's clearly recognise the importance of these liturgical poems-in-music: the performances here are evidence that they are guided by the principle that everything — metre, emphasis, lyricism, momentum, dynamics and clarity — plays an equally crucial role"  
*The Sunday Times*

### ***Eastertide Evensong*** SIGCD707

★★★★★ "The results are extremely fine, with much attention to musical detail, clear diction, impeccable tuning and a well-balanced choral blend" *Choir & Organ*

"Nethsingha is his own man and absolutely his own musician, which is why his choir continues to evolve and lead" *Gramophone*

"For all devotees of choral evensong, this is an indispensable disc"  
*Opera Today*

### ***The Tree*** SIGCD691

"The whole thing is a beautifully realised tribute to the history of the choir and its hope for the future" *BBC Record Review*

Gramophone  
Editor's Choice

### ***Magnificat 2*** SIGCD667

"They're on cracking form right now... there's that sort of earthy ferocity that is totally exhilarating... the control, the pianissimo and the clarity this recording brings is magnificent" *BBC Radio 3 Record Review*

"This choir's singular qualities – responsiveness, sophistication of line and texture and a chameleonic stylistic acumen that never loses sight of its own core, identifying sound – are all in play here" *Gramophone*

### ***Advent Live - Volume 2*** SIGCD661

"The fantastic balance of anthems, hymns and organ music leaps out in this arresting, fabulously performed Advent programme" *BBC Music Magazine*

Gramophone  
Editor's Choice

### ***Michael Finnis – Pious Anthems & Voluntaries*** SIGCD624

★★★★★ "The sequence maintains a powerfully communicative grip... The choir makes the music sound as lived-in as Byrd or Howells"  
*BBC Music Magazine*

Finalist (Contemporary)  
Gramophone  
Awards 2021

BBC Music Magazine  
Choral & Song Choice

Top Ten Recording  
of the Year Europadisc

★★★★★ “Exquisitely beautiful, sensual music” *Choir & Organ*

“An 84-minute work that might well change your listening life” *Classical Music*

“This is some of the most compelling music written for the ‘English choral tradition’ in many years... the results are infinitely rewarding” *Europadisc*

**Ash Wednesday** SIGCD605

“The malleable, sensitive trebles have what seems to me an unparalleled ability to invest text and phrase with meaning” *Gramophone*

“It’s the most glorious, glorious music making” *BBC Radio 3, Record Review*

★★★★★ “Exceptionally satisfying. Bravo. Bravissimo” *AllMusic*

Gramophone  
Editor’s Choice

**Magnificat** SIGCD588

“extreme perception of blend (vowel and timbre), words and phrasing; a true ensemble” *Gramophone*

★★★★★ “A fascinating hour’s music” *Choir & Organ*

« Superbe. Les petits trebles sont en grande forme » *Diapason (France)*

Gramophone  
Editor’s Choice

**Locust Iste** SIGCD567

★★★★★ “a glint of sunlight, inspired and inspiring” *BBC Music Magazine*

“Beautifully captured” *BBC Radio 3, Record Review*

“This disc really soars” *Gramophone*

**Advent Live** SIGCD535

“Sung with typical St John’s verve and character, this superbly programmed collection will take your Advent listening in unexpected, but entirely apposite, directions” *BBC Music Magazine*

BBC Music Magazine  
Choral & Song Choice

**Vaughan Williams – Mass in G Minor** SIGCD541

★★★★★ “Formidably attractive” *BBC Music Magazine*

“Director Andrew Nethsingha shapes a performance of profound dignity and power, beautifully sung by this always impressive choir” *The Guardian*

**Poulenc | Kodály | Janáček – KYRIE** SIGCD489

★★★★★ “...a superb reading from Nethsingha and his forces... Throughout, the choir sing with their justly famed blend and perfect intonation. An essential disc...” *Choir & Organ*

**Christmas with St John’s** SIGCD458

“proving yet again, they are as good as it gets” *Classic FM*

“an evocatively sung collection...glowing with devotional joy, wonder and a kaleidoscope of colours and emotions” *Choir & Organ*

BBC Music Magazine  
Award Winner

**Jonathan Harvey – DEO** SIGCD456

★★★★★ “ecstatic...the Choir tackles it all with confidence and clarity” *The Observer*

Gramophone  
Editor’s Choice

★★★★★ “characterful yet authoritative performances of which they can be justly proud” *Choir & Organ*



THE CHOIR OF  
ST JOHN'S  
CAMBRIDGE

DIO HARVEY  
NETSINGHA



THE CHOIR OF  
ST JOHN'S  
CAMBRIDGE

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS  
MESSING & MINOR  
NETSINGHA



THE CHOIR OF  
ST JOHN'S  
CAMBRIDGE

PIOUS ANTHEMS & VOLUNTARIES  
FINNISSY NETSINGHA



THE CHOIR OF  
ST JOHN'S  
CAMBRIDGE

EASTERTIDE EVENSING  
NETSINGHA



THE CHOIR OF  
ST JOHN'S  
CAMBRIDGE

CHRISTMAS WITH ST JOHN'S  
NETSINGHA



THE CHOIR OF  
ST JOHN'S  
CAMBRIDGE

LOCUS ISTE  
NETSINGHA



THE CHOIR OF  
ST JOHN'S  
CAMBRIDGE

ADVENT LIVE VOLUME 2  
NETSINGHA



THE CHOIR OF  
ST JOHN'S  
CAMBRIDGE

THE PSALMS  
NETSINGHA



THE CHOIR OF  
ST JOHN'S  
CAMBRIDGE

KYRIE  
ELENIC KODALY JANACEK  
NETSINGHA



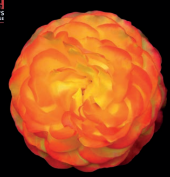
THE CHOIR OF  
ST JOHN'S  
CAMBRIDGE

MAGNIFICAT  
AZ POSTHORN



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ST JOHN'S  
CAMBRIDGE

MAGNIFICAT 2  
NETSINGHA



THE CHOIR OF  
ST JOHN'S  
CAMBRIDGE

MAGNIFICAT 3  
NETSINGHA



THE CHOIR OF  
ST JOHN'S  
CAMBRIDGE

ADVENT LIVE  
NETSINGHA



A BBC recording

THE CHOIR OF  
ST JOHN'S  
CAMBRIDGE

ASH WEDNESDAY  
NETSINGHA



THE CHOIR OF  
ST JOHN'S  
CAMBRIDGE

THE TREE  
HILL NETSINGHA ROBINSON



THE CHOIR OF  
ST JOHN'S  
CAMBRIDGE

NEW MILLENNIUM  
NETSINGHA

