

The Cantilena Singers

Daniel Spreadbury – Director

O magnum mysterium



Saturday 10 December 2022

Parish Church of St Nicholas, Great Wilbraham

Programme

Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548–1611)	<i>O magnum mysterium</i>
Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)	<i>Lux aurumque</i>
Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943)	<i>O nata lux</i>
	<i>O magnum mysterium</i>
Tomás Luis de Victoria	<i>Missa “O magnum mysterium”</i>
I. Kyrie	
II. Gloria	
III. Credo	
IV. Sanctus	
V. Benedictus	
VI. Agnus Dei	



Harold Darke (1888–1976)	<i>In the bleak midwinter</i>
Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)	<i>A Hymn to the Virgin</i>
Pierre Villette (1926–1998)	<i>Hymne à la Vierge</i>
Franz Gruber, arr. Malcolm Sargent (1895–1967)	<i>Silent night</i>
Jamie W. Hall	<i>Jesu sweet</i>
John Ireland (1879–1962)	<i>The holy boy</i>
Joel Nilson	<i>A cradle song</i>
Herbert Howells (1892–1983)	<i>Long, long ago</i>



About tonight's programme

Once more the turn of the year brings us to Advent and Christmas, the time of the great mystery at the heart of the Christian story: that the son of God comes to earth in the form of a vulnerable, human baby to fulfil a prophecy and save mankind from sin.

Tonight's programme reflects on this great mystery, with the first half bookended with the setting by the 16th century Spanish composer Victoria of the responsorial chant from the Matins for Christmas, and a full mass setting drawing from that motet. The text, in English:

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!

Between the motet and the mass, contrasting works from contemporary American composers, also in Latin: Whitacre's setting of an English language poem by Charles Anthony Silvestri in translation, with Lauridsen's settings of the office hymn at Lauds of the Feast of the Transfiguration, *O nata lux*, and his own setting of *O magnum mysterium*, without doubt his most famous work.

If the first half focuses on the divine, the second half examines the Christmas story at a more human scale. We journey to the crib with Joseph and Mary, feeling the warmth of the animals around the manger, and scarcely able to take in the scene. We celebrate Mary, the mother of Jesus, with the macaronic *A Hymn to the Virgin* from the young Benjamin Britten and *Hymne à la Vierge* from the French composer Pierre Villette nearing the end of his life. We gaze upon the baby, and share in the familiar parental love and protectiveness towards this fragile and precious gift.

Our programme concludes with a setting of John Buxton's poem by Herbert Howells:

Long, long ago, / Oh! So long ago / Christ was born to heal the world's woe.
/ For he should be the Saviour / making wars to cease, / who gives joy to all men, / and brings to them peace.

We wish you, your families and your loved ones a peaceful Christmas.

Daniel Spreadbury, Director

The Cantilena Singers

Soprano

Amanda Bouskill
Hilary Burton
Alison McRobb
Cath Stubbs
Caille Sugarman-Banaszak

Alto

Kate Clark
Miriam Craddock
Evelyn Payne
Judy Rowland
Janet Stevens

Tenor

Steven Aronson
Michael Lee
Sam Spreadbury

Bass

Chris Fell
Mike Gait
Stephen Linden
Tim Rowland

The Cantilena Singers is a well-established chamber choir that performs regularly in Cambridge and the surrounding villages. The choir has been established for nearly 40 years, and is committed to promoting the joy of choral singing.

We are always looking for new members. If you would like to join us, please get in touch.



Daniel Spreadbury read for a degree in music at University College, Oxford, where he studied singing with Alastair Thompson, founder member of the King's Singers, and sang with and directed a variety of college and chapel choirs around the city. Daniel has been the director of Cantilena since 2001.



The Cantilena Singers' next concert will be a concert of music for Easter in April 2023.

More details will be forthcoming at www.cantilenasingers.org.uk/next-concert