



Thomas Tallis Society Choir  
Directed by Eamonn Dougan



# LAUDA PER LA NATIVITA DEL SIGNORE

RESPIGHI



WITH CHRISTMAS CAROLS & MOTETS

## Tonight's Programme

Judith Weir Carol	Drop down, ye heavens O come, O come Emmanuel	Warlock Howells Carol	The first mercy Here is the little door O come all ye faithful
Grieg Victoria	Ave maris stella O magnum mysterium	Respighi	Lauda per la nativita del Signore
Chaminade Charpentier Carol	Noël des oiseaux Salve puerule Of the Father's heart begotten	Mathias	A babe is born

Words for audience carols are provided on a separate sheet.

This concert has no interval. Drinks and mince pies will be available in the hall after the concert. Please join us there.

**Drop down, ye heavens, from above**

**Judith Weir (b.1954)**

Born in Cambridge in 1954, Dame Judith Weir grew up in London playing the oboe in the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and studied composition with John Tavener. Appointed Master of the King's Musick in 2014, she was the first woman to hold the post in a term that was to last a decade. She has a long association with the Spitalfields Music Festival (serving as Artistic Director between 1995 – 2000), as well as having held positions with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the Southern Arts Association.

Weir often draws inspiration from medieval history, as can be heard in another of her well-known works for Advent, *Illumare, Jerusalem*, commissioned for the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols by Stephen Cleobury and the Choir of King's College, Cambridge. Written in 1983, *Drop down ye heavens from above* reworks portions of the plainchant text and melody *Rorate coeli*, which appears at several points in the Christian liturgy of the Western Church during Advent. Weir writes 'The music has a plainsong-like shape (although not based on any real plainsong).' She artfully manipulates and reorders the words and music of the original chant, resulting in a magical blend of ancient and modern music.

**O come, O come Emmanuel**

**arr. Willcocks, orchestral arrangement Stephen Jackson**

See translations or separate sheet.

**Ave maris stella**

**Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)**

Norwegian composer and pianist Edvard Grieg is widely considered to be one of the leading Romantic-era composers; his use of Norwegian folk music in his own compositions not only helped to raise awareness of the music of Norway, but also ignited a feeling of national identity in the country. Grieg also has associations with Scotland, with his Scottish grandfather settling in Bergen following the Battle of Culloden in 1746.

An arrangement of a solo song with piano, *Ave maris stella* dates from 1898 as one of the few sacred pieces Grieg wrote. The text conjures the poetic image of the Virgin Mary as a star, guiding mortal souls across the ocean of life.

**O magnum mysterium**

**Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548-1611)**

Tomás Luis de Victoria was one of the most prolific Spanish Renaissance composers, as well as being a priest, organist and accomplished singer. Born around 1548, his surviving works are almost all sacred and polyphonic vocal music, admired for their intensity, drama and expressivity.

*O magnum mysterium* is one of Victoria's most enduring motets, published at some point between 1572 – 1605. Victoria's setting of the Nativity text – drawn from the Christmas Matins – is full of changes of texture, simple melodies and sensitive harmonies. Occasional, gentle chromaticism evokes the great mystery surrounding the birth of Jesus.

**Salve puerule**

**Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1634-1704)  
edited John Rutter, arranged Stephen Jackson**

Charpentier was born in or near Paris in 1643, the same year as the death of Louis XIII. Little is known about his musical education until the age of around 20, when he embarked on a journey to Rome in order to study with Giacomo Carissimi. When he returned to Paris in 1670, he found patronage in the Duchesse de Guise; as one of the most influential figures in the artistic life of Paris, Charpentier composed a considerable quantity of devotional music for her and her family, as well as using their connections to write music for the Théâtre Français and the French royal family.

*Salve puerule* (Welcome thou blessed child) is taken from *In Nativitatem Domini Nostri Jesu Christi Canticum*, written at some point between 1683-1685 for the musicians employed by the Duchess. Intended to be performed as part of a miniature oratorio, *Salve puerle* is the final chorus of the short work. It features an equal balance of Italian and French stylistic elements including instrumental refrains and choruses resembling French noëls, Christmas carols which were often based on melodies borrowed from popular secular songs.

**Of the Father's heart begotten**

**arr. Willcocks, orchestral arrangement Stephen Jackson**

See translations or separate sheet.

**Here is the little door**

**Herbert Howells (1892 – 1983)**

Herbert Howells was born in Gloucestershire; his father, as well as being a painter, decorator, plumber and builder, also played the organ at a local Baptist church. The young Howells showed musical promise and was a choirboy and deputy organist at a nearby church by the age of 11. His stellar line-up of teachers and mentors throughout his musical education include Ivor Novello, Ivor Gurney, Charles Villiers, Hubert Parry and Charles Wood, and his contemporaries at the Royal College of Music include Arthur Bliss and Arthur Benjamin.

*Here is the little door* is the first of three Carol-Anthems, written between 1918-1920 and is the setting of a poem by Frances Chesterton. Chesterton was hugely moved by the image of the Nativity, and wrote many poems depicting the infant Jesus to be used as verses in Christmas cards, the best known being *How far is it to Bethlehem?* *Here is the little door*, written from the perspective of the Magi presenting their gifts to the Christ-child, is beautifully poised, using a modal harmony throughout. The printed score says that Howells completed the setting in September 1918, but Howells' friend, the composer Harold Darke, claimed that it was composed "...in the kitchen of a friend's house one Xmas Eve, amid the bustle and excitement of preparing a Xmas dinner" which might be too good to be true...

**O come all ye faithful**

**JF Wade, arr. Willcocks, orchestral arrangement Stephen Jackson**

See translations or separate sheet.

**Lauda per la Natività del Signore**

**Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)**

Respighi had already completed his celebrated Rome trilogy of orchestral works – *The Fountains of Rome*, *The Pines of Rome* and *Roman Festivals* – when in 1930 he composed *Lauda per la Natività del Signore*. It was to remain his only sacred work, and according to his wife, the mezzo-soprano singer Elsa Respighi (née Olivieri Sangiacomo), it was inspired by the atmosphere conjured up during a harpsichord recital by the legendary Wanda Landowska held in the concert hall of the palace of Count Guido Chigi Saracini in Siena. Built in the 12th century, the palace's Gothic exterior presents a striking contrast with its Renaissance interior created in the 16th century (extensively modernised in the early 19th century).

The extraordinary mix of styles presented by Landowska's recital and its venue – medieval, Renaissance, Rococo and Baroque – is all reflected in Respighi's *Lauda*, which he conceived as a 'piccola cantata' to be performed in the relatively intimate space of the Chigi-Saracini concert hall. Thus, in contrast to the orchestral extravagance of his Rome trilogy, the forces for which Respighi wrote his cantata are quite modest: besides the vocal soloists and chorus, it is scored merely for 'strumenti pastorali' (shepherds' instruments) – that is wind instruments, represented here by flutes, oboe, cor anglais and bassoons – plus a piano duet.

For his text, Respighi chose a tender narrative attributed to a 13th-century Franciscan monk, Jacopone da Todi, which tells the story of Jesus's birth from the point of view of the Angels, the Shepherds and Mary herself. Respighi, with the assistance of his friend and regular librettist, Claudio Guastalla,

adapted the text to give it a more theatrical character. While in Rome in the spring and summer of 1930, he completed *Lauda* in time for its premiere in Siena on 22 November that year, held during the 'Micat in Vertices' festival.

There are three soloists – a soprano, representing the Angel; a mezzo-soprano in the role of Mary (sung in the first performance by Elsa Respighi); and a tenor in the role of a shepherd, implicitly the spokesman for his fellow herdsmen represented by a male chorus. The female or upper voices generally represent the angelic host, who herald the birth of Jesus, though sometimes the two choruses combine to create a full chorus to represent mankind in general.

The *Lauda* begins with the pastoral sound of an oboe, soon joined by cor anglais, then bassoon and finally flute. Then the oboe turns from straightforward A major to an ancient mode, as if adding the refrain "long, long ago" to this "once upon a time" start. This sets the scene for the angel's Annunciation of Jesus's birth. A choir of angels describes to the shepherds the humble stable where the infant might be found lying in a manger between ox and ass. One of the shepherds asks the angels to accompany them to see the baby in person. Their joyous journey to the stable is briefly conveyed by the woodwind playing dance-like music. With great restraint, the shepherds then describe the poverty of the Nativity: Mary, Joseph and the child have nothing to eat, nor even anything to wrap the baby. Mary sings an aria (with more than a touch of Bach in its poignancy and the use of cor anglais as her accompaniment) expressing her love and contentment at the arrival of her son. The full chorus, for a moment representing all mankind, respond: "O fountain of all bounty, to such poverty you have stooped."

Then, as the shepherds offer their cloaks to wrap the baby, Mary resumes her song, and for a wonderful moment she and the full choir join forces. Angels and men together sing "Gloria in excelsis Deo!". This episode ends very quietly, the choir singing "Sire del cielo onnepotente" to an eerie harmonic inflection (surely recalled by Poulenc in his opening Christmas motet, composed just over 20 years later).

We return to the shepherds ("Segnor, puoie ch'hai degnato"), who – a cappella – give thanks for the arrival of their Saviour. Respighi's active interest in Russian Orthodox music (having himself studied under Rimsky-Korsakov in St Petersburg early in his career) is surely reflected in the music here. The shepherds then beg Mary to be allowed to touch the child before they leave. Mary grants this request. As the shepherds break into a joyous exaltation ("Laude, Gloria"), we hear an unexpected but typical Respighi sound: the tinkling of a piano (akin to that moment early in "I pini del Gianicolo" from *Pines of Rome* when there's a similar bubbling outburst from piano). There follows a Neo-Baroque efflorescence from the whole choir in praise of God "and on earth peace to men of good will". The excitement dwindles to the more hymn-like "Al mondo tango reo", the piano duet adding deep, bell-like notes to the ensemble. The Angel, twice soaring to a high note, and Mary join in the general praise for mankind's Saviour. Then, like a fading dream, Respighi's cantata gently draws to a close.

Programme note by Daniel Jaffé

## A babe is born

William Mathias (1934-1992)

Born in Carmarthenshire in 1934, William Mathias started playing the piano at the age of three and composing at the age of five. He eventually went on to study with Lennox Berkeley at the Royal Academy of Music, and wrote the anthem *Let the people praise Thee, O God* for the wedding of the then Prince and Princess of Wales in 1981.

The words of *A babe is born* are of anonymous 15<sup>th</sup> century origin. Written in 1971, it is a lively dance-like carol for mixed chorus and organ, with the deft use of syncopation to bring energy and vitality. Commissioned by the Cardiff Polyphonic Choir, it was premiered in Llandaff Cathedral under the baton of Roy Bohana.

## EAMONN DOUGAN



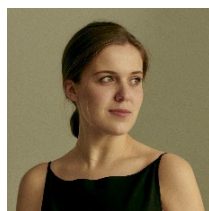
Eamonn Dougan is an inspirational conductor and renowned vocal coach and baritone. He is Associate Conductor of The Sixteen, founding Director of Britten Sinfonia Voices, Music Director of the Thomas Tallis Society, and Chief Conductor for Jersey Chamber Orchestra and Ryedale Festival Opera.

Recent conducting debuts include Handel's *Semele* at Sibelius Summer Academy and Haydn's *Seven Last Words of our Saviour on the Cross* with the English National Opera.

Forthcoming conducting engagements include performances as part of the Royal Academy of Music's Bach the European series, concerts with Chorwerk Ruhr, celebrating Byrd's 400th anniversary, a Christmas tour with Ars Nova, Copenhagen and Messiah with Chamber Choir Ireland and the Seville Baroque Orchestra. His third recording with De Profundis will be released in 2024.

Eamonn is vocal consultant for the ongoing Bach series at the Royal Academy of Music, where he also gives conducting masterclasses. He is a Visiting Professor to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, where he teaches ensemble singing and directs the Guildhall Consort. Eamonn read music at New College, Oxford, before continuing his vocal and conducting studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Eamonn Dougan is managed worldwide by Percius.

## KATHERINE ALLEN - Angel



Sydney-born soprano Katherine Allen completed her Bachelor's degree at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music before moving to London to study for her Master's degree at the Royal College of Music. Last season she made her European debut, performing the role of Adela in Reimann's *Bernarda Albas Haus* at the Musiktheater im Revier Gelsenkirchen. This season she returned to the theatre to sing the role of Patricia in a new production of Kaija Saariaho's *Innocence*.

Her previous roles include Cunegonde in *Candide* (Victorian Opera, Australia), Katerina Cavalieri in *Amadeus* (Sydney Opera House/Red Line Productions), Josephine in *HMS Pinafore* (Hayes Theatre Company), Adele in *Die Fledermaus* (Lyric Opera Studio Weimar), as well as First Lady (*Die Zauberflöte*) and Servilia (*La Clemenza di Tito*) with the Pacific Opera Company.

## EMMA WILKINS - Mary



Emma Wilkins is a soprano based in South East London. She read Music at The University of Manchester, performing regularly across the North West of England whilst studying for her degree. Highlights included BBC Daily Service and Songs of Praise as well as many exciting world premieres.

In London, Emma has sung with choirs such as the Holst Singers (Stephen Layton) and New London Chamber Choir (Matthew Hamilton), as well as deputising for numerous churches including the professional quartet at Holy Trinity Prince Consort Road, Kensington.

With her teacher Jenny Miller, Emma enjoys preparing both choral and solo repertoire. Emma's freelance singing career incorporates choral singing, solo performances, live-streams and recordings.

Emma is hugely grateful to be Soprano Ambassador for the Thomas Tallis Society. She adores the breadth of repertoire covered by TTS and looks forward to more music making with this friendly community under such inspirational direction.

When Emma isn't singing, she is Senior Administrator for the South London Youth Orchestras and enjoys spending time with her husband and children.

## WILL SEARLE - Shepherd



Welsh tenor William Searle is a renowned performer of oratorio in the UK and internationally, appearing in JS Bach's *Magnificat* with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at Cadogan Hall, in a world premiere at Carnegie Hall in New York and in Handel's *Messiah* at the Royal Albert Hall, as well as in Haydn's *Nelson Mass* with the Orquestra do Algarve in Portugal and evangelising JS Bach's *St John Passion* at the Lyrique-en-Mer Festival in France. His 2024 Christmas season concludes with a second performance of *Messiah* with the Manchester Camerata.

On the opera stage, William spent the previous two summers at Garsington Opera, playing *Ufficiale Il barbiere di Siviglia* and covering Basilio *Le nozze di Figaro* and Circusmaster *The Bartered Bride*. Other recent roles include Tamino *The Magic Flute* (The Merry Opera Company), Bertram *La donna del lago*, Souffleur *Viva la Diva!*, Lensky [cover] *Eugene Onegin* (all Buxton International Festival), Sergente Marocchino *La Ciociara* (Wexford Festival Opera) and Acis *Acis and Galatea* (Zimmermann Band). He studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Opera School, where his tutelage with Scott Johnson was supported by the Help Musicians Sybil Tutton Award, playing King Ouf in Chabrier's *L'étoile* and Oliver Sacks in Nyman's *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat* to widespread critical acclaim. In spring 2025, he will make his debut with Scottish Opera, covering the role of Raoul de Saint-Bricote in *The Merry Widow* and in the chorus of *Trial by Jury*.

As a trainee of the Genesis Sixteen programme, he continues to enjoy making sporadic choral appearances with groups including The Sixteen, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Polyphony and Arcangelo, and he is delighted to join Eamonn again for tonight's performance.

## JACK REDMAN - Piano



Jack is a freelance pianist and répétiteur based in London. He recently completed a masters in piano accompaniment at the Royal Academy of Music, studying with Michael Dussek and James Baillieu. Graduating with a DipRAM and Regency prize, he won the Marjorie Thomas Art of Song Prize in competition. A thoroughly rewarding two years at the Academy produced many highlights with some extremely talented soloists.

He has earned a place on the Oxford Lieder Young Artist's programme with soprano Clara Orif, performed as part of the Academy's Song Circle, and performed at Wigmore Hall with trombonist Isobel Daws. Jack has acted as répétiteur for a range of productions, most recently Massenet's *Werther* for Lyric Opera Ireland, and also productions of Bizet's *Carmen*, Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, and Adam Gorb's new opera *The Path to Heaven*. He also sings professionally for choirs and opera chorus, including under Carlo Rizzi for Opera Rara's performance of Mercadante's *Il Proscritto* at the Barbican.

## BENJAMIN NEWLOVE - Piano & Organ



Benjamin Newlove enjoys a busy schedule as a freelance harpsichordist, organist and conductor based in London, whilst holding the position of Director of Music at the Royal Church of St. Alfege, Greenwich. In addition to performing, he is also a PhD student at the University of Edinburgh, specialising in the choral music of Tallis and Byrd. Previous posts include positions at the Royal Hospital Chelsea, St. Michael's Church, Cornhill, St. Paul's Church, Knightsbridge, and St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle.

Benjamin is a prizewinning master's graduate from Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance (generously supported as a Help Musicians Postgraduate Award holder), a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists, Trinity College London, and the Royal Society of Arts. Prior to Trinity, Benjamin studied at King's College London, the Royal Academy of Music (Entrance Scholarship), and Chetham's School of Music. Previous teachers have included: Christopher Stokes, Stephen Farr, Anne Marsden Thomas and Simon Johnson. Currently, Benjamin studies with James Johnstone, focusing on the organ and keyboard works of JS Bach.

## MUSICIANS (from **ST PAUL' S SINFONIA**)

### Flute

Elizabeth Marr  
Kim Reilly

### Oboe

Alex Birchall

### Cor Anglais

Jenni Britton

### Bassoon

Molly Nielsen  
Hannah Robinson

## THOMAS TALLIS SOCIETY CHOIR

With around 60 auditioned voices TTS presents four or five concerts a year in the beautiful setting of St Alfege Church. Although many of the choir members live locally in Greenwich, TTS attracts musicians from all over London owing to the high standards it maintains. All singers are required to have very good sight-reading abilities as the choir works on a few concentrated rehearsals before each concert.

Each year we seek to recruit young singers at the start of their career to join us as Choral Ambassadors. This scheme offers a fee for each concert and rehearsal attended with opportunities for solo performance under Eamonn's guidance. Past members can be heard performing on professional platforms throughout the UK and beyond. Tonight we welcome back Will Searle.

We are always keen to recruit new voices. If you are interested, please contact our membership secretary Kathryn Strachan [strac157@ntlworld.com](mailto:strac157@ntlworld.com).

**Sopranos** Phoebe Clapham, Alana Clark, Imogen Faris, Jan Hart, Claire Jones, Chloe Lam, Rachel Lethbridge, Caroline Molloy, Rosemary Naylor, Nelly Nickerson, Naomi Quant, **Emma Wilkins**

**Altos** Susan Dean, Moira Fitzgerald, Sally Hughes, Emma Humphries, Philippa John, Katie Pennington-Arnold, Katherine Pile, Alice Shelton, Ruthie Smith

**Tenors** David Abrahams, Antonio Antonucci, Justin Eeles, Andrew Green, Larry Howes, Chris Moody, Adam Oliver

**Basses** Dermot Agnew, Kevin Brau, Richard Brooks, Cyril Cleary, Quentin Evans, Simon Gallie, Cameron Glavin, David Houghton, Stephen Jackson, Daniel Jaffé, Tom Perry, Geoff Woodhouse

**Bold** denotes Choral Ambassadors.

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ThomasTallisSociety



And look out for updates on our website [www.thomas-tallis-society.org.uk](http://www.thomas-tallis-society.org.uk).

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## REMAINING 2024-25 SEASON DATES

**Saturday 8 March 2025** conducted by Eamonn Dougan

Howells -Requiem

with penitential motets by Lobo, Tallis, Byrd, Jonathan Dove and Kerensa Briggs

**Sunday 6 July 2025** conducted by Eamonn Dougan

Taylor Scott Davis – Magnificat

Schubert – Magnificat

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## FRIENDS AND PATRONS

We are very grateful to our faithful group of Patrons and Friends that have been loyally supporting us for a number of years. Their generosity and support have really helped the Society to keep going. A reliable yearly income is a huge benefit in planning programmes and means we can budget more accurately.

**We are very keen to increase the number of Patrons and Friends to help us go forward in a sustainable manner and we would love your support as either a Patron or Friend.**

A Friend contributes £30 per year and this special relationship with the choir is recognised by:

- A newsletter with early notification of concerts
- An invitation to the annual Friends and Patrons party
- Recognition of support in TTS programmes.

As a Patron of the Society you receive additional benefits in recognition of an annual donation of £150:

- A complimentary top price ticket to all concerts
- Free concert programmes
- Separate interval or pre-concert complimentary drinks table
- Acknowledgment of support of the Society in the programme
- An invitation to the annual Friends and Patrons party.

Please consider whether you could support TTS by becoming a Patron or a Friend of the Society. Speak to Carole tonight or contact her at [carolelowe@rocketmail.com](mailto:carolelowe@rocketmail.com).

**We would like to recognise the important contribution of the following TTS Patrons:**

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With thanks to the Churchwardens of St Alfege for their continued support.