

# HEXHAM ORPHEUS CHOIR

*Conductor: Glenn Davis*



## *A Feast of*

## *Christmas Music*



# The Hexham Orpheus Choir

Conductor Glenn Davis

Assistant Conductor and rehearsal Pianist

Margaret Huntington



With

John Kirk (Baritone)

Julia Boulton (Violin)

Margaret Huntington (Piano)

and an invited orchestra led by

Julia Boulton

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The Hexham Orpheus Choir would like to thank

**Cogito Books**

**5, St Mary's Chare, Hexham Tel 01434 602555**

for their continued support as our Principal Sponsor in 2006

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Founded in 1955 the choir performs two major concerts each season, plus additional smaller works during the summer months, weddings and fund raising events. Over the years, the choir has appeared at various venues within the region. Many of the choir members also belong to other choirs in the area, with some members also performing as soloists in their own right. Our conductor, Glenn Davis also leads the Priory Singers, based in Tynemouth, and from time to time the two choirs come together to perform larger choral works. Hexham Orpheus Choir operates a no-audition policy which has always provided a platform for people of various musical backgrounds to come together and perform a wide variety of choral music, from Renaissance to the present day. Should you be interested in joining the choir or would like further information please visit our website or email us at [info@hexham-orpheus-choir.org.uk](mailto:info@hexham-orpheus-choir.org.uk) or telephone 07751 346487.

### ***Our next performance***

The Hexham Orpheus Choir and Priory Singers

**Saturday 8th April 2006**

The Kings School Tynemouth

**MOZART - REQUIEM**

With music from his final year including highlights from The Magic Flute

website [www.hexham-orpheus-choir.org.uk](http://www.hexham-orpheus-choir.org.uk)

We would like to express our thanks to Fr. Martin Deegan and the parishioners of St Mary's for allowing us to use the Church for tonight's performance.



The Hexham Orpheus choir gratefully acknowledge the financial support it has received for this concert by The National Federation of Music Societies



## PROGRAMME

### CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA

Das neugeborne Kindelein (The newly-born little child)  
(Sung in English)

Diderik Buxtehude

### STRINGS

Pifa ("Pastoral Symphony") from *Messiah*

George Frideric Handel

### CHOIR

Ein Kind geborn zu Bethlehem  
In dulci jubilo

Harmonised by Gesius and Praetorius  
Samuel Scheidt

### ORCHESTRA

Winter (from *The Four Seasons*)

Antonio Vivaldi

**Soloist:** Julia Boulton

1. Allegro non molto
2. Largo
3. Allegro

### CHOIR, SOLOISTS AND ORCHESTRA

Two "prophecies" from *Messiah*

George Frideric Handel

1. Behold, a virgin shall conceive.
2. O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion.
3. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth.
4. The people that walked in darkness.
5. For unto us a child is born.

**Soloists:** Val Hooker (Alto) and John Kirk (Baritone)

### Interval

### AUDIENCE

Once in Royal David's City

Gauntlett, harmonised A. H. Mann

### CHOIR

1. I saw a maiden sitten and sing
2. All this time this song is best
3. Nativity Carol

trad. arr. Pettman  
William Walton  
John Rutter

### TWO BARITONE SOLOS, to be announced

John Kirk with Margaret Huntington (Piano)

### CHOIR AND BARITONE

A spotless Rose

Herbert Howells

### AUDIENCE

While Shepherds watched their flocks by night

arr. Willcocks

### BARITONE SOLO, CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA

In Terra Pax (with Pip Emler, Soprano)

Gerald Finzi

Diderik (Dietrich) Buxtehude (1637-1707) was Danish – the most famous organist of his day, as well as a prolific composer for the same instrument. This short Christmas cantata was written for the series of evening concerts (*Abendmusik*) that he initiated for the five Sundays in Advent. The text, from the late sixteenth century, welcomes the birth of the "new-born little child" as proof that "God has become reconciled with Man." Not only that, He will ward off the wiles of the devil and hell, bringing a new beginning for the chosen Christian community. At such news we are exhorted to "Rise up! It is now time to sing!" – a fitting beginning to the concert, we hope. Buxtehude uses a small string group, often in apposition to the choir, in a style perhaps derived from the separated groups used in early seventeenth-century Venice.

The short *Pifa* from *Messiah* was a direct attempt by Handel (1685-1759) to imitate the music of the *Pifferari* – shepherds playing their bagpipes and primitive oboes that descended from the Italian hills at Christmastime. In the full oratorio it introduces the narrative of the angels and the shepherds.

The short German carol *Ein Kind geborn zu Bethlehem* uses an “angelic” gallery choir to balance the “standard” harmonisation of the tune, while Samuel Scheidt’s version of *In dulci Jubilo* employs two choirs throughout plus instruments, tossing the famous tune between them in both 4:4 and the more familiar 6:8 time signatures.

1725 saw the publication of twelve violin concertos by Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) named *The Contest between Harmony and Invention*. The first four (*The Four Seasons*) have become the most famous, since their rediscovery in the 1940’s. Within the framework of a set form (all the concerti adopt a fast-slow-fast scheme), Vivaldi allows the soloist ample scope for virtuosity and fantasy (=Invention). All the concerti are prefaced by Italian sonnets written by the composer. Winter, not surprisingly, describes folk shivering and stamping their feet as their teeth chatter in “the bitter blast of a horrible wind.” The suave melody of the slow movement takes us to the warm fireside as the rain outside “drenches at least a hundred.” The winds (Sirocco and Boreas) return in the last movement, freezing the water into ice. Its perils are the “programme” for the last movement – but all within the spirit of a winter “of a kind to gladden one’s heart.”

Lifting “bleeding chunks” from *Messiah* is not totally satisfactory, of course, but Jennens (Handel’s librettist) designed Part One of the oratorio as a series of separate prophecies, each foretelling the birth of the Messiah in his different aspects. Two of these conclude the first half of tonight’s concert.

Edgar Pettman was organist at St James, Picadilly, Like *The Angel Gabriel*, (also harmonised by him) the tune of this carol is Basque, but the refrain is Pettman’s.

William Walton (1902-83) only wrote four carols, but here succeeds in recapturing the ancient association between carol-singing and dancing. The constant refrain of the sixteenth-century verse is that “The Word was made Flesh” – *Verbum caro factus est*.

One composer more than any other has become associated with Christmas music in England over the last thirty years. We hope it is fitting, therefore, to celebrate John Rutter’s sixtieth birthday year with his first-ever carol, written (both words and music) when he was eighteen.

Herbert Howells (1892-1983) wrote sensitively for voices throughout his long career. A *Spotless Rose* was one of three “Carol-Anthems” written just after the First World War. Howell’s vocal lines flow so effortlessly that it comes as a surprise to read that he wrote it while watching trains shunt into sidings on the Gloucester-Bristol line!

In *Terra Pax* (On earth, peace) was one of Gerald Finzi’s last works, before his early death through leukaemia. (He lived from 1901-56). Finzi was taught by Ernest Farrar (at one time an organist in South Shields), who was killed on the Western Front. From the late 1920’s Finzi became an admirer of the poetry of Robert Bridges (Laureate from 1916-30). In this work he takes a short poem, *Christmas Eve*, 1913 describing a winter walk (in the Cotswolds). The distant bells in the valley remind the poet (sung by the solo Baritone) of “that first Christmas of all” – a cue for the narrative of the angels and the shepherds from St. Luke. As the vision fades, the soloist muses on his experience, the text (as earlier) mystically uniting God with nature.

## THE HEXHAM ORPHEUS CHOIR

### Sopranos

Sarah Barker	Nancy Gash
Evelyn Blenkinsop	Rosemarie Herdman
Dorothy Booker	Frances Hughes
Ruth Brownlee	Carolyn Ramsey
Elspeth Christie	Elaine Rigg
Janet Davies	Nuala Rose
Pip Emrler	Brenda Waton
Anne Firth	Carrie Winger

### Altos

Margaret Bainbridge	Vivien Hubbuck
Marie Bridges	Anita Jeffries
Pat Crompton	Judith Murray
Sheila Dance	Patricia Phillips
Elizabeth Dixon	Pat Rose
Davina Dwyer	Janet Storrie
Val Hooker	Roz Waller
	Jean Wilks

### Basses

James Arkless	Keith Mallinson
Paul Barrett	Tony May
Paul Berry	Owen McArdle
Robert Firth	Larry Winger
John Kent	

### Tenors

John Barker	Tim Grew
John Brewster	Susan Kent
Keith Brunton	Dorothy Peters
Malcolm Chainey	Peter Vasey
Tom Frost	