

**The Hexham Orpheus Choir**  
**Conductor Glenn Davis**

# An English Christmas



**Saturday 2nd December 2006**  
**Programme 50p**



# **The Hexham Orpheus Choir**

**Conductor Glenn Davis**

Assistant Conductor and rehearsal accompanist  
**Margaret Huntington**



**With**

**Philip Cull – Oboe**  
**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 2007

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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 the Renaissance to the present day. The choir also has a very active social calendar and new members are always made very welcome. 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***

**Saturday 12th May**  
**HEXHAM ABBEY**

***Howard Goodall***

*Missa Aedis Christi*

***Ralph Vaughan Williams***

*5 Mystical Songs*

***Gabriel Faure***

*Requiem*

We would like to express our thanks to St Aidan's United Reformed Church  
in 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



# PROGRAMME

1. **All sing:** In The Bleak Midwinter Gustav Holst
2. Come All You Worthy Gentlemen trad. English, arr. Willcocks  
What Sweeter Music John Rutter
3. Christmas Cantata Geoffrey Bush  
Soloists: Pip Emler (Soprano), Val Hooker (Contralto)
- (a) Prelude
- (b) Theme and Variations: The Seven Joys of Mary
- (c) Chorale: When Jesus Christ Was Four Years Old
- (d) Lullaby: Little Jesus, Sweetly Sleep
- (e) Scherzo: Make We Merry, Both More and Less
- (f) Carol: This Endris Night
- (g) Intermezzo: I Sing of a Maiden
- (h) Lament: By By Lullay, Thou Little Tiny Child
- (i) Finale: I Saw Three Ships, leading to Epilogue

## Interval : Mulled Wine and Mince Pies

4. **All sing:** A Child This Day Is Born trad. English, arr. Willcocks
5. There Is No Rose (from *The Ceremony Of Carols*) Benjamin Britten  
O Little Town Of Bethlehem Walford Davies
6. Concerto for Oboe and Strings  
(First movement: Rondo pastorale) Ralph Vaughan Williams
7. What Sweeter Music Richard Rodney Bennett  
I Sing Of A Maiden Lennox Berkeley
8. Strings: Two Movements from A Simple Symphony Benjamin Britten  
(a) Playful Pizzicato  
(b) Sentimental Sarabande
9. White Christmas Irving Berlin, arr. Thomson  
and Davis
10. **All sing:** I Saw Three Ships John Rutter

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## The Orchestra

### Violins

Julia Boulton (**leader**)  
Jane Cuggy  
Rachel Davies  
Gordon Dyke  
Kathryn Wakefield  
Michael Walton  
Helen West

### Violas

Eileen Evans  
Anne Greaves

### Double Bass

Gordon Callander

### Cellos

Nigel Chandler  
Peter Richardson

### Oboe

Philip Cull

## PROGRAMME NOTES

Geoffrey Bush lived from 1920 until 1998. His *Christmas Cantata* was written in 1947 and first performed in Oxford. Using a string orchestra with selective contributions from a solo oboe, Bush sets a series of Christmas texts, either his own arrangements of traditional tunes as in the even numbered items and the *I Saw Three Ships* section of 9, or his own freely composed versions, as in the Prelude and Epilogue and numbers 3, 5, and 7. The piece opens with an extended orchestral introduction leading to what could almost be a lament from the Sopranos (*Lullay Jesu*). The men then intone the Collect for Christmas Day. The theme for number two is one of the traditional tunes for *The Seven Joys of Mary*. The Variations lie in the different orchestral treatment for each verse, with particularly discordant harmonies for the reference to Christ's Passion. After a hymn-like setting of Hilaire Belloc's poem, *The Birds*, and a simple realisation of the Czech carol, *Little Jesus*, the choir then have a lively unaccompanied challenge in the central Scherzo (*Make we merry, both more and less*), notable for the constant key changes the choir have to cope with. Bush then cleverly relaxes the excitement with a gentle orchestral introduction to *This Endris Night*, with its flowing melodic line. For me, the highlight of the Cantata is the solo Soprano setting of *I Sing of a Maiden*: a gently undulating string accompaniment with expressive answering figures between the Oboe and Cellos. After a suitably bare version of the *Coventry Carol*, all seems jolly enough when the choir swings into the familiar tune to *I Saw Three Ships*, until the return of the very opening music. This (to me) makes the whole piece just a little more than a mere medley of Christmas Carols. The plaintive ending (prefigured in parts of *Little Jesus*) also seems to remind us that Christ was not born into a cheery "Christmas card" world.

Vaughan Williams wrote his *Oboe Concerto* in 1944. The very mention of VW, the Oboe, and any movement headed "Pastoral" immediately leads us to expect the composer of *The Lark Ascending*, but its mood is more complex than just a rural idyll. It was written for the world-famous virtuoso, Leon Goossens, and indeed makes great demands on its soloist, who plays without a break through the whole concerto. The opening theme is the one that recurs throughout the first movement and explains the "Rondo" of the title. After a series of solo cadenzas the movement ends on a subdued note.

Britten's *Simple Symphony* is an early work from the 1930s (he was born in 1913), but based on even earlier music from the composer's boyhood. The well-known *Playful Pizzicato* comes from a *Scherzo for Piano* written when he was eleven, while the longer *Sentimental Sarabande* is based on two piano compositions from the ages of ten and twelve.

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## THE HEXHAM ORPHEUS CHOIR

### Sopranos

Sarah Barker  
Carol Bates  
Evelyn Blenkinsop  
Dorothy Booker  
Ruth Brownlee  
Elspeth Christie  
Janet Davies  
Jill Dexter  
Pip Emler  
Anne Firth  
Nancy Gash

Rosemarie Herdman  
Frances Hughes  
Margaret Huntington  
Melody Price  
Carolyn Ramsey  
Ann Reed  
Elaine Rigg  
Nuala Rose  
Brenda Waton

### Altos

Margaret Bainbridge  
Marie Bridges  
Sylvia Chainey  
Pat Crompton  
Sheila Dance  
Elizabeth Dixon  
Davina Dwyer  
Heather Grace  
Val Hooker  
Wendy Howe  
Vivien Hubbuck

Anita Jeffries  
Janette Kirton-Darling  
Jan Loughran  
Ellen Murphy-Clarke  
Judith Murray  
Pat Rose  
Audrey Shiels  
Janet Storrie  
Catherine Stott  
Susan Watson  
Jean Wilks

### Tenors

John Barker  
John Brewster  
Keith Brunton  
Malcolm Chainey  
Tony Compton  
Tom Frost

Tim Grew  
Susan Kent  
Dorothy Peters  
Peter Vasey

### Basses

James Arkless  
Paul Barrett  
Paul Berry  
Peter Charlton  
John Crawford  
Robert Firth  
John Kent  
Don Macleod

Keith Mallinson  
Tony May  
Owen McArdle  
Simon Partridge  
Paul Proctor  
Jack Shiels  
Alan Stephenson  
Peter Stott