



SOMERVILLE
COLLEGE CHOIR
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

*A British
Christmas in Goa*



Tuesday 12th December, 6.00 PM
Bom Jesu Church, Goa



Programme

<i>Love Came Down</i>	Richard Lloyd (1933–2021)
<i>Behind the Clouds</i>	Abbie Burt Betinis (b.1980)
<i>O Rex Gentium</i>	Matthew Martin (b.1976)
<i>Alma Redemptoris Mater a5</i>	Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548–1611)
<i>There is no rose</i>	Cecilia McDowall (b.1951)
<i>Three Kings</i>	Peter Cornelius (1824–1874)
<i>Omnes de Saba</i>	Orlando de Lassus (1534–1594)
<i>A Present for the Future</i>	Joanna Forbes L'Estrange (b.1971)
<i>Follow that Star</i>	arr. Peter Gritton (b.1963)
<i>Star of Rohini</i>	Shruthi Rajesekar (b.1996)
<i>Winter Wonderland</i>	Trad.
<i>The Holly and the Ivy</i>	arr. Henry W. Davies (1869–1941)
<i>Sans day carol</i>	Trad. arr. John Rutter (b.1945)
<i>Have yourself a merry little Christmas</i>	arr. Peter Gritton
<i>Ding dong merrily on high!</i>	arr. Mack Wilberg (b.1955)

Introduction

Whilst the Christian feast of Christmas has its origins as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ, the modern version of ‘this most wonderful time of the year’ is a unique juxtaposition of religion and cultural tradition. For some, it is all about religion – marking the birth of Jesus Christ in a stable in Bethlehem on the 25th December, 2023 years ago, as foretold by messianic prophecies. For others it’s a time of celebration, time to spend with families, reminiscing about memories of our childhood, playing party games, singing carols around either the fire, or on the street at people’s doors. Every family will have their own fiercely-guarded traditions, relating to decorating the house, the giving and receiving of gifts, Father Christmas, sending Christmas Cards, making a Christmas (figgy) pudding, where to walk on Boxing day (26th Dec) and even those who wouldn’t consider Christianity to be at the forefront of their lives will head to their local church for Midnight Mass on Christmas eve, often walking back home in the falling snow. It should be noted that many of these traditions include pre-Christian customs, as well as secular and even pagan rituals.

The music that we’ll perform this evening is a selection of works, appropriate for this time of year in Oxford. One of the particular curiosities of Oxford is that students want to celebrate Christmas (or Oxmas in this case) before they go home at the end of term, normally early December, and sometimes even before the season of Advent (which comes from the Latin, *ad veni* – before he comes), the four or five weeks before Christmas has commenced!

We’ll hear music for Advent; music about the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of the Lord; and music about the journey of the Three Kings, who brought Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then a final section of arrangements of traditional Christmas melodies.

Musical Programme

Music and text perfectly combine with the first work of the concert, Richard Lloyd's delightful and charming setting of Christina Rossetti's poem: *Love came down at Christmas*. It's set by many other composers, but this one just oozes the warm fireside feeling of Christmas with its tender and heartfelt harmonies.

Love came down at Christmas

Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love Divine,
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and Angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,
Love Incarnate, Love Divine,
Worship we our Jesus,
But wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,
Love be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men,
Love for plea and gift and sign.

Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)

Richard Lloyd (1933–2021)

The first set of pieces looks at Advent, and the theme of bringing light to darkness, starting with Abbie Betinis' *Behind the clouds*. The text is based on a prose-poem written by the composer's great-grandfather Rev. Bates G. Burt in a Christmas card circulated in 1942 during the dark days of the Second World War. Beginning with just a solo soprano melody, the eager anticipation of relief from the darkness becomes more resolved each verse as the harmonies extend gradually to full choir, as though the proverbial clouds are clearing.

Behind the Clouds

Behind the clouds that darken human life,
Forever shines the Light of God;
And whensoever those clouds may go,
Dispelling the shadows in which we so
blindly grope,
Then is it, indeed,
Hope.

With ears attuned to heaven's prophecies,
Our hearts await a Prince of Peace,
And whensoever that Prince appear,
And we in darkness, and we in fear
find release,
Then is it, indeed,
Peace.

Awake! Awake! Lift up your hearts downcast,
For sorrow shall transform at last,
And whensoever that Rose unfurl'd,
Invites Hosannas for all the world
to employ,
Then is it, indeed,
Joy.

O come, O come, come closer still tonight,
The pains of life remain, but Light...!
And whensoever that Light breaks through,
And we, in radiance, reflect a new
world above,
Then is it, indeed,
Love.

Reverend Bates G. Burt (1878–1948)

Abbie Betinis (b. 1980)

In the days just before Christmas, a special antiphon is traditionally sung at the service of Vespers from a set known as the Advent Antiphons, or more commonly ‘O Antiphons’. There are 7 of these, and each is a name of Christ, with one of his attributes names in scripture. Each addresses Christ, and then beckons him with a specific request, ***O Rex Gentium*** is a particularly bold and striking setting of one of these texts by the English Composer, Matthew Martin, a former organ scholar at Magdalen College, Oxford. It’s traditionally sung on December 22nd and is inspired by the Romantic composer Anton Bruckner.

O Rex Gentium

<i>O rex gentium,</i>	O King of the nations,
<i>et desideratus earum,</i>	and their desire,
<i>lapisque angularis,</i>	the cornerstone
<i>qui facis utraque unum,</i>	making both one:
<i>veni, et salva hominem</i>	Come and save the human race,
<i>quem de limo formasti</i>	which you fashioned from clay.

Advent antiphon, c. 6th century

Matthew Martin (b.1976)

We then hear two works associated with the Blessed Virgin Mary. She was chosen by God to give birth to Jesus, but whose conception was immaculate, so she remained a Virgin after giving birth. The news of her conception was announced to her by the Archangel Gabriel. Mary has four specific pieces named after her (Marian Antiphons) which are sung at specific points of the church year. The Antiphon for Advent is ***Alma redemptoris Mater***, and this setting by the Spanish Renaissance composer Tomás Luis de Victoria is one of the most sublime settings of the text.

Alma Redemptoris Mater

<i>Alma Redemptoris Mater,</i>	Loving Mother of the
<i>quae pervia caeli</i>	Redeemer, who remains the
<i>Porta manes, et stella maris,</i>	gate by which we enter heaven,
<i>succurre cadenti</i>	and the star of the sea,
<i>Surgere qui curat pópulo: tu</i>	help your fallen people who
<i>quae genuisti,</i>	strive to rise:
<i>Natura mirante, tuum</i>	You who gave birth, amazing
<i>sanctum Genitorem:</i>	nature, to your sacred Creator:
<i>Virgo prius ac posterius,</i>	Virgin prior and following,
<i>Gabrielis ab ore</i>	from Gabriel’s mouth
<i>sumens illud Ave, peccatorum</i>	we receive that ‘Hail!’ O, have
<i>miserere.</i>	mercy on us sinners.

Marian antiphon, c. 11th century
Attributed to Hermann of Reichenau
(1013–1054)

Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548–1611)

One of the most notable English events around Christmastime is the BBC broadcast of Carols from King’s College, Cambridge at 3pm on Christmas Eve. This has been a tradition for over 100 years. One of the many traditions about the service is that the Director of Music at King’s will commission a new piece each year. This setting of ***There is no rose*** by Cecilia McDowall was written for the 2021 service and her setting of this well-known fifteenth-century macaronic text which describes Mary as a ‘rose of such virtue’ is expressive and ethereal.

There is no Rose

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.

By that rose we may well see
That he is God in persons three,
Pari forma.

The angels sung the shepherds to:
Gloria in excelsis Deo:
Gaudeamus.

Leave we all this worldly mirth,
And follow we this joyful birth;
Transeamus.

Anonymous c.15th Century

Cecilia McDowall (b.1951)

Music associated with The Three Kings/Wise Men/Magi comes next – They are said to have visited Jesus after his birth, bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They are regular figures in traditional accounts of the nativity celebrations of Christmas and are an important part of Christian tradition. First up, Peter Cornelius' wonderful song: ***Three Kings from Persian Lands afar***. Originally in German, this is a miniature masterpiece for Baritone and Piano. The piano plays a German chorale all the way through, entitled "How brightly shines that morning star"

Three Kings from Persian Lands afar

Three Kings from Persian lands afar
To Jordan follow the pointing star:
And this the quest of the travellers three,
Where the new-born King of the Jews may be.
Full royal gifts they bear for the King;
Gold, incense, myrrh are their offering.

How brightly shines the morning star!
With grace and truth from heaven afar
Our Jesse tree now bloweth.

The star shines out with a steadfast ray;
The kings to Bethlehem make their way,
And there in worship they bend the knee,
As Mary's child in her lap they see;
Their royal gifts they show to the King;
Gold, incense, myrrh are their offering.

Of Jacob's stem and David's line,
For thee, my Bridegroom, King divine,
My soul with love o'erfloweth.

Thou child of man, lo, to Bethlehem
The Kings are travelling, travel with them!
The star of mercy, the star of grace,
Shall lead thy heart to its resting place.
Gold, incense, myrrh thou canst not bring;
Offer thy heart to the infant King.

Thy word, Jesu, Inly feeds us,
Rightly leads us, Life bestowing.
Praise, O praise such love o'erflowing.

Anonymous c.15th Century

Peter Cornelius (b.1951)
Chorale: J. S. Bach (1685–1750)

Then, a work from the Renaissance – ***Omnes de Saba***: a blazing double-choir description of the Kings from Orlando de Lassus.

Omnes de Saba

<i>Omnes de Saba venient, aurum et thus defentes,</i>	All they from Sheba shall come, bringing gold and frankincense,
<i>Et laudem Domino annuntiantes. Alleluia.</i>	and showing forth praise to the Lord. Alleluia.
<i>Reges Tharsis et insulae munera offerent,</i>	The kings of Tharsis and the islands shall offer presents,
<i>Reges Arabum et Saba dona adducent. Alleluia.</i>	The kings of the Arabians and Sheba shall bring gifts. Alleluia.

Isiah 60:6
Psalm 71: 10

Orlando de Lassus (1532–1594)

Something rather different next – ***Follow that Star***, a more jazzy number, by the English singer and composer, Peter Gritton, which allows us to show off our lighter side...

Follow That Star

One dark and stormy evening,
through the wind and rain
There came a sight worth seeing
'cos it wasn't gonna happen again:
Three Kings...

They'd seen a bright light in the sky
Without knowing who, what, when, where, why
They grabbed their gifts and off they went:
Three Kings...

They had to find the little town,
It was not easy to be found:
Follow that star.

Arr. Peter Gritton (b.1963)

From light-hearted to more serious in a work by a former member of the Swingle Singers, Jo Forbes L'Estrange: ***A present for the future*** sets words by the composer which ask us to give the world a present for the future and to live a more sustainable life. These ideals are exemplified in the work of the Oxford India Centre for Sustainable Development, based at Somerville

Choir: A Present for the Future

Is it gold that you bring?
Is that your present for the King?
Is that your special offering?
But far more precious than the gold,
So often have we heard it told,
Is our beloved blue-green world.
Oh bring me a present for the future!

Is it frankincense you bring?
Is that your present for the King?
Is that your special offering?
However fair the frankincense,
Its perfume warming to our sense,
Our planet's need remains immense.
Oh bring me a present for the future!

(continued overleaf)

Is it myrrh that you bring?
Is that your present for the King?
Is that your special offering?
If only could those drops of myrrh
A sense of longing in us stir,
To make Earth's blessings as they were.
Oh bring me a present for the future!

Words and Music by Joanna Forbes L'Estrange (b. 1971)

Finally in this set, a work from Shruthi Rajesekar. She is an Indian-American composer who creates intersectional music that draws from her unique background in the Carnatic and Western classical idioms. ***Star of Rohini*** is a work which sees the converging of two faiths - Christianity and Hinduism. The song draws a link between the Star of Bethlehem - under which Jesus was born - and the Star of Rohini - under which the Hindu deity Krishna was born. These influences are strongly felt in the music, with the harmony resembling elements of Indian Classical music and the piece conveying a strongly ethereal atmosphere.

The Star of Rohini

They saw the star of
Rohini ascending
*Vidimus stellam in oriens
et venimus adorare*

We were stargazing
Gazing at stars
*Ecce stella quam
viderant in oriente
gavisi sunt
gaudio magno valde*

They rejoiced for the star was there
With tears of joy, they cried,
"Behold the star!"
The answers -
They lie in *oriente*

Adapted from Matthew 2:2, 2:9-10, and
the Bhagavata Purana, Canto 10,
with additions from the composer

Shruthi Rajesekar (b. 1996)

Our final set of music looks at traditional melodies, and arrangements of popular Christmas tunes. After a jazzy version of ***Winter Wonderland***, we have two songs about Holly and Ivy - plants often used to decorate homes at this time of year. Firstly, a wonderful arrangement of the traditional tune, ***The Holly and the Ivy*** by Henry Walford Davies followed by a work by 'Mr Christmas', John Rutter, who takes a tune from a Cornish village called St Day, and tuns it into a sparkling masterpiece.

The Holly and the Ivy

The holly and the ivy
when they are both full grown,
of all the trees that are in the wood
the holly bears the crown.

*The rising of the sun
and the running of the deer,
the playing of the merry organ,
sweet singing in the choir.*

The holly bears a blossom,
white as the lily flower,
and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
to be our sweet Saviour.

The rising of the sun...

(continued overleaf)

The holly bears a berry,
as red as any blood,
and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
to do poor sinners good.

The rising of the sun...

The holly bears a prickle,
as sharp as any thorn,
and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
on Christmas day in the morn.

The rising of the sun...

The holly bears a bark,
as bitter as any gall,
and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
for to redeem us all.

The rising of the sun...

English traditional

First setting: English traditional melody,
Arranged by Henry Walford Davies
(1869–1941)

Second setting: ST DAY
Arranged by John Rutter (b.1945)

One of the most frequently heard Christmas songs of the last 100 years, ***Have yourself a merry little Christmas*** was first heard sing by Judy Garland in the 1944 musical, Meet me in St Louis. The lyrics have been adapted on a regular basis, but we can only hope that the prescience of the war-bound line “Next year all our troubles will be out of sight” might come true again.

Have yourself a merry little Christmas,

Have yourself a merry little Christmas,
let your heart be light,
Next year all our troubles
will be out of sight

Have yourself a merry little Christmas,
make the yule-tide gay.
Next year all our troubles
will be miles away

Once again as in olden days,
happy golden days of yore,
Faithful friends who were dear to us
will be near to us once more.

Some day soon we all will be together,
if the fates allow,
Until then we'll have to
muddle through somehow,
So have yourself a merry little Christmas
now.

Ding Dong! Merrily on high started life as a secular dance tune from 16th Century France, but was transformed when George Woodward came up with these words to go alongside his fondness for bell-ringing. Whilst the most common version of this carol is by the Victorian composer Charles Wood, this version (by the Musical Director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir) is loaded full of jollity and festive spirit.

Ding Dong! Merrily on High

Ding Dong! merrily on high
in heav'n the bells are ringing
Ding, dong! verily the sky
is riv'n with angel singing:

Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis.

(continued overleaf)

E'en so here below, below
let steeple bells be swungen
And i-o, i-o, i-o
by priest and people be sungen.
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis.

Pray ye dutifully prime
your matin chime, ye ringers
May ye beautifully rhyme
your evetime song, ye singers.
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis.

We hope you've enjoyed this evening's concert. Have a safe journey home – **and merry Christmas!**

About the Choir



Somerville College Choir is made up of 32 singers from Somerville College and the wider Oxford community. Consisting of choral scholars and volunteers, the choir meets twice weekly and is the only College Choir that sings primarily secular events. The focal point of each week is Choral Contemplation which

takes place every Sunday evening in term and plays a central role in College life. Members of the Choir also sing in the National Youth Choir, the Rodolfus Choir, Gabrieli Roar, Genesis Sixteen, and Schola Cantorum of Oxford, and former members can be found at various music colleges, and as part of VOCES8.

Recent highlights include workshops with Ben Parry (Former director of the National Youth Choir), the King's Singers, Giles Underwood, Dame Emma Kirkby (an alumna of the college), and Rachel Nicholls, performances of Bach St John Passion and Mozart Requiem with the Instruments of Time and Truth, as well as a concert for refugees from Afghanistan with the Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra, and a gig with the Basin St Brawlers.

The choir was first Oxford College Choir to tour to India, engaging in outreach with multiple charities and performing three concerts to capacity audiences in Mumbai and Goa in 2018. The choir's recent album 'The Dawn of Grace' featuring music for Christmas by women composers has received wide ranging acclaim from around the world, and was named as Christmas Choice Album by BBC Music Magazine, 2022.

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Director of Chapel Music



Will Dawes is Director of Chapel Music of Somerville College, Oxford, Director of Music at the church of St Mary Magdalen, Oxford, and the former Director of Frideswide Voices (Oxford's first liturgical choir for 7-14 year-old girls, which became part of the Choral Foundation at Christ Church Cathedral in September). He is a graduate of the Royal Academy

of Music where he studied Choral Conducting and Singing. He has directed numerous excellent choral societies and chamber choirs across the UK and his work has also taken him to cities across the globe, including Auckland, Ghent, Jerusalem, Mumbai, Portland OR, and Shenzhen. For 16 years, Will was a member of the internationally acclaimed vocal ensemble Stile Antico. The group performs all over the globe, including concerts in the Wigmore Hall and at the BBC Proms, and have recently have made their debut in South America, South Korea, as well as performing at the 2018 GRAMMY Ceremony in Madison Square Garden, New York. He is a former Lay Clerk of Christ Church, Oxford, and has sung with The Sixteen, Collegium Vocale Gent, The Eric Whitacre Singers, and Polyphony. He was made an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music in March 2018.

Somerville College

Somerville College, University of Oxford, was founded in 1879 to include the excluded, and named in honour of the Scottish mathematician and scientist Mary Somerville. It welcomed women when they were barred from the University and was the

first non-denominational College in Oxford. Now as a College for women and men it remains as true as ever to those founding principles.



Cornelia Sorabji

The College has exceptionally strong and meaningful links to India, with distinguished alumnae that include Indira Gandhi, India's first woman Prime Minister and Cornelia Sorabji, the first Indian woman at Oxford in 1889, and the first Indian woman lawyer to practice in the UK, and the first woman to practice law in India.

We are also the home of the Oxford India Centre for Sustainable Development, which advances India's sustainable development by bringing different academic disciplines and sectors together. The Centre develops future leaders by offering scholarships to exceptional Indian students to study at Oxford. We carry out multidisciplinary research on sustainable nutrition, the environment and health; and we translate academic ideas to the ground. We have twenty one current scholars, with a thirty four OICSD alumni who have since returned to India to work in relevant sectors.



Somerville College's Library

SOMERVILLE

COLLEGE CHOIR

Director of Chapel Music
Will Dawes

Organ Scholars: Emanuel Bor, Alfred Kelsey

Sopranos: Bea Carpenter, Kaia Cochran, Steph Garrett*, Nikita Handel, Emma Hunt, Ella Machtynger, Helen Matthews, Miriam Remshard, Rosie Thorogood, Angie Wyatt

Altos: Trina Banerjee, Zaira Barakat, Ursula Batchelor, Kate Dorkins, Roxanne Moghareh, Ciara Morris, Vicky Taylor, Erin Townsend

Tenors: Louis Benneyworth, Finlay Dove, Jack Evans, Franco Lopez, Luca Hayes Lorente, Alva Orr

Basses: Ben Carter, Tim Chan, Christopher Churcher, Bobby Clark, Francois de Robert Hautequere**, Augustine McMahon*, Luke Mulholland, Phoenix Solti

**Chloe and Helen Morton Scholar*

*** John M Cockcroft Choral Scholar*

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