

# Colinton & Merchiston Choir

## Christmas Programme – December 2020



### Season's Greetings from our Conductor

During this prolonged period when we are unable to meet to sing together as a choir, it seemed appropriate to put together a programme of Christmas music, which choir members could then follow (and sing along to, if they wish) at a time which is suitable to them. This idea met with general approval in the recent questionnaire completed by choir members.

There is nothing which any choir can do at present to replicate the enjoyment of being able to meet together to sing, especially at this time of year, but we hope that this will give some enjoyment to listeners, and very much hope that, by this time next year, we will be meeting once again to sing and perform together. Most of the music chosen has been performed by the choir in recent years, so should be familiar to many, and should revive some memories of our concerts.

Throughout the document we have called out on which page you can find some of the pieces within the "100 Carols for Choirs" publication. Additionally, you can click on the embedded links within this document (blue underlined text) to take you to each piece. Alternatively, you can use Google, entering "YouTube" followed by the title and composer / arranger of the piece. I am pretty inept with technology but have found this easy to do!

**Philip Rossiter**  
**Conductor**

**Stay connected  
with your choir!**

**Website:** [colintonchoir.org](http://colintonchoir.org)

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/colintonchoir/](https://facebook.com/colintonchoir/)

**Email:** [admin@colintonchoir.org](mailto:admin@colintonchoir.org)

# Christmas Programme



## **In Terra Pax** **Gerald Finzi (1901 – 1956)**

Christmas Scene for Soprano and Baritone soloists and Chorus

Composed in 1954, this short work has been performed three times by the choir – in 1998, 2005 and 2015. Unlike Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, which we performed in last year's Christmas concert, it is not based on traditional carol tunes, and takes its text from Robert Bridges' poem "Noel: Christmas Eve, 1913" and from the Gospel of St Luke.

Finzi's inspiration for the work came from hearing church bells ringing on a frosty Christmas Eve from a hilltop in the Cotswolds between Cheltenham and Gloucester. It is in that chilly quiet that "In Terra Pax" begins, with a lone walker in this very situation, whose thoughts then start to reflect on the first Christmas Eve, taking us into St Luke's nativity narrative.

The two soloists and chorus have clearly defined roles: the baritone takes the voice of the poet, the soprano is cast as the angel, and the chorus narrates the familiar biblical text. The climax comes with the chorus singing "Glory to God in the highest", which gradually fades away as we return to the lone walker on the hilltop.

The work concludes with the chorus singing *ppp* – "And on earth peace, Good will toward men" – those who have sung in our performances may well remember that this short phrase, unaccompanied, is notoriously difficult to keep in tune!

Follow the [link](#) to listen to this lovely atmospheric work.





# Carol Settings For Choir

## Star Carol

**John Rutter (b. 1945)** – *100 Carols for Choirs*, p. 293

This energetic and jaunty carol has words and music by John Rutter, whose name is synonymous with Christmas music. Composed in 1972, the piece was performed by our choir in 2019's concert.

## The Truth From Above

**harm. Vaughan Williams (1872 – 1958)** – *100 Carols for Choirs*, p. 342

**and**

## Sussex Carol Trad.

**arr. David Willcocks (1919 – 2015)** – *100 Carols for Choirs*, p. 242

Both of these carols featured in our concert last year, in Vaughan Williams' Fantasia on Christmas Carols. Both come into the category of English Folk Carols, which were collected and catalogued by Cecil Sharpe and Vaughan Williams in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

This version of "The truth from above" is a straightforward four-part harmonisation of the English folk tune, not dissimilar to the version we encountered last year.

David Willcocks' setting of the Sussex Carol, for choir and organ, is much more complex, and was written for the choir of King's College, Cambridge, where he was Director of Music from 1957 until 1974. It features regularly in the annual service broadcast from King's.

## O Holy Night

**Adolphe Adam (1803 – 1856)** – *not found in 100 Carols for Choirs*

This piece will be familiar to many choir members, having performed it under the baton of David Turner at least twice. Written in the Classical style, it was composed in 1847 to mark the restoration of the church organ in the French town of Roquemaure, near Avignon, and is a setting of a poem by Philippe Cappeau.

This carol has become more familiar in recent years to the general public, having been voted "the nation's favourite carol" in the Classic FM polls in 2017, 2018, and 2019.

## Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day

**John Gardner (1917 – 2011)** – *not found in 100 Carols for Choirs*

This carol is extremely lively and is characterised by its syncopated rhythms and unusual setting of the words, which choir members will remember having to wrestle with in last year's rehearsals. In the end, our performance was very successful. It was composed in the 1960s when Gardner was Director of Music at St Paul's Girls' School, following in the illustrious footsteps of Gustav Holst and Herbert Howells. To quote a famous British choral director, who taught me the organ when I was at university, "You cannot fail to smile on hearing it".



## Audience Participation Carols

Audience participation has become a feature of the Colinton and Merchiston Choir's Christmas concert over a number of years. There is little need to provide any background detail, and all have been chosen because they feature a descant to tax the sopranos even further in the course of an evening's singing! Recordings are readily available in the usual way. 100 Carols for Choirs page numbers indicated below.

- [O come, all ye faithful](#) (Willcocks descant) p. 226
- [O little town of Bethlehem](#) (Armstrong descant) p. 234
- [Once in royal David's city](#) (Willcocks descant) p. 260
- [Hark the herald-angels sing](#) (Willcocks descant) p. 107

This features a particularly "cruel" descant for the sopranos at the end of a big sing!

### **Finale – [We wish you a merry Christmas](#)**

***Arr. Arthur Warrell (1883 – 1939)***

We include this particular carol to wish the compliments of the season to all members of the Colinton and Merchiston Choir and your families. We very much hope it will not be too long before we can meet together again.



**We hope you can join us at the Choir Zoom Christmas Social – Monday 14<sup>th</sup> December at 7.30pm**

**Happy Christmas to all  
and good wishes for 2021!**