

# WIGMORE HALL

Thursday 14 December 2023  
7.30pm

## Winter Tales

### VOCES8

Andrea Haines soprano  
Molly Noon soprano  
Katie Jeffries-Harris alto  
Barnaby Smith alto, artistic director

Blake Morgan tenor  
Euan Williamson tenor  
Christopher Moore baritone  
Dominic Carver bass

William Byrd (c.1540-1623)	Rorate caeli (pub. 1605)
Reena Esmail (b.1983)	The Unexpected Early Hour from <i>A Winter Breviary</i> (2021)
Michael Praetorius (c.1571-1621)	Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen (pub. 1609)
Sergey Rachmaninov (1873-1943)	Bogoroditse Devo from <i>All-Night Vigil</i> Op. 37 (1915)
Francis Pott (b.1957)	Balulalow (2009)
Jonathan Dove (b.1959)	The Three Kings (2000)
Hieronymus Praetorius (1560-1629)	Magnificat quinti toni <i>incorporating</i> Joseph, lieber Joseph mein <i>and</i> In dulci júbilo (pub. 1622)
	<i>Interval</i>
Sally Beamish (b.1956)	In the stillness (2007)
Luke Mayernik (b.1981)	The Lamb (2023)
Trad/English	Joseph and Mary <i>arranged by John Rutter</i>
Anon	Maria durch ein Dornwald ging <i>arranged by Stefan Claas</i>
Jonathan Rathbone (b.1957)	The Oxen (1991)
Jay Livingston (1915-2001)	Silver Bells (1950) <i>arranged by Blake Morgan</i>
& Ray Evans (1915-2007)	
Jule Styne (1905-1994)	Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow! (1945) <i>arranged by</i> <i>Jim Clements</i>
J Fred Coots (1897-1985)	Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town (1934) <i>arranged by Jim Clements</i>
& Haven Gillespie (1888-1975)	



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This evening's programme, with its rich mix of old and new, embraces the spiritual and the worldly threads that together weave the vibrant cloth of Christmas and bring warmth to winter's chilly heart.

**William Byrd's** death four centuries ago signified the end of a golden age in English music. The vitality of his work is clear in *Rorate caeli*, an uplifting setting for five voices of words from the *Book of Isaiah*. The text yearns for the coming of the Messiah, mankind's saviour; it became central to worship during Advent, the pre-Christmas period of penitence. Byrd's motet, from his first book of *Gradualia* (1605), projects fervent longing for Christ's coming into the world.

*The Unexpected Early Hours* is one of three 'eco-carols' from **Reena Esmail's** *A Winter Breviary* (2021), exquisite settings of verse by Rebecca Gayle Howell that explore the Christmas story from perspectives determined by the natural world. The piece combines the intense concentration of the early morning service of Lauds with the joyful spirit of the Hindustani classical raag, Ahir Bhairav. Nature imagery and the wisdom enshrined in the turning year are present also in the simple beauty of **Michael Praetorius's** hymn *Es ist ein ros' entsprungen*. The piece, like Byrd's *Rorate caeli*, connects with the prophecies of Isaiah, with Mary here personified as the spotless rose, offshoot of the Tree of Jesse. *Bogoroditse Devo* from **Rachmaninov's** *All-Night Vigil* of 1915, a miracle of so-called choral orchestration, gives voice to the angelical salutation to the Blessed Virgin, the traditional 'Hail, Mary' prayer.

Another **Praetorius, Hieronymous**, unrelated to Michael, enriched the already well-stocked repertory of Lutheran Christmas music as organist of Hamburg's Jakobikirche. His *Magnificat quinti toni* for eight voices, constructed on the fifth tone or church mode, wraps the even-numbered verses of the Song of Mary in sonorous polyphony to contrast with the plainsong statements of its odd verses. The lilting melody of the Christmas cradle song *Joseph, lieber Joseph mein*, echoed at the words 'et sanctum nomen eius' in the Magnificat, predates Praetorius's tender setting of it by at least 250 years. Praetorius makes deft use of two contrasting four-part choirs to reiterate lines from the text's mixed salad of German and Latin words. It appears that the words of *In dulci jubilo* were revealed in a vision to Heinrich Suso, a 14th-century mystic known to his contemporaries as 'Servant of the Eternal Wisdom'; they were probably married by him to an existing dance song, destined to become a Christmas staple in German-speaking lands. Praetorius evokes the sound of bells in his setting's ringing harmonies.

**Jonathan Dove's** *The Three Kings*, commissioned for the 2000 Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at King's College, Cambridge, sets words by Dorothy L Sayers, best known for her detective novels. The piece imagines the kings who paid homage to the infant Jesus respectively as young, middle aged and old, the latter portrayed in music of euphoric energy. Sayers's 'balow-la-lay' refrain echoes a common device in late medieval carols, vocalised by the Virgin Mary as she sings her newborn child to sleep.

**Francis Pott's** meditative *Balulalow* wraps an early 16th-century version of the Marian lullaby attributed to the Scottish brothers James, John and Robert Wedderburn in harmonies of ravishing beauty.

*In the stillness* distils the essential spirit of a humble parish church in a snowbound rural scene. **Sally Beamish's** short homophonic carol, to words by Katrina Shepherd, unfolds as an evocation of a Christmas free from the commercial distractions. The focus of the Nativity story, a child born into poverty in a cattle stall, becomes a symbol for the beauty of all creation in William Blake's *The Lamb*. The poem's setting by **Luke Mayernik**, recently announced as winner of the 2023 VOCES8 Composition Competition, began life as a piano improvisation fashioned while its composer listened to a perpetual loop of Ralph Richardson reciting Blake's verse, 'desiring earnestly to capture its simplicity and timelessness,' as he recalls. 'After a long period of silence, I began to play. It was as if a gateway had opened, and the setting was finished in almost real-time. It was the first time such a thing had happened to me when writing. I don't know if that experience will ever happen again, but I'll cherish it always with profound gratitude.' **John Rutter's** arrangement of *Joseph and Mary*, to traditional words first published in 1833 by William Sandys, is based on a haunting Herefordshire folk melody collected by Ralph Vaughan Williams before the First World War.

*Maria durch ein Dornwald ging*, first published in 1850, probably began life as a pilgrimage song and secured lasting popularity thanks to its use in Catholic Advent services in Germany and Austria. The late composer and conductor Stefan Claas matched its folk-like melody to timeless harmonies that invite the listener to contemplate the profound mystery of the incarnation. Studies in music and mathematics prepared the ground for **Jonathan Rathbone's** career as composer, singer and conductor. The delicate close harmonies of his setting of *The Oxen*, Thomas Hardy's well-loved poem first published in *The Times* on Christmas Eve, 1915, captures the serenity of the moment of Christ's birth. Even closer harmonies (and multiple echoes of transatlantic Christmas favourites) flow through **Blake Morgan's** spellbinding arrangement of 'Silver Bells', perfect Yuletide fare for one of the world's finest a cappella vocal ensembles.

While the revival of such old English folk carols as *Joseph and Mary* gathered pace in the 1920s, London-born Jule Styne was making his mark as a dance band pianist across the pond. He achieved immortality as a Broadway songsmith, begetter of some of the last century's greatest hits. **Jim Clements** has applied his brand of magic to **Styne's** 'Let it Snow!', a Christmas evergreen originally written during a Hollywood heatwave in 1945. Swing is the thing in Clements's showstopping arrangement of **J Fred Coots** and **Haven Gillespie's** 'Santa Claus is Comin' to Town', a Christmas cracker packed with seasonal sparkle and big band bling.

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## William Byrd (c.1540-1623)

### Rorate caeli (pub. 1605)

*Liturgical text*

Rorate caeli desuper, et  
nubes pluant iustum:

Aperiatur terra, et germinet  
salvatorem.

Benedixisti, Domine, terram  
tuam:

Avertisti captivitatem  
Jacob.

Gloria Patri,  
et Filio,  
et Spiritui Sancto.

Sicut erat in principio, et  
nunc, et semper,

Et in saecula saeculorum.  
Amen.

### Drop down ye heavens

Drop down ye heavens,  
from above, and let the  
skies pour down  
righteousness:

let the earth open and  
bring forth a Saviour.

Lord, thou hast blessed  
thy land:

thou hast turned away  
the captivity of Jacob.

Glory be to the Father,  
and to the Son, and to  
the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is  
now, and ever shall be,  
world without end.  
Amen.

## Reena Esmail (b.1983)

### The Unexpected Early Hour from *A Winter Breviary* (2021)

*Rebecca Gayle Howell*

Praise Be! Praise Be!  
Praise Be! Praise Be!

The dim the dun the dark withdraws  
Our recluse morning's found

Praise Be! Praise Be!  
Praise Be! Praise Be!

The river's alive  
The clearing provides  
Lie down, night sky—Lie down

Lie down, night sky!  
Lie down, night sky!

I feel the cold wind leaving, gone  
I feel the frost's relief  
My tracks in the snow  
Can still be erased  
In us, the sun believes

*Winter is Winter ends*

So the true bird calls  
The rocks cry out  
My bones cry out  
All the trees applaud

Every hard thing lauds!

Lie down, night sky!  
Lie down, night sky!

I know the seeding season comes  
I know the ground will spring  
My fate is not night  
I don't need to try  
Behold! The dawn, within

Horizon lights across my thoughts  
Horizon lines redraw  
Inside of my throat  
A rise of the gold  
Inside my chest I thaw

*Winter is Winter ends*  
Nothing stays the same  
The moon strikes high  
The sun strikes high  
Now I hear Your name:

*Earth's Untired Change*

Praise Be! Praise Be!  
Praise Be! Praise Be!

The unexpected early hour  
Grows the good light long

Our darkness ends  
O mercy sun

Trust can warm us all!

Begin Again! (Again) (Again)  
Begin Again! (Again)

May our day begin!

Begin Again! (Again) (Again)

O may our day begin!

*Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have ended.*

## Michael Praetorius (c.1571-1621)

**Es ist ein Ros'  
entsprungen** (pub. 1609)  
*Anonymous*

Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen  
aus einer Wurzel  
zart,  
Wie uns die Alten sungen,  
von Jesse kam die Art.  
Und hat ein Blümlein  
bracht mitten im kalten  
Winter  
Wohl zu der halben Nacht.

Das Röslein, das ich meine,  
davon Jesaja sagt,  
Hat uns gebracht  
alleine Marie, die reine  
Magd.  
Aus Gottes ew'gem Rat  
hat sie ein Kind  
geboren,  
Welches uns selig macht.

O Jesu, bis zum Scheiden  
aus diesem Jammertal  
Lass Dein Hilf uns geleiten  
hin in den Freudensaal,  
In Deines Vaters Reich, da  
wir Dich ewig loben.  
O Gott, uns das  
verleih.

**A spotless rose is  
growing**

A spotless rose is  
growing, sprung from a  
tender root,  
of ancient seers' foretelling,  
of Jesse promised fruit.  
Its fairest bud unfolds to  
light amid the cold, cold  
winter,  
and in the dark midnight.

The rose which I am singing,  
whereof Isaiah said,  
is from its sweet root  
springing in Mary,  
purest maid;  
through God's great love  
and might the blessed  
babe she bare us  
in a cold, cold winter's night.

O Saviour, child of Mary,  
who felt our human woe;  
Saviour, king of glory, who  
dost our weakness know,  
bring us at length, we  
pray,  
to the bright courts of  
heaven and to the  
endless day.

## Sergey Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

**Bogoroditse Devo from  
All-Night Vigil Op. 37**  
(1915)  
*Liturgical text*

Bogorditse Devo,  
raduisya,  
Blagodtnaya Mariye, Gospod  
s toboyu.  
Blagoslovena ty v  
zhenakh,  
I blagosloven plod chreva  
tvoyevo,  
Yako Spasa rodila yesi dush  
nashikh.

**Rejoice, virgin  
mother of God**

Rejoice, virgin mother of  
God,  
Mary, full of grace, the  
Lord is with you.  
Blessed are you among  
women,  
and blessed is the fruit of  
your womb,  
for you have borne the  
Saviour of our souls.

## Francis Pott (b.1957)

**Balulalow** (2009)  
*attr. James, John & Robert Wedderburn*

O my deare hert, young Jesu sweit,  
Prepare thy creddil in my spreit,  
And I sall rock thee to my hert,  
And never mair from thee depart.

But I sall praise thee evermoir  
With sanges sweit unto thy gloir.  
The knees of my hert sall I bow,  
And sing that richt Balulalow.

## Jonathan Dove (b.1959)

**The Three Kings** (2000)  
*Dorothy L Sayers*

The first king was very young,  
O balow, balow la lay,  
With doleful ballads on his tongue,  
O balow, balow la lay,  
He came bearing a branch of myrrh  
Than which no gall is bitterer,  
O balow, balow la lay,  
Gifts for a baby King, O.

The second king was a man in prime,  
O balow, balow la lay,  
The solemn priest of a solemn time,  
O balow, balow la lay,  
With eyes downcast and reverent feet  
He brought his incense sad and sweet,  
O balow, balow la lay,  
Gifts for a baby King, O.

The third king was very old,  
O balow, balow la lay,  
Both his hands were full of gold,  
O balow, balow la lay,  
Many a gaud and glittering toy,  
Baubles brave for a baby boy,  
O balow, balow la lay,  
Gifts for a baby King, O.

## Hieronymus Praetorius (1560-1629)

### Magnificat quinti toni (pub. 1622)

*Liturgical text*

*incorporating*

**Joseph, lieber Joseph  
mein** (pub. 1622)

*Anonymous*

*and*

**In dulci jubilo** (pub. 1622)

*attr. Henry Suso*

Magnificat anima mea  
Dominum

Et exultavit spiritus meus in  
Deo salutari meo.

Joseph, lieber Joseph mein,  
Hilf mir wiegen das  
Kindelein,

Gott, der wird dein Lohner  
sein

Im Himmelreich, der  
Jungfrau Kind Maria.

Eia, eia.

Virgo Deum genuit,  
Quem divina voluit  
clementia.

Omnes nunc concinite,  
Nato regi  
psallite,

Voce pia dicite:

Sit gloria Christo nostro  
infantulo.

Hodie apparuit in Israel,  
Quem praedixit Gabriel,  
est natus  
Rex.

Quia respexit humilitatem  
ancillae suae:

Ecce enim ex hoc beatam  
me dicent

Omnes generationes.

Quia fecit mihi magna qui  
potens est:

Et sanctum nomen ejus.

In dulci jubilo

Nun singet und seid froh!

Unsers Herzens Wonne

Liegt in praesepio

Und leuchtet als die Sonne  
Matris in gremio.

Alpha es et O.

**Joseph, my dear  
Joseph**

**In sweet rejoicing**

My soul magnifies the  
Lord

and my spirit rejoices in  
God my salvation.

Joseph, my dear Joseph,  
help me rock this little  
child,

the child of the Virgin  
Mary.

God will reward you in  
heaven.

Eia, eia.

God is born of a Virgin,  
as heaven's grace  
ordained.

Let all now sing together,  
sing praises to the new-  
born king,

proclaim with pious voice:  
glory to Christ, the new-  
born child.

Today is born in Israel  
the one whom Gabriel  
prophesied. The King is  
born.

For he has had respect to  
the lowliness

of his handmaiden: for  
behold, from now,  
all generations will call  
me blessed.

For he that is mighty has  
done great things for me:  
and his name is holy.

In sweet rejoicing,  
now sing and be joyful:

our heart's bliss

rests in a manger

and shines like the sun  
in his mother's lap.

You are Alpha and Omega.

Et misericordia ejus a  
progenie in progenies:

Timentibus eum.

Fecit potentiam in brachio  
suo:

Dispersit superbos  
mente cordis  
sui.

O Jesu parvule,

Nach dir ist mir so weh.

Tröst mir mein Gemüte,

O puer optime;

Durch alle deine Güte,

O princeps gloriae,

Trahe me post te!

Deposuit potentes de  
sede:

Et exaltavit humiles.

Esurientes implevit  
bonis:

Et divites dimissit  
inanes.

O patris caritas

O nati lenitas,

Wir wärn all verloren

Per nostra crimina:

So hat er uns erworben

Coelorum gaudia.

Eia, wärn wir da!

Suscepit Israel puerum  
suum:

Recordatus misericordiae  
suae.

Sicut locutus est ad patres  
nostros:

Abraham et semini ejus in  
saecula.

Ubi sunt gaudia?

Nirgend mehr denn da!

Da die Engel singen

Nova cantica

Und da die Schellen klingen

In Regis curia.

Eia, wärn wir da!

Gloria Patri et Filio, et Spiritui  
Sancto:

Sicut erat in principio et nunc  
et semper,

Et in saecula saeculorum.  
Amen.

And his mercy is from  
generation to generation:

to those who fear him.

He has shewed strength  
with his arm:

he has scattered the proud  
in the imagination of their  
hearts.

O little Jesus,

I yearn for you.

Comfort my spirit,

O fairest child.

Let me follow you

in all your goodness,

O prince of glory.

He has put down the  
powerful from their seats:

and raised up the humble.

He has filled the hungry  
with good things:

and the rich sent away  
empty.

O love of the Father,

O gentleness of the Son,

though our sins

led us astray,

he has secured us

the joys of heaven.

O that we were there!

Concerning Israel, his  
child:

he remembered his  
mercifulness.

Which he promised to our  
forefathers:

to Abraham and his seed  
in perpetuity.

Nowhere is there more joy  
than there,

where the angels sing  
new songs.

The bells are chiming  
in the court of the King.

O that we were there!

Glory to the Father, the Son,  
and the Holy Spirit:

as it was in the beginning, is  
now and ever shall be,

world without end.  
Amen.

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**Interval**

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## Sally Beamish (b.1956)

### In the stillness (2007)

*Katrina Shepherd*

In the stillness of a church  
Where candles glow, ...

*Due to copyright reasons, we are unable to reproduce the text for this song.*

## Luke Mayernik (b.1981)

### The Lamb (2023)

*William Blake*

Little Lamb who made thee?  
Dost thou know who made thee,  
Gave thee life and bid thee feed  
By the stream and o'er the mead;  
Gave thee clothing of delight  
Softest clothing woolly bright;  
Gave thee such a tender voice  
Making all the vales rejoice?  
Little Lamb who made thee?  
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb I'll tell thee!  
Little Lamb I'll tell thee!  
He is called by thy name  
For he calls himself a Lamb:  
He is meek and he is mild,  
He became a little child:  
I a child and thou a lamb,  
We are called by his name.  
Little Lamb God bless thee!  
Little Lamb God bless thee!

## Trad/English

### Joseph and Mary

*arranged by John Rutter*

*Traditional*

O, Joseph being an old man truly,  
He married a virgin fair and free;  
A purer virgin could no man see  
Than he chose for his wife and his dearest dear.

They lived both in joy and bliss;  
But now a strict commandment is,  
In Jewry-land no man should miss  
To go along with his dearest dear

Unto the place where he was born,  
Unto the Emperor to be sworn,  
To pay a tribute that's duly known,  
Both for himself and his dearest dear.

And when they were to Bethlehem come,  
The inns were filled, both all and some;  
For Joseph entreated them, every one,  
Both for himself and his dearest dear.

Then they were constrained presently  
Within a stable all night to lie,  
Where they did oxen and asses tie,  
With his true love and his dearest dear.

The king of all power was in Bethlehem born,  
Who wore for our sakes a crown of thorn,  
Then God preserve us both even and morn  
For Jesus' sake, our dearest dear.

## Anon

**Maria durch ein  
Dornwald ging**  
*arranged by Stefan Claas*  
*Anonymous*

Maria durch ein' Dornwald  
ging.  
Kyrie eleison!  
Maria durch ein' Dornwald  
ging,  
Der hatte in sieb'n Jahr'n kein  
Laub getrag'n.  
Jesus und Maria.

Was trug Maria unter ihrem  
Herzen?  
Kyrie eleison!  
Ein kleines Kindlein ohne  
Schmerzen,  
Das trug Maria unter ihrem  
Herzen.  
Jesus und Maria.

Da haben die Dornen Rosen  
getragen.  
Kyrie eleison!  
Als das Kindlein durch den  
Wald getragen,  
Da haben die Dornen Rosen  
getragen.  
Jesus und Maria.

Wer soll dem Kind sein  
Täufer sein?  
Kyrie eleison!  
Das soll der Sankt Johannes  
sein,  
Der soll dem Kind sein Täufer  
sein.  
Jesus und Maria.

Wie soll dem Kind sein Name  
sein?  
Kyrie eleison!

**Mary walks amid the  
thorns**

Mary walks amid the  
thorns,  
Kyrie eleison!  
Mary walks amid the  
thorns  
which seven years no leaf  
have borne.  
Jesus and Mary.

What 'neath her heart  
doth Mary bear?  
Kyrie eleison!  
A little child doth Mary  
bear,  
beneath her heart he  
nestles there.  
Jesus and Mary.

Lo! Roses on the thorns  
appear,  
Kyrie eleison!  
And as the two are  
passing near,  
roses on the thorns  
appear.  
Jesus and Mary.

Who should baptise the  
child?  
Kyrie eleison!  
That should indeed Saint  
John be,  
who should baptise the  
child.  
Jesus and Maria.

What should the child be  
named?  
Kyrie eleison!

Der Name der soll Christus sein	His name should be Christ,
Das war von Anfang der Name sein.	as his name has been from the beginning.
Jesus und Maria.	Jesus and Mary.
Wer hat erlöst die Welt allein?	Who alone has redeemed the world?
Kyrie eleison!	Kyrie eleison!
Das hat getan das Christkindlein,	That indeed is the Christchild,
Das hat erlöst die Welt allein.	who has alone the world redeemed.
Jesus und Maria.	Jesus and Mary.

## Jonathan Rathbone (b.1957)

### The Oxen (1991)

*Thomas Hardy*

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.  
'Now they are all on their knees,'  
An elder said as we sat in a flock  
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where  
They dwelt in their strawy pen,  
Nor did it occur to one of us there  
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave  
In these years! Yet, I feel,  
If someone said on Christmas Eve,  
'Come; see the oxen kneel,

In the lonely barton by yonder coomb  
Our childhood used to know,'  
I should go with him in the gloom,  
Hoping it might be so.

*Due to copyright reasons, we are unable to reproduce the texts for  
the final three songs.*

## Jay Livingston (1915-2001)

& **Ray Evans** (1915-2007)

### Silver Bells (1950)

arranged by **Blake Morgan**

City sidewalks, busy sidewalks.  
Dressed in holiday style ...

## Jule Styne (1905-1994)

### Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow! (1945)

arranged by **Jim Clements**

Well the weather outside is frightful  
But the fire is so delightful ...

## J Fred Coots (1897-1985)

& **Haven Gillespie** (1888-1975)

You better watch out  
You better not cry ...

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