



Saturday 2 December, 6pm

St Paul's Church

A HEAVENLY BYRD IN AN EARTHLY TREE

Advent and Christmas music including medieval carols and works by Byrd, Cornysh and Sheppard

BREMf Consort of Voices

Deborah Roberts *director*

Ashdown Consort of Viols

Maurice Rogers *treble viol*

Marion Pilbeam *tenor viol*

Janet Gascoine *tenor viol*

Ruth Ridley *bass viol*

Medieval carol 14th century

William Byrd 1543–1623

Byrd

Medieval carol 15th century

William Cornysh 1465–1523

Byrd

John Sheppard c.1515–1558

Interval

Angelus ad virginem

An earthly tree

(soloists Natasha Stone & Bibi Lees)

Cast off all doubtful care

In Nomine No. 2

Fantasia No. 1

Nowel – out of your sleep

Ave Maria

O magnum mysterium

A solis ortus cardine



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Sheppard	Christi Virgo dilectissima
Medieval carol 15 th century	Alleluya: a nywe werke
Thomas Weelkes 1576–1623 Byrd	In Nomine a 4 Hodie Christus natus est From Virgin's womb (soloist Natasha Stone)
Medieval carols 15 th century	Veni, veni Emmanuel Nowel sing we
Sheppard	Verbum caro factum est

In our last concert of 2023 we complete our celebration of William Byrd's anniversary year with two of his delightful sacred consort songs for the Christmas season, as well as his deeply reflective *O magnum mysterium*, a meditation on the idea that animals would be the first to witness the birth of Jesus and to see him lying in a (their) manger.

From his collection of Songs of Sundry Natures (1589) the two consort songs 'An earthly tree' and 'From Virgin's womb' are set for four viols and solo voices, the former a duet and the latter a solo, and both have cheerful choral refrains. Unfortunately, we are unable to perform both choruses tonight as each requires quite different scoring; that to 'From Virgin's womb', 'Rejoice with heart and voice', being set for a chorus of 4-part high voices. Maybe another year! It is charming to imagine the possible context for the performance of these Christmas songs: not a church service, but a domestic gathering, possibly on Christmas Day itself.

Like William Byrd, John Sheppard was an English Catholic. He died the year before Queen Elizabeth I was crowned in 1559 so never had to tread the tightrope of living under her Protestant reign. Born during the reign of Henry VIII, he would have lived through the Reformation, and even wrote some music for the new Anglican rite, but he was most active during Queen Mary's reign when the country was returned to the Roman Catholic faith. His music is very different to that of Byrd's, with much of the emphasis on a rich sonority that harks back to the pre-Reformation style.

No Christmas would be complete without carols, so we offer a selection of some of the very oldest from medieval England.

Deborah Roberts

The texts

Angelus ad virginem,
subintrans in conclave,
Virginis formidinem
demulcens, inquit "Ave!
Ave, regina virginum:
coeli terraeque dominum
concipies et paries intacta
salutem hominum;
tu porta coeli facta,
medela criminum."

"Quomodo conciperem,
quae virum non cognovi?
Qualiter infringerem,
quae firma mente vovi?"
"Spiritus sancti gratia
perficiet haec omnia.
Ne timeas, sed gaudeas
secura, quod castimonia
manebit in te pura
Dei potentia."

An earthly tree a heavenly fruit it bear,
a case of clay contained a crown immortal,
a crown of crowns, a King whose cost and care
redeemed poor man, whose race before was thrall
to death, to doom, to pains of everlasting,
by His sweet death, scorns, stripes, and often fasting.

Then let us sing the lullabies of sleep
to this sweet babe, born to awake us all
from drowsy sin that made old Adam weep,
and by his fault gave to mankind the fall.
For lo! this day, the birth day, day of days
summons our songs to give Him laud and praise.

Cast off all doubtful care, exile and banish tears,
to joyful news divine, lend us your list'ning ears.

The angel came to the Virgin,
entering secretly into her room;
the Virgin's fear
calming, he said, "Hail!
Hail, queen of virgins:
you will conceive the Lord of heaven
and earth and bear him, still a virgin,
to be the salvation of mankind;
you will be made the gate of heaven,
the cure of sins."

"How can I conceive,
since I have not known a man?
How can I break the vow
I made with firm intent?"
"The grace of the Holy Spirit
shall bring all this to pass.
Fear not, but rejoice,
secure in the knowledge that pure chastity
shall remain yours
through God's mighty power."

Nowel, nowel, nowel,
Nowel, nowel, nowel.

Out of youre slepe arise and wake,
For God mankind now hathe itake
All of a maide without any make.
Of all women she berethe the belle.

Nowel, nowel, nowel,
Nowel, nowel, nowel.

Ave Maria, mater Dei,
regina caeli,
domina mundi,
imperatrix inferni,
miserere mei
et totius populi Christiani;
et ne permitas nos
mortaliter peccare;
sed tuam sanctissimam voluntatem
adimplere.
Amen.

Hail Mary, mother of God,
queen of heaven,
mistress of the world,
empress of hell:
have mercy on me
and on all Christian people;
and do not allow us
to commit mortal sins;
but help us to fulfil
your most holy will.
Amen

O magnum mysterium
et admirabile sacramentum,
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum
jacentem in praesepio.
O beata Virgo, cujus viscera meruerunt
portare Dominum Jesum Christum.
Ave Maria, gratia plena: Dominus tecum.
O beata Virgo, cujus viscera meruerunt
portare Dominum Jesum Christum.
Alleluia!

O great mystery
and wonderful sacrament,
that animals should see the new-born Lord
lying in a manger!
O blessed is the Virgin, whose womb
was worthy to bear Christ the Lord.
Hail Mary, full of grace: the Lord is with you.
Blessed is the Virgin whose womb
was worthy to bear Christ the Lord.
Alleluia!

A solis ortus cardine
ad usque terrae limitem
Christum canamus Principem,
natum Maria Virgine.

From the rising of the sun
to the ends of the earth,
let us sing of Christ the Prince,
born of the Virgin Mary.

Beatus auctor saeculi
servile corpus induit,
ut carne carnem liberans
non perderet quod condidit.

The blessed creator of the world
put on a servant's body,
so that, liberating the flesh through taking
flesh, he would not lose what he had made.

Clausae parentis viscera
caelestis intrat gratia;
venter puellae baiulat
secreta quae non noverat.

Domus pudici pectoris
templum repente fit Dei;
intacta nesciens virum
verbo concepit Filium.

Enixa est puerpera
quem Gabriel praedixerat,
quem matris alvo gestiens
clausus Ioannes senserat.

Foeno iacere pertulit,
praesepe non abhorruit,
parvoque lacte pastus est
per quem nec ales esurit.

Gaudet chorus caelestium
et Angeli canunt Deum,
palamque fit pastoribus
Pastor, Creator omnium.

Gloria, tibi Domine,
qui natus es de Virgine,
cum Patre et almo Spiritu,
in sempiterna saecula. Amen.

Christi Virgo dilectissima,
virtutum operatrix:
opem fer miseris.
Subveni, Domina,
clamantibus ad te iugiter.

Gloria Patri et Filio:
et Spiritui Sancto.
Subveni, Domina...

Alleluya, alleluya, alleluya.
A nywe werke is come on honde
þorw my3t & grace of Godys sonde:
to saue þe lost of euery londe.
For now is fre þat erst was bonde:
we mowe wel synge, alleluia.

The virgin mother's belly
is filled with heavenly grace;
the girl's womb carries
secrets which she has not known.

The modest dwelling of her body
becomes God's new temple;
untouched, not knowing a man
at a word she conceived the Son in her womb.

By her birth pangs she brought forth
the one whom Gabriel had foretold,
and whom the Baptist, leaping within the
womb, had recognised as Lord.

He consented to lie in the hay;
he did not shrink from the manger;
and with little milk he was fed,
who does not allow even the birds to hunger.

The heavenly chorus rejoices,
and the angels sing God's praise,
and to the shepherds is now made known
the Shepherd who is the creator of all.

Jesus, to you be glory,
who are born of a virgin,
with the Father and the loving Spirit,
for eternal ages. Amen.

Virgin most beloved of Christ,
worker of all virtues,
bring aid to the wretched.
Be our perpetual succour,
Lady, when we cry to you.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost.
Be our perpetual succour...

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.
A new work has come on hand
through might and grace of God's messenger,
to save the lost of every land.
For he is now free who was once in bondage;
we may well sing, alleluia!

From Virgin's womb this day, this day did spring
the precious Seed that only saved man.
This day let man rejoice and sweetly sing
since on this day our Saviour first began.
This day did Christ man's soul from death remove
with glorious saints to dwell in Heaven above.

O sing unto this glittering, glorious King,
O praise His name let every living thing,
let heart and voice like bells of silver ring
the comfort that this day to man doth bring.
Let lute, let shawm, with sound of sweet delight
these joys of Christ His birth this day recite.

Veni, veni, Emmanuel

captivum solve Israel,
qui gemit in exsilio,
privatus Dei Filio.

R: Gaude! Gaude! Emmanuel,
nascetur pro te Israel.

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

R: Rejoice! Rejoice! O Israel,
to thee shall come Emmanuel.

Veni, O Sapientia,
quae hic disponis omnia,
veni, viam prudentiae
ut doceas et gloriae.

O come, Thou Wisdom, from on high,
and order all things far and nigh;
to us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go.

Veni, veni, Adonai,
qui populo in Sinai
legem dedisti vertice
in maiestate gloriae.

O come, o come, Thou Lord of might,
who to thy tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times did give the law,
in cloud, and majesty, and awe.

Veni, O lesse virgula,
ex hostis tuos ungula,
de specu tuos tartari
educ et antro barathri.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse's stem,
from ev'ry foe deliver them
that trust Thy mighty power to save,
and give them vict'ry o'er the grave.

Nowel sing we now all and sum
For *rex pacificus* is cum.

In Bedleem, in that fair cete,
a child was born of a maden free,
that schall a lord and prince be
A solis ortus cardine.

Children were slain full grete plente,
Jhesu, for the love of thee.

Wherfore here soules saved be,
Hostis Herodes impie.

As sunne schineth throw the glass,
so Jhesu in his moder was.
Thee to serve now graunt us gras,
O lux beata trinitas.

Now God is comen to wurchepen us,
Now of Marye is born Jhesus.
Make we mery amonges us ;
Exultet celum laudibus.

Verbum caro factum est
et habitavit in nobis,
cuius gloriam vidimus,
quasi unigeniti a Patre,
plenum gratiae et veritatis.

And the Word was made flesh,
and dwelt among us,
and we beheld his glory,
as of the only begotten of the Father,
full of grace and truth.

Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto.

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

The performers

BREMF Consort of Voices (BCV) is an ensemble of solo and consort singers formed from semi-professional, student and experienced amateur singers. Dedicated to giving dramatic and exciting performances of music from the Renaissance and early Baroque, the ensemble gives several concerts each year at BREMF. It has taken part in music ranging from 15th-century a cappella polyphony to the spectacular 1589 Florentine Intermedi with renaissance orchestra, great Venetian works with The English Cornett & Sackbut Ensemble and Purcell with Emma Kirkby and the International Baroque Players.
bremf.org.uk/ensembles/bcv

Deborah Roberts was born in Europe and graduated from Nottingham University with an MA in editing and interpreting renaissance and baroque music. She has remained fascinated by the discovery of new repertoire and performance styles ever since. As a long-term former member of The Tallis Scholars, Deborah performed with them in over 1,200 concerts in many weird and wonderful places around the world and in countless recordings of rare and beautiful renaissance music. She also sang with many other early music ensembles as a soloist and consort singer. She took up choral direction 20 years ago, and enjoys running courses in sacred polyphony and early opera. In 2002 she co-founded Brighton Early Music Festival with Clare Norburn and remains its artistic director.