



Stretton Choral Society

presents

From Handel to Holst

A Celebration of Christmas

Conductor

Michael Turner

The Shropshire Hills Ensemble

David Joyce, Alex Postlethwaite, Jane Park, and Fiona Rattray

Piano: Gill Styles



Sunday 15th December 2024

7.30 pm

Silvester Horne Institute

PROGRAMME

Choir Choruses from *Messiah* by **George Frederick Handel**
Ensemble Instrumental arrangements of **Carols**
by **Gustav Holst** (arr. **Michael Turner**)

Choir

Ensemble

And the Glory of the Lord
And He Shall Purify

Lullay My Liking

Glory to God
Behold the Lamb of God

Bring Us in Good Ale

He Trusted in God
Let All the Angels of God Worship Him

Of One that Is So Fair and Bright

Their Sound Is Gone Out
Let Us Break Their Bonds Asunder

In the Bleak Midwinter

Hallelujah

INTERVAL

Please remain seated until the choir and musicians have left the hall.

Refreshments will be available for sale at the side of the hall.

A bell will be rung at the end of the interval.

Audience Carol

1 Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King:
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With th’angelic hosts proclaim,
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King”

2 Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold him come,
Offspring of a virgin’s womb:
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail th’incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King”

3 Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King”

Four Old English Carols Gustav von Holst

I A Babe Is Born

II Now Let Us Sing

III Jesu, Thou the Virgin-Born

IV The Saviour of the World Is Born

Audience carol



1 *choir women* I saw three ships come sailing in
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
I saw three ships come sailing in
On Christmas Day in the morning.



2 *audience* And what was in those ships all three,....
3 *choir men* Our Saviour Christ and his lady,....
4 *audience* Pray whither sailed those ships all three,....
5 *choir women* O, they sailed into Bethlehem,....
6 *audience* And all the bells on Earth shall ring,....
7 *choir* And all the angels in Heav'n shall sing,....
8 *audience* And all the souls on Earth shall sing,....
9 *choir and audience* Then let us all rejoice amain!....



Reading **Christmas Mail** – Ted Kooser

Choir **Hail Blessed Virgin Mary** – Charles Wood

Reading **The Oxen** – Thomas Hardy

Choir **Personent Hodie** - Gustav Holst

Reading **Mistletoe** – Walter de la Mare

Choir **New Year Carol** – Benjamin Britten

Reading **The Good Old days** – Brian Bilston

Choir **Sir Christemas** – William Mathias

Audience carol

1 O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to
Bethlehem;
Come and behold him
Born the King of Angels:

O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord!

2 God of God,
Light of Light,
Lo! he abhors not the Virgin's
womb;

Very God,
Begotten, not created: *O come...*

3 See how the shepherds,
Summoned to his cradle,
leaving their flocks, draw nigh with
lowly fear;
We too will thither
Bend our joyful footsteps: *O come...*

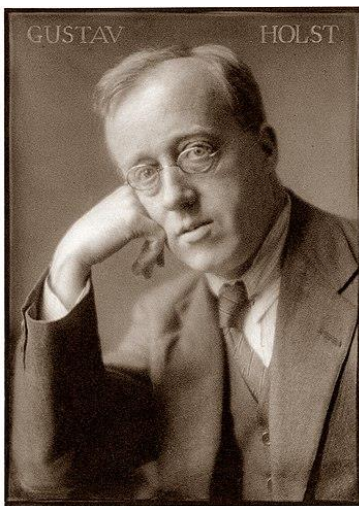
4 Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven
above;
Glory to God
In the highest: *O come...*

Thanks to:

Shrewsbury Performing Arts Library for the loan of music used in this concert.
The helpers and choir members who donate and assist with refreshments.

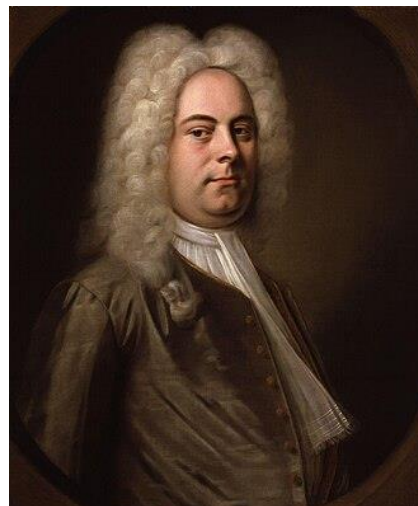
Church Stretton Library
Co-Op Foodstore
Central Garage

Stretton Focus
PCB Solicitors
Vine & Co



Holst

b.
Cheltenham,
1874.
d. London,
1934.



Handel

b. Halle,
Germany,
1685.
d. London,
1759.

Musical Notes

Our Music Director, *Michael Turner*, introduces tonight's music.

I suspect that, in many people's minds, there are two pieces of classical music that are most associated with Christmas – Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Nutcracker* and Handel's oratorio *Messiah*. It is the latter, of course, that forms the lion's share of the first half of this evening's concert. Choosing which choruses to perform was not easy. I was keen to make sure that you, the audience, got to hear plenty that would be familiar including, of course, the *Hallelujah* chorus. Then again, I also think that it is good to encounter music that is less familiar, to remind us that *Messiah* is a far-reaching work and that, from time to time, it is good for us to stretch ourselves and our musical experiences. Lastly, of course, it was vital to ensure that I choose numbers that suited the voices and strengths of Stretton Choral Society.

Tonight's concert also features several pieces by Gustav Holst. Born in 1874, 2024 marks the 150th anniversary of his birth and the 90th anniversary of his death. I have adapted four carols by Holst into short instrumental pieces to interweave between the Handel choruses. Again, some of the melodies may be unfamiliar, I suspect that one will be well known to you, however. Holst also features in the second half of our concert, with his delightful *Four Old English Carols*, taking centre stage after our first audience carol.

After the second audience carol, where we'll have some fun and games with *I Saw Three Ships*, the remaining four choir carols includes Holst's *Personent Hodie* or *On this Day*. Also in this group are three other carols from the UK. Charles Wood's *Hail Blessed Virgin Mary* is one of those very simple, hymn-like utterances that, perhaps more so than some of the more glittering or dazzling Christmas music, gives us an opportunity to reflect on the true meaning of the Festive Season. In a similar way, Benjamin Britten's *New Year Carol* is reflective in its mood. You may be wondering why, halfway through December, I've included this piece. It is very simple: as there are so few Epiphany or New Year carol services, this charming work rarely gets an airing. However, it deserves to. Before our final audience carol we have William Mathias's *Sir Christemas*. This carol originated as part of Mathias's larger Christmas work, *Ave Rex*, and is the polar opposite of the Charles Wood carol. Full of an earthy swagger, *Sir Christemas* would seem just as much at home in a pub sing-song as a Christmas concert.

The members of the Stretton Choral Society, our new accompanist, Gill Styles, and I wish you all a peaceful and Happy Christmas!



MUSIC DIRECTOR: Michael Turner

From Birmingham, Michael Turner studied violin and viola, before settling on percussion as his main instrumental study. As a singer, he has been a member of the CBSO Chorus, along with a number of other choirs across the Midlands.

Michael has attended conducting courses with John Carewe and George Hurst and studied under Hilary Davan Wetton, with whom he settled on adopting the conducting technique favoured by Sir Adrian Boult.

A music graduate of Leicester University, Michael has conducted several amateur and professional ensembles and choirs including the Birmingham Singers, Proteus Chamber Orchestra, the More Singers, the Telford Orchestra, the Marches Choir and the Phoenix Singers. He made his professional debut with the Milton Keynes City Orchestra and has also worked with the Manchester Camerata. Michael has been Music Director of the Bloomsbury Chamber Orchestra since 1996, was Music Director of the Oswestry Sinfonia from 2014 - 2020 and became Music Director of the Stretton Choral Society in September 2021. He has been an ensemble conductor for Shropshire Music Service since 2016.

Michael has composed extensively, with works including a Horn Concerto, several orchestral and choral works, instrumental music and pieces for percussion and wind ensemble. He lives in South Shropshire with his wife. They have three sons.

PIANIST and ACCOMPANIST: Gill Styles

This term we have been delighted to welcome a new Accompanist, Gill Styles, who is also playing the piano this evening.

Gill was born in West Yorkshire. She studied music at Goldsmiths' College, London where she focused on piano and voice. For over thirty years she has been a junior-school class teacher with responsibility for music. Throughout her career she has enjoyed accompanying singers and instrumentalists, as well as playing chamber music, performing as a vocal soloist and singing in local choirs.

Just in case you were wondering about the spelling:

It seems that Handel was baptised Georg Friedrich Händel. "Frideric" was used on his 1727 application for British citizenship, then by the time of his will and on his funeral monument it was "George Frederick".

So you pays your money and you takes your choice...

Our Spring concert 2025

Saturday 10th May

Note that we are returning to holding our concerts on Saturdays next year

“Stuff and Nonsense!”

In our spring concert of 2025, we will be building on the success of last year’s *Captain Noah* and performing a programme of jovial music, including many settings of nonsense poetry by Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear. The fun-but-satisfying music is by composers with a Birmingham connection, including our own Music Director, Michael Turner, who says:

“There’s a tendency to see so-called classical music as stuffy, or an acquired taste. I’m keen to let people hear that it is as approachable as any other musical genres and this programme will appeal to a wide range of folk, whether singers themselves or audience members.”

Do you like the idea of singing in a choir? Perhaps you find the traditional choral repertoire of church music daunting? Or you’re put off because you’ve never had any formal choir training? These fun and more modern pieces could be the ideal opportunity to give it a try.

Although we aim for high standards when we perform, we are a very welcoming group – open to anyone, of any level of

ability and experience, and definitely no auditions.

We will rehearse every Thursday at 7.30 p.m. in the United Reformed Church, High Street, Church Stretton, starting with our first rehearsal on Thursday 16 January.

New members are always very welcome, just come along and give us a try!

Musical score for Soprano and Alto parts of 'Hal-le-lu-jah'. The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The Soprano part starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The Alto part starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. Both parts have lyrics: Hal-le - lu-jah, Hal-le-lu-jah, Hal-le - lu-jah, Hal - le - lu - jah!

Website: strettonchoral.org.uk



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