



SANSARA

THE WAITING SKY

MUSIC FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

The Waiting Sky

Music for Advent and Christmas

SANSARA

Tom Herring *artistic director*

Benjamin Cunningham *co-artistic director*

About SANSARA:

'SANSARA slips easily into the elite ranks of exceptional performers'
Choir & Organ

'Choral singing with real depth'
The Observer

Thomas Tallis (1505–1585)

1. **Videte miraculum à6**

[9:44]

Josquin des Prez (c.1450–1521)

2. **Inviolata, integra et
casta es Maria à5**

[5:58]

Judith Weir (b. 1954)

3. **Ave Regina caelorum**

[3:12]

Hieronymus Praetorius (1560–1629)

4. **Joseph, lieber Joseph mein –
Magnificat quinti toni – In dulci jubilo** [10:35]

James MacMillan (b. 1959)

5. **Dominus dabit benignitatem**

[4:20]

Oliver Tarney (b. 1984)

6. **The Waiting Sky**

[2:51]

Rhiannon Randle (b. 1993)

7. **O magnum mysterium**

[5:09]

John Tavener (1944–2013)

8. **The Lamb**

[3:54]

Oliver Tarney

9. **Balulalow**

[3:04]

Marco Galvani (b. 1994)

10. **The Oxen**

[4:31]

William Byrd (1543–1623)

11. **Reges Tharsis et insulae à5**

[2:18]

Oliver Tarney

12. **The Wise Men and the Star**

[2:52]

Marco Galvani

13. **On Christmas Morn**

[3:49]

Total playing time

[62:25]

**The Waiting Sky:
Music for Advent and Christmas**

The Waiting Sky is a collection of our favourite pieces for the Christmas season from Advent through to Epiphany. The programme explores the anticipation of Christmas through works by masters of the Renaissance alongside pieces by living composers combining to conjure an aura of mystery and excitement.

A regular feature of our Advent and Christmas programmes, Thomas Tallis's **Videte miraculum** sets the Responsory at First Vespers of Candlemas in six voices, with the baritone part providing the *cantus firmus* around which the other voices elaborate in complex, deeply expressive and often highly dissonant polyphony, with frequent false relations sounding between voices. The atmosphere is one of awe and wonder at the miracle of the Immaculate Conception.

This Marian devotion is echoed in Josquin des Prez's stunning motet **Inviolata, integra, et casta es Maria** à5. The chant melody is presented in canon between the tenor and alto parts with the other voices in imitative free polyphony. The music ebbs and flows,

moving seamlessly between passages of lilting motion and moments of pure stasis such as the tricolon 'O benigna! O Regina! O Maria!'.

These two sixteenth century Marian pieces are followed by Judith Weir's rousing and energised **Ave Regina caelorum**, commissioned by the Choir of Merton College, Oxford in 2014 and dedicated to Sir John Tavener. The text setting evokes a feeling of exultant chanting, drawing on speech rhythms and natural word stresses to create dynamic textures, driving towards a closing duet between the soprano and alto parts which repeats the text in full before a final 'Ave regina' in the lower parts.

Hieronymus Praetorius spent most of his life in Hamburg, forging a career as an organist and composer that spanned the last decades of the sixteenth century and the first decades of the seventeenth. His **Magnificat quinti toni** is a jubilant and complex setting for two choirs, here recorded in a new edition by Timothy Symons with **Joseph, lieber Joseph mein** presented as an antiphon to the Magnificat with the verses of the carol **In dulci jubilo** interpolated between the verses of the Magnificat. Shifts between polyphonic and homophonic passages articulate the text in a highly expressive way with much



of the writing demonstrating instrumental colour and shape. It is likely that large-scale settings such as this would have been performed with a variety of instruments in different combinations and we have attempted to capture elements of this performance practice within our *a cappella* performance.

Setting text from Psalm 84, James MacMillan's **Dominus dabit benignitatem** is one of the *Strathclyde Motets* written for the parish of St Columba's, Maryhill. Soaring soprano lines unfold over a measured looping sequence in the lower parts achieving a simultaneous feeling of narrative motion and calm stasis. The music of the final phrases is remarkable for its sudden harmonic tension, evoking a sense of epiphany with the lower voices pivoting between E-flat major and A major as the sopranos slide down an octatonic descent (alternating tones and semitones) from their top G, before their closing hummed melody ending on E and D, left unresolved and hanging in space.

Commissioning and performing new music is a core part of SANSARA's work with close collaboration with the two Associate Composers Oliver Tarney and Marco Galvani. Tarney's Christmas triptych takes

us from Advent in *The Waiting Sky* through to Epiphany in *The Wise Men and the Star* via the nativity scene in *Balulalow* and the three pieces punctuate the narrative of the second half of the programme. **The Waiting Sky** is a veiled pre-nativity scene captured by poet Lucia Quinault who explores the pregnant atmosphere of Advent through a pastoral lens, drawn from the meadows surrounding the choir's home venue of St Cross in Winchester. **Balulalow** is a hauntingly beautiful setting of the medieval lullaby with an expansive middle section filled with chromatic harmony colouring the text with a dark radiance. **The Wise Men and the Star** echoes *The Waiting Sky* in texture and the three verses of the poem by Quinault are set simply, with subtle harmonic differences responding to the nuances of the text.

Commissioned by the *Choir & Organ New Music Series* in 2016, Rhiannon Randle's setting of **O magnum mysterium** draws on well-known settings of the same text by Victoria and Lauridsen, weaving influences into a distinct and unique sound-world of its own. The atmosphere is poised as the wonderous mystery unfolds and eventually the harmony blooms with the closing 'Alleluias', ending with four solo lines in the upper voices. The last of these

outlines the opening melody of the next piece.

Probably John Tavener's most well-known choral piece, **The Lamb** is a stark and simple setting of the poem by William Blake filled with characteristic use of dissonance. Our interpretation aims to capture the feeling of reverent astonishment found in *The Waiting Sky* and *O magnum mysterium*, the hushed voices of those surrounding the new born Jesus in the manger silently asking 'Dost thou know who made thee?'

Thomas Hardy's 1915 poem **The Oxen** nostalgically reflects on the innocence of childhood belief, in a time when the structures of society were being stretched to breaking point as the Great War raged on past its second Christmas and families across Europe were gathering together, clinging onto their own glimmers of hope. Galvani sets the poem with striking textures; dense lower voices beneath halos of sound in the sopranos and altos, creating an ominous feeling of distance and timeless knowledge. The sense of doubt and uncertainty felt by the narrator links to the story of the Magi who arrive in the following two pieces.

As with the Tallis earlier in the programme, William Byrd's **Reges Tharsis et insulae à5** is built on a *cantus firmus*. However, it is much more triumphant, even boisterous in tone. The text is from verse ten of Psalm seventy-two and celebrates the Feast of the Epiphany. This youthful work survives only in the incomplete Baldwin partbooks held in the Bodleian library, and as such, the tenor – providing the *cantus firmus* – has been assumed from the more regularly performed version by John Sheppard.

Commissioned by the Royal Philharmonic Society in association with Classic FM, Galvani's **On Christmas Morn** conveys the sense of wonder of hearing distant bells in a snowy Christmas landscape described in the opening two verses of Anne Brontë's poem *Music on Christmas Morning*. This atmosphere is achieved from the very beginning through marked dynamic contrasts and the overlapping of multiple chords. Towards the end of the second verse, the music undergoes a great surge of energy, leading to an outpouring of joy in celebratory repetitions of the line 'To wake, and worship, and rejoice': a suitable way in which to end this musical journey through the Christmas season.

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Texts and Translations

Thomas Tallis

1. **Videte miraculum**

Videte miraculum matris Domini:
concepit virgo virillis ignara consortii,
stans onerata nobili onere Maria;
et matrem se laetam cognosci,
quae se nescit uxorem.

Haec speciosum forma prae filiis hominum
castis concepit visceribus,
et benedicta in aeternum
Deum nobis protulit et hominem.

Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto.

Responsory at First Vespers of Candlemas

Josquin des Prez

2. **Inviolata, integra et casta es Maria à5**

Inviolata, integra et casta es Maria:
Quae es effecta fulgida caeli porta.

O Mater alma Christi carissima:
Suscipe pia laudum praeconia.

Te nunc flagitant devota corda et ora:
nostra ut pura pectora sint et corpora.

Tua per precata dulcisona:
Nobis concedas veniam per saecula.

O benigna! O Regina! O Maria!
Quae sola inviolata permansisti.

Traditional, eleventh century

Judith Weir

3. **Ave Regina caelorum**

Ave Regina caelorum,
Ave Domina Angelorum:

*Behold the miracle of the mother of the Lord:
a virgin has conceived though she knows not a man,
Mary, who stands laden with her noble burden;
knowing not that she is a wife,
she rejoices to be a mother.*

*She has conceived in her chaste womb
one who is shining beyond the sons of men,
and blessed for ever,
she has brought forth God and man for us.*

*Glory to the Father and to the Son and to
the Holy Ghost.*

Trans. Mick Swithinban

*Inviolata, whole and chaste is Mary:
you are the shining gate of heaven.*

*O kind mother, dearest to Christ:
accept our faithful hymns of praise.*

*To you our hearts and lips cry out:
may our souls and bodies be pure.*

*Through your prayers' sweet sounds:
grant us forgiveness for ever.*

*O kindly one! O Queen! O Mary!
you alone remain inviolate.*

*Hail, O Queen of Heav'n enthron'd,
Hail, by angels Mistress own'd*

Salve radix, salve porta,
Ex qua mundo lux est orta:

Gaude Virgo gloriosa,
Super omnes speciosa,
Vale, o valde decora,
Et pro nobis Christum exora.

Hieronymus Praetorius
4. Joseph, lieber Joseph mein

Joseph, lieber Joseph mein,
Hilf mir wiegen das Kindelein,
Gott der wird dein Lohner sein
Im Himmelreich der Jungfrau Kind Maria. Eya.

Virgo Deum genuit,
Quem divina voluit Clementia.

Omnes nunc concinite
Nato regi psallite,
Voce pia dicite:
Sit gloria Christo nato infanto.

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

Magnificat Quinti Toni
Magnificat anima mea Dominum.
Et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.

Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae:
ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.

Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est:
et sanctum nomen eius.

Et misericordia eius a progenie in progenies
timentibus eum.

Fecit potentiam in brachio suo:
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.

*Root of Jesse, Gate of morn,
Whence the world's true light was born.*

*Glorious Virgin, joy to thee,
Loveliest whom in Heaven they see,
Fairest thou where all are fair!
Plead with Christ our sins to spare.*

*Joseph, my dear Joseph,
help me to rock the little child,
the God who will be your reward
in heaven, the child of the virgin Mary. Eya.*

*A virgin bore God,
as divine mercy wished it.*

*Now let all sing
and praise the new-born king,
saying with holy voice:
Glory be to the infant Christ.*

*Today has appeared in Israel
the one whom Gabriel foretold, a king is born.*

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.
And my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.*

*For he has looked with favour on the lowliness
of his handmaiden: behold, from henceforth
all generations shall call me blessed.*

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

*And his mercy is upon them
that fear him throughout all generations.*

*He has shown the power of his arm:
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.*

Deposuit potentes de sede,
et exaltavit humiles.

Esurientes implevit bonis:
et divites dimisit inanes.

Suscipit Israel, puerum suum,
recordatus misericordiae suae.

Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,
Abraham, et semini eius in saecula.

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper,
et in saecula saeculorum.
Amen.

Luke 1:46-55

In dulci jubilo
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.

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!

O Patris caritas,
O Nati lenitas,
Wir wern all verlohren per nostra crimina,
So hat er uns erworben caelorum gaudia,
Eya, wern wir da.

Ubi sunt gaudia
Nirgend mehr denn da,
Da die Engel singen nova cantica,
Und die Schellen klingen in regis curia.
Eya, wern wir da.

*He has put down the mighty from their seat,
and has exalted the humble and meek.*

*He has filled the hungry with good things:
and the rich he has sent empty away.*

*He has sustained his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy.*

*As he promised to our forefathers,
Abraham and his sons for ever.*

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.*

*In sweet jubilation now sing with hearts aglow!
Our delight and pleasure
Lies in a manger,
Like sunshine is our treasure in his mother's lap.
Thou art Alpha and Omega!*

*O tiny Jesus,
For thee I long always; comfort my heart's blindness,
O best of boys,
With all thy loving kindness, O prince of glory,
Draw me after thee!*

*O love of the Father,
O gentleness of the Son!
Deeply were we stained through our sins;
But thou for us hast gained The joy of heaven.
O that we were there!*

*Where are joys
In any place but there?
There are angels singing new songs,
And the bells are ringing In the court of the King.
O that we were there!*



James MacMillan

5. Dominus dabit benignitatem

Dominus dabit benignitatem,
et terra nostra dabit fructum suum.

*Communion motet for the first
Sunday in Advent, Psalm 84:13*

Oliver Tarney

6. The Waiting Sky

The trees are bare.
Green fields where puddles hold
The waiting sky.

The cows move slow.
Their breathing clouds the air
As they walk by.

What if the clouds
Smother the shining star?
We'll know it's there:

Warm light will fill
The puddles, and the cows
Will stop and stare.

Lucia Quinault (b. 1969)

Rhiannon Randle

7. O magnum mysterium

O magnum mysterium,
et admirabile sacramentum,
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum,
iacentem in praesepio!
O beata Virgo, cujus viscera muerunt portare
Dominum Jesum Christum,
Alleluia!

Matins responsory for Christmas Day

*The Lord shall shew loving-kindness:
and our land shall give her increase.*

*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.
Alleluia!*

John Tavener

8. The Lamb

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?
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!

William Blake (1757–1827)

Oliver Tarney

9. Balulalow

O my dear hert,
Young Jesu sweet,
Prepare thy creddil in my spreit.
And I sall rock thee in my hert,
And never mair from thee depert.

But I sall praise thee evermore,
With sangis sweet unto thy glor.
The knees of my hert sall I bow,
And sing that richt Balulalow.

*From Ane Compendious Buik of
Godly and Spirituall Sangis (1567)
by James, John and Robert Wedderburn*

Marco Galvani

10. The Oxen

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.

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928)

William Byrd

11. Reges Tharsis et insulae à5

Reges Tharsis et insulae munera offerent,
reges Arabum et Saba dona
domino Deo adducent.

Sarum Rite Matins Responsory for the Feast of the Epiphany

Oliver Tarney

12. The Wise Men and the Star

Sovereign scholars
Weary of waiting
Startled by starlight that kindles the sky
Eager for answers
Destiny drives them
Watching with wonder
Follow the star

Passing by palaces
Greedy and golden
Threading the byways of winter and cold
Come to a doorway
Low-built and lamp-lit
Eagerly enter
Under the star

Source of all starlight
Simply they see him
Laid in a manger and haloed with hay
Bright in his beauty
Shrouded with shadows
Steady the star shines
Follow the star

Lucia Quinault (b. 1969)

*The kings of Tharsis and the isle offer their gifts,
the kings of Arabia and Sheba
bring gifts to the Lord God.*

Trans. Mick Swithinbank

Marco Galvani

13. On Christmas Morn

Music I love - but never strain
Could kindle raptures so divine,
So grief assuage, so conquer pain,
And rouse this pensive heart of mine-
As that we hear on Christmas morn,
Upon the wintry breezes borne.

Though Darkness still her empire keep,
And hours must pass, ere morning break;
From troubled dreams, or slumbers deep,
That music kindly bids us wake:
It calls us, with an angel's voice,
To wake, and worship, and rejoice.

Anne Brontë (1820–1849)

SANSARA

SANSARA is an award-winning vocal ensemble focused on the performance of a *cappella* choral music. As a collective body of voices, a choir is a living, breathing instrument with unparalleled expressive potential. SANSARA realises this through direct and honest music-making, always striving to conjure compelling atmospheres, communicating with clarity and integrity.

The choir has rapidly gained a reputation for captivating performances of a broad range of repertoire, juxtaposing choral music old and new in vivid narrative programmes, tying thematic and textual links into rich live experiences.

Winners of the 2015 London International A Cappella Choir Competition, the choir's performance highlights include Barbican Sound Unbound, Holy Week Festival, Newbury Spring Festival, London A Cappella Festival, Temple Winter Festival, Winchester Festival, and a performance of Arvo Pärt's music at St John's Smith Square with the composer present. The choir's debut recording, *Cloths of Heaven*, was released in February 2017 and received high praise for the group's 'perfect intonation and clean, pure sound' (*The Observer*) and 'breathtaking interpretations' (*Choir & Organ*). The disc has since been featured on BBC Radio 3's *Choir and Organ*, *Breakfast* and *Essential Classics*.

www.sansarachoir.com

Tom Herring, Artistic Director

Tom is a conductor, singer and artistic director based in London. Tom is the Founder and Artistic Director of SANSARA: highlights include winning performances at the 2015 London International A Cappella Choir Competition at St John's Smith Square, concerts at several UK festivals and the release of a highly acclaimed debut recording. As a conductor he has been praised for his 'breathtaking interpretations' (*Choir & Organ*) of a broad range of repertoire. Tom is the bass soloist on the debut recording of Oliver Tarney's *Magnificat* and performed at the London première at Cadogan Hall. Other solo appearances include performances of Handel's *Messiah* (Instruments of Time and Truth), Bach's *Magnificat* (East Anglian Academy, Suffolk Bach Choir), *St Matthew Passion* and *St John Passion*, Mozart's *Requiem* and *Vesperae solennes*, Fauré's *Requiem* and Pärt *Passio* (The Façade Ensemble). Operatic roles include The Abbot (Britten's *Curlew River*), Collatinus (*The Rape of Lucretia*) and Arthur Jones (*Billy Budd* with Sir John Tomlinson, Mark Padmore and Roderick Williams). Tom has also sung with world-renowned ensembles including Tenebrae, The Tallis Scholars, Vox Luminis and Contrapunctus.

Benjamin Cunningham, Co-artistic Director

Benjamin Cunningham is Assistant Director of Chapel Music at Winchester College, and is the College's principal organist. Prior to taking up his current post, Benjamin was Organ Scholar at Westminster Abbey from July 2016 to August 2018 where he shared in the responsibilities of playing for and conducting services, as well as the training of the boy choristers. Benjamin was also Organ Scholar of Worcester College, Oxford whilst reading for a degree in Music, in which he attained a First, and during his gap year was Organ Scholar of Chichester Cathedral. Benjamin has given a number of recitals, most notably at: Westminster Abbey; Chichester, St Paul's and Westminster Cathedrals; Reading Town Hall; and Merton, The Queen's, and Keble Colleges in Oxford. In 2017, Benjamin was a Young Artist at the Newbury Spring Festival, and went on to be Chorus Master of the Festival Chorus in the following Season. Benjamin is a founder member and Co-artistic Director of SANSARA, and has conducted them in many concerts and festivals across the UK.

SANSARA

Soprano
Lucinda Cox *
Fiona Fraser
Caroline Halls
Daisy Walford *

Alto
Laura Baldwin*
Amy Blythe
Rosie Parker *
Amy Williamson

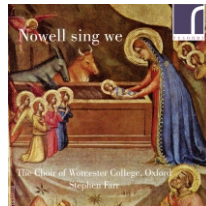
Tenor
Tom Castle
Oscar Golden-Lee
Jonathan Hanley*
Matthew Thomson

Bass
Benjamin Cunningham (conductor: 1, 2, 7, 9–11, 13)
Tom Herring (conductor: 3–5, 6, 8, 12)
Piers Kennedy
David Le Prevost
Ben McKeen
Ben Tomlin

* Soloists in track 7



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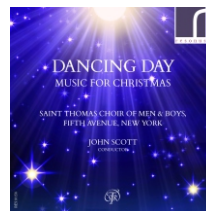


Nowell Sing We
The Choir of Worcester College, Oxford

Stephen Farr
RES10138

'[...] would that all new Christmas issues were as fresh and enterprising as this one! There isn't a routine setting among them, and many are strikingly successful [...] Stephen Farr directs well-contrasted performances'

BBC Music Magazine (Christmas Choice 2014)



Dancing Day: Music for Christmas
Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys,

Fifth Avenue, New York
John Scott

RES10158

'The abiding impression is one of intimacy, innocence and wonder [...] This is a moving, memorable recital'

BBC Music Magazine (Christmas Choice 2015)

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