

CONCERTS *at* SAINT THOMAS

PRESENTS

CHRISTMAS ON FIFTH AVENUE



The Boys of the Saint Thomas Choir

Parker Ramsay, *Harp*

Nicolas Haigh, *The Miller-Scott Organ*

Jeremy Filsell, *Conductor*

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2021

5:30 P.M.

We are extremely grateful to all our donors who support and enhance the activities of *Concerts at Saint Thomas*. This evening's concert is underwritten in part by the following generous individuals:

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CONCERTS *at* SAINT THOMAS

SAINT THOMAS CHURCH FIFTH AVENUE

The Reverend Canon Carl F. Turner, *Rector*

Dr. Jeremy Filsell, *The Nancy B. & John B. Hoffmann Organist and Director of Music*

Mr. Christopher Seeley, *Head of School*

The Saint Thomas Choir School

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF ADMISSIONS OF SAINT THOMAS CHOIR SCHOOL

A holiday concert of boys' voices and harp has been a fixture in the Saint Thomas concert series since the 1970's and has become, alongside The Rockettes and dramatic window displays along Fifth Avenue, an integral, if more reflective, part of New York City's Christmas traditions. This year we pair selections from Benjamin Britten's A Ceremony of Carols with John Rutter's Dancing Day, which act as bookends to pieces equally celebratory but perhaps less well-known by Hendrie, Litaize, and Birstow.

Rutter composed Dancing Day at the request of a harpist to work as a companion piece to A Ceremony of Carols. Imagine for a moment the daunting nature of that task even for a composer of Rutter's stature – to have your work forever linked to Britten's masterwork and to hazard the possibility of unfavorable comparisons. It is an artistic challenge, to be sure, but at its heart, the question Rutter faced was an existential one: “Am I ready for this?” Happily, Rutter was and gave us, as our program from 2009 says, “a work that celebrates Christmas with a tapestry of familiar carols and old texts dating back as far as the 14th century. Several of these songs are ‘people’s music,’ merry medieval dance tunes with religious texts having one foot in the church door, and, with their dance melodies, one in the village square...Through them all runs the sense of wonder and danceable joy.”

Readiness. I encourage you to think about this word tonight as you listen to the exquisite music of seventeen boys accompanied by harp.

Our choristers arrive at eight or nine years old to live, study, and sing in residence at the Choir School. They come from eight different states, as far away as Kentucky, Kansas, Michigan, Massachusetts, and Tennessee. Some are religious; others are not. Some speak two languages; a few speak three. Some sang in choirs before they arrived; others sang in the shower, or on the bus, or wherever they could. No matter their backgrounds and whether they were sure of it or not, they were ready to grow as musicians, to be sure, but also as empathetic, resilient young men, emerging scholars, and thoughtful citizens.

The Choir School exists because we know there are many boys who are ready for more: more academic rigor, more extraordinary life experience, more personalized education, and certainly more music! A key part of continuing this transformative experience is connecting these boys to our Choir School. Word of mouth is one of our best recruitment tools, so please help us spread the word.

If you would like to know more about our Choir School, please come see me in the Narthex to chat, get a video glimpse of what life looks like at the Choir School, and to pick up some literature. I would be very pleased to meet you. You can also visit our website at www.choirschool.org. Please direct inquiries to admissions@choirschool.org.

Victoria Vanasco
Director of Admissions
Saint Thomas Choir School

PROGRAM

- C'est la Noël *Gaston Litaize*
(1909-1991)
- The Blessed Virgin's Cradle Song *Edward Bairstow*
(1874-1946)
- Reading - "The Boy Who Laughed at Santa Claus"
The Rev. Canon Carl F. Turner *Ogden Nash*
(1902-1971)
- Rhapsodie pour la Harpe *Marcel Grandjany*
(1891-1975)
Parker Ramsay, *harp*
- As I Outrode this Enderes Night *Gerald Hendrie*
(born 1935)
- Infant holy, Infant lowly *Gerre Hancock*
(1934-2012)
- Reading - "The Twelve Days of Christmas
[Correspondence]" *John Julius Norwich*
(1929-2018)
The Rev. Canon Carl F. Turner
- Von Himmel hoch, da komm ich her *Georg Böhm*
(1661-1733)
Nicolas Haigh, *organ*
- A Ceremony of Carols, Op. 28 *Benjamin Britten*
(1913-1976)
That Yongë childe
Spring Carol
- Dancing Day *John Rutter*
(born 1945)
Prelude
Angelus ad Virginem
A Virgin most pure
Interlude
There is no Rose
Tomorrow shall be my dancing day
Parker Ramsay, *harp*

PARKER RAMSAY, *Harp*

Parker Ramsay's career, unique in its integration of contemporary music and historical performance, defies easy categorization. Equally at home on modern and period harps, Parker is dedicated to invigorating the existing canon while delving into new and underperformed works. In 2020, the recording of his transcription of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* for the King's College, Cambridge label was praised as "remarkably special" (Gramophone), "nuanced and insightful" (BBC Music Magazine), "relentlessly beautiful" (WQXR), "marked by keen musical intelligence" (The Wall Street Journal) and "a resounding success" (The Independent). His essay on the transcription process, "Is Bach Better on Harp?" was published in The New York Times, and followed up with further insights in VAN Magazine and on his blog, *Harping On: Thoughts from a Recovering Organist*. A native of Nashville, Tennessee, Parker began harp studies with his mother at a young age before moving to the UK at age 16. Parker was awarded the undergraduate organ scholarship at King's College, Cambridge where he served under the direction of Stephen Cleobury. His tenure with the Choir of King's College, Cambridge included performing for the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols in 2012, as well as six international tours and four recordings. Parker has performed at the Concertgebouw in (Amsterdam), the Royal Albert Hall (London), the Musée d'Orsay (Paris), the National Center for the Performing Arts in (Beijing), Sejong Center for the Performing Arts (Seoul), Verizon Hall in (Philadelphia), and Alice Tully Hall (New York City).

Parker is co-director of A Golden Wire, a period instrument ensemble devoted to French and English music from the seventeenth century. He has appeared with the Shanghai Camerata, the Academy of Sacred Drama, Ruckus, Teatro Nuovo and Apollo's Fire. Upcoming projects include collaborations with composers Tom Morrison, Michael Seltenreich, David Fulmer, Saad Haddad, Josh Levine, Nico Muhly and Marcos Balter.

After receiving his bachelor's degree in history at Cambridge, he pursued graduate studies in historical keyboards at Oberlin Conservatory. In 2014, he was awarded First Prize at the Sweelinck International Organ Competition. He then studied modern harp at The Juilliard School, under the tutelage of Nancy Allen. He is a regular contributor for VAN Magazine, and his writing has appeared in Cleveland Classical, The New York Times and The Washington Post. He lives in New York City.

NICOLAS HAIGH, *The Miller-Scott Organ*

Nicolas Haigh serves as Associate Organist at Saint Thomas Church in New York City. Originally from the United Kingdom, Nicolas previously held positions with the multiple Gramophone Award-winning Choir of New College, Oxford, and York Minster. He is a recipient of the coveted Limpus Prize from the Royal College of Organists and held the Sir William McKie Organ Scholarship at Clare College, Cambridge.

Active as a historical keyboardist, continuo performer, and conductor, Nicolas appears regularly with American Bach Soloists, Oxford Bach Soloists, and Bach Akademie Charlotte. He is also the co-founder of early music consort L'Académie du Roi Soleil with which he has performed throughout the United States and the United Kingdom.

Nicolas has been privileged to perform as both a soloist and accompanist to countries including Australia, France, Italy, Hong Kong, The Netherlands, and Israel. He can be heard on numerous CDs including *Veni Emmanuel* and *Imogen Holst: Choral Works* (Harmonia Mundi USA) and has performed frequently on radio (BBC Radio 3 and BBC Radio 4). Nicolas' teachers have included Malcolm Archer, Clive Driskill-Smith, James McVinnie, and Jonathan Moyer.

JEREMY FILSELL, *Conductor*

Jeremy Filsell is one of only a few virtuoso performers as both pianist and organist. His concerto repertoire stretches from Bach to Shostakovich and includes the complete concerto cycle of Rachmaninov. Among others, he has recorded the solo piano music of Herbert Howells, Bernard Stevens, Eugene Goossens, Johann Eschmann, Francis Pott and Sergei Rachmaninov and is on the international piano roster of Steinway Artists. His discography comprises more than 35 solo recordings including, as an organist, the complete oeuvre of Marcel Dupré and the symphonies of Louis Vierne.

Jeremy studied as organ scholar at Keble College Oxford, before completing graduate studies in piano performance at the Royal College of Music and gaining a PhD in Musicology from Birmingham Conservatoire/BCU – researching aesthetic and interpretative issues in the music of Marcel Dupré. Before coming to the US in 2008, he held Academic and Performance lectureships at the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal Northern College of Music in England, and was a lay clerk in the choir of St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle.

Jeremy Filsell has taught at universities, summer schools, and conventions in both the UK and US and has served on international competition juries in England and Switzerland. Recent solo engagements have taken him across the US and UK and to Germany, France, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Australia and New Zealand. Since 2008 he has directed the music at two Washington DC churches, served as Artist-in-residence at Washington National Cathedral and was Professor of Organ successively at the Catholic University of America and Peabody Conservatory. He became Organist & Director of Music at St. Thomas, 5th Avenue, New York in April 2019.

SAINT THOMAS CHOIR SCHOOL

Founded in 1919, the Saint Thomas Choir School is the only boarding school solely for choristers in the United States, and one of only three schools of its type remaining in the world today. The Choir School offers a challenging pre-preparatory curriculum, interscholastic sports and musical training for boys in grades three through eight. Following graduation, boys move on to highly competitive independent boarding and day schools across the country.

The Saint Thomas Choir School is committed to training and educating talented musicians without regard to religious, economic, or social background. Generous financial aid is available to all successful applicants. Inquiries from interested families are sought throughout the year.

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C'EST LA NÖEL

Gaston Litaize (1909-1991)

C'EST la Noë!
Sur la minuit tous les bergers sortent du lit.
S'en vont tout droit vers leurs agneaux
Endormis bien au chaud.
"Pasteurs le ciel vous garde,"
Leur dit l'ange du ciel.

Ainsi cet ange leur parla,
"Les belles choses que voilà!
Le Seigneur vient de naître tout près de
Bethléem.
Il faut quitter vos âtres
Et venir voir Noël."

Ils y sont tous ensemble allés.
Ils se sont tous agenouillés.
Alors un grand éclair soudain illumina
l'Enfant
Et la Vierge sa mère,
Reine de tous les Saints.

Pasteurs il faut prier notre Dieu
Car il nous sauve dans les cieux
Afin que sur la terre
Sa sainte volonté
Apaïse toutes guerres.
Croyons en sa bonté.

*It is Christmas!
At midnight the shepherds all rise from their beds.
They head straight to their lambs
Asleep nice and warm.
"Heaven protects you, Shepherds,"
The heavenly angel said to them.*

*Thus this angel spoke to them saying,
"Beautiful things are here!
The Lord is born near Bethlehem.
You must leave your hearths
And come to see Noel."*

*They went all together.
They all knelt down.
And suddenly a great light illuminated the Child
And the Virgin his mother,
Queen of all the Saints.*

*Shepherds we must pray to our God
Because he saves us in the heavens
So that on earth
His holy will
May pacify all wars.
Let us believe in his goodness.*

THE BLESSED VIRGIN'S CRADLE SONG

Edward Bairstow (1874-1946)

SLUMBER in Thy manger,
Jesu, Child divine,
Lying, Lord of Heaven,
With the lowly kine.
Love shall be Thy cradle,
Love shall hush Thy cry,
Love, the love of mother,
Love Thy lullaby.

Slumber in Thy manger,
Born without a pang,
While the angel's anthem
Thro' the heavens rang.
Poor the welcome bid Thee,
Yet the best is nigh,
Love, the love of mother,
Love Thy lullaby.

Slumber in Thy manger,
Though the cross await
And the darkness hide Thee,
Hanging desolate,
Though Thy God forsake Thee,
Yet there cannot die,
Love, the love of mother,
Love Thy lullaby.

AS I OUTRODE THIS ENDERES NIGHT

Gerald Hendrie (*b. 1935*)

AS I outrode this end'res night,
Of three jolly shepherds I saw a sight;
And all about their fold
a star shone bright.
They sang terliterlow,
So merrily the shepherds their
pipes can blow.

Down from Heav'n so high of angels
There came a great company
with joy and mirth,
And great solemnity.
They sang terliterlow,
So merrily the shepherds their
pipes can blow

Traditional English (16th Century)

INFANT HOLY, INFANT LOWLY

Gerre Hancock (*1934-2012*)

INFANT holy, Infant lowly,
For his bed a cattle stall;
Oxen lowing, Little knowing
Christ the Babe is Lord of all.
Swift are winging Angels singing,
Nowells ringing, Tidings bringing,
Christ the Babe is Lord of all.

Flocks were sleeping, Shepherds keeping
Vigil till the morning new;
Saw the glory, Heard the story,
Tidings of a gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, Free from sorrow,
Praises voicing, Greet the morrow,
Christ the Babe was born for you!

Traditional Polish Carol

A CEREMONY OF CAROLS, OP. 28

Benjamin Britten (*1913-1976*)

THAT YONGĚ CHILDE

THAT yongě childe when it gan weep
With song she lulled him asleep:
That was so sweet a melody
It passèd alle minstrelsy.

The nightingale sang also:
Her song is hoarse and not thereto:
Whoso attendeth to her song
And leaveth the first then doth he wrong.

SPRING CAROL

PLEASURE it is to hear iwis,
The Birdès sing, the deer in the dale,
The sheep in the vale, the corn springing.
God's purveyance for sustenance,
It is for man, it is for man.
Then we always to give him praise,
And thank him than, and thank him than.

DANCING DAY

John Rutter (*b. 1945*)

ANGELUS AD VIRGINEM

ANGELUS ad virginem
Subintrans in conclave,
Virginis formidinem
Demulcens inquit 'Ave!
Ave, regina virginum;
Cæli terraeque Dominum
Concipies
Et paries intacta
Salutem hominum;
Tu porta cæli facta,
Medela criminum.'
'Quomodo conciperem
Quae virum non cognovit?
Qualiter infringerem
Quod firmamente vovi?'
'Spiritus Sancti gratia
Perficiet haec omnia;
Ne timeas, sed gaudeas, segura
Quod castimonia
Manebit in te pura Dei potentia.'

*Th'angel to the Virgin said,
Ent'ring into her bower,
For dread of quaking of this maid
He said 'Hail', with great honour.
'Hail! be thou queen of maidens mo,
Lord of heaven and earth also,
Conceive thou shalt
And bear withal the Lord of might,
Heal of all mankind.
He will make the gate of heaven bright,
Med'cine of all our sin.'
'How can I conceive a child
When I've not known a man?
How can I break promises
I vowed with determined mind?'
'The grace of the Holy Spirit
Shall do all this.
Do not be afraid, but rejoice
For your chastity
Remains pure through God's power.'*

A VIRGIN MOST PURE

A virgin most pure,
As the prophets do tell,
Hath brought forth a baby,
As it hath befel,
To be our Redeemer
From death, hell, and sin,
Which Adam's transgression
Hath wrappèd us in:

*Aye and therefore be merry,
Rejoice and be you merry,
Set sorrows aside;
Christ Jesus our Savior
Was born on this tide.*

But when they had entered
The city so fair,
A number of people
So mighty was there,
That Joseph and Mary,
Whose substance was small,
Could find in the inn there
No lodging at all:

At Bethlem in Jewry
A city there was,
Where Joseph and Mary
Together did pass,
And there to be taxèd
With many one mo',
For Caesar commanded
The same should be so:

And they were constrain'd
In a stable to lie,
Where oxen and asses
They used for to tie:
Their lodging so simple,
They held it no scorn,
But against the next morning
Our Savior was born:

*Aye and therefore be merry,
Rejoice and be you merry,
Set sorrows aside;
Christ Jesus our Savior
Was born on this tide.*

The King of all glory
To the world being brought,
Small store of fine linen
To wrap him was sought;
And when she had swaddled
Her young son so sweet,
Within an ox-manger
She laid him to sleep:

Then God sent an angel
From heaven so high,
To certain poor shepherds
In fields where they lie,
And bade them no longer
In sorrow to stay,
Because that our Savior
Was born on this day:

*Aye and therefore be merry,
Rejoice and be you merry,
Set sorrows aside;
Christ Jesus our Savior
Was born on this tide.*

Then presently after,
The shepherds did spy
A number of angels
That stood in the sky;

They joyfully talked,
And sweetly did sing,
To God be all glory,
Our heavenly King.

THERE IS NO ROSE

THERE is no rose of such virtue
As is the rose that bare Jesu.
Alleluia

For in this rose containèd was
Heaven and earth in little space.
Resmiranda

TOMORROW SHALL BE MY DANCING DAY

TOMORROW shall be my dancing day:
I would my true love did so chance
To see the legend of my play,
To call my true love to my dance:
*Sing O my love,
This have I done for my true love.*

Then was I born of a virgin pure,
Of her I took fleshly substance;
Thus was I knit to man's nature,
To call my true love to my dance:
*Sing O my love,
This have I done for my true love*

In a manger laid and wrapp'd I was,
So very poor, this was my chance,
Betwixt an ox and a silly poor ass,
To call my true love to my dance:
*Sing O my love,
This have I done for my true love.*

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day:
I would my true love did so chance
To see the legend of my play,
To call my true love to my dance:
*Sing O my love,
This I have done for my true lo*

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CONCERTS AT SAINT THOMAS

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