



Portishead Choral Society

Conductor: Andrew Kirk
Accompanist: Richard Lennox

Christmas Magnificence

A concert of festive music

Saturday 6th December 2025 at 7.30pm

Portishead Methodist Church
High Street, Portishead, BS20 6EN

Contact us via the website:
www.portisheadchoral.co.uk/contact



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PROGRAMME

Magnificat

John Rutter (b1945)

John Rutter is widely acknowledged as a leading choral composer of his generation. He is a distinguished editor and arranger of choral music, as well as a renowned conductor. Though he is perhaps best known for his carols and other short pieces, he has also written a number of large-scale works for chorus and orchestra. We are delighted to be performing his setting of Magnificat tonight, in his 80th birthday year.

Rutter's Magnificat is a modern take on an ancient text — Mary's 'song of praise' from the Gospel of Luke, a personal response on hearing she is to give birth to the Son of God. Across the centuries, composers have set this text, more often for church, rather than concert use. Rutter's joyful 1990 extended concert setting, sung mainly in Latin, stands out for its brightness and accessibility. His musical style mixes influences from the Anglican choral world, via hints of Latin American rhythm, to the easy warmth of attractive, tuneful melodies. In tonight's performance we are using soprano soloists drawn from the choir, with piano accompaniment.

1. Magnificat anima mea

*My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden.
For behold from henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed.*

2. Of a Rose, a lovely Rose

This movement uses 15th Century English words in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, describing the five branches of a Rose (Mary).

3. Quia fecit mihi magna

For he that is mighty hath magnified me, and Holy is his name.

4. Et Misericordia (soprano soloists: Sally Melson, Miriam Dunn)

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

5. Fecit potentiam

*He hath shewed strength with his arm, he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich he hath sent empty away.*

6. Esurientes (soprano soloist: Alison John)

*He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel.
As he promised to our forefathers: Abraham and his seed for ever.*

7. Gloria Patri

*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.*

INTERVAL

The second half of tonight's concert gives the audience an opportunity to sing familiar traditional carols, alongside the choir singing some shorter carols from the collection 'Carols for Choirs 2', first published in 1970, predominantly featuring arrangements or original compositions by David Willcocks and John Rutter.

Choir: **Masters in this hall**
arranged by David Willcocks (1919-2015)

ALL: **In the bleak midwinter**

In the bleak midwinter frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter long ago.

Our God heaven cannot hold him nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign,
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

Enough for him, whom cherubim worship night and day,
A breastful of milk and a mangerful of hay;
Enough for him, whom Angels fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel which adore.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;
But only his mother in her maiden bliss
Worshipped the beloved with a kiss.

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb,
If I were a wise man I would do my part,
Yet what I can give him, give my heart.

Choir: **This is the truth sent from above**
Trad English arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Hail Blessed Virgin Mary
arranged by Charles Wood (1866-1926)

ALL:

Ding dong merrily on high

Ding dong merrily on high in heav'n the bells are ringing:
Ding dong! verily the sky is riv'n with angel singing.
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

E'en so here below, below, let steeple bells be swungen,
And "Io, io, io!" by priest and people sungen.
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

Pray you, dutifully prime your matin chime, ye ringers;
May you beautifully rime your evetime song, ye singers.
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

Choir:

I sing of a maiden

Patrick Hadley (1899-1973)

Shepherd's Pipe Carol

John Rutter (b1945)

ALL:

Once in Royal David's City

Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a Mother laid her Baby, in a manger for His bed:
Mary was that Mother mild, Jesus Christ her little Child.

He came down to earth from heaven, who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable, and His cradle was a stall;
With the poor, and mean, and lowly, lived on earth our Saviour holy.

For he is our Childhood's pattern, day by day like us He grew,
He was little, weak, and helpless, tears and smiles like us He knew;
And He feeleth for our sadness, and He shareth in our gladness.

And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own redeeming love,
For that child so dear and gentle is our Lord in heaven above;
And he leads his children on to the place where he is gone.

Not in that poor lowly stable, with the oxen standing by,
We shall see Him; but in heaven, set at God's right hand on high;
Where like stars His children crowned, all in white shall wait around.

Christmas Day

Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

Written in 1910 for music students at Morley College (London), this setting weaves together four carols — *Good Christian Men Rejoice*, *God Rest You Merry Gentlemen*, *Come Ye Lofty, The First Nowell* — into a seamless musical collage. It is similar in scope to the better known 1912 setting *Fantasia on Christmas Carols* by Ralph Vaughan Williams. Holst builds the piece from quiet expectancy to full choral brightness, with clever use of varied choral texture, tempo and dynamics.

The third melody, *Come ye lofty*, is perhaps not so well known in the UK; it is an old Breton Melody, in the style of a French Noel with characteristic sparkling dotted rhythms.

ALL: **Hark the herald Angels sing**

Hark! the herald Angels sing glory to the new-born King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled:
Joyful all ye nations rise, Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim Christ is born in Bethlehem.
Hark! the herald Angels sing Glory to the new-born King.

Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold him come offspring of the Virgin's womb!
Veiled in Flesh the Godhead See, Hail the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald Angels sing Glory to the new-born King.

Hail the heaven-born Prince of peace! Hail the Son 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 new-born King.

Choir: **We wish you a merry Christmas**

Merry Christmas!

Andrew Kirk



Andrew Kirk is a freelance choral director, organist, accompanist and composer working mainly in the Bristol and Somerset area. In September 2025, Andrew became Musical Director of Portishead Choral Society, and is delighted to be directing his first concert with the choir tonight.

In the autumn of 2024 Andrew took up the role as Director of two Good Afternoon Choirs, in North Somerset (Nailsea) and Chepstow. From 2023-2025 he was Musical Director of Henbury Singers, a chamber choir of around 20 singers. For five months in 2024, he held the position as Interim Director of Music at Cirencester Parish Church.

From 2003-2023, he was Director of Music and Organist at St Mary Redcliffe Church, Bristol, where he had responsibility for directing several choirs at the church and regularly gave concerts on the famous 1912 Harrison and Harrison organ. In the past few years, his organ concerts have included St

David's Cathedral, St Chad's Cathedral, Tewkesbury Abbey, Christchurch Priory, Leeds Minster, Albert Hall Nottingham and Brangwyn Hall Swansea.

From 1994-2003 he was Director of Music at St John's Church, Ranmoor, Sheffield. He also taught class music at three secondary schools, including Lady Manners School, Bakewell. He has been an external consultant for the appointment of Directors of Music in some of the larger churches in the UK.

Born and educated in Leicester, he won an Organ Scholarship to Pembroke College, Oxford where he studied organ with David Sanger. He spent two years in Western Australia as Assistant Organist at St George's Anglican Cathedral in Perth. He holds the FRCO Diploma, gaining the Turpin and Durrant prizes for organ playing.

Richard Lennox



Richard has been the accompanist for Portishead Choral Society since 2016, supporting both rehearsals and concerts. A versatile and accomplished musician, he has given concerts across the UK and Europe, collaborating with many artists and ensembles.

He has accompanied renowned bass-baritone Jonathan Veira, featuring twice in the online concert series *Live from the Steinway Room*, which remains available to view on YouTube and Facebook. Richard has also had the privilege of accompanying Jamie W. Hall, of the BBC Singers, performing with Weston Choral Society.

Beyond the concert stage, Richard is in high demand as an accompanist for vocalists and instrumentalists in examinations and recitals. He also works with dance schools in Epsom and Cheltenham, further showcasing his adaptability across musical genres. His performances and interviews have been featured on BBC Radio Bristol, where he has shared both his music and insights.

Portishead Choral Society

In 2025, Portishead Choral Society is celebrating its Platinum Jubilee. The Society was formed in 1955 with Winston Jackson as Hon. Conductor and Chairman, and subscriptions were set at five shillings per year. The first concert, in Holy Week 1955, was *The Passion of Christ* by Sir Arthur Somervell.

Currently the choir has about sixty members, drawn mainly, but not exclusively, from Portishead. The society's aim is to provide the local community with the opportunity to perform or listen to choral music to a high standard, singing mostly classical music in four voice parts.

New members are always welcome, be they experienced or new to choral singing, and we do not hold auditions. More information on membership can be found on our website at www.portisheadchoral.co.uk.

Portishead Choral Society

President: Pamela Rudge, GRSM(Hons), ARCM
Registered Charity No: 1039773

www.portisheadchoral.co.uk

www.facebook.com/PortisheadChoral

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If you would like to become a patron, please contact the General Secretary, Sally Melson, using the contact form on our website, or email contact@portisheadchoral.co.uk.

Next Concert

Saturday 28th March 2026 at 7.30pm.

'A Classical Celebration'

Haydn - St Nicholas Mass

Mendelssohn - Hear my Prayer

Mozart - Ave verum and Regina Coeli

New members are always welcome, with no audition. For more information, please see our website portisheadchoral.co.uk, contact a member, or email contact@portisheadchoral.co.uk. Rehearsals are at Portishead Methodist Church on Thursday evenings at 7.30pm.

Members of the choir are available to sing at weddings, funerals, and other events – please see our website, contact a committee member, or email contact@portisheadchoral.co.uk.

Acknowledgements

The society is affiliated to Making Music, the charity that represents and supports amateur choirs, orchestras, and music promoters throughout the United Kingdom.

The society is grateful for the sponsorship and hosting of our website by 34sp.com, who provide free website hosting for registered UK charities.

Programme notes by Andrew Kirk.

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