

Ambleside and District Choral Society



Christmas Concert

**Rachel Little (soprano)
Sarah Jillian Cox (mezzo)
Christopher Steele (tenor)
John Lofthouse (bass)**

Simon Mercer (organ)

Conductor: Marco Giudici

**St. Mary's Church, Ambleside
Saturday 13th December 2025 at 7.30 pm**

Welcome to our Christmas concert! Thank you for supporting live music-making in the Lake District.

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791):

Regina Coeli, K 276

Mass in C (Coronation Mass), K317

1. Kyrie eleison (chorus and soloists)
2. Gloria (chorus and soloists)
3. Credo (chorus and soloists)
4. Sanctus (chorus)
5. Benedictus (soloists and chorus)
6. Agnus Dei (soloists and chorus)

See pages 9-10 for text and translation.

Interval

(Liquid refreshments will be served in the Parish Centre)

Tomás Luis de Victoria: O Magnum Mysterium

Richard Terry: Myn Lyking

Away in a manger (choir and audience)

Bob Chilcott: The First Nowell

Sergei Rachmaninoff: Ave Maria

Edgar Pettman: I saw a maiden

We wish you a merry Christmas (choir and audience)

Mykola Leontovich: Carol of the Bells

Philip Stopford: Do not be afraid

Hark! the herald-angels sing (choir and audience)

George Frideric Handel: Hallelujah Chorus from *Messiah*

See pages 10-11 for the words of the carols for choir and audience.

Mozart: Regina Coeli and Coronation Mass



In January 1779, Mozart returned to his native Salzburg in low spirits after a sixteen-month sojourn in Mannheim and Paris. He had intended to find employment and to secure a substantial commission, but achieved neither. He felt guilty about neglecting his mother, notionally his chaperone for the journey, who had died in Paris six months earlier. In Mannheim, he had been smitten by the soprano Aloysia Weber, but she spurned his advances. Back within the orbit of his controlling father, the twenty-three-year-old composer faced the prospect of a humdrum existence as Court Organist in the employ of the Prince Archbishop, Count Hieronymus Colloredo, whom he despised. Never a prey to false modesty, Mozart poured out his woes in a letter to his friend Franz Joseph Bullinger: “Salzburg is no place for my talent! There’s nothing going on musically, no theatre, no opera...the court orchestra is rich in what is useless and poor in what is essential”.

In reality, the two years Mozart spent in Salzburg prior to his final move to Vienna proved exceptionally productive, notably in the field of sacred music. He composed two masses, two versions of the Vespers Psalms and a setting of the Eastertide antiphon, **Regina Coeli**. This is a joyful and energetic piece, in which the contributions of choir and the soloists are seamlessly joined. It is consciously baroque in style, and we hear unmistakable echoes of the Hallelujah Chorus, which we will be performing in the second half of the concert. Mozart had almost certainly attended a performance of *Messiah* in London at the age of nine and the influence of Handel, the composer he revered most, is apparent in all his choral works.

Regina coeli laetare, alleluia.
Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia,
Resurrexit sicut dixit, alleluia.
Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.

*O Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia.
The Son you were worthy to bear, alleluia.
Has risen as he said, alleluia.
Pray to God for us, alleluia.*

The **Mass in C**, first performed in Salzburg Cathedral on Easter Day 1779, became known as the Coronation Mass, probably as a result of subsequent performances at various coronation ceremonies, including the imperial coronations of Leopold II (1790) and Francis I (1792). These performances were conducted by Antonio Salieri, *Kapellmeister* of the Imperial Chapel.

Archbishop Colloredo had decreed that no Salzburg church service should last longer than forty-five minutes. This might have inhibited a composer as ambitious as Mozart in setting the five sections of the Ordinary of the Mass: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus (including the Benedictus) and Agnus Dei. Although Mozart bemoaned the Archbishop’s restrictions, the restless energy and drive of the Coronation Mass makes a virtue of them. The dotted rhythms of the opening *Kyrie* create an imposing and celebratory mood, with expansive contributions from the soloists providing a contrast. The *Gloria* maintains this momentum, with declamatory choral writing. The soloists are highlighted in the supplicatory sections of the text.

Perhaps with Colloredo's restrictions in mind, Mozart forgoes the customary bass-led fugue on "Cum Sancto Spiritu" and contents himself with a spacious treatment of the concluding Amen.

The lengthy text of the *Credo* has often proved a stumbling block for composers, but here Mozart's setting radiates lightness and vigour. The restless, scurrying accompaniment is stilled by a rapt passage for the soloists at "Et incarnatus est", before resuming at "Et surrexit". The majestic *Sanctus* is terse, but the *Benedictus*, tenderly presented by the soloists, resolves the tensions. The *Agnus Dei* begins with a melting soprano solo, the expressive heart of the work, anticipating the famous "Dove sono" aria in *The Marriage of Figaro*. Mozart may have drafted this in Mannheim in the previous year, with Aloysia Weber in mind. This leads into the *Dona Nobis Pacem*, initially a recapitulation of the soloists' music in the opening Kyrie; the chorus then joins in, bringing the work to a confident and emphatic conclusion.

Tomás Luis de Victoria (1546-1611): O Magnum Mysterium

This justly famous motet sets a text from the Christmas Vespers service. Victoria's use of serenely interwoven voices in the opening bars leads to a hushed united declamation of the words "O beata Virgo". The piece concludes with a joyful Alleluia.

O magnum mysterium
et admirabile sacramentum,
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum
iacentem in praesepe.
O beata Virgo, cuius 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 Virgin, whose womb was worthy
to bear our Lord Jesus Christ.
Alleluia.*

Richard Terry (1865-1938): Myn Lyking

Sir Richard Terry is remembered for his achievement in rescuing Tudor church music from near-oblivion: he published numerous editions and conducted pioneering performances at Westminster Cathedral, where he was organist from 1901 to 1924. Myn lyking is one of a handful of his published compositions; its choice of text illustrates his interest, not then widely shared, in the riches of early English poetry.

Bob Chilcott (1955-): The First Nowell

The carol, a lively new setting of a familiar text, was commissioned by the Church of England in 2023 for use by church choirs across the country.

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943): Ave Maria (Borogoditze devo)

This Ave Maria is taken from the All-Night Vigil, a fifteen-movement choral work using the Russian Orthodox Church liturgy. Rachmaninoff bases the piece on a simple chant melody, which rises to a climax at the words "for thou hast brought forward the Saviour" before ending in a whisper with "who redeemed our souls". This celebrated setting combines rapture with great solemnity.

Edgar Pettman (1866-1943): I saw a maiden

A number of charming folk-carols from the Basque region of Spain were introduced to England in the 1930s by the London organist and composer Edgar Pettman, and popularised through inclusion in the King's College Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. *I saw a maiden* is one of the best-remembered of them.

Mykola Leontovich (1877-1921): Carol of the Bells

The Carol of the Bells is a Ukrainian-American carol, adapted from a Ukrainian folk chant welcoming the spring, known as *Shchedryk* (The Little Swallow). It was recast as a Christmas carol by the American composer Peter Wilhousky in 1936 and has enjoyed huge popularity ever since (for an example of another successful re-purposing, see the note on *Hark! the herald-angels sing* on page 11).

Philip Stopford (1977-): Do not be afraid

This gentle choral song is based on verses from the Book of Isaiah. It was commissioned in 2010 by Andrew and Kathryn Radley on the occasion of the baptism of their daughter at St Peter and St Paul's Church, Uplyme.

George Frideric Handel (1685-1757): Hallelujah Chorus from *Messiah*

The triumphant conclusion of the second part of *Messiah* needs no introduction. We will be performing the entire work on 18 December 2027, to mark the 150th anniversary of the Choral Society's first concert.

Artists' Biographies

Rachel Little - Soprano

Rachel studied at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama with Patricia MacMahon and at the Royal College of Music with Eiddwen Harrhy. An experienced oratorio singer, she has performed extensively in venues from the Royal Albert Hall and The Barbican to the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall and St. Patrick's Cathedral Dublin. She was the soprano soloist for a BBC Radio 3 recording of Haydn's *Creation*, conducted by Sir Philip Ledger, and the soloist for two BAFTA award-winning film sound tracks, *Transition* and *American Cousins*, both composed by Donald Shaw.

On the concert platform, she has worked with internationally renowned conductors including Sir David Willcocks, Peter Robinson and Tan Dun. Recent performances include Mozart's *Exultate Jubilate* conducted by David Chapman, *Messiah* with the Manchester Chamber Choir and the Haydn *Harmonie Messe* in St Asaph's Cathedral.

On the operatic stage, Rachel has sung for three years with the Opera Holland Park Chorus and performed in the British Premiere of Tan Dun's opera *Marco Polo* with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. She has won several awards including the Jean Highgate Scholarship, the Jewish Choral Prize and the Hugh Sloane Memorial Award.

Sarah Jillian Cox - Mezzo

Born in Canada of British parentage, Sarah studied at the RNCM and the National Opera Studio, graduating in 2002. Since 2010, Sarah has taught singing, both privately and in schools, and was awarded her MA in Musicology in 2021 from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. She presently continues her study there as a part-time PhD student, funded by Midlands4Cities. Sarah sings as First Alto for the Lancaster Priory Choir, for whom she is also a staff singing teacher.

Sarah has sung leading and supporting roles for Mid Wales Opera, English Touring Opera, Scottish Opera, Tête à Tête and Opera North. Oratorios include Verdi *Requiem* for Glossop Choral Society, *Messiah* with Sir David Willcocks, Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* for the Derby Choral Union, the Bach B minor Mass, and Rossini's *Petite Messe Solenne* and *Stabat Mater*.

Christopher Steele - Tenor

Christopher sang with the chorus of Opera Australia before winning a scholarship to the opera course at The Royal College of Music. He then studied at the National Opera Studio. He performed many lead tenor roles for national touring companies and small roles and understudies for most of the major opera companies, as well as singing oratorio roles in many of the UK's premier venues. Now a full-time teacher based in Lancaster, Christopher teaches at Lancaster Royal Grammar School and Sedbergh School, as well as teaching privately. He has helped students to achieving places at classical and musical theatre tertiary institutions, and specialises in the science of tone production and boys' transitional voice change. He also enjoys golf and flat water kayaking.

John Lofthouse – Bass

John, who comes from Levens, studied Theology at Durham University before training at the Guildhall School of Music and the Opera Studio. He has worked for many of the UK's leading Opera companies big and small, including Glyndebourne, Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera and English National Opera. Operatic roles include title role Leporello *Don Giovanni* for Opera della Luna, Pirate King *The Pirates of Penzance*, and March Hare and the White Knight in Will Todd's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* at the Royal Opera House.

Concert performances include Bach *Christmas Oratorio* and Stainer *Crucifixion* in Germany; Elgar *Dream of Gerontius* in Iasi, Romania; C.P.E. Bach *Magnificat* in Dunblane Cathedral, Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony* in Chichester Cathedral, *Messiah* in Carlisle, Liverpool and Portsmouth Cathedrals, Vaughan Williams' *Mystical Songs* in Rochester Cathedral, *Mozart Requiem* in the Royal Albert Hall, Rachmaninoff *The Bells* in Southampton Guildhall, Britten *War Requiem* in Kendal and Bernstein's *Mass* at The Anvil, Basingstoke. Future performances include Zuniga *Carmen* and Yamadori *Madame Butterfly* for Opera Brava and a tour of a musical variety act featuring the work of Flanders & Swann and Hinge & Brackett.

Simon Mercer – Organ

Simon comes from Sussex and moved to Sheffield to study for his BMus degree, followed by postgraduate study at the RNCM: the organ with Eric Chadwick, Ronald Frost and Gillian Weir and the harpsichord with David Francis. He has held a range of important musical posts in the South Manchester area, including Director of Music at King's School Macclesfield. He has had a long-standing connection with the Junior RNCM as Organ Tutor and Academic Tutor. He is also Director of the JRNCM Vocal Ensemble and founded the Hallé Choral Academy in 2014. He is much in demand as a teacher, mentor, adjudicator and conductor, and is one of thirty Accredited Teachers appointed by the Royal College of Organists. He has given organ recitals at the cathedrals of Arundel, Blackburn, Chichester, Dunkeld, Sheffield and Vienna, and at Brinkburn Priory in Northumberland.

Marco Giudici - Conductor

Marco has been our Music Director since 2022. After gaining his Diploma at the Conservatorio G.Verdi in Milan, he was principal clarinet of the Italian Youth Orchestra for two years. He went on to study in Germany with internationally renowned performers and tutors Edward Brunner and Hans Deinzer, obtaining his soloist Diploma with Distinction. He has performed as a freelance player both in Italy and England, working with orchestras such as the National Italian Radio Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Manchester Camerata, Lancashire Sinfonietta and the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company.

At present he enjoys a rewarding teaching career. Some of his students have become members of youth orchestras, such as the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, Hallé Youth Orchestra and the Liverpool Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, and have gone on to study at the principal music colleges. In recent years, Marco has studied conducting at the London Conducting Academy and with Eduardo Portal. He is the Music Director both of the Salford Symphony Orchestra and the Preston Symphony Orchestra.

Ambleside and District Choral Society

www.amblesidechoralsociety.org.uk

Director of Music: Marco Giudici

Accompanist: David Edmonds

Chairman: Michael Corin



Sopranos

Lin Allen
Amanda Astle
Joan Carus
Anna Gervasoni
Jill Halton
Sachie Hawks
Pamela Hull
Nicky Hunter
Jo Knight
Monica Liddell
Amy Long
Myra McCraith
Judith Meredith
Margaret Mitchinson
Kathryn Owen
Dorothy Reilly
Jane Renouf
Sandie Telford-Reed
Heather Venables

Tenors

Carole Drury
Amy Morris
Esther Potts
Mark Rigby
David Stothard
David Telford-Reed

Altos

Judy Blake
Carolyn Bradley
Jane Collings
Judith Dixon
Sue Dixon
Joy Duxbury
Margaret Gambie
Belinda Harward
Liz Kenna
Jean Lane
Anne Leung
Sue Mathieson
Christine Mead
Dee Rogers
Liz Shapland
Kate Stelfox
Liz Taylor

Basses

Edward Astle
Michael Corin
Mark Crompton
Stewart Fuller
Paul Johnston
Peter Yates

Come and join us! We are a very friendly choir, whose singers are drawn from Ambleside and around – Coniston, Grasmere, Hawkshead, Kendal, Troutbeck, Windermere and further afield. We do not hold auditions, nor do we expect sight-singing ability; what we do expect is that new members will have had some prior experience of choral singing, the ability to follow their part in the vocal score, and a commitment to practise at home between rehearsals. Our next concert, on 2 May 2025, features Fauré's ever popular Requiem and the Magnificat by John Rutter, with soloists and the Lonsdale Ensemble. You are very welcome to give us a try: rehearsals begin on Monday 5 January 2026 at 7.30 pm in Ambleside Parish Centre. Give Michael Corin a ring on 015394 33944 or just turn up on the night.

Weddings and Events: We are often able to provide a choir to sing at weddings. We are also glad to sing at funeral and thanksgiving services. If you would like to know more, please contact Nicky Hunter on 015394 34867 to discuss your requirements.

TEXT AND TRANSLATION OF THE CORONATION MASS

1. Kyrie

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

*Lord have mercy.
Christ have mercy.
Lord have mercy.*

2. Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax
hominibus bonae voluntatis. Laudamus te,
benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te.
gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam
tuam, Domine Deus, Rex caelestis, Deus
Pater omnipotens. Domine Fili unigenite,
Jesu Christe, Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius
Patris. Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere
nobis. Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe
deprecationem nostram. Qui sedes ad
dexteram Patris, miserere nobis. Quoniam tu
solus sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus
Altissimus, Jesu Christe, cum Sancto Spiritu,
in gloria Dei Patris, Amen.

*Glory to God in the highest and on earth
peace to men of good will. We praise you,
we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you.
We give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father
almighty. Lord, only-begotten Son, Jesus
Christ, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the
Father. You who take away the sins of the
world, have mercy on us. You who take
away the sins of the world, receive our
prayer. You who sit at the right hand of the
Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are
holy, you alone are the Lord, you alone are
the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy
Spirit, in the glory of God the Father, Amen.*

3. Credo

Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem,
factorem caeli et terrae, visibilium omnium et
invisibilium, et in unum Dominum Jesum
Christum, Filium Dei unigenitum, et ex Patre
natum ante omnia saecula, Deum de Deo,
lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero,
gentium, non factum, consubstantialem Patri
per quem omnia facta sunt. Qui propter nos
homines et propter nostrum salutem
descendit de caelis. Et incarnatus est de

*I believe in one God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all things
visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus
Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, born of
the Father before all worlds. God from God,
light from light, true God from true God.
Begotten, not made, of one being with the
Father, through whom all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation he came
down from heaven, by the power of the Holy*

Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine, et homo factus est. Crucifixus etiam pro nobis, sub Pontio Pilato; passus et sepultus est. Et resurrexit tertia die, secundum Scripturas, et ascendit in caelum: sedet ad dexteram Patris. Et iterum venturus est cum gloria, iudicare vivos et mortuos, cuius regni non erit finis. Et in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum et vivificantem qui ex Patre Filioque procedit. Qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur: qui locutus est per prophetas. Et unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam. Confiteor unum baptisma in remissionem peccatorum. Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum, et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.

Spirit he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. He rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures, and ascended into heaven; and sits at the right hand of the Father. He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son He is adored and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And I look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

4. Sanctus

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis.

Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

5. Benedictus

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Hosanna in excelsis.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

6. Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

CAROLS (see p.2)

Away in a manger,

No crib for a bed.
The little Lord Jesus
Lays down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky
Looked down where he lay.
The little Lord Jesus
Asleep on the hay.

2. The cattle are lowing,
The baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus
No crying he makes.

I love thee, Lord Jesus,
Look down from the sky
And stay by my side
Until morning is nigh.

3. Be near me, Lord Jesus,
I ask thee to stay
Close by me for ever,
And love me I pray.
Bless all the dear children
In thy tender care,
And fit us for heaven,
To live with thee there.

We wish you a Merry Christmas

We wish you a merry Christmas,
We wish you a merry Christmas
And a happy New Year.
Good tidings we bring
To you and your kin,
We wish you a merry Christmas
And a happy New Year.

2. Now bring us some figgy pudding,
Now bring us some figgy pudding,
Now bring us some figgy pudding,
And a cup of good cheer.
Good tidings we bring ...

3. We won't go until we get some,
We won't go until we get some,
We won't go until we get some,
So bring some out here.
Good tidings we bring ...

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.*

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 the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.
*Hark! the herald-angels sing
Glory to the new-born 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 new-born King.*

The tune of *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* is taken from a cantata composed by Mendelssohn in 1840 to mark the 400th anniversary of Gutenberg's invention of the printing press. The first line can be translated "Fatherland, in your dominions, here first dawned the golden day". Mendelssohn was well aware of the tune's potential: "I am sure that the piece will be liked very much by the singers and their hearers, but *it will never do* to set it to sacred words. There must be a national or merry subject found". However, once the organist William Cummings discovered in 1856 how well the tune fitted Charles Wesley's words, the two became inseparably linked.

And a very Merry Christmas to one and all!



Our Next Concert:

**Gabriel Fauré: Requiem
John Rutter: Magnificat**

Rachel Little (soprano)
Terence Ayebare (bass)

Lonsdale Ensemble
(Leader: Julian Cann)

Conducted by Marco Giudici

Saturday 2 May 2026 at 7.30 pm
in St Mary's Church, Ambleside

Tickets are now available. Scan the code or go to
<https://www.trybooking.com/uk/events/landing/99510>



We would love to hear your comments on tonight's concert.
Scan the code or go to <https://amblesidechoralsociety.org.uk/feedback/>

