

CHRISTMAS ORCHESTRAL CONCERT, IN AID OF SANKTUS

Aeolian Sinfonia of North London - Thursday 11th December 2025, 8pm

[Our Lady Help of Christians Church](#), Lady Margaret Road, Kentish Town, London NW5 2XT

Welcome to our Christmas orchestral concert, which is being held in aid of the [Sanktus Welfare Project](#). Sanktus provides essential help to homeless and vulnerable people, the elderly and those with support needs in the local community. The cost of providing these valuable services has recently risen sharply. Sanktus is a *very* local charity – it operates from the church you're now sitting in. Please make a generous paper cash donation in the church before you leave, or send a donation using the instructions found on the website [sanktus.org](#)

We would like to say a big thank you to Fr Allan Alvarado Gil for permission to hold this concert in the church, and to Liliana Bragadin and to Rose and Richard for their help in various ways in organising this event. Most of the orchestral players are donating their time free of charge, and we would like to thank them all too – many have travelled a considerable distance to be here. Liz Valentine has generously provided programme notes for the three classical orchestral works, and the orchestra's treasurer, Nigel Brockmann, has kept us afloat, financially.

Aeolian Sinfonia of North London, active for many years, was conducted for most of these by the late Roy Budden, who founded the orchestra at least sixty years ago as the Kensington Sinfonia. Known as one of North London's friendliest orchestras, we rehearse on Thursday evenings during school term time. If you know of anyone who would like to join us, we always need string players, and often extra woodwind and brass. Future concerts will be listed at [aeoliansinfonia.com](#) - send us a message via the site and ask to be added to our mailing list.

Violin 1

Elizabeth Ann Binks (leader)
Donna Beldom
Margot Hodgkinson
Pamela White
Mariko Yamamoto

Violin 2

Jasmine Ali
Rohan Arambepola
Gita Croft
Rodric Jenkin
Piyarat Martin
Richard

Viola

Segun Adetunji
John Rokos
Richard Stanley
Henry Walker

Cello

Ruth Williams
Dave Jenkinson
Jude Olabanji

Bass

Paul Martin

Flute

Liz Valentine
Helen Barrett

Oboe

David Williamson
Nick Murray

Clarinet

Nick Charles
Nigel Brockmann

Bassoon

Bryan Ogilvie
Dan Sowood

Horn

Daniel Davis
Anna Wood
Felix Davis
Armen Boldy

Trumpet

Ben Wong
Chrissie Perrin

Timpani/Conductor

Charlotte Harber
Keith Bramich

Please join in with our six audience carols this evening.

Audience carol: Once in Royal David's City

1 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.

2 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.

3 And through all His wondrous
childhood
He would honour and obey,
Love and watch the lowly maiden,
In whose gentle arms He lay:
Christian children all must be
Mild, obedient, good as He.

4 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.

5 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.

6 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.

PTO>>

All four orchestral works in tonight's concert are related to Christmas in one way or another.

Orchestra: Engelbert Humperdinck (1854-1921): *Hansel and Gretel: Overture*

The opera owes its origin to Humperdinck's sister, who asked her brother to compose music for verses she had written based on the Grimms' fairytale, for performance at her children's Christmas party. These were quickly enlarged into a *Singspiel* with piano accompaniment, presented by Humperdinck to his fiancée as an engagement present at Christmas in 1890. During the following two years he turned it into a three-act opera. Richard Strauss, delighted with the result, agreed to conduct the premier in Weimar on December 23rd 1893. It was first performed in London on 26th December the following year. With its Wagnerian techniques (Humperdinck was greatly influenced by Wagner whom he met in Italy) and German folk songs, it became an instant success, and has traditionally been performed at Christmas-time ever since.

The Overture, which Humperdinck privately called 'Children's Life', opens with a beautiful horn chorale, a gentle 'Evening Prayer' hymn. In accordance with convention, it introduces songs and dances from the opera, including the witch's hocus pocus spell and the final 'The witch is dead' scene. A great variety of instrumentation and moods from serene to tense follow, the themes being woven together in an elegant counterpoint. After a stirring climax, the movement returns to the calm with which it began and the horn chorale is heard once again.

Audience carol: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

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| 1. O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel;
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel. | 2. O come, Thou Rod of Jesse,
free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people
save,
And give them victory o'er the
grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel. | 3. O come, Thou Day-Spring,
come and cheer,
Our Spirits by Thine Advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of
night,
And death's dark shadows put to
flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel. |
| 4. O come, Thou Key of David,
come
And open wide our heavenly
home;
Make safe the way that leads on
high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel. | 5. O come, O come, thou Lord of
Might
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's
height,
In ancient times didst give the law,
In cloud, and majesty, and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel. | |

Orchestra: Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912), arr Sydney Baynes: *Christmas Overture*

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was born 150 years ago in Holborn, the son of a Sierra Leonean doctor whom he never saw and an English mother. Named after the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, he lived for most of his life in Croydon, entering the Royal College of Music aged 15 in 1890 to study violin and piano. His *Te Deum* led Sir Charles Grove to persuade him to switch to composition, which he studied under Charles Villiers Stanford. Best known for *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, based on Longfellow's poem, he toured the United States as the 'African Mahler', being received by President Roosevelt, a distinction for someone of mixed race. He died tragically of pneumonia at the age of 37.

His *Christmas Overture*, published posthumously in 1925, is thought to have been originally conceived as incidental music for Alfred Noyes' poem *The Forest of Wild Thyme* but never performed. Orchestrated by Sydney Barnes, it cleverly interweaves well-known Christmas carols, including *Good King Wenceslas* and *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*. Can you hear any others?

PTO>>

Audience carol: Hark the Herald Angels Sing

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| 1. 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 th' 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 th' 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 us second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new born King!" |
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Orchestra: Otto Nicolai (1810-1849): *Christmas Overture*

Otto Nicolai was a German composer and conductor, a founder of the Vienna Philharmonic and best known for his opera *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor* (The Merry Wives of Windsor). His *Christmas Overture* was first performed in the Garrison Church in Potsdam in 1833. There were three more performances in Leipzig and Vienna, but the work was not published until 1938.

Following Bach's practice, the Overture is based on a Lutheran chorale, *Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her* ('From Heaven Above to Earth I Come'), an interpretation of the Christmas story in Luke's gospel. This is turned into a substantial symphonic movement with dramatic contrasts. The work opens with a sombre *Adagio* section representing the Biblical text "the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" from Isaiah, followed by a light *Allegro* section. A crescendo leads to dotted rhythms before the chorale is first heard, played by the winds. A frantic, fast section introduces a version of the theme at a faster tempo. After more climaxes, dotted rhythms and chromatic phrases, the theme reappears in the final section, played solemnly and sedately by the winds with decorative accompaniments in the strings. There is provision for an optional addition of mixed voice choir and organ in this final section.

Audience carol: The Angel Gabriel from heaven came

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| 1 The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
his wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;
"All hail," said he to meek and lowly Mary,
"most highly favored maiden." Gloria! | 2 "I come from heav'n to tell the Lord's decree:
a blessed virgin mother you shall be.
Your Son shall be Immanuel, by seers foretold,
most highly favored maiden." Gloria! |
| 3 Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head;
"To me be as it pleases God," she said.
"My soul shall laud and magnify his holy name."
Most highly favored maiden, Gloria! | 4 Of her, Immanuel, the Christ, was born
In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,
and Christian folk throughout the world will ever
say, "Most highly favored maiden." Gloria! |

Audience carol: *Past Three A Clock*

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| Refrain:
<i>Past three a clock,
And a cold frosty morning,
Past three a clock;
Good morrow, masters all!</i> | 1. Born is a Baby,
Gentle as may be,
Son of the eternal
Father supernal.
(Refrain: <i>Past three a clock ...</i>) | 2. Seraph quire singeth,
Angel bell ringeth;
Hark how they rime it,
<i>Time it and chime it. Refrain.</i> |
| 3. Mid earth rejoices
Hearing such voices
e'ertofore so well
Carolling Nowell. <i>Refrain.</i> | 4. Hinds o'er the pearly,
Dewy lawn early
Seek the high Stranger
Laid in the manger. <i>Refrain.</i> | 5. Cheese from the dairy
Bring they for Mary
And, not for money,
Butter and honey. <i>Refrain.</i> |

6. Light out of star-land
Leadeth from far land
Princes, to meet him,
Worship and greet him.

7. Myrrh from full coffer,
Incense they offer;
Nor is the golden
Nugget withholden.
Refrain.

8. Thus they: I pray you,
Up, sirs, nor stay you
Till ye confess him
Likewise and bless him.
Refrain.

Refrain:

*Past three a clock,
And a cold frosty morning,
Past three a clock;
Good morrow, masters all!*

Orchestra: Carol medley in memory of Mike Walker (arranged by Keith Bramich)

This piece began life three years ago, written in memory of Mike Walker, Aeolian Sinfonia's long-term saxophone player. Constructed almost entirely from traditional carols from various countries, it contains, in playing order, *This is the truth sent from above* from Herefordshire beginning with Bryan Ogilvie's solo bassoon, the Irish *Wexford Carol* as a violin solo played by Elizabeth Ann Binks, then a reprise of the Herefordshire carol which gradually changes into the *Ukrainian Bell Carol*. After a slight pause comes the *Huron Carol* from Canada and then the Welsh tune *All through the night* which, towards the end, is combined with *The Christmas tree is decorated* from Finland. Next comes the sprightly French *He is born, the Divine Christ Child*. When this tune repeats more slowly, medieval tune *Good Christian Men Rejoice* is added on clarinet. The original version of this medley ended with the well-known Austrian song *Silent Night*, by Franz Gruber (1787-1863) played by our first clarinet Nick Charles on a solo saxophone in memory of Mike. (Tonight Nick plays it on clarinet.)

This year's version of the medley continues with the circa 16th century *Gaudete!* made famous in the UK by Steelee Span in the 1970s, then the beautiful and gentle *Bethlehem Down* by English composer Peter Warlock (1894-1930) and then *Infant Holy* from Poland, followed by the strident medieval *Personent Hodie*. *Bethlehem Down* returns, but this time it's a slightly unwilling accompaniment to *Vienna, City of My Dreams* (1914) by Rudolf (*non rubro naso*) Siczyski (1879-1952), played on the oboe by David Williamson.

Please listen carefully as, at the end, the medley goes straight into :

Audience carol: We wish you a merry Christmas

1 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.

3 For we all like figgy pudding,
For we all like figgy pudding,
For we all like figgy pudding, so bring it out here!
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 bring it out here!
Good tidings we bring to you and your kin.
We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

4 And we won't go until we got some,
and we won't go until we got some,
and we won't go until we got some, so bring some out here!
Good tidings we bring to you and your kin.
We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Please stay for refreshments and conversation in the parish centre after the concert, and don't forget, before you leave, to give a donation to the **SanKTus Welfare Project**.