

WELCOME FROM THE DIRECTOR

From the concert programme of To Bethlehem With Kings Christmas concert series, December 2017

Dear Friends,

With this concert I hope we are fulfilling the *To Bethlehem With Kings* promise of 'beautiful carols, ancient and modern'. We open with the *A Solis Ortus* chant: 5th century words set to a haunting Gregorian melody that seems to dance between light (Dorian) and dark (Phrygian) modes. This is, I think, ancient enough to command our reverence, while Paul Halley's tarting up of the straight-laced Dutch classic *Ere Zij God*, which comes toward the end of our programme, is brand new and big and bright enough to give us a laugh.

Along the way, we'll take you to medieval England (*There is no Rose*), Josquin's 15th century France (the polyphonic masterpiece *Ave Maria*), and Praetorius's Germany (*Lo How a Rose*). There is the usual smattering of folk songs, from hither and yon, and even a couple of modern hymns. Warlock's *Lullaby* could only have been written in the 20th century, but I think its harmonic charm and lyrical simplicity would make Bach smile.

This range is offered in an effort to put on a good concert for you, of course. But it is also in an effort to give the members of Capella Regalis a thrilling, edifying experience. Where else can boys and men, kids and grown-ups and teenagers, participate in and connect with the great trajectory of human artistic effort spanning back through the centuries, in such a visceral, meaningful way? I ask an honest question to which there are no doubt answers. But this *singing*, this declamation of texts that have been made only more beautiful in their pairing with music, is a transforming experience for a person of any age, of any faith, at any time.

You can imagine how powerful it is for these boys to see the notes on the page (in the case of the Gregorian chant, they are strange little squares on a four-line staff), to bring them to life with their voices, and then to hear what seems to be the works of heaven opening up when their voices join in the ensemble of sound: altos, tenors, basses, brass, organ, and sometimes audience too, all blaring along.

Thank you for coming to hear this music yourself, and for encouraging the men and boys in making it. We are truly grateful for your support.

Yours,
Nick