



ST JOHN'S SMITH SQUARE

35th Christmas Festival

Sunday 13 December 2020

The Gesualdo Six



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The Gesualdo Six Owain Park - director

Veni Emmanuel *arr. Philip Lawson (b.1957)*
Nun Komm, der Heiden Heiland *Michael Praetorius (1571 – 1621)*

In the stillness *Sally Beamish (b.1956)*
Mirabile mysterium *Jacob Handl (1550 – 1591)*

Rorate caeli *William Byrd*
The promised light of life *Cheryl Frances-Hoad*

The Annunciation *Jonathan Harvey (1939 – 2012)*
The truth sent from above *arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 – 1958) & Owain Park (b.1993)*

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen *harm. Michael Praetorius*
Angelus ad virginem *Anon.*

In Winter's House *Joanna Marsh (b.1970)*
There is a flower *John Rutter (b.1945)*

Maria durch ein dornwald ging *arr. Philip Lawson (b.1957)*
The Oxen *Jonathan Rathbone (b.1957)*

BBC
RADIO



The 3pm performance of today's concert is being recorded for broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in Concert on Wednesday 16 December 2020 at 7.30pm and will be available online on BBC Sounds for 30 days after the broadcast.

For centuries Christmas and the surrounding seasons have inspired composers to new heights of invention. This programme reaches across the ages, from the eternal beauty of the Tudor church right up to the twenty-first century, with each piece chosen to evoke a sense of mystery and joy.

In the Renaissance, Advent—the weeks preceding the celebration of Christ’s birth at Christmas—was a time of wonder and reflection. Centuries-old carols tell this story, with some works presented here in their inherited form, others reimagined by skilled arrangers. Pieces that focus on the birth of Christ form the backbone of this collection: Thomas Hardy’s tableau of the scene on Christmas Eve is particularly striking, alongside music that heralds the baby’s arrival and offers insight into the first few weeks of Jesus’s life. Themes and forms are echoed through the ages: two lullabies, though written centuries apart, employ coaxing refrains to be sung to disquieted children; some of the most exquisite melodies are found in works dedicated to Mary.

I hope that we have managed to capture something of the festive spirit, with moments of stillness set against joyful exuberance. It is music that we thoroughly enjoy singing—we all feel a certain magic when we revisit this repertoire towards the end of each year.

Owain Park



The Gesualdo Six is an award-winning British vocal ensemble comprising some of the UK’s finest consort singers, directed by Owain Park. Praised for their imaginative programming and impeccable blend, the ensemble formed in 2014 for a performance of Gesualdo’s *Tenebrae Responsories* in Cambridge and has gone on to perform at numerous major festivals across UK, Europe, Canada and Australia. Notable highlights include a concert as part of the distinguished Deutschland Radio Debut Series in 2018, and collaborations with the Brodsky Quartet, London Mozart Players, Luxmuralis, William Barton and Matilda Lloyd. The ensemble often incorporates educational work into its activities, holding workshops for choirs and composers and giving concerts alongside local performers. The Gesualdo Six has curated two Composition Competitions, with the 2019 edition attracting entries from over three hundred composers around the world. The group have recently commissioned new works from Joanna Ward and Kerensa Briggs, alongside coronasolfège for 6 from Héloïse Werner. Videos of the ensemble performing a diverse selection of works filmed in Ely Cathedral have been watched by millions online. The group released their debut recording ‘English Motets’ on Hyperion Records in early 2018 to critical acclaim, followed by a festive album of seasonal favourites in late 2019, ‘Christmas’. G6’s latest

recording is an album of compile-themed music titled 'Fading' which was awarded Vocal & Choral Recording of the Year 2020 by Limelight.

Upcoming Events this month at St John's Smith Square...

Monday 14 December – 35th Christmas Festival
David Titterington plays Messiaen's *La Nativité du Seigneur*
Narrated by Timothy West

Tuesday 15 December
English Sinfonia: English Miniatures & The Lark Ascending

Wednesday 16 December – 35th Christmas Festival
London Choral Sinfonia & Mary Bevan – Bach Magnificat in D

Thursday 17 December – 35th Christmas Festival
Ex Cathedra

Friday 18 December – 35th Christmas Festival
The Tallis Scholars

Saturday 19 December – 35th Christmas Festival
City of London Choir

Sunday 20 December – 35th Christmas Festival
Brodsky Quartet

Monday 21 December – 35th Christmas Festival
Koor Singers & Players, Roderick Williams & Mary Bevan: Christmas Fantasia

Tuesday 22 December – 35th Christmas Festival
Polyphony & Stephen Layton

For the full December programme and further details, please visit:
<https://www.sjss.org.uk/whats-on>

All tickets must be booked online and in advance. Booking closes 2 hours before the start of each performance.

St John's Smith Square

The coronavirus pandemic has had a devastating effect on people's lives and their livelihoods. St John's Smith Square is a registered charity and receive no regular public funding, with all our revenue provided for by hiring out the hall, ticket revenue, catering receipts and your generous donations. When we closed our doors on 16th March 2020 we immediately lost over 80% of our income.

We are delighted to now be able to re-open and to share the joy of live music in these challenging times whilst providing a vital base for artists to once again perform. Ticket sales alone only cover approximately 30% of the operating costs for these concerts. If you have enjoyed today and are able to consider making an additional donation your support would be greatly appreciated. Details of ways in which you can help can be found on our website at: <https://www.sjss.org.uk/donations>. You can also make a simple donation by TEXT MESSAGE:

Text STJOHNS to 70450 to donate £10

Texts cost £10 plus one standard rate message

Thank you for your support.

In accordance with the requirements of Westminster City Council persons shall not be permitted to sit or stand in any gangway.

The taking of photographs and use of recording equipment is strictly forbidden

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without formal consent from St John's Smith Square.

Smoking is not permitted anywhere in St John's Smith Square.

Please ensure that all digital watch alarms, pagers, and mobile phones are switched off.

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www.sjss.org.uk

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