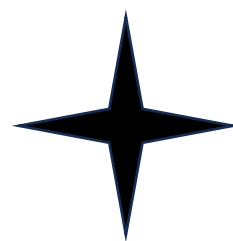




# Stretton Choral Society

Music Director: Michael Turner

Accompanist: Gill Styles



Present

## *Choirs and Carols at Christmas*

*From Bach to the Vicar of Dibley*

With

### **Stretton Singers**

Music Director: Andrea Chapman

Soloist: Isabelle Clews

Accompanist: Thomas Wilson

And

### **Shropshire Hills Ensemble**

Music Director: Michael Turner



**Saturday 13th December 2025**

**7.30 pm**

**Silvester Horne Institute**

Registered Charity No. 1012348  
[www.strettonchoral.org.uk](http://www.strettonchoral.org.uk)

Programme included in ticket price



Stretton Choral Society is long-established as part of the musical landscape of the Strettons, open to all, friendly and welcoming, with no auditions, yet aiming for a high standard. Stretton Singers are the choir from Church Stretton School, created by the Head of Music, Andrea Chapman.



Tonight is a new venture where the town and school come together to make music at Christmas. As is our tradition, Stretton Choral Society perform excerpts from a major work, this year, Bach's Christmas Oratorio, and a selection of carols. We have readings, audience carols, and musical interludes. But we also have performances from Stretton Singers, who sing in the second half, before a soloist from the school joins the Choral Society to perform Howard Goodall's Psalm 23 (better known as the Vicar of Dibley theme!)

The soloist was chosen through a competition sponsored by Stretton Choral Society. A dozen students sang a piece of their choice to a judging panel from the Choral Society. Three winners, as well as receiving a cash prize, then performed the Goodall solo in a second round. The overall winner, Isabelle Clews from Year 9, is our soloist tonight. Congratulations!

Through the competition and joint concert tonight, we aim both to introduce more young people to choral singing, and to promote community links between town and school. This (along with singing in local residential homes) is funded by the proceeds of our Quiz Night earlier this year – do support next year's Quiz Night to enable these community initiatives to continue!

And do consider joining us to sing. Choral singing (at least how we do it) is fun and uplifting, and we'd love more people to experience that. We can't emphasise enough that all are welcome; no previous experience necessary!

Stretton Choral Society

## **Quiz Night 2026**

7.15pm Friday 20 February, Silvester Horne Institute

Raising funds for musical outreach in our community

The 2025 Quiz was full to capacity and great fun – put next year's in your diary!

# PROGRAMME

*Stretton Choral Society*

Excerpts from

## **J S Bach's Christmas Oratorio**

*With carol interludes arranged by Michael Turner*

*Shropshire Hills Ensemble:*

Alex Postlethwaite - violin

Elin Roddy - viola

Jane Park - violin

Fiona Rattray - cello

**Come now with gladness**

**O Lord of all creation**

*Interlude: Silent Night*

**Ah, dearest Jesus, babe divine**

**Break Forth, O glorious morning-light**

*Interlude: In dulci jubilo*

**Behold! Within a humble stall**

**Our God has all these wonders done**

**Rejoice and sing!**

*Interlude: In the bleak midwinter*

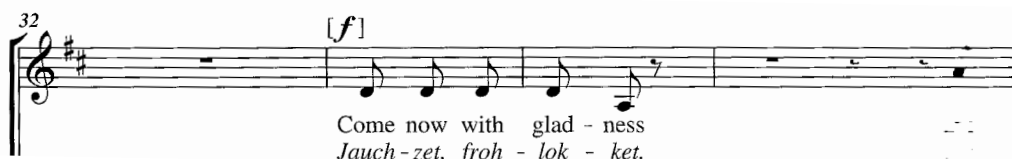
**Come! Be thankful and adore him**

**Now vengeance has been taken**

## **INTERVAL**

Refreshments available

Raffle drawn after the interval

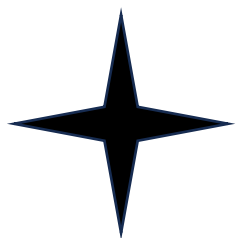


The opening words of the Christmas Oratorio

## Audience Carol

1 Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn 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 hosts proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn 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 newborn 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 newborn King"

## Torches

Words: translated from traditional Galician by J B Trend.

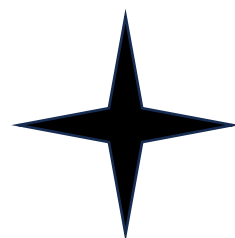
Music: John Joubert.

## All My Heart This Night Rejoices

Words: Paulus Gerhardt, translated by Catherine Winkworth

Music: Johann Georg Ebeling

*Reading*  
**Talking Turkeys**  
By Benjamin Zephaniah



*Stretton Singers*  
**Somewhere Only We Know**  
Words and music by Keane, arranged Lily Allen

*Shropshire Hills Ensemble*  
**Jingle Bells**  
By James Pierpont, arranged Michael Turner

*Stretton Singers*  
**Mistletoe**  
Words and music by Justin Bieber, Nasri Atweh, and Adam Messinger

*Reading*  
**Saturday Night at the Bethlehem Arms**  
By Gareth Owen

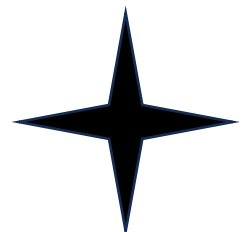
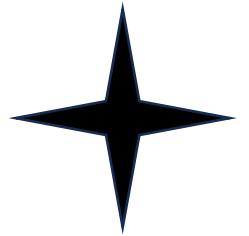
**Past Three A Clock**  
Words: G R Woodward  
Music: traditional, harmonised by Charles Wood

**Come Thou Redeemer of the Earth**  
Words: St Ambrose, translated by J M Neale and others  
Music: traditional melody, adapted by M Praetorius, arranged David Willcocks

*Choir and soloist*  
**The Lord is my Shepherd**  
Psalm 23  
Music: Howard Goodall

**Audience Carol**  
1 The first Nowell the angel did say  
was to certain poor shepherds in  
fields as they lay,  
in fields where they lay keeping their  
sheep,  
on a cold winter's night that was so  
deep.

*Refrain:*  
*Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,*  
*born is the King of Israel.*



2 They looked up and saw a star  
shining in the east beyond them far;  
and to the earth it gave great light,  
and so it continued both day and  
night. *[Refrain]*

3 And by the light of that same star  
three wise men came from country  
far;  
to seek for a king was their intent,  
and to follow the star wherever it  
went. *[Refrain]*

4 This star drew nigh to the  
northwest;  
o'er Bethlehem it took its rest,

and there it did both stop and stay,  
right over the place where Jesus lay.  
*[Refrain]*

5 Then entered in those wise men  
three,  
full reverently upon their knee,  
and offered there in his presence  
their gold, and myrrh, and  
frankincense. *[Refrain]*

6 Then let us all with one accord  
sing praises to our heavenly Lord,  
that hath made heaven and earth of  
nought,  
and with his blood our life hath  
bought. *[Refrain]*

#### **Thanks to:**

Shrewsbury Performing Arts Library for the loan of music used in this concert.  
The helpers and choir members who donate and assist with refreshments.

John R Thomas Florist, Plants&Pet Supplies  
Soul Bean Coffee House  
Church Stretton Library  
Entertaining Elephants  
The Co-Op Food Store  
Berry's Coffee House  
Saxtons Deli  
Vine & Co

Mynd DIY  
PCB Solicitors  
Burway Books  
Stretton Focus  
Mr Bun The Baker  
Stretton Barbershop  
The Door Knocker Company  
Peppers Menswear & Ladieswear

#### **Stretton Choral Society Spring Term 2026**

**Rehearsals** Thursday evenings, 7.30pm, URC Hall, starting 15 January  
**Concert** 7.30pm Saturday 9 May 2026, Silvester Horne Institute

In a new departure, rather than decide our programme in advance, we are making the first rehearsal, Thursday 15 January, a Come and Sing fun evening open to everyone, where we will try out a few pieces and collectively decide what we want to perform for the concert. Tea and cake included – do join us!

## Some brief thoughts on tonight's programme

from our Music Director, Michael Turner

This evening's concert falls very much into two halves. In a similar way to how we approached Handel's *Messiah* in 2024, I have selected a series of chorales and two choruses from J S Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* to form the first half of this evening's programme. As before, I've inserted three instrumental carol arrangements between the numbers, by way of contrast.

The *Christmas Oratorio* is a six-part work, each part corresponding to a key day in the Christmas season, telling the story of Jesus' birth, the angels' announcement to the shepherds, their adoration, the naming, the Magi's journey, and their final adoration. The Oratorio consists of recitatives, arias, choruses, and chorales (hymns) to guide the listener through the Nativity narrative from Christmas Day through to Epiphany and Bach incorporates music from earlier compositions within it. While it was written for the Christmas season of 1734, remarkably, it wasn't until 17 December 1857 that the next complete public performance took place.

The second half of our concert is given over to the usual mix of carols, readings and other items. Traditional carols top and tail the programme, for which we would welcome some lusty

singing from you, the audience! Within the music that is sandwiched in between, it's great that we have been able to incorporate such a spread of different musical styles. I'll highlight

two pieces in particular. John Joubert's *Torches* has become a classic of 20<sup>th</sup> Century carol repertoire. Its straightforward melody and distinctly different verses – at once gentle, then almost pagan – call us to the place of Christ's birth with earthy enthusiasm. By way of contrast, Lily Allen's *Somewhere Only We Know*, offers us an escape from the

hustle and bustle of modern life, striving for a simpler existence away from mobile phones, social media and the seemingly constant barrage of grim news that we all live with.

Our two readings give an alternative look at elements of the Christmas season while, aside of carols, we have an instrumental arrangement of *Jingle Bells* (as I explained to someone recently, most definitely not a carol!) which is invaded by eight other pieces of Christmas music. See if you can spot them.

We're delighted to have you with us at our concert. Let me take this opportunity to wish you a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year from all of this evening's performers.



J S Bach 1685-1750

## **MUSIC DIRECTOR, STRETTON CHORAL SOCIETY and STRETTON HILLS ENSEMBLE: Michael Turner**

From Birmingham, Michael Turner studied violin and viola, before settling on percussion as his main instrumental study. As a singer, he has been a member of the CBSO Chorus, along with a number of other choirs across the Midlands.

Michael has attended conducting courses with John Carewe and George Hurst and studied under Hilary Davan Wetton, with whom he settled on adopting the conducting technique favoured by Sir Adrian Boult.

A music graduate of Leicester University, Michael has conducted several amateur and professional ensembles and choirs including the Birmingham Singers, Proteus Chamber Orchestra, the More Singers, the Telford Orchestra, the Marches Choir and the Phoenix Singers. He made his professional debut with the Milton Keynes City Orchestra and has also worked with the Manchester Camerata. Michael has been Music Director of the Bloomsbury Chamber Orchestra since 1996, was Music Director of the Oswestry Sinfonia from 2014 - 2020 and became Music Director of the Stretton Choral Society in September 2021. He has been an ensemble conductor for Shropshire Music Service since 2016.

Michael has composed extensively, with works including a Horn Concerto, several orchestral and choral works, instrumental music and pieces for percussion and wind ensemble. He lives in South Shropshire with his wife, who is also a musician. Perhaps inevitably, they have three musical sons!

## **HEAD OF MUSIC, CHURCH STRETTON SCHOOL: Andrea Chapman**

Andrea is a graduate of Viola Performance from Birmingham Conservatoire and has performed in a many orchestras and string quartets in the Midlands She has toured with Mid Wales Opera and was also musical director of Lapal Community Choir in Halesowen. She arrived in Church Stretton during the summer of 2023 to take up the post of Music Teacher at Church Stretton School, having been Head of Music at a secondary school in Dudley for over 20 years. She plays with the Accordion Band, sings with the Choral Society and church choir and plays viola with a local folk band.

## **PIANIST and ACCOMPANIST: Gill Styles**

Gill was born in West Yorkshire. She studied music at Goldsmiths' College, London where she focused on piano and voice. For over thirty years she has been a junior-school class teacher with responsibility for music. Throughout her career she has enjoyed accompanying singers and instrumentalists, as well as playing chamber music, performing as a vocal soloist and singing in local choirs.



[strettonchoral.org.uk](http://strettonchoral.org.uk)

Member of Making Music, the National Federation of Music Societies

