



Registered charity 1134378

## DISCOVERING CHRISTMAS

Classical musicians meet the folk tradition

The First Nowell - God Rest You Merry Gentlemen - O Little Town of Bethlehem - On Christmas Night - This is The truth Sent From Above: are all deeply embedded in our idea of the traditional Christmas.

But 100 years ago none of these tunes had ever been heard in churches or concert halls. They were known and loved by country people, but for the educated few who controlled musical life they simply didn't exist.

We owe God Rest You Merry to Cecil Sharp, and On Christmas Night to Ralph Vaughan Williams: professional musicians who wanted to find out what ordinary people were singing, and learn from them a whole new musical language. With composer colleagues such as Holst, Butterworth, and Grainger they travelled through the English countryside talking to local singers, writing down their songs, and introducing them to 'educated' audiences. In effect, they discovered the music of the English Christmas as we know it today.

OK, they had their limitations and prejudices; but how amazing in this post-Brexit world to see two Cambridge graduates take ordinary people's values seriously, and how relevant now seems their aim to broaden and strengthen English identity by making something new.

Vivace Choir will be exploring these themes in a forthcoming concert, which features all these carols: -

**"Discovering Christmas", 7.00 pm Saturday 10 December, Tilehouse Street Baptist Church, Hitchin, SG5 2EE**

Classical and folk music come together in this warm-hearted seasonal event full of well-known carols from the folk tradition and opportunities for the audience to sing. At its heart is the Fantasia on Christmas Carols by Vaughan Williams, a lively piece inspired by the composer's excitement at re-discovering the traditional carols of the English countryside.

The idea of "Discovering Christmas" also inspires our choice of shorter choral items, many by living composers, which will almost certainly be new to you. Do come along!

Tickets: £10 adults, £8 teens, under 13s free; available from the ticket manager [tickets@vivacechoir.co.uk](mailto:tickets@vivacechoir.co.uk), 01462 711735 or on the door subject to availability.