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# A CHRISTMAS OFFERING

# KRISTINA ARAKELYAN

**The Choir of King's College London**  
**Joseph Fort**

# A CHRISTMAS OFFERING

## KRISTINA ARAKELYAN

Composer

The Choir of  
King's College London

Joseph Fort, Conductor

\*Kristina Arakelyan, Piano

\*\*Esther Beyer, Harp

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Total 1.07.46

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## ARTIST FOREWORD

As anyone working in education will attest, one of the greatest joys of the job is watching former students of the institution go out into the world and flourish. Since the completion of her PhD in Composition at King's, Kristina's career has blossomed spectacularly (as her biography elsewhere in this booklet demonstrates), and I feel enormously fortunate that we are able to celebrate our connection with her through this album.

While preparing this album, I have been struck by many aspects of Kristina's music, and have talked with her about it at length. I will just mention two things here that I believe are particularly relevant to this recording. The first is Kristina's deeply felt connection with the emotion latent in any text that she sets; she approaches the compositional task as an exercise in conveying this emotion and stirring it in her listeners, and I hope that this comes through in our performances. And the second is her ability to 'tell a story' in her music, whether of Christ's birth or an

absent lover; again, I hope that this comes over in the delivery.

Many people and institutions made this project possible, and we are grateful to them all. The Vaughan Williams Foundation, PRS Foundation and King's College London provided generous funding. Claire Long and Meg Davies of Music Productions brought the project to life and lifted it with visionary expertise. Steve Long, Nigel Short, Mike Hatch, Will Good, Kim Bourlet and all the team at Signum and Floating Earth have been inspirational to work with. St Jude on the Hill proved a beautiful place to make the recording, and Susie Gregson and her colleagues there were instrumental in enabling this. My King's colleagues Ellen Clark-King, Tim Ditchfield, Clare Dowding and Nat Frangos have as always been enormously supportive. Finally, I am truly grateful to Kristina for trusting us with her music!

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# NOTES

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Proms premieres, cathedral commissions, BBC broadcasts: in some ways, Kristina Arakelyan's career is as British as it gets. This is hardly surprising: having studied at the Purcell School for Young Musicians, the Royal Academy of Music, Oxford University and King's College London, Arakelyan is fundamentally a product of the English educational establishment, through and through. A long association with the BBC Singers, beginning when she won the BBC Young Composer Competition at the age of fifteen, a formative fellowship with the National Youth Choir of Great Britain and a commission from St Paul's Cathedral have seen her writing for some of the country's leading choirs. And recent compositions—a companion piece for Britten's

*Ceremony of Carols* and a piece for the newest 'Carols for Choirs' anthology among them—attest to the extent to which her music is becoming embedded in the very fabric of the English choral tradition.

Yet this is only one half of the story. Born in Budapest and raised until the age of twelve in Yerevan, Armenia, as a child Arakelyan was immersed in the music of the Armenian Apostolic Church. As a chorister, in the Sunday liturgies she sang the ancient Sharaknots, modal chants thought to have originated in the fifth century and that were subsequently harmonised in the nineteenth century. Moreover, she experienced first-hand a style of worship that places mysticism at its heart, that architecturally uses a

large, floor-to-ceiling veil to depict a heavenly sanctuary, and that sees its chief function as drawing the congregation towards the ineffable divine. The music and the traditions of the Armenian Church thus sank deep into her bones. Arakelyan's Armenian heritage is not just a matter of personal importance, although performing her own piano concerto with the Armenian State Symphony in spring 2025 was of course a moment of great joy for her; rather, it is a key aspect of her compositional voice.

Arakelyan's choral music, then, might best be understood as fusing elements of the English choral style with aspects of the Armenian Apostolic tradition. This is certainly true of ***A Christmas Offering***, a substantial work for choir and harp from which the album takes its title. The composer readily cites *A Ceremony of Carols* as a chief inspiration for this piece; indeed, the

spirit of Britten surely hung in the air during its 2024 premiere at Snape Maltings with Pembroke College Chapel Choir and Anna Lapwood. Arakelyan sang Britten's work as a teenager, and recalls being captivated by its vivid imagery and captivating melodic lines. Like Britten, Arakelyan draws her texts from mediaeval carols in Latin and early-modern English, which celebrate the birth of Christ while also looking ahead to his suffering and crucifixion. The music evokes a Western mediaeval soundscape through archaic open-fifth intervals, Lydian modal influences and fast, iambic rhythms—particularly in some of the more upbeat movements, such as 'Gaudete'. More Eastern influences are never far away, though, and often come to the fore in the softer, slower movements. Exotic pentatonic scales infuse 'Out of the East', while an elusive modal mixture of major and minor keys conveys a



sense of divine mystery in 'Jesu, Jesu'.

It is in some of the individual choral motets where ecclesiastical mysticism really comes to the fore, though.

Arakelyan explains that **O Adonai**, which was commissioned by the BBC Singers and first performed in December 2024, was 'inspired by the act of prayer'. The piece

begins almost with a whisper, as different sections of the choir come in on a single pitch—E—repeating the words 'O Adonai' to the same, simple rhythmic figure. This is a text of strength, though—one of the O Antiphons, sung during the final days of Advent—and speaks of God appearing to Moses through a burning bush. Accordingly, the texture

and register of the voices slowly and ineluctably expand outwards in both directions from the single starting note, and builds to a radiant climax on the word 'Law', before the work retracts again for its final phrases to the note on which it began. The chords in this work have a clear tonal root but also have one or two (or sometimes more) dissonant notes added, in what is coming to be known in contemporary choral composition as the 'ecstatic style'.

Repeated notes and drones are in fact a recurring compositional device in Arakelyan's output, and also form a fundamental building block in **Sanctus**, which was composed especially for this album. Like *O Adonai*, this work begins on a single note—this time D—and the voices gradually fan outwards, often by just two more notes. The effect chord-to-chord is perhaps the sonic equivalent of looking through a kaleidoscope

toy, where with each single twist the makeup of the colourful mosaic shifts slightly. The short work concludes with an atmosphere of understated exuberance, with 'Hosanna in excelsis' set to slowed-down syncopations and jazzy chordal clusters. In the Christian liturgy of the Mass, the 'Sanctus' is the moment where the doors of heaven are inched open and the congregation hears the choir of angels singing their own hymn of praise; Arakelyan's setting captures precisely that aesthetic.

Arakelyan notes that *Te lucis ante terminum* and *Evening Prayer* were both influenced by 'the mystery of night-time prayers, repetition and silence'. **Te lucis ante terminum** was composed for the Choir of King's College London, in partnership with *Choir & Organ* magazine for their New Music Series. The opening and closing sections feature soprano and tenor solos, in a gentle 'call and response' with the full

choir. The text of the middle section grapples with ‘ill dreams’ and ‘nightly fears’, and the harmonies here become darker and a little more static—pleading for protection through the night.

**Evening Prayer** was composed as a short introit for St Paul’s Cathedral, and sets a single verse from Psalm 141, about a prayer rising in the same way as incense wafts up from a thurible. Although an atmosphere of serenity is sustained throughout this piece, the composer wanted to challenge the expert singers of St Paul’s, and put them through their paces with a series of complex modulations and harmonic relationships.

**Echo** brings us back to Britten. It was composed as one of four choral companion pieces to his *Four Sea Interludes* (from *Peter Grimes*), and was first performed by the BBC Singers, alongside Anna Lapwood’s organ transcriptions of Britten’s *Interludes*. Arakelyan was

particularly taken by the emotional richness and poignancy of Christina Rossetti’s text. Again, certain pitches perform an anchoring function in the compositional structure: in this case, the three-note chord (Eb, Ab, Bb) that begins the piece recurs throughout, and also features significantly at the end, its unresolved nature conveying the lack of resolution for the text’s protagonist. Certain glimmers of brightness notwithstanding (‘eyes as bright / As sunlight on a stream’), an overwhelming sense of nostalgia and longing pervades this work.

*Ave maris stella*, *You Know Me* and *Christmas Lullaby* form a little triptych of short sacred works designed to be lyrical and approachable for all choirs. **Ave maris stella** was composed for the sixth volume of Oxford University Press’s ‘Carols for Choirs’ anthology, and offers a tranquil setting of this hymn to the Virgin Mary, which invokes

her blessing as ‘star of the sea’ on travellers. **You Know Me** sets Psalm 139 (in the New International Version), which also references the sea as it speaks to the intimacy of God’s love. This setting for upper voices sees long, flowing melodies unfolding over effortless arpeggios in the piano. One of the earliest works on the album, this was also commissioned by Anna Lapwood for Pembroke College Chapel Choir. **Christmas Lullaby** consists of Arakelyan’s own assemblage of biblical passages to create two separate narratives—the first depicting a mother’s lullaby to her son and the second giving an account of Christ’s life. Tender melodies belie a harmonic complexity that sees the music roving through an adventurous succession of keys, before returning home for the final ‘Amen’.

**Dreamland** sets Christina Rossetti’s poem of the same name, but did not begin life in sung form. In fact,

initially called ‘Rhapsody’, the first iteration of this work was as a ballet score for piano and wind quintet, and it has since also been transcribed into versions for solo piano and for solo voice and piano. Even in its vocal versions the music retains something of the grace of ballet dancers, particularly in the piano writing. The work was originally composed in the bleak pandemic months of 2020, and its forlorn melodic lines lend themselves naturally to Rossetti’s poem, with its connotations of death. Just as the poem charts a progression from the brightness of day into a gentle twilight, so the song drifts meditatively into slumber, one solo singer left to declaim the ‘perfect peace’.

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# TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

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## 1 Echo

Come to me in the silence of the night;  
Come in the speaking silence of a dream;  
Come with soft rounded cheeks and eyes as bright  
As sunlight on a stream;  
Come back in tears,  
O memory, hope, love of finished years.

O dream how sweet, too sweet, too bitter sweet,  
Whose wakening should have been in Paradise,  
Where souls brimfull of love abide and meet;  
Where thirsting longing eyes  
Watch the slow door  
That opening, letting in, lets out no more.

Yet come to me in dreams, that I may live  
My very life again tho' cold in death:  
Come back to me in dreams, that I may give  
Pulse for pulse, breath for breath:  
Speak low, lean low,  
As long ago, my love, how long ago.

*Christina Rossetti*

## 2 O Adonai

O Adonai and ruler of the house of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the burning bush and gave him the Law on mount Sinai:  
Come with an outstretched arm and redeem us.

*O Antiphon for 18<sup>th</sup> December*

## 3 Sanctus

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus,  
Dominus Deus Sabaoth:  
pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.  
Hosanna in excelsis.

*Mass Ordinary*

*Holy, holy, holy,  
Lord God of hosts.  
Heaven and earth are full of thy glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.*

## 4 Te lucis ante terminum

Te lucis ante terminum,  
Rerum Creator, poscimus,  
Ut pro tua dementia,  
Sis praesul et custodia.

Procul recedant somnia,  
Et noctium phantasmata:  
Hostemque nostrum comprime,  
Ne polluantur corpora.

Praesta, Pater piissime,  
Patrique compar Unice,  
Cum Spiritu Paraclito,  
Regnans per omne saeculum.  
Amen.

*Before the ending of the day,  
Creator of the world, we pray  
That with thy wonted favor, Thou  
Would'st be our guard and keeper now.*

*From all ill dreams defend our eyes,  
From nightly fears and fantasies;  
Tread under foot our ghostly foe,  
That no pollution we may know.*

*O Father, that we ask be done,  
Through Jesus Christ, Thine only Son;  
Who, with the Holy Ghost and Thee,  
Shall live and reign eternally.  
Amen.*

*Compline Hymn in the Roman Breviary; translation by J. M. Neale*

## 5 Evening Prayer

Let my prayer rise before you as incense,  
The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.  
Amen.

*Psalm 141:2, Common Worship*

## A Christmas Offering

### 6 Gaudete (plainchant)

Gaudete in Domino semper:  
iterum dico, gaudete.  
Modestia vestra nota sit omnibus hominibus:  
Dominus enim prope est.  
Nihil solliciti sitis:  
sed in omni oratione et obsecratione  
cum gratiarum actione petitiones  
vestrae innotescant apud Deum.  
Benedixisti Domine terram tuam:  
avertisti captivitatem Jacob.  
*Introit for the 3rd Sunday of Advent*

*Rejoice in the Lord always;  
again I say, rejoice.  
Let your forbearance be known to all men.  
The Lord is at hand.  
Do not be anxious over anything;  
but in all manner of prayer,  
let your requests be made known unto God.  
Lord, you have blessed your land;  
you have put an end to Jacob's captivity.*

### 7 Gaudete!

Gaudete, gaudete!  
Christus est natus  
Ex Maria virgine,  
gaudete!  
Tempus adest gratiae  
Hoc quod optabamus,  
Carmina lætitiæ  
Devote reddamus.

*Rejoice, rejoice!  
Christ is born  
Of the Virgin Mary;  
Rejoice!  
The time of grace has come,  
What we have wished for;  
Songs of joy  
Let us give back faithfully.*

Deus homo factus est  
Natura mirante,  
Mundus renovatus est  
A Christo regnante.

Ezechielis porta  
Clausa pertransitur,  
Unde lux est orta  
Salus invenitur.

Ergo nostra contio  
Psallat iam in lustro;  
Benedicat Domino:  
Salus Regi nostro.  
*Pie Cantiones, 1582*

### 8 There is No Rose

There is no rose of such virtue  
As is the rose that bare Jesu;  
For in this rose contained was  
Heaven and earth in little space;  
Alleluia.  
Res miranda. [Wonderful thing]

By that rose we may well see  
There be one God in Persons Three,  
The angels sungen the shepherds to:  
Gloria in excelsis Deo: [Glory to God on high]  
Alleluia.  
Pares forma. [Equal in form]  
Leave we all this worldly mirth  
And follow we this joyful birth;  
Gaudeamus, [Let us rejoice]

*God has become man,  
With nature marvelling,  
The world has been renewed  
By the reigning Christ.*

*The closed gate of Ezekiel  
Is passed through,  
Whence the light is risen;  
Salvation has been found.*

*Therefore, let our assembly  
Now sing in brightness  
Let it bless the Lord:  
Greetings to our King.*

Transeamus. [Let us follow]  
*Anonymous, fifteenth century*

### 9 Alleluia!

Alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia,  
Deo Patri sit gloria. [Glory be to God  
the Father]

There is a Blossom sprung of a thorn,  
To save mankind that was forlorn,  
As the prophets said beforon,  
Deo Patri sit gloria!  
There sprang a well at Mary's foot,  
That turned all this world to boot;  
Of her took Jesus flesh and blood,  
Deo Patri sit gloria!  
From that well there stretched a stream,

Out of Egypt into Bethlehem;  
God through His highness turned it again,  
Deo Patri sit gloria!

There were three kings of diverse lands,  
They thought a thought that was strong,  
Him to seek and thank among.  
Deo Patri sit gloria!

There shone a star out of heaven bright,  
That men of earth should deem aright  
That this was Jesu full of might.  
Deo Patri sit gloria!

*Anonymous, fifteenth/sixteenth century*

### 10 Mary, Flower of Flowers All

Mary, flower of flowers all,  
Hath born a child in an ox-stall,  
That Lord and Prince is over us all;  
Puer natus est nobis. [A boy is born for us]

He was born on our lady,  
Without sin of her body,  
Godes own true Son truly;  
Puer natus est nobis.

By an apple of a tree,  
Bondmen all made were we,  
That Child was born to make us free;

That Child was done on the Rood,  
With His flesh and with His blood,  
For our help and for our good;  
Puer natus est nobis.

The third day He rose and to heaven went,

Wit and wisdom He us sent,  
To keep His commandment;  
Puer natus est nobis.

He shall come down at Doomesday,  
With bloody woundes, I you say,  
As He died on Good Friday;  
Puer natus est nobis.

Now pray we to that heaven(ly) King,  
To send us all His dear blessing,  
Shrift and housel at our ending.  
Puer natus est nobis.

*Anonymous, fifteenth/sixteenth century*

### 12 Te Deum Laudamus

Te laudamus, Te Dominum  
Confitemur, Te eternum.

[We praise Thee, we acknowledge Thee  
to be the Lord, eternal one.]

O blessed God in Trinity,  
Great cause we have to bless Thy name,  
That now wouldst send adown fro Thee  
The Holy Ghost to stint out blame.  
Te Deum laudamus. [We praise Thee, Lord]

Sing we to God, Father Eternal,  
That liketh, to tune with our nature,  
The Son of Him Celestial  
Man to be born, our souls to cure.  
Te Deum laudamus.

All the saints in heaven on high,  
And all that be in earth also,

Give laud and thanks devotedly,  
To God above and sing him to,  
Te laudamus, Te Dominum  
Confitemur, Te eternum.

*Anonymous, fifteenth/sixteenth century*

### 13 Out of the East

Out of the East a star shone bright,  
To three kings hath it given light,  
Who travelled far by day and night  
To seek the Lord, Who all hath sent.

Thereof king Herod needs must hear  
How three kings drew his land anear,  
Seeking a Child Who had no peer,  
And after them he straightway sent.

Rejoice all ye who be here present;  
Omnes de Saba venient! [All shall come  
from Sheba]

Then forth they went by the starry gleam  
Till they came to gladsome Bethlehem,  
And a goodly Babe, forsooth, they deem  
Him, who His Blood for us hath spent.

Now lords and ladies in rich array,  
Lift up your hearts on this Holy Day,  
And to God the Son here let us pray,  
Who once upon the rood was rent.

Rejoice all ye who be here present;  
Omnes de Saba venient!

*Anonymous, fifteenth/sixteenth century*

### 14 Jesu, Jesu

Jesu, Jesu, Jesu, Jesu,  
Save us all through Thy virtue.

Jesu, as Thou art our Saviour  
That Thou save us fro dolour!  
Jesu is mine paramour.  
Blessed by Thy name, Jesu.

Jesu was born of a may,  
Upon Christemas Day,  
She was may befornd and ay,  
Blessed be Thy name, Jesu.

Three kinges comen fro Segent,  
To Jesu Christ they brought present,  
Lord God Omnipotent,  
Save us all through Thy virtue.

*Anonymous, fifteenth/sixteenth century*

### 15 Now sing we with angelis

Now sing we with angelis:  
Gloria in excelsis! [Glory on high]

A Babe is born, to bliss us bring.  
I heard a maid lullay and sing;  
She said: 'Dear Son, leave Thy weeping,  
Thy Father is the King of bliss.'

Now sing we with angelis:  
Gloria in excelsis!

'Lullay,' she said, and sang also,  
'Mine own dear Son, why art Thou woe?  
Have I not done as I should do?  
Thy grievance, tell me what it is.'

Now sing we with angelis:  
Gloria in excelsis!

'Nay, mother, for thee weep I nought,  
But for the woe that shall be wrought  
To me, ere I mankind have bought.  
Was never sorry like it, ywis.'

Now sing we with angelis:  
Gloria in excelsis!

'Ah, dear Son, leave thy weeping!  
Thou bringest my heart in great mourning;  
A careful song now may I sing;  
This tidings, hard to me it is.'

Now sing we with angelis:  
Gloria in excelsis!

'Ah! peace, dear mother, I thee pray,  
Comfort me all that ye may,  
And sing, "by-by, lullay, lullay,"  
To put away all heaviness.'

Now sing we with angelis:  
Gloria in excelsis!

*Anonymous, fifteenth/sixteenth century*

### **16 Ave maris stella**

Ave Maris Stella, [Hail, star of the sea]  
Blessed may she be,  
The star of the sea.

Atque semper virgo, [And ever virgin]  
Pray thy Son for me  
That I may come to thee.

Gabriel, that archangel,  
He was messenger so fair,

He greeted our Lady  
With an ave so clear.  
Dei mater alma, [Nurturing mother of God]  
Hail be thou, Mary,  
Felix coeli porta [Happy gate of Heaven]  
Full of Godes grace,  
And queen of mercy.  
All that are to greet  
Withouten deadly sin,  
Forty days of pardon  
God granteth him.

*Vespers Hymn*

### **17 You Know Me**

You have searched me, Lord, and you  
know me,  
you know when I sit and when I rise;  
you have searched me and you know me,  
you perceive my thoughts from afar.  
You are familiar with all my ways, Lord,  
you know me completely,  
Where can I go from your Spirit?  
Where can I flee from your presence?  
If I go up to the heavens,  
if I make my bed in the depths,  
you are there,  
if I rise on the wings of the dawn,  
if I settle on the far side of the sea,  
even there your hand will guide me,  
your right hand will hold me fast.  
Surely the darkness will hide me and the  
light become night around me,

even the darkness will shine like the day  
for darkness is as light to you.  
Even the darkness will not be dark to you  
the night will shine like the day.

*Psalms 139, New International Version*

### **18 Christmas Lullaby**

Sleep my child,  
How sweetly you smiled,  
Close your eyes,  
This is our paradise.

For God so loved the world that he gave  
his only son,  
Full of grace and truth, He came to dwell  
with us.

Lamb of God.

Sleep my dear,  
I will hold you near,  
Keep you warm,  
Shield you from the storm.

For unto us this day is born Christ our Lord,  
He is the way, the truth, and the life.

Lamb of God.

Amen.

*Text assembled and written by the composer*

### **19 Dreamland**

Where sunless rivers weep  
Their waves into the deep,  
She sleeps a charmed sleep:

Awake her not.  
Led by a single star,  
She came from very far  
To seek where shadows are  
Her pleasant lot.  
She left the rosy morn,  
She left the fields of corn,  
For twilight cold and lorn  
And water springs.  
Through sleep, as through a veil,  
She sees the sky look pale,  
And hears the nightingale  
That sadly sings.

Rest, rest, a perfect rest  
Shed over brow and breast;  
Her face is toward the west,  
The purple land.

She cannot see the grain  
Ripening on hill and plain;  
She cannot feel the rain  
Upon her hand.

Rest, rest, for evermore  
Upon a mossy shore;  
Rest, rest at the heart's core  
Till time shall cease:  
Sleep that no pain shall wake;  
Night that no morn shall break  
Till joy shall overtake  
Her perfect peace.

*Christina Rossetti*

# KRISTINA ARAKELYAN

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Kristina Arakelyan's work as composer, pianist and educator is guided by a clear vision of music's intrinsic power and purpose. An Armenian-British, prize-winning musician, her compositions are hallmarked by their striking beauty and compelling emotional honesty. Kristina's studies as composer and pianist were nurtured at the Purcell School, the Royal Academy of Music, the University of Oxford and King's College, London. Her music has been performed at some of the world's leading venues including the Royal Albert Hall, Southbank Centre and the Wigmore Hall in London, Symphony Hall Birmingham, Carnegie



Hall and Walt Disney Concert Hall in the United States. Commissions have been written for Britten Pears Snape Maltings, BBC Proms, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, St. Paul's Cathedral, BBC Singers, Alison Balsom and Huddersfield Choral Society. An accomplished pianist, in February 2025 Kristina performed the world premiere of her Piano Concerto in Yerevan with the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra. *Toccata* for organ and orchestra received its world premiere in May 2025 at the Royal Albert Hall, performed by the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by André de Ridder, and organist Anna Lapwood. Recent releases include

*Dreamland*, her debut solo album as composer and pianist for Apple Music's Platoon label and *A Christmas Offering* featuring The Choir of King's College London on Signum Records.

# THE CHOIR OF KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

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## The Choir of King's College London

is one of the leading university choirs in England, and has existed since its founding by William Henry Monk in the middle of the nineteenth century. The choir today consists of some thirty choral scholars reading a variety of subjects. The choir's principal role at King's is to provide music for chapel worship, with weekly Eucharist and Evensong offered during term, as well as various other services. Services from the chapel are regularly broadcast on BBC Radio. The choir also frequently sings for worship outside the university, including at Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral.

In addition, the choir gives many

concert performances. Recent festival appearances in the UK include the Barnes Music Festival, Cowbridge Music Festival, London Handel Festival, Oundle International Festival, Presteigne Festival of the Arts, Ryedale Festival, St Albans International Organ Festival, Spitalfields Festival, and the Christmas and Holy Week Festivals at St. John's Smith Square. The choir enjoys a longstanding relationship with the English Chamber Orchestra, which in 2025 became Ensemble in Residence at King's. The choir tours widely, with recent destinations including Canada, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Nigeria and the USA.

The choir has made many recordings,



in particular for Delphian Records. Recent recordings include portrait discs of music by contemporary composers Kristina Arakelyan, Kerensa Briggs and Edward Nesbit (the latter recognised as Gramophone 'Editor's Choice'). Their recordings have also championed the music of twentieth-century British composers such as Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Gustav Holst and Kenneth Leighton. These recordings have received wide critical acclaim; one was described as

'a performance of astonishing intensity and musicality' (Marc Rochester, *Gramophone*). The choir was the partner choir for *Choir & Organ* magazine's 2023 New Music Series.

Following some twenty years under the leadership of David Trendell, the choir has been directed since 2015 by Joseph Fort.

## The Choir of King's College London

### Soprano

Ellie Blewitt <sup>[19]</sup>  
*David Trendell Memorial Choral Scholar*  
Jordan Brooks  
Théa Deacon  
Sasha Ford  
Teresa Garcia Ribeiro  
Helena Haas  
Katie Hinett  
Lucca Kelf <sup>[8]</sup> <sup>[13]</sup>  
*Stephen Harrow Choral Scholar*  
Jessica Nelson  
Alice Platten <sup>[4]</sup>  
Maya Valecha

### Alto

Sheena Jibowu  
Oliver Nathanielsz <sup>[13]</sup>  
*Stephen Harrow Choral Scholar*  
Ella Reid  
Katie Santi <sup>[10]</sup>  
*Helen Hudson Choral Scholar*  
Christine (Pien) van der Wal  
*Helen Hudson Choral Scholar*

### Tenor

Alvin Choy  
Benjamin Miller <sup>[4]</sup>  
*Stephen Harrow Choral Scholar*  
Chris O'Leary <sup>[12]</sup>  
Harry Rowland  
*Glanfield Choral Scholar*  
Joseph Walshe  
Glyn Webster

### Bass

Nicholas Bacon  
Hugo Burgess <sup>[10]</sup> <sup>[12]</sup>  
Nathaniel Chang  
Dexter Dedalo  
Joseph Fuller  
Archie Halward  
Jeremy Ng  
*E. H. Warrell Memorial Organ Scholar*  
Zhengwu Yang

[4] Soprano solo

[8] Soprano solo

[10] Alto solo, baritone solo

[12] Tenor solo, baritone solo

[13] Soprano solo, alto solo

[19] Soprano solo



# JOSEPH FORT

**Joseph Fort** is College Organist & Director of the Chapel Choir, and Senior Lecturer in Music at King's College London, where he directs the Choir of King's College London in chapel services, broadcasts, recordings, concerts and international tours. The Choir's performances under his direction have been recognised as 'English choral singing at its best' (*Choir & Organ*) and 'a performance of astonishing intensity and musicality' (*Gramophone*). In 2021 he was appointed Director of Music at St Paul's, Knightsbridge, where he conducts the acclaimed professional choir.

Recent orchestral conducting includes performances with Britten Sinfonia,

the English Chamber Orchestra, the Hanover Band and the London Mozart Players. Festival conducting appearances across the world include the Festival de México, the White Nights Festival of St. Petersburg, the Montreal Organ Festival, the London Handel Festival, the St Albans International Organ Festival, and the conventions of the American Guild of Organists and the Royal Canadian College of Organists.

Joseph is known for his innovative and creative programming, and his track record of eclectic commissions ranges from new Canticle settings to large-scale works for choir and electric guitar. His expansive discography



with Delphian Records has received considerable critical acclaim, including Editor's Choice and the 'best new classical albums' selections in *Gramophone*. Particular focuses have been around contemporary

repertoire and neglected early twentieth-century British music. He broadcasts regularly on BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM.

Joseph holds a PhD from Harvard University, and his academic research focuses on eighteenth-century music and dance. He has published in a number of journals and his monograph *Haydn's Minuets and Eighteenth-Century Dance* will be published by Cambridge University Press in September 2025. Prior to Harvard, he studied at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he was the organ scholar, and at the Royal Academy of Music, who in 2017 elected him to their Associateship.

# ESTHER BEYER

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Described as “a sparkling presence” by Seen and Heard International (2022), **Esther Beyer** is an award-winning harpist based in London. A passionate orchestral musician, Esther has worked with orchestras including the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, English National Ballet, English Touring Opera and Northern Ballet, for conductors such as Sir Mark Elder, Edward Gardner and Vasily Petrenko.

Esther is also an avid chamber musician. Her flute and harp duo, the Equinox Duo, perform frequently across England. Appearances include the Swaledale Festival (2024), Barnes

Music Festival (2023), and Buxton International Festival (2021). Excited by contemporary music, the duo aims to subvert the stereotype of the flute and harp ensemble, collaborating frequently with emerging composers and broadening the repertoire for the duo combination.

A keen advocate of the importance of music in the community, Esther regularly works in schools, nurseries and hospitals with organisations such as the London Sinfonietta, London Rhymes, Wigmore Hall and the Imperial Health Charity. Esther is passionate about sharing the joy of creativity and the necessity of creating access to music for all.



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Esther studied at the Royal Academy of Music, where she won first place in the inaugural Royal Academy of Music Bicentenary Prize (Wigmore Hall, 2020). She studied with Karen Vaughan and Susan Blair, graduating with a Bachelor of Music (First Class, *hons*) and a Master of Music (Distinction) degrees in 2020 and 2022. Esther is a grateful recipient of a Wolfson Foundation Grant (2018), which allowed her to purchase her Salvi Iris harp.