



BACK BAY CHORALE

THE POWER OF VOICE

★
A
Boston
CHRISTMAS
Together
for the Holidays



Friday, December 19, 2025 • 7:30 pm
Saturday, December 20, 2025 • 4:00 pm

Old South Church
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BACK BAY CHORALE

THE POWER OF VOICE



O FORTUNA

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Carl ORFF *Carmina Burana*

In an unprecedented collaboration between the **Back Bay Chorale** and the **Boston Conservatory at Berklee**, this performance unites the Chorale with the Conservatory's orchestra, choirs, and dance division for an extraordinary presentation of one of the most iconic works in the choral canon.

Back Bay Chorale

Choirs of Boston Conservatory at Berklee

Boston Conservatory at Berklee Orchestra

The Dance Division at Boston Conservatory at Berklee

Stephen Spinelli, Conducting

FRIDAY MAY 1, 2026

8:00 pm

Symphony Hall, Boston

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The Back Bay Chorale gratefully acknowledges the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency, The Boston Foundation, and the Boston Cultural Council, for their support.



From the President of the Board



Welcome to you, our audience, our friends, to our end of year concert, and the halfway point of our 50th anniversary season!

Many of us experience the surprise of time slipping by unnoticed. Birthdays or anniversaries are wonderful times to notice the time that has passed, to honor what has been done and to think about what might be next.

The Back Bay Chorale was founded in 1973 by minister and social activist Larry Hill, with a first concert around the corner at Church of the Covenant in the Spring of 1974. Larry put up posters around town urging people to audition for a new group. 80 joined and the BBC performed Mozart's Requiem on April 21, 1974. No matter where people came from, Larry recognized an urge, a need, for people to come together in song. Fifty years later, we still need this. Maybe now we need it even more.

We have evolved over the last fifty years and have sustained a musical community and an enduring network of friends. We have grown: we have become better singers, we have explored a large world of complex and meaningful music. We have commissioned new works that have celebrated our shared humanity. Today you're hearing the start of a new tradition and legacy: our first annual commissioned Christmas choral work. We are excited about adding to the choral canon in the coming years.

We're delighted to spend time with you in the new year, as we explore favorite music from across the last half century of performances and invite you to join us 'on stage' in February and March at our choral sing-ins of Fauré and Mozart. In March, in particular, we return to where it all started to sing Mozart's Requiem in Church of the Covenant. Once again, posters will appear around Back Bay inviting singers to join us. It worked well when Larry did it!

We're also excited to perform at Symphony Hall to close out our fiftieth anniversary season as we combine forces with our friends at Boston Conservatory at Berklee to perform Orff's Carmina Burana. Our singing and performance community expands for this memorable concert in a unique way and hopefully will inspire the future musicians at the conservatory as they begin their careers in music.

Our community, founded fifty years ago, essentially includes **you**, our audience. We need your presence at our concerts and we'd love your support as a donor or a concert sponsor. You can reach out to our Executive Director, Susanne Powers for more information on how to help us, or simply contribute online on our website.

Please enjoy this concert and this milestone season. We're enormously grateful for your presence, your energy and your love for choral music.

Craig Hughes, Board Chair & President



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From the Music Director



A Boston Christmas brings together music, memory, and community in celebration of the Back Bay Chorale's fifty years of music-making. At the center of the program is a story of friendship: we begin with Gustav Holst's *Christmas Day* and close with Ralph Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, works that frame the evening in the shared language of two lifelong friends whose partnership helped define British choral life in the twentieth century. Their carol settings, folk song collections, and devotion to congregational singing still shape how many of us "hear" Christmas. From that foundation, the program

widens into a broader portrait of the British carol tradition. Judith Weir and Gabriel Jackson, two of today's most influential British choral composers, stand as living heirs to this lineage. Their music reminds us that carols are not artifacts; they continue to evolve, offering modern reflections on timeless themes.

We leave the British countryside twice. First, we turn toward Eastern Europe for two settings of the Church Slavonic prayer "Bogoroditse Devo" - one by a living Estonian composer, and another by Sergei Rachmaninoff. Both honor the musical and linguistic traditions of our inaugural conducting apprentice, Viacheslav ("Slava") Kozlenko.

Our second departure from Britain leads us homeward—to a true Boston Christmas. We celebrate Bridges ESOL and its partnership with our community engagement coordinator and conductor, Dr. Riikka Pietiläinen Caffrey. Each week, Bridges participants gather at the Boston Public Library to learn, connect, and study English through song. Their presence embodies our conviction that music builds community not by intention alone, but through shared practice. Both Bridges and the Chorale honor Amy Beach, the first woman to have a symphony premiered by a major American orchestra. We then celebrate Alice Parker, a Boston native who would have turned 100 this year and whose carol arrangements have shaped American Christmas traditions. We also recognize Dr. William Cutter, whose work as a composer and educator at the Boston Conservatory and MIT has influenced generations of singers. This arc culminates in the premiere of Michael Cheng's *Ring Out, Ye Bells!*, winner of this year's Carol Commissioning Competition and a glimpse of Boston's next generation of composers.

This program also highlights one of the Chorale's greatest strengths: its own members. Every soloist you hear tonight comes from within the ensemble. Some are professional musicians, many are not, yet all bring

exceptional skill and commitment to this art form. Their artistry proves that musical excellence can flourish in a community united by curiosity, discipline, and joy.

In returning to Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, we return to friendship—the heart of this concert. Holst and Vaughan Williams, bound by shared ideals and musical curiosity, remind us that music-making is a lifelong conversation among friends. My hope is that you will hear this evening as a web of connections: between nations and neighborhoods, traditions and new voices, mentors and apprentices, past and future. Thank you for being part of this Boston Christmas, and for lending your listening presence to the stories we tell tonight.

With gratitude, Dr. Stephen Spinelli




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Our Singers - Back Bay Chorale

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Catherine Backer
Maya Bloom
Evann Carter
Hannah Cole
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Theresa Ekinici
Maryanne Fenerjian
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William Aldenberg
Don Di Salvo
Logan Grubb
John Herrington
Paul Kearney
John Kornet
Benjamin Kulas
Abe Laxague
Paul Lewis
Patrick McMahon
Claye Metelmann

Conrad Moss
Paul Rabin
Joseph Reid
Alan Rothschild
Tyler Seegars
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Matthew Vera
Michael Wagner

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HENRY WEINBERGER

PIANO / REHEARSAL ACCOMPANIST



As a professional musician, **Henry Weinberger** has accompanied, coached, collaborated and performed throughout New England. He served as vocal coach and accompanist in the opera departments of both New England Conservatory and Boston Conservatory, and has privately coached many aspiring opera singers. Mr. Weinberger received a Master of Music in Piano Performance at NEC, where he studied with Leonard Shure and

accompanied the chorus under the direction of Lorna Cooke DeVaron. Other principal teachers included Victor Rosenbaum and John Moriarty. Mr. Weinberger has played rehearsals under the batons of Seiji Ozawa, Arthur Fiedler, Kurt Masur and John Williams. He has served on the faculty of the Longy School in Cambridge, where he was the music director of the opera department and taught classes in vocal repertoire and diction. He accompanied the MIT Chorus under the direction of Bill Cutter and the Master Singers of Lexington under the direction of Betsy Burleigh. Mr. Weinberger also enjoyed a career in nursing, working at Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates for twenty-four years, specializing in the care of people with HIV, hepatitis C, and other infectious diseases. He frequently plays chamber music and occasionally performs in venues in and around Boston.



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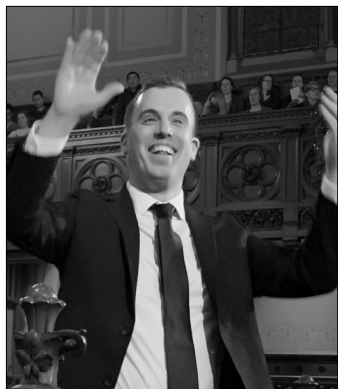
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About the Music Director



Dr. Stephen Spinelli is a conductor, scholar, and advocate for historically under-represented voices in music. He serves as Music Director of the Back Bay Chorale in Boston, and as Director of Choral Studies at the Boston Conservatory at Berklee, where he conducts the Conservatory Chorale and Chamber Choir, builds curriculum in choral literature, and mentors graduating conducting candidates. He previously served as the Assistant Director of Choral Programs at Cornell University, and held visiting appointments at Thomas Jefferson University, Moravian College, Villanova University, and Syracuse University.

Dr. Spinelli has sung with some of the country's leading vocal ensembles. As a tenor with The Crossing, his credits include the 2018 GRAMMY® Award-winning recording of Gavin Bryars' *The Fifth Century*. Spinelli also performed with the genre-bending vocal octet Roomful of Teeth. He assisted in the production of their GRAMMY Award-winning debut album, which yielded the Pulitzer Prize-winning recording of Caroline Shaw's *Partita for Eight Voices*. As a frequently engaged guest conductor, he particularly cherishes his experiences leading the Maui Chamber Orchestra and Chorus.

Spinelli is the co-founder and director of ONEcomposer, an arts initiative dedicated to restoring the legacies of historically excluded musicians. Through research, performance, publication and recording, ONEcomposer seeks to broaden our understanding of history. The organization, founded in 2019, has collaborated with major arts organizations all over the country, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, Opera Philadelphia, the New Jersey Symphony, the Eastman School of Music, and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. ONEcomposer's inaugural recording, *Beyond the Years: The Unpublished Art Songs of Florence Price*, featuring soprano Karen Slack and pianist Michelle Cann, won the 2024 GRAMMY Award for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album, with Spinelli serving as researcher and co-producer. His work as editor and researcher of music by Florence Price and Margaret Bonds has been supported by fellowships from the Beinecke Library at Yale University, the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute, and the Central New York Humanities Corridor, and has been featured in national media. He holds degrees from Williams College (BA, music), Temple University (MM, choral conducting), and Northwestern University (DMA, choral conducting).

The Back Bay Chorale Conducting Apprenticeship

We're thrilled to welcome Viacheslav (Slava) Kozlenko as the Back Bay Chorale's Conducting Apprentice for the 2025–2026 season!

This season-long apprenticeship is a fantastic opportunity for emerging conductors to dive into the life of a vibrant, high-level volunteer chorus. Under the guidance of our Music Director, Stephen Spinelli, and in collaboration with our artistic team, Mr. Kozlenko will gain hands-on experience throughout the year.

As Conducting Apprentice, he'll be involved in all aspects of our musical preparation—studying scores to a professional standard, leading sectional rehearsals, conducting portions of full rehearsals, and occasionally offering keyboard support. He'll also assist behind the scenes when needed and benefit from regular one-on-one mentorship with Maestro Spinelli.

We can't wait to see the energy and perspective he brings to the Chorale this season—welcome, Slava!

VIACHESLAV (SLAVA) KOZLENKO

CONDUCTING APPRENTICE



Viacheslav (Slava) Kozlenko is an accomplished choir director and pianist with extensive experience in classical and contemporary music. He is currently a Boston Conservatory at Berklee Choral Conducting student. Holding a Master's degree in Artistic Direction of Opera and Symphony Orchestra and Academic Choir from the V.S. Popov Academy of Choral Art, he has a strong foundation in music theory, vocal coaching, and ensemble leadership. His career highlights include serving as Choirmaster for the Perm Opera and Ballet Theater, where he led weekly rehearsals, coordinated repertoire, and directed

live performances. Viacheslav has also collaborated with esteemed orchestras like the Moscow Regional Philharmonic and Mariinsky Theater Orchestra, performing under the direction of renowned conductors, including Valery Gergiev and Vladimir Fedoseev.

As a singer, Viacheslav has performed with the INTRADA vocal ensemble, which specializes in early music, touring internationally and appearing on television and in theater productions. His commitment to excellence in performance is matched by his dedication to music education, evident from his role as a collaborative pianist with such prominent singers as Lubov Petrova (Metropolitan opera/Bolshoy theater), Vasily Laduk (Bolshoy/Mariinsky theater) and many more. Fluent in Russian, English and German he brings a global perspective and a rich artistic background to his work, inspiring musicians and audiences alike.

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Thank You!

We are grateful to our many friends and members for their generous support. Ticket income covers less than half of concert costs. If you enjoy today's concert, please consider making a donation at bbcboston.org, or by mail to:



Back Bay Chorale
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Back Bay Chorale is a federal 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. Annual donors of \$1,800 or more become members of the Larry Hill Society in recognition of their generous support. Named in honor of our founder and first conductor, the Larry Hill Society ensures the Chorale's future through leadership giving.

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DR. RIIKKA PIETILÄINEN CAFFREY

BRIDGES ESOL DIRECTOR & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR



Dr. Riikka Pietiläinen Caffrey holds the position of Associate Professor of the Practice and Director of Choral and Vocal Performance at Boston College. Riikka was born in Kemi, Finland, and sang and toured with the acclaimed Finnish choir Philomela. She has held academic positions at American University in Beirut, Lebanon, Whitman College in Walla Walla, WA, and Bunker Hill Community College in Boston.

Riikka's research interests include holistic choral experience, cross-disciplinary artistic collaborations, and redefining the choral canon. Her articles have appeared in American and Australian choral journals. Her compositions and arrangements have been published with Alliance Music Publications and Kandinsky Music. Riikka is an active member of the Advocacy and Collaboration Committee of the American Choral Directors Association.

Riikka holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Jazz Performance from the City College of City University of New York, Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees in Choral Conducting from the University of Colorado.



Advancing the spirit of community.

Our Bridges ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) Chorus gives students an opportunity to sing together, improve their English language skills, and develop friendships with fellow singers. A partnership with the Boston Public Library, the program helps English speakers of other languages to become integrated with the Boston community. These in-person classes are FREE for all participants, and no previous music skills are required. The Bridges ESOL Chorus performs at the Boston Public Library, our Christmas concerts, and at U.S. Naturalization Ceremonies.

To learn more, visit bbcboston.org/bridges



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The Back Bay Chorale presents
A Boston Christmas

Friday, December 19th, 2025 - 7:30pm
Saturday, December 20th, 2025 - 4:00pm
Old South Church, Boston

Dr. Stephen Spinelli, conducting
Viacheslav (Slava) Kozlenko, conducting apprentice

AUDIENCE CAROL: **Once in Royal David's City** Henry Gauntlett
arr. David Willcocks

Christmas Day Gustav Holst
(1874–1934)

Holly Teti, Tyler Williams, Maya Bloom, William Aldenberg,
Josh Daniels, Wayne Wilkins, Tatiana Niebuhr, Caroline Lowell, soloists

Drop Down, Ye Heavens, From Above Judith Weir
(b. 1954)

Ane Sang of the Birth of Christ Gabriel Jackson
(b. 1962)
Lessie Tyson, soloist

Suo Gan Welsh Lullaby
arr. Thomas Quigly

Bogoroditse Djevo Arvo Pärt
(b. 1935)

Bogoroditse Djevo (*All-Night Vigil*, Op. 37) Sergei Rachmaninoff
(1873–1943)

AUDIENCE CAROL: **Hark! the Herald Angels Sing** Felix Mendelssohn
arr. Willcocks

BRIDGES ESOL CHORUS: **Peace I Leave With You** Amy Beach
(1867–1944)

Dr. Riikka Pietiläinen Caffrey, director

Peace on Earth Beach
Becca Kornet, Sabrina Sarmiento, soloists

Il est né le divin enfant arr. Alice Parker
(1925–2023)

The Friendly Beasts arr. Parker

Touro-louro-louro! arr. Parker

Blessed be that maid Marie Bill Cutter
(b. 1956)

Ring Out, Ye Bells! Michael Cheng
Carol Commission Competition Winner 2025 (b. 1997)

Fantasia on Christmas Carols Ralph Vaughan Williams
(1872–1958)

Michael Hanley, soloist

AUDIENCE CAROL: **O Come, All Ye Faithful** John Francis Wade
arr. Willcocks

Texts and Translations

Christmas Day - Gustav Holst

Text: Traditional English carols

Good Christian men, rejoice

With heart, and soul, and voice;
Give ye heed to what we say:
News! News!
Jesus Christ is born today;
Ox and ass before Him bow,
And He is in the manger now.
Christ is born today!
Christ is born today!

God rest you merry, gentlemen

Let nothing you dismay,
Remember Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas Day,
To save us all from woe and sin,
When we were gone astray.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.

In Bethlehem, in Judah,
This blessed Babe was born,
And laid within a manger,
Upon that holy morn;
The which His Mother, Mary,
Did nothing take in scorn.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.

Good Christian men, rejoice

With heart, and soul, and voice;
Now ye hear of endless bliss:
Joy! Joy!

Jesus Christ was born for this!
He hath oped the heav'nly door,
And man is blessed evermore.
Christ was born for this!
Christ was born for this!
Christ was born for this!
Christ was born for this!

Come ye lofty, come ye lowly

Let your songs of gladness ring;
In a stable lies the Holy,
In a manger rests the King.
See in Mary's arms reposing,
Christ by highest heav'n adored:
Come, your circle round Him closing,
Pious hearts that love the Lord.

Come, ye poor, no pomp of station
Robes the Child your hearts adore:
He, the Lord of all salvation,
Shares your want, is weak and poor:
Oxen, round about behold them;
Rafters naked, cold and bare,
See the shepherds, God has told them
That the Prince of Life lies there.

Come, ye children, blithe and merry,
This one Child your model make;
Christmas holly, leaf, and berry,
All be prized for His dear sake;
Come, ye gentle hearts, and tender,
Come, ye spirits, keen and bold;
All in all your homage render,
Weak and mighty, young and old.



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High above a star is shining,
And the Wisemen haste from far:
Come, glad hearts, and spirits pining:
For you all has risen the star.
Let us bring our poor oblations,
Thanks and love and faith and praise:
Come, ye people, come, ye nations,
All in all draw nigh to gaze.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,
Born is the King of Israel!

Good Christian men, rejoice
With heart, and soul, and voice;
Give ye heed to what we say:
News! News!
Jesus Christ is born today;
Ox and ass before Him bow,
And He is in the manger now.
Christ is born today!
Christ is born today!

Good Christian men, rejoice
With heart, and soul, and voice;
Now ye hear of endless bliss:
Joy! Joy!
Jesus Christ was born for this!
He hath oped the heav'nly door,
And man is blessed evermore.
Christ was born for this!
Christ was born for this!
Now to the Lord sing praises,

All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas
All other doth deface.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.

Good Christian men, rejoice,
With heart and soul and voice;
Now ye need not fear the grave:
Peace! Peace!
Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all,
To gain His everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save!
Christ was born to save!

***Drop Down, Ye Heavens, From Above* - Judith Weir**

Text: From the Advent Prose (Rorate caeli), based primarily on Isaiah 45:8; additional phrases drawn from Isaiah 40:1, Isaiah 44:22, and Isaiah 43:3

Drop down ye heavens from above,
and let the skies pour down righteousness.
Comfort ye, comfort ye my people;
my salvation shall not tarry.
I have blotted out as a thick cloud,
thy transgressions:
Fear not, for I will save thee;
For I am the Lord thy God,
the holy one of Israel,
thy redeemer.
Drop down ye heavens from above,
and let the skies pour down righteousness.

***Ane Sang of the Birth of Christ* - Gabriel Jackson**

Text: William Dunbar (c.1460–c.1520)

I come fra hevin heich to tell
The best nowells that e'er befell.
To you thir thythings trew I bring
And I will of them say and sing.
To you this day is born ane child
Of Marie meik and Virgin mild.
That blissit bairn bening and kind
Sall you rejoyce baith hart and mind.

Lat us rejoyis and be blyth
And with the Hyrdis go full swyth
And see what God of his grace has done
Throu Christ to bring us to his throne.
My saull and life, stand up and see
What lyis in ane cribbe of tree.
What Babe is that, sa gude and fair?
It is Christ, Goddis Sonne and Air.

O my deir hart, yung Jesus sweit,
Prepair thy creddil in my spreit!
And I sall rock thee in my hart
And never mair fra thee depart.
Bot I sall praise thee evermoir
With sangis sweit unto thy gloir.
The kneis of my hart sall I bow,
And sing that rycht Balulalow.

Bogoroditse Djevo - Arvo Pärt and Sergei Rachmaninoff

Text: Orthodox prayer “Богородице Дево, радуйся” (Ave Maria),
paraphrasing Luke 1:28 and Luke 1:42

Богородице Дево,
радуйся,
благодатная Марие,
Господь с Тобою.
Благословенна Ты в женах,
и благословен Плод чрева Твоего,
яко Спаса родила еси
душ наших.

*Rejoice, O Virgin,
Mary full of grace,
the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,
for thou hast borne the Savior
of our souls.*

Peace I Leave With You - Amy Beach

Text: John 14:27, King James Version

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you;
Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.
Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.



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***Peace On Earth* - Amy Beach**

Text: Edmund Hamilton Sears (1810–1876), inspired by the angelic proclamation of Luke 2:14

It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold.

Peace on Earth, good will to men,
From heaven's allgracious King;

The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.
Peace on the Earth, good will to men.

O ye beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow,

Look now, for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing;

O rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing,
Peace on the earth, good will to men.

For lo, the days are hast'ning on,
By prophets seen of old,
When with the evercircling years,
Shall come the time foretold.

When the new heav'n and earth
Shall own the Price of Peace their
King,
And the whole world send back the
song
That now the angels sing.

Peace on the Earth.
Good will to men. Amen.



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Il est né le divin enfant - French Carol, arr. Alice Parker

Text: Traditional French carol; anonymous traditional English translation;
based on prophecies and narratives from Isaiah and the Nativity accounts in
Luke 2

Refrain:

Il est né le divin enfant,
Jouez hautbois, résonnez musettes!
Il est né le divin enfant,
Chantons tous son avènement!

Depuis plus de quatre mille ans,
Nous le promettaient les prophètes;
Depuis plus de quatre mille ans,
Nous attendions cet heureux temps.

Refrain

Ah! qu'il est beau, qu'il est charmant!
Ah! que ses grâces sont parfaites!
Ah! qu'il est beau, qu'il est charmant!
Qu'il est doux ce divin enfant!

Refrain

Une étable est son logement,
Un peu de paille est sa couchette;
Une étable est son logement —
Pour un Dieu, quel abaissement!

Refrain

Partez, grands rois de l'Orient!
Venez vous unir à nos fêtes;
Partez, grands rois de l'Orient!
Venez adorer cet enfant!

Refrain

Il veut nos cœurs, il les attend:
Il est là pour faire leur conquête;
Il veut nos cœurs, il les attend:
Donnons-les-lui donc promptement!

Refrain

O Jésus! O Roi tout-puissant!
Tout petit enfant que vous êtes,
O Jésus! O Roi tout-puissant!
Réglez sur nous entièrement!

Refrain

Refrain:

*He is born, the divine Child,
Play the oboes, ring out the bagpipes!
He is born, the divine Child,
Let us all sing His coming!*

*For more than four thousand years,
The prophets promised Him to us;
For more than four thousand years,
We waited for this happy time.*

Refrain

*Oh! How lovely He is, how charming!
Oh! How perfect are His graces!
Oh! How lovely He is, how charming!
How sweet is this divine Child!*

Refrain

*A stable is His lodging,
A bit of straw is His cradle;
A stable is His lodging —
For a God, what humbling!*

Refrain

*Depart, great kings of the Orient!
Come join in our celebration;
Depart, great kings of the Orient!
Come adore this Child!*

Refrain

*He wants our hearts — He waits for them:
He is here to win them for Himself;
He wants our hearts — He waits for them:
Let us give them to Him promptly!*

Refrain

*O Jesus! O Almighty King!
Though a little Child You have become;
O Jesus! O Almighty King!
Reign over us entirely!*

Refrain

The Friendly Beasts - French Carol, arr. Alice Parker

Text: Traditional French carol; English text by Robert Davis (1889–1950).

Imagery associated with the Nativity of Luke 2:7

Jesus our brother, kind and good,
Was humbly born in a stable rude,
And the friendly beasts around him stood:
Jesus our brother, kind and good,

“I,” said the donkey, all shaggy and brown.
“I carried His mother uphill and down.
I carried her safely to Bethlehem town.
I,” said the donkey all shaggy and brown.

“I,” said the cow, all white and red.
“I gave Him my manger, for a bed.
I gave Him my hay to pillow His head.
I,” said the cow, all white and red.

“I,” said the sheep with the curly horn
“I gave Him my wool for a blanket warm.
He wore my coat on Christmas morn.
I,” said the sheep with the curly horn.

“I,” said the dove from the rafters high.
“I cooed him to sleep so he wouldn’t cry.
We cooed him to sleep my mate and I.
I,” said the dove from the rafters high.

Thus every beast by some good spell
In the stable dark was glad to tell
Of the gifts they gave Emanuel,
The gifts they gave Emanuel.

Touro-louro-louro! - Provençal Carol, arr. Alice Parker

Text: Traditional Provençal carol referring to the Nativity narrative of Luke 2

Touro louro louro! Cocks are crowing
Though there is no dawning light,
For the stars are brightly glowing
In the Holy Land tonight.
“Who’ll walk with me?”
“Not I, not I”
Oh, come now, oh, come now.
Should I ne’er return again,
Say the sev’n Psalms in remembrance.
Alackaday.

Like a lonely, wayward child
Alone I go.

Touro louro louro!
Winds are blowing,
Making fingers blue with cold,
Trudging wearily I’m going,
Suff’ring miseries untold.
I must find rest!
“No rest for you.”

Oh, come now, good farmer,
Let me in for just one night.
In the barn I would be sleeping.
And if you don't, where can I go?
If you're unkind, no rest I'll find.

Touro louro louro! Now I'm happy,
For I've found the manger here,
On the hay, inside the stable,
Lies the wondrous child so dear.
Be strong and glad. Oh, Mary!

All the world will praise thy name,
For to us is born a Savior.
Saint Joseph too, blessings on you.
Let us unite in singing now to one
we love.

Blessed be that Maid Marie - Bill Cutter

Text: Traditional text adapted by GR Woodard (1848–1934)

Blessed be that Maid Marie;
Born He was of her body;
Very God ere time began,
Born in time the Son of man.

Eya! Jesus hodie
Natus est de Virgine.

Sweet and blissful was the song
Chanted of the Angel throng,
"Peace on earth," Alleluia.
In excelsis gloria.

Eya! Jesus hodie
Natus est de Virgine.

Make we merry on this fest,
In quo Christus natus est:
On this child I pray you call,
To assoil us all.

Eya! Jesus hodie
Natus est de Virgine.

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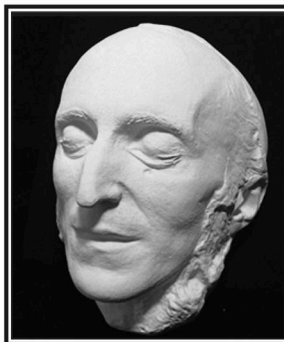
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BBC Christmas Carol Commission Competition

The Back Bay Chorale proudly presents the **inaugural year** of its annual **Christmas Carol Commission Competition**, dedicated to nurturing new voices and adding bold, meaningful works to the choral canon. This initiative commissions a brand-new carol each year, designed to capture the warmth, wonder, and enduring magic of the holiday season.

The competition seeks submissions from both emerging and established composers for works 4–8 minutes in length. The winning composer receives a \$2,500 prize and the opportunity to have their carol premiered by the BBC's 110-voice ensemble during its Boston Christmas concerts. Entries are evaluated by a distinguished panel of choral experts and music directors. The inaugural winner, Michael Cheng, will have his carol, "Ring Out, Ye Bells!," performed this year, setting the stage for future commissions.

The Pitt Family is pleased to support the Back Bay Chorale Christmas Carol Commissioning Competition in honor of Chris Pitt – husband, father, singer - 1951-2022. *Ecce Quam Bonum*.

MICHAEL CHENG

CHRISTMAS CAROL COMMISSION COMPETITION WINNER 2025



Chung Hon Michael Cheng (b. 1997) is an award-winning composer born in Hong Kong. His teachers have included Chaya Czernowin, Richard Beaudoin, Robert Kyr, Carson Cooman, Andrew Clark, Federico Cortese, Christopher Hasty, Ann Witherspoon, and John and Nancy Weems.

His compositions have been performed across the United States and internationally, including before audiences of over 30,000 and such dignitaries as then-New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. He is also a Diploma awardee and

finalist of the 2022 International J. S. Bach Piano Competition in Saarbrücken, Germany.

Cheng began studying piano at age four and composing on his own at age five. He is the two-time United States national winner of the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) Composition Competition (Junior, 2012; Young Artist, 2021), as well as two-time national runner-up of the same (Junior, 2011; Senior, 2014). He has also won numerous other national and international awards in composition, and his music has been featured on the United States Public Broadcasting Service (PBS).

In 2019, Cheng graduated from Harvard University with an A.B. in Physics magna cum laude, an S.M. in Engineering Sciences, and a minor in Economics. He then earned an S.M. at MIT and returned to Harvard in 2021, where he is a member of the Harvard University Choir and the Ferris

***Ring Out, Ye Bells!* - Michael Cheng**

A letter from the composer, winner of the BBC Christmas Carol Commission Competition

"I am honored to be the inaugural winner of the BBC's Christmas Carol Commissioning Competition, and I am deeply grateful to the Pitt family for their generous support.

Being the first composer in this new tradition is both a privilege and a responsibility, and I wanted to create something that could help establish a strong foundation for the program. As it happened, 2025 proved to be a year marked by crisis and tragedy, even more so than when I wrote the carol. Then as now, I felt compelled to offer a musical response to our contemporary atmosphere of anxiety and uncertainty by affirming the strength of human resilience, our innate goodness, and the sustaining power of faith and joy. Paul Laurence Dunbar's "Christmas Carol" perfectly answers this demand because it preaches a message of optimism and hope that does not ignore the reality of darkness in the world. Coming from the son of two emancipated slaves—born just seven years after the Civil War and rising to prominence in a nation still emerging from slavery's long shadow—that message carries particular resonance.

My setting of Dunbar's poem is correspondingly joyful and melodic, with passing allusions to darkness. A brief organ introduction paves the way for the first two stanzas' bright, spirited theme. The middle stanzas turn toward new ideas and are infused with sprinkles of jazz, followed by a gentle organ reflection on the preceding material—a focal point in the work. In the last two stanzas, a renewed burst of vigor heralds the opening theme's return (in canon and with a descant) and the subsequent climax. The organ's initial motif briefly reappears before the work concludes, exuberantly.

I hope you enjoy it."

Text: Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906)

Ring out, ye bells!
All Nature swells
With gladness at the wondrous story,—
The world was lorn,
But Christ is born
To change our sadness into glory.

Sing, earthlings, sing!
To-night a King
Hath come from heaven's high throne to bless us.
The outstretched hand
O'er all the land

Is raised in pity to caress us.
Come at his call;
Be joyful all;
Away with mourning and with sadness!
The heavenly choir
With holy fire
Their voices raise in songs of gladness.

The darkness breaks
And Dawn awakes,
Her cheeks suffused with youthful blushes.
The rocks and stones
In holy tones
Are singing sweeter than the thrushes.

Then why should we
In silence be,
When Nature lends her voice to praises;
When heaven and earth
Proclaim the truth
Of Him for whom that lone star blazes?

No, be not still,
But with a will
Strike all your harps and set them ringing;
On hill and heath
Let every breath
Throw all its power into singing!



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***Fantasia on Christmas Carols* - Ralph Vaughan Williams**

Text: English carols collected in Herefordshire, Somerset and Sussex

This is the truth sent from above,
The truth of God, the God of Love:
Therefore don't turn me from your door
But hearken all, both rich and poor.
The first thing which I will relate
Is that God did man create,
The next thing which to you I'll tell,
Woman was made with man to dwell.
Then, after this, 'twas God's own choice
To place them both in Paradise,
There to remain, from evil free,
Except they ate of such a tree.
And they did eat, which was a sin,
And thus their ruin did begin,
Ruined themselves, both you and me
And all of their posterity.
Thus we were heirs to endless woes.
Till God the Lord did interpose,
And so a promise soon did run,
That he would redeem us by his Son

Come all you worthy gentlemen that may be standing by,
Christ our blessed Saviour was born on Christmas day,
The blessed Virgin Mary unto the Lord did pray
O we wish you the comfort and tidings of joy!
Christ our Blessed Saviour now in the manger lay,
He's lying in the manger, while the oxen feed on hay.
The blessed Virgin Mary unto the Lord did pray
O we wish you the comfort and tidings of joy!

On Christmas night all Christians sing
To hear the news the angels bring;
News of great joy, news of great mirth,
News of our merciful King's birth.
When sin departs before thy grace,
Then life and health come in its place,
Angels and men with joy may sing,
All for to see the new-born King.

God bless the ruler of this house, and long may he reign,
Many happy Christmases he live to see again!
God bless our generation, who live both far and near
And we wish them a happy New Year.
Both now and evermore, Amen.

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