

YORK
EARLY MUSIC
CHRISTMAS
FESTIVAL
2025

Apollo5

The Crimson Sun

National Centre for Early Music

Tuesday 9 December 6.30pm

Apollo5

Penelope Appleyard *soprano*

Lily Robson *mezzo-soprano*

Thomas Mottershead *tenor*

Joseph Taylor *tenor*

Augustus Perkins Ray *bass*

The Crimson Sun

Good-will to men, and peace on Earth

Dobrinka Tabakova b. 1980

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A Spotless Rose

Piers Connor Kennedy b. 1991

Omnes de Saba venient

Jacob Handl 1550-91

Virgen sancta

Francisco Guerrero 1528-99

Laetentur Caeli

William Byrd c.1540-1623

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Lute-book Lullaby

Anonymous arr. **Geoffrey Shaw** 1879-1943

O magnum mysterium

Francis Poulenc 1899-1963

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The Angel Gabriel

Traditional Basque

arr. **Fraser Wilson** b. 1984 for Apollo5

The Coventry Carol

Traditional English

arr. **Barnaby Smith** b. 1983

Quem pastores laudavere

James Bassi b. 1961

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Ubi caritas

Ola Gjeilo b. 1978

O radiant dawn

James MacMillan b. 1959

Venite, gaudete!

Adrian Peacock b. 1962

arr. for Apollo5

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Make we joy now in this fest

William Walton 1902-83

The Crimson Sun

Alexander Campkin b. 1984

Carol of the Bells

Mykola Leontovych 1877-1921

Apollo5's *The Crimson Sun* invites you on a festive journey, blending timeless Christmas favourites with lesser-known works. The concert opens with Dobrinka Tabakova's rousing and dance-like 'Good-will to men, and peace on Earth', originally composed for the readers of *BBC Music Magazine*. This lively opening gradually yields to an atmosphere of quiet contemplation in Piers Connor Kennedy's 'A Spotless Rose', which immerses the Advent antiphon 'O Oriens' in a meditative, mystical soundscape.

The programme then transports listeners to the Renaissance era, where the majestic fanfare of Jacob Handl's 'Omnes de Saba venient' contrasts with the playful effervescence of William Byrd's 'Laetentur caeli', framing a beautiful devotion to the Virgin Mary by Spanish composer Francisco Guerrero.

The tender 'Lute-book Lullaby' was sourced from sixteenth-century lutenist William Ballet's collection and transcribed by Geoffrey Shaw, who composed this pretty carol in the 1920s. Poulenc's haunting 'O magnum mysterium' offers a moment of profound stillness and awe before building to a colossal, devastating climax. Familiar carols like 'The Angel Gabriel' and 'The Coventry Carol' emerge anew under the hands of Fraser Wilson and Barnaby Smith, while James Bassi's lush harmonies in 'Quem pastores laudavere' imbue the Nativity story with a peaceful radiance.

Three gems of contemporary choral music follow: the plaintive opening chant in Ola Gjeilo's 'Ubi Caritas' blossoms into sumptuous harmonies; James MacMillan's 'O Radiant Dawn' evokes a spiritual yearning for light amid darkness; and Adrian Peacock's 'Venite, gaudete!', arranged especially for the ensemble, builds with thrilling crescendo to a climax of exuberant excitement.

The festive mood continues with William Walton's rollicking 'Make we joy now in this fest', evoking the lively ambience of a tavern song. The programme reaches its summit with Alexander Campkin's 'The Crimson Sun', its powerful strophic structure and fiery "Gloria" motif cascading like stars across the night sky.

Apollo5's concert draws to a close with the beloved 'Carol of the Bells'. Written by Ukrainian composer Mykola Leontovych around 1916 and popularised with English words two decades later, this folk-inspired favourite perfectly captures the sparkling magic of the season. Together with rest of this diverse programme, it promises to leave you uplifted, warmed and fully immersed in the spirit of Christmas.

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Apollo5

Celebrating its fifteenth year in 2025, Apollo5 continues to thrill, move and inspire audiences as one of Britain's smallest but most impressive vocal groups. Comprising a soprano, mezzo-soprano, two tenors and a bass, the ensemble – which takes its name from the ancient Greek god of music – has become known for its ability to connect with intimacy and directness, showcasing with rich, dynamic and distinctive sound how powerful five voices alone can be. With a versatile approach to music programming, and a repertoire spanning Renaissance, Classical and contemporary choral works to folk, jazz and pop, the group's five voices bring the music of five centuries to life.

Apollo5 has accumulated a busy international touring schedule that has taken the group to many European countries, the USA and Asia. In addition to performing at prestigious UK venues such as the Barbican Centre, Wigmore Hall, Cadogan Hall and St John's Smith Square, the group has toured extensively across Belgium, Germany and France.

The group has released seven studio albums. In January, Apollo5 released a seventh album, *Anam*, a Gaelic-tinged programme of 'music to move the soul'. *Haven*, which explores the music of troubled, displaced and persecuted composers and features a full setting of William Byrd's Mass for Five Voices, was released in 2023 to critical acclaim. Other albums include *Where All Roses Go* and *O Radiant Dawn* (both of which charted in the top five of the UK Classical Charts), winter disc *A Deep But Dazzling Darkness*, and *Invocations*, a piano-accompanied treasury of favourite songs recorded with composer and arranger Fraser Wilson.

As part of the VOCES8 Foundation, Apollo5 works alongside Paul Smith and other affiliated ensembles to deliver a transformative programme of workshops, masterclasses and concerts to over 40,000 young people annually in the UK, Europe, the USA and Asia.

A Spotless Rose

○ Oriens,

splendor lucis aeternae, et sol justitiae:

veni, et illumina sedentes in tenebris, et umbra mortis.

○ Morning Star,

splendour of light eternal and sun of righteousness:

Come and enlighten those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

Omnes de Saba venient

Omnes de Saba venient, aurum et thus deferentes,

et laudem Domino annuntiantes. Alleluia.

All they from Saba shall come, bringing gold and incense,
and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord. Alleluia.

Virgen sancta

Virgen Sancta, el Rey del cielo,
vuestro hijo y nuestro bien,
Gran Señora, vuestro amado,
luz del cielo y nuestro bien,
¿Cómo está'n un pesebruelo
de la pequeña Belén?

El Hijo de Dios eterno,
que gobierna lo criado,
está'n medio del invierno
a un pesebre reclinado.

Virgen Sancta, el Rey del cielo,
vuestro hijo y nuestro bien,
Gran Señora, vuestro amado,
luz del cielo y nuestro bien,
¿Cómo está'n un pesebruelo
de la pequeña Belén?

Holy virgin, the king of heaven,
your son and our saviour,
Great lady, your beloved,
light of the sky and our saviour,
How can he be in a little manger
in tiny Bethlehem?

The son of God eternal
that rules over the creation
is lying in a manger
in the middle of the winter.

Holy virgin, the king of heaven,
your son and our saviour,
Great lady, your beloved,
light of the sky and our saviour,
How can he be in a little manger
in tiny Bethlehem?

Laetentur Caeli

Laetentur caeli, et exultet terra.
Iubilare montes laudem,
quia Dominus noster veniet,

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the
earth be glad.
Let the mountains offer up praise,

et pauperum suorum miserebitur.
Orietur in diebus tuis iusticia et
abundantia paucis,
et pauperum suorum miserebitur.

O magnum mysterium

O magnum mysterium, et admirabile
sacramentum,
ut animalia viderent Dominum
natum iacentem in praeseptio. Beata
virgo,
cuius viscera meruerunt portare
Dominum Christum.

Quem pastores laudavere

Quem pastores laudavere,
Quibus angeli dixere:
Absit vobis iam timere,
Natus est rex gloriae.

Ad quem magi ambulabant,
Aurum, thus, myrrham portabant,
Immolabant haec sincere,
Nato regi gloriae.

Christo regi Deo nato,
Per Mariam nobis dato,
Merito resonet vere,
Laus, honor et gloria.

Ubi caritas

Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est.
Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor.
Exultemus, et in ipso jucundemur.
Timeamus, et amemus Deum vivum.
Et ex corde diligamus nos sincero.
Amen.

because our Lord will come,
and he will show mercy on his poor.
On your days let justice and plenty
arise for the select,
and he will have mercy on his poor.

How great a mystery, and how
wonderful the sacrament,
that the animals should behold the
Lord
newly born and lying in a stable.
Blessed be the virgin
whose womb was worthy to bear our
Lord Christ.

He whom the shepherds praised,
to whom the angels sang:
be not afraid,
the king of glory is born.

Wise men came
and humbly made their offerings
of gold, frankincense and myrrh
to the prince of glory.

Christ the king, God incarnate,
given to us through Mary,
may resound with true merit,
praise, honour and glory.

Where charity and love are, God is
there.
Christ's love has gathered us into one.
Let us rejoice and be pleased in Him.
Let us fear, and let us love the living God.
And may we love each other with a
And sincere heart. Amen.

Venite, Gaudete!

Veni veni, veni Emmanuel
Hodie Christus natus est
Laetantur archangeli.
Gaudete, Christus est natus!
Venite gaudete, adoremus.

O come, come Emmanuel
Today Christ is born
And all the angels rejoice.
Rejoice, Christ is born!
Come, let us worship.

YORK EARLY MUSIC CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL is directed by
Delma Tomlin MBE and administered by the National Centre for Early Music
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