

A pine cone is positioned at the top center, with the letters 'ea' in a white serif font overlaid on it. To the left, there are two wrapped gifts: one in white paper with a red and white striped string, and another in brown paper with a dark green and red striped string. The background is a solid, vibrant red.

ea

ENSEMBLE ALTERA

a
christmas
present

A SUMPTUOUS PROGRAM OF SEASONAL
MUSIC WRITTEN IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM,
INCLUDING NEW ARRANGEMENTS OF
TIMELESS CLASSICS

9 dec | 7:00pm

CHURCH OF THE ADVENT
BOSTON, MA

10 dec | 2:30pm

ST. MARTIN'S EPISCOPAL
PROVIDENCE, RI

WWW.ENSEMBLEALTERA.COM

Holiday

HAPPENINGS



CAROL
QUARTETS

30 minutes of carols for your private event,
sung by members of Ensemble Altera.

DETAILS

ENSEMBLEALTERA.COM/CAROLS

Bring a bit of Christmas magic into your home or business this year, courtesy of Ensemble Altera. Elevate your holiday party and charm your guests with a live performance of Christmas carols, sung by our professional carolers. Singers will perform a delicious selection of traditional favorites, though requests can be made in advance. Performances last approximately 30 minutes.

With a donation of \$1000 or more, a portion of which is tax-deductible, Ensemble Altera will bring the gift of music into your home this holiday season!

www.EnsembleAltera.com/CAROLS



A NOTE *from the* DIRECTOR

As I look back on Altera's whirlwind 2023 year, I'm full of thanks. From a chamber *Messiah* to our incredible *Dazzling Light* program, which we recorded and performed, Altera is continuously forging ahead as a true musical force, with programming that joins the timeless with the innovative. With three world premieres in 2023 alone, including one by 3rd annual competition winner Motshwane Page from South Africa, we remain committed to lifting up new voices in choral music, wherever they may be.

Off the concert platform, we expanded our trailblazing education programs with *Sing Out! In Schools* interactive demonstrations at Title I schools in Rhode Island, as well as choral clinics at Wheaton College and the University of New Hampshire. We also continue our longstanding commitment to sharing our recording library free to select partners in music therapy.

As I gaze at the horizon of 2024, there is so much to look forward to: the release of our first commercial album, *The Lamb's Journey*, a tour to Dallas (another first), and our debut at Carnegie Hall, singing Brahms' *Requiem* alongside the Orchestra of St. Luke's. We will also offer a brand new program in September on the Psalms of David, and revive our much-loved *Feminine Voices* program in November (with a commercial recording as well!), featuring works by women paired with Britten's beloved *Ceremony of Carols*. Additionally, we will mount a completely free community concert in March at the Providence Public Library to continue to broaden our audience and mission.

It is in the context of all this work, artistically exciting and socially engaged, that I hope to nudge you, our loyal audience. Small acts, in the aggregate, can electrify Altera's engines as we zoom into the future. Spread the word to your friends, bring them to our free community concert in March, or to our Psalms program in the fall, join our email list, sign up to house a visiting artist, volunteer for board service, or make a gift today to nudge all of this a few inches into the future.

I would be remiss not to mention the many kind nudges from the fleet of volunteers behind the scenes of today's concert: our board led by the brilliant Simon Holt; the volunteer efforts of our wonderful corps of ushers, organized by Dwight Porter and Trevor Neal; the sheer competence and perseverance of our Treasurer Charlie Oliver, the humble service of our Secretary Donna Lowrey, the many, many hours put in by Production Manager Tim Harbold; the adaptability and positivity of our Accommodations Officer Camilla de Rochambeau, the thousands of texts answered by our marketing and graphic design manager Olivia Kleyla; the administrative assistance of Rachel Garrepy, Michael Garrepy's counsel and friendship, to say nothing of his glorious music, the venues that open their doors to us and the hosts who open their home to our artists, and most of all to you, our loyal audience. Thank you for believing in this little juggernaut!

Yours in music,
Christopher Lowrey
Founder & Artistic Director



BOARD *of* DIRECTORS

Michelle Caetano, Cumberland, RI
Michael Garrepy, Warwick, RI, *Artistic Advisor*
Tim Harbold, Boston, MA
Simon Holt, Stonington, CT, *Chair*
Phyllis Hoffman, Boston, MA
Jennifer Ritvo Hughes, Needham, MA, *Vice Chair*
Gregory J. King, Baltimore, MD
Jared Kornblatt, Boston, MA
Christopher Lowrey, Johnston, RI, *Artistic Director*
Donna Lowrey, Johnston, RI, *Secretary*
Mark Meyer, Dallas, TX
Trevor S. Neal, Newport, RI
Reverend Janet Cooper Nelson, Providence, RI
Charles Oliver, Attleboro, MA, *Treasurer*
Dwight E. Porter, Stoneham, MA
Camilla de Rochambeau, North Kingstown, RI
Reverend Benjamin Straley, Providence, RI

DONORS 2023

Ensemble Altera gratefully recognizes the support of our friends and donors who have made this program possible. Donor listings are current as of November 30th, 2023.

SERAPHIM

\$10,000 +

Epp Sonin
Scot Jones & Sue Smith

CHERUBIM

\$5,000-\$9,999

Lyle Confrey
Harishabad Khalsa
Mary Phillips
Rhode Island Foundation
Rhode Island State Council on the Arts

ANGELS

\$1,000-\$4,999

Boston Foundation
Choral Arts New England
Phyllis Hoffman
Simon & Alison Holt
Terry Karaniuk
Mary & Richard Kenny
Gregory King
Robert & Cynthia King Family Fund
Donna & Michael Lowrey
Mark Meyer

ANGELS cont.

\$1,000-\$4,999

Charles & Wendy Oliver
Ben Orenstein
Jeffrey & Alisa Steadman

DONORS *continued*

\$500-\$999

Joseph Amante
Bank of America Charitable Gift
Julian Bullitt
James Burress
Peter Laarman
Stephan Lane
Robert Nolan
Camilla de Rochambeau
Michael Touloumtzis & Paula Foresman
Jan Tullis

\$100-\$499

Anna Berman
Michelle Caetano
Valerio Contaldo
Dan & Mimi Dyer
Mary Fitton
Karen Gagne
Jolle Greenleaf
Heidi Halbur
Dan Hall
Timothy Harbold
Benjamin Heasly
Elaine Killough
Thomasine & Jeffrey Manickas
Pierre Masse
Susan Maycock
Elijah McCormack
Sarah McCormack
Justin Meyer
Susan Morvan
Janet Cooper Nelson
Becca Nickelson
Martha A. Parks
Dwight Porter
Friederike Rentzsch
Jim Seymour
Jillian Siqueland
Anne Stone
Lonice Thomas
Rebekah Westphal

Under \$100

Tish Brennan
Joseph Cantone
Mary Cantone
John Case
Thomas Cooley
Marie-Andree Courchesne
Hugh Cutting
Walter Galloway
Tony Giannamore
Amy Henion
Jennifer Kiddie
Rebecca Myers
John Ong
Julie Price
Rachel Remington
Maria Schlafly
Helen Sherman
Brian Taylor
Chris Taylor
Zachary Wilder



scan to
SUPPORT

WWW.ENSEMBLEALTERA.COM/DONATE

a christmas present

ENSEMBLE ALTERA

Christopher Lowrey
director

soprano

Clare Brussel
Katelyn Grace Jackson
Eleonore Cockerham
Rachel Garrepy
Sarah Yanovitch Vitale

alto

Rhianna Cockrell
Janna Critz
Olivia Kleyla
Christopher Lowrey
Ashley Mulcahy

tenor

Andrew Bearden Brown
Mark Garrepy
Nicholas Madden
Oliver Mercer

bass

Michael Garrepy
Amory Kisch
Chris Talbot
Simon Whiteley
Thou Yang

program

Venite, Gaudete!, Adrian Peacock (b. 1962)

Coventry Carol, Richard Allain (b. 1965)

Salvator mundi, Domine, Alexander Hopkins (b. 1998)

Balulalow, Oliver Tarney (b. 1984)

Gaudete, arr. Karl Jenkins (b. 1944)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap, Kenneth Leighton (1929-1988)

There is a flower, John Rutter (b. 1945)

A tender shoot, Kerensa Briggs (b. 1991)

In the bleak midwinter, arr. Ola Gjeilo (b. 1978)

Come and dance, Toby Young (b. 1990)

- interval -

In the stillness, Sally Beamish (b. 1956)

**O holy night*, arr. Michael Garrepy (b. 1990)

Good-will to men and peace on Earth, Dobrinka Tabakova (b. 1980)

Love came down at Christmas, Richard Lloyd (1951-2021)

The Shepherd's Carol, Bob Chilcott (b. 1955)

Les anges dans nos campagnes, arr. Tobias Frank (b. 1980)

Quem pastores laudavere, James Bassi (b. 1961)

Silent night, arr. Jonathan Rathbone (b. 1957)

Jingle Bells, arr. Ben Parry (b. 1965)

**World Premiere*

program notes

This program is testament to a truth not as commonly recognized as it ought to be, namely that we are living through a new golden age of choral music. Other such high points for the flowering of choral output include 15th-century Flanders, 16th-century England, and 17th-century Italy. What can explain the current explosion of composition, performance, and consumption of this music? Perhaps it has something to do with the tenacity of tonality within choral repertoire that was abandoned or at least highly warped throughout the 20th century in instrumental music. That is not to say that experimentation or extension of techniques is altogether missing from music written for choirs today, but still, it can't be denied that choral composition has largely hewn to a more conservative musical language. Some of this is down to pragmatism when writing for the voice; after all, intervals calculated by singers are not the same as those on mechanical instruments. Having said that, a survey of modern and post-modern music for the solo voice somewhat puts paid to that theory, with its sometimes fierce difficulty and extended techniques. Still, it's one thing to ask a few virtuosi to do this and another to expect an entire ensemble (though please do spare a thought for such enterprising new music ensembles as Exaudi who eat this repertoire for breakfast). Perhaps the newfound proliferation of all things choral has to do with the ongoing blurring of boundaries between pop, folk, jazz, and classical music that is part of the spirit of the age. Choral music's current aesthetic values map neatly onto the cultural zeitgeist: easy on the ear, singable, and commercially successful.

This explosion in popularity of choral music by living composers might be related to another modern trend: the revival of the Christmas carol. Of all things, who would have guessed that medieval carols would survive the next half millennium and be heard in airports and shopping malls across the land? We don't see many estampies or quadrilles down the club, after all, or hear many hurdy-gurdy or shawm concertos. Yet, this music and these texts stay stubbornly with us. The first great revival of the Christmas carol in the early 19th century grew from a concern that rural society needed more of a common culture to knit it back together. The fact that the Christmas carol then captured the imagination of Victorian city dwellers was a happy by-product of a nostalgic pastoral revivalism. So, when John Stainer and Henry Bramley published their first volume of *Christmas Carols, New and Old* in 1867, the scene was set for Christmas carols to be sung by the newly-robed Anglican choirs and to begin the steady march towards the current proliferation of the medium.

The selection of carols we offer represents a rich variety, with recurring features that demonstrate a throwback to the genesis of the English carol in the early modern period. First, many of the texts are antique – setting either medieval English or Latin. Secondly, the textures are predominantly homophonic. And thirdly, the harmonies are frequently modal. But there are 20th-century fixations too, for instance additive rhythms, resonant harmonic clusters, and the techniques of minimalism. These features in combination represent the new choral orthodoxy, and a most attractive orthodoxy it is.

Adrian Peacock was long the lowest voice in many top professional choirs, and is now mainly a recording producer of sterling quality (if you own more than one choral disc he's bound to have produced some of them). His **Venite, Gaudete!** sets our program cracking with a chattering rhythmic ostinato that speaks of the expectation associated with Advent. Quasi middle-eastern melodies and bell-like textures place the carol at the geographical center of the Christmas story. The Alleluias sweep ecstatic and triumphant across the choir.

Richard Allain's works encompass a wide range of styles, and choral music is at the heart of his output. Allain has written Christmas carols throughout his career, from the miniature *Balulalow*, written when he was still at school, to *Welcome, all wonders*, which was commissioned by Collegium Regale and broadcast live on Christmas Eve from King's College Chapel. His haunting setting of *In the bleak midwinter* has been recorded by several choirs. Similarly, **Coventry Carol** has firmly established itself as part of the Christmas choral repertoire. A twist in his re-interpretation of the medieval carol is a technical one. Allain takes the harmonic cross relations inherent in the original song from the *Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors* and magnifies that feature until it is all-encompassing.

Salvator mundi, Domine was commissioned in 2021 from Alexander Hopkins, who was a bass in the choir of St John's College, Cambridge at the time. The text is taken from a Sarum plainsong hymn traditionally associated with Christmas Eve and the service of Compline. Scored for divided alto, tenor and bass voices a cappella, the piece uses overlapping voices to create a wash of sound from which passages in rhythmic unison sometimes emerge. Viewed as a whole, the composition traces a path from B major to F major, an extreme progression designed, perhaps, to reflect the long Advent journey from darkness to light.

Oliver Tarney is head of Academic Music and Composition at Winchester College in Hampshire, UK. He sings regularly with the college's chapel choir and with Winchester Cathedral choir. He has written music for many choirs, including chamber choir Sansara, with whom he is an associate composer, and for whom he wrote a set of three Christmas pieces, from which **Balulalow** is drawn (the other two pieces being *The Waiting Sky* and *The Wise Men and the Stars*). *Balulalow* is a hauntingly beautiful setting of the medieval lullaby with an expansive middle section filled with chromatic harmony infusing the text with a dark radiance.

A global survey in 2011 showed Welshman Karl Jenkins to be among the most performed living composers. Together with the global 'cross-genre' phenomenon *Adiemus*, *The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace* is perhaps his best-known work, approaching three thousand performances since its millennium premiere, while his recording of the piece has the unique status of having been in the Classical charts for 18 years. **Gaudete** ('rejoice') is an anonymous composition whose chorus was first published in 1582 in the *Piae Cantiones* collection. The verses are taken from a medieval Czech song, *Ezechielis Porta*, and tell of the wonder of God's arrival on earth. This arrangement was written for the vocal group Tenebrae.

Kenneth Leighton has been esteemed "a musician's musician", as any church choir that includes in its repertoire his beloved *Second Service*, *Preces and Responses*, or the Christmas carol *Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child* can attest. They may perhaps not (yet) know **The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap**, which opens the second part of his large-scale BBC commission of 1984, *The World's Desire*. Subtitled 'A Sequence for Epiphany', this work was designed to incorporate images from Western traditions and the Orthodox Church. The soprano solo is here given to a tenor.

Kerensa Briggs' love of choral music emanates from her background, singing in Gloucester Cathedral Youth Choir and Choir of King's College London, and steeped also in the music of her father, organist David Briggs. At King's she held a Choral Scholarship and undertook a master's degree in Composition. **A tender shoot** concerns Jesus' mother Mary, and extols the miracle of Jesus's virgin birth. Briggs sets an anonymous 15th-century German text in a quasi-chorale fashion. The soft lilting harmonies are punctuated by moments of harmonic intensity, illustrating for instance the 'cold bleak winter' and 'God of endless might'.

Ola Gjeilo is one of the most frequently performed composers in the choral world. An accomplished pianist, improvisations over his own published choral pieces have become a trademark of his collaborations. Although Norwegian by birth, it is perhaps Ola's adopted country of America that has influenced the composer's distinctive soundworld the most, evolving a style that is often described as cinematic and evocative, with a lush, harmonious sound. Gjeilo gives Gustav Holst's well-known tune **In the bleak midwinter** an American a cappella feel, an affectionate nod to the style of the religious minimalists.

Toby Young has emerged as a composer unbound by the typical genre limitations in classical music. His work is rooted in the theatricality of opera, the energy of electronic dance music, and the emotion of film scores, and has been played around the world at venues ranging from the Royal Albert Hall to Glastonbury Festival. A great rhythmic ostinato unifies this energetic a cappella setting of a Jennifer Thorpe text, **Come and dance**, that celebrates the festivities of the Christmas season. Young's lively melodies are full of syncopated rhythms, often supported by colorful harmonies in the accompanying voices.

Sally Beamish was born in London, and for most of her early career trained and performed as a violist. She moved to Scotland in 1990 to develop her career as a composer. Her music embraces many influences, particularly jazz and Scottish traditional music. For her charming carol **In the stillness**, she chooses a text by Katrina Shepherd depicting the 'hushed rapture of a small parish church in a snowbound landscape.' For so many of us who live and work in the world of choral music, it is this moment Shepherd describes that we look forward to every year at Christmas. Beamish writes simply and homophonically throughout, leaving room for expression through the text alone.

Resident collaborator Michael Garrepy can be relied upon to shape any known work to fit Altera's forces. So it was without a second thought that I commissioned his arrangement of Adolphe Adam's **O holy night**, a piece familiar to us all, but perhaps even more intimately so to a church musician hailing from French-Canadian northwest Rhode Island, where we wouldn't be surprised to still hear *Minuit, Chrétien, c'est l'heure solennelle*. Garrepy devises some rather ingenious solutions to convert an otherwise accompanied carol into an a cappella version, tossing connective ostinati from one voice to another to sustain the sound. It wouldn't be Garrepy's work without palatially wide textures or harmonic development symphonic in nature, and here, we are not disappointed, as he is true to form while also maturing in his melody writing within the counterpoint.

Dobrinka Tabakova was born in Bulgaria. Living in London since 1991, she graduated from the Guildhall School of Music, and obtained a PhD from King's College London. Her music has featured in films, dance, and has been programmed at festivals across Europe and the US. **Good-will to men and peace on Earth** draws overtly on aspects of familiar medieval soundscapes, with voices moving in parallels, bare fifths, and alternation of meters. The composer achieves a 'playful element' (in her words): the traditions of conviviality associated with carols (again traceable to their medieval origins) are here reinforced by the use of clapping (or tambourine in our version) as another component in the texture.

In addition to playing the organ and conducting, most famously at Hereford Cathedral, composing was always a central part of Richard Lloyd's musical life. He produced around 600 compositions and arrangements, many of which were written during his subsequent time in Durham. He has been an inspiration to many musicians, writing accessible, beautifully crafted music of very high quality for both parish and cathedral choirs. One such fine example is this Christmas miniature setting Christina Rossetti's text **Love came down at Christmas**. Though the compass of the soprano line may put it out of the repertoire of some parish choirs, it is nevertheless a study in elegant simplicity with three ardent strophes of gently modern harmony.

Bob Chilcott is a choral composer, conductor, and singer, based in Oxfordshire. He was a tenor in the King's Singers from 1985 to 1997. The text of his **Shepherd's Carol**, written for the 2001 Service of Nine Lessons and Carols at King's College, Cambridge, is a beautiful poem by Clive Sansom. The poignancy of the shepherds narrating their story directly to Mary is underscored by lulling melodies of folk-like simplicity and supported by languid and atmospheric harmonies. The effect is a sublime marriage of poetic imagery and music.

Bavarian organist and church musician Tobias Frank's first fascination has been with the music of Marcel Dupré, whose complete works he is in the process of digitizing. His other major love has been the English choral tradition, having been a student of Tim Brown and David Briggs. It is probably that soundworld which serves as the model for his angelic re-casting of the 18th-century French tune **Les anges dans nos campagnes** (*Angels from the realms of glory* in its best-known English version).

American James Bassi, composer, pianist, music director, and tenor, is a founding member of the accomplished New York City ensemble Voices of Ascension, singing with them every season, and he has written numerous commissioned works for the group, including **Quem pastores laudavere**, which weaves a touching ballad from a 14th-century poem for Christmas day. Particularly enjoyable are the aching rising 5ths of the alto part throughout the final verse, perhaps longing for the coming reign of Christ.

Former Swingle Singers tenor Jonathan Rathbone has developed a reputation for creating challenging but highly rewarding arrangements for more experienced choirs. His close-harmony arrangement of **Silent Night** is one of his more straightforward efforts, though not without its own pitfalls, including an intriguing bitonal modulation into the second verse and tricky-to-tune wide textures in the closing moments of the piece. Speaking of tricky, Ben Parry's take on **Jingle Bells**, equal parts raucous and treacherous, is a tour-de-force in rhythmic and intervallic pitfalls. Do not be fooled by the breeziness of the jazzy soundworld. This is expert writing for expert singers!

CL

texts & translations

1.

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.*

2.

Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child,
By by, lully, lullay.

O sisters too,
How may we do
For to preserve this day
This poor youngling,
For whom we do sing,
By by, lully lullay?

Herod, the king,
In his raging,
Charged he hath this day
His men of might,
In his own sight,
All young children to slay.

3.

Salvator mundi, Domine
qui nos salvasti hodie:
in hac nocte nos protege,
et salva omni tempore.

Adesto nunc propitius,
Et parce supplicantibus
Tu dele nostra crimina,
Tu tenebras illumina.

Te, reformator sensuum
Votis precamur cordium
Ut pui castis mentibus
surgamus a cubilibus.
Amen.

*Lord, Savior of the world,
Who has redeemed us today,
Protect us in this night,
And save us at any time.*

*Propitiously help us now
And have mercy on us, entreating you,
Erase our crimes,
Lighten our darkness.*

*We ask you, reformer of our senses,
With our heartfelt prayers,
That pure, with chaste minds,
We may rise from our beds.
Amen.*

4.

O my deir hert,
Young Jesu sweet,
Prepare thy creddil in my spreit.
And I sall rock thee in my hert,
And never mair from thee depart.

But I sall praise thee evermoir,
With sangis sweet unto thy gloir.
The knees of my hert sall I bow,
And sing that richt Balulalow.

5.

Gaudete, gaudete!
Christus est natus
Ex Maria virgine,
gaudete!

Tempus adest gratiæ
Hoc quod optabamus,
Carmina lætitiæ
Devote reddamus.

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

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

*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.*

*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.*

6.

The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,
His hair was like a light.
(O weary, weary were the world,
But here is all aright.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast
His hair was like a star.
(O stern and cunning are the kings,
But here the true hearts are.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,
His hair was like a fire.
(O weary, weary is the world,
But here the world's desire.)

The Christ-child stood on Mary's knee,
His hair was like a crown,
And all the flowers looked up at Him,
And all the stars looked down.

7.

There is a flower sprung of a tree,
The root thereof is callèd Jesse,
A flower of price;
There is none such in paradise.

This flower is fair and fresh of hue,
It fadeth never, but ever is new;
The blessed branch this flower on grew
Was Mary mild that bare Jesu;
A flower of grace;
Against all sorrow it is solace.

The seed hereof was Goddes sand,
That God himself sowed with his hand,
In Nazareth, that holy land,
Amidst her arbour a maiden found
This blessed flower
Sprang never but in Mary's bower.

When that fair flower began to spread
And his sweet blossom began to bed,
Then rich and poor of every land
They marvelled how this flower might spread,
Till kinges three
That blessed flower came to see.
(Alleluia)

Angels there came from heaven's tower
To look upon this freshele flower,
How fair he was in his colour
And how sweet in his savour,
And to behold How such a flower might spring
in gold.

8.

A tender shoot hath started
Up from a root of grace,
As ancient seers imparted,
From Jesse's holy race,
It blooms without a blight,
Blooms in the cold bleak winter,
Turning our darkness into light.

This shoot Isaiah taught us
From Jesse's root should spring;
The Virgin Mary brought us
The branch of which we sing;
Our God of endless might
Gave her this child to save us,
Thus turning darkness into light.

9.

In the bleak mid-winter
Frosty wind made moan;
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter Long ago.

Our God, heav'n cannot hold Him
Nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When He comes to reign:
In the bleak mid-winter
A stable place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty — Jesus Christ.

What can I give Him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a Shepherd
I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise Man
I would do my part,
Yet what I can I give Him,
Give my heart.

10.

Come and dance upon the silvered winter ground
all agleam with firelight from the open door,
and so brimmed with snow it give up not a sound,
just as if we moved inside a world of pearl.

This is the merry dance of Christmas night,
this is the beat and swell of winter's heart,
this is the message born upon the air:
come dance with us, let joy be ev'rywhere.

Come and join the circle round the soaring pine,
sap as dark as honey shining on the bows,
crowned with candles, brilliant with holly twined,
she is queen of Christmas, this the forest know.

Come and hold my hand beneath the velvet night
when the feast is over and the quiet comes,
as the bonfire forges a world of light
halo of embrace from flicker spun.

Come and sing the songs of season and of cheer,
golden and resounding though the frost is nigh,
Christmas is the finest note of all the year,
let us hear it rising in the hopeful sky.

11.

In the stillness of a church
Where candles glow,
In the softness of a fall
Of fresh white snow,
In the brightness of the stars
That shine this night,
In the calmness of a pool
Of healing light,
In the clearness of a choir
That softly sings,
In the oneness of a hush
Of angels' wings,
In the mildness of a night
By stable bare,
In the quietness of a lull
Near cradle fair,
There's a patience as we wait
For a new morn,
And the presence of a child
Soon to be born.

12.

O Holy night! The stars are brightly shining
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth
Long lay the world in sin and error pining
'Til He appears and the soul felt its worth
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn
Fall on your knees; O hear the Angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born
O night, O Holy night, O night divine!

Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming
With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand
So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming
Here come the Wise Men from Orient land
The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger
In all our trials born to be our friend
He knows our need, our weakness is no stranger
Behold your King; before Him lowly bend,
Behold your King; before Him lowly bend!

13.

Behold, a lucid light appears
Which brightens all the eastern sky;
Hark, hark, what sounds salute our ears,
All glory give to God on high.

Good-will to men and peace on earth,
The heavenly choirs united cry
At the divine Redeemer's birth,
And glory be to God on high.

Let mortals catch the sacred flame,
Till round the world the song shall fly,
Which sounds the great Redeemer's name,
And glory gives to God on high.

14.

Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love divine,
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,
Love incarnate, love divine,
Worship we our Jesus,
But wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,
Love shall be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men,
Love for plea and gift and sign.

15.

We stood on the hills, Lady,
Our day's work done,
Watching the frosted meadows
That winter had won.

The evening was calm, Lady,
The air so still,
Silence more lovely than music
Folded the hill.

There was a star, Lady,
Shone in the night,
Larger than Venus it was
And bright, so bright.

Oh, a voice from the sky, Lady,
It seemed to us then
Telling of God being born
In the world of men.

And so we have come, Lady,
Our day's work done,
Our love, our hopes, ourselves,
We give to your son.

16.

Les anges dans nos campagnes
Ont entonné l'hymne des cieus,
Et l'écho de nos montagnes
Redit ce chant mélodieux

Gloria in excelsis Deo
Gloria in excelsis Deo

Bergers, pour qui cette fête ?
Quel est l'objet de tous ces chants ?
Quel vainqueur, quelle conquête
Mérite ces cris triomphants :

Il est né le Dieu de gloire
Terre, tressaille de bonheur
Que tes hymnes de victoire
Chantent, célébrant ton Sauveur!

*The angels in our countryside
Hear the hymn of heaven,
And the echo of our mountains
Redeem this melodious song*

*Gloria in excelsis Deo
Gloria in excelsis Deo*

*Shepherds, for whom this feast?
What is the object of all these songs?
What conqueror, what conquest
deserves these triumphant cries*

*He was born the God of glory
Earth, thrill to happiness
Let your hymns of victory
Sing, celebrate your Savior!*

17.

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.

*Shepherds sang their praises o'er him,
Called by angels to adore him:
"Have no fear but come before him:
Born is now your glorious King!"*

*Eastern sages came to view him,
Judah's conqu'ring Lion knew him,
Gold and myrrh and incense
As their tribute offering.*

*Christ our King, from Mary springing,
God made man, salvation bringing,
Thee we worship ever singing:
"Honour, praise, and glory be!"*

18.

Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright.
Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child.
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia,
Jesus the Saviour is born,
Jesus the Saviour is born.

Silent night, holy night!
Holy babe, smiles alight.
Radiant from Thy innocent face
In this saving hour of thy grace,
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth,
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth.

19.

Jingle bells, jingle bells,
Jingle all the way.
Oh, what fun it is to ride
In a one-horse open sleigh, yeah!
Jingle bells, jingle bells,
Jingle all the way.
Oh what fun it is to ride
In a one-horse open sleigh.

Dashing through the snow
In a one-horse open sleigh,
O'er the fields we go
Laughing all the way.
Bells on bobtail ring,
Making spirits bright,
What fun it is to ride and sing
A sleighing song tonight.

Christine Noel
Artistic Director

PROVIDENCE **SINGERS**

53rd Season
2023-2024

Handel's *Messiah*
December 10, 3 PM
The Vets
with the RI Philharmonic

Considering Matthew Shepard
by Craig Hella Johnson
March 9, 7 PM
WaterFire Arts Center

May 11, 7 PM
McVinney Auditorium
A Night at the Opera

Community Sing:
Mozart's Requiem
May 14, 7 PM
Carter Center

www.ProvidenceSingers.org



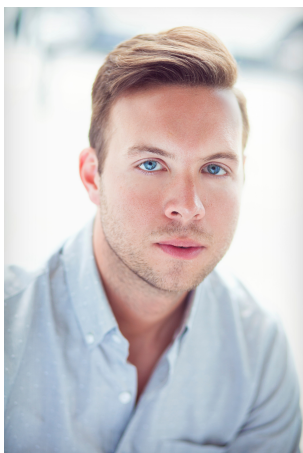
A chamber choir of "seamless ensemble perfection" (The Boston Musical Intelligencer), **ENSEMBLE ALTERA** was founded to be the beating heart of professional choral music in the United States. Led by internationally celebrated countertenor Christopher Lowrey, the group has quickly become known for thoughtful programming, passionate performances, and tireless advocacy for the importance of ensemble singing in the broader music culture.

Recent programs include *Dazzling Light*, an exploration of illumination in the physical and metaphysical worlds, a boldly reimagined chamber version of Handel's *Messiah*, co-presented with Newport Classical, *The Lamb's Journey*, drawing on many periods and styles to depict the Christ narrative, *We Watch & Welcome: Feminine Voices at Christmas*, featuring works by seven female composers for treble voices arrayed around Britten's *Ceremony of Carols*, and *We Remember*, a musical journey of healing and reflection in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout its short history, Altera has received universally rave reviews, creating "some of the best choral singing by an American choir". Upcoming projects include *A Christmas Present*, a sumptuous collection of seasonal music written in the new millennium, *Sure on this Shining Night*, featuring American choral music of the last century, and *A New Song: Psalms for the Soul*, charting a survey of the Psalms of David, in all their dizzying variety. Additionally, in 2024 Altera undertakes their first tour, to Texas, and makes their debut at Carnegie Hall in Brahms' *Requiem*, with the Orchestra of St. Luke's.

Deeply committed to championing new works and lifting up new voices, over the past few seasons Altera has premiered works by Motshwane Pege, Toby Young, Joanna Marsh, Daniel Gledhill, Zuzanna Koziej, and Michael Garrepy. In addition to performing, Ensemble Altera undertakes an extensive education and outreach program. Such activities include clinics and interactive presentations with school students in a variety of settings, with a particular focus on opening musical horizons to those from underserved backgrounds. Additionally, Altera has a profound faith in the healing power of music both in and out of the concert hall, and is proud to offer its complete recorded music library free of charge in collaboration with select partners in music therapy.

More at www.EnsembleAltera.com.



Director **Christopher Lowrey** was born and raised in Johnston, RI, and trained at Brown University, the University of Cambridge, where he sang under Stephen Layton with Trinity College Choir, and the Royal College of Music. In addition to conducting, he enjoys a dynamic international solo career as a countertenor, working at some of the world's leading opera houses and concert platforms, including the Metropolitan Opera, Royal Opera House, the Philharmonie de Paris, The London Symphony Orchestra, and this season he makes debuts with Theater an der Wien in Vienna, The National Symphony Orchestra, Opera Australia, and the Grange Festival in the UK.

a note of
THANKS

Deepest thanks to Reverends Robert Sutherland, Linda Briggs, Douglas Anderson, Susan Esposito, Mark Dwyer, and the entire staff and community of St Martin's Episcopal, Providence and Church of the Advent, Boston, for welcoming us into their spaces. It is always an honor and privilege to be servants of this music in such glorious buildings. Heartfelt thanks also to Rob Maloof for his videography, Olivia Kleyla for marketing and front of house help, Brad Kleyla for his peerless audio engineering, and the support of producer Krishan Oberoi.

DON'T MISS A NOTE

To learn more about all our exciting artistic activities, both in-person and digital, be sure to sign up for our newsletter at:

WWW.ENSEMBLEALTERA.COM/SUBSCRIBE





If you have enjoyed this evening's music and wish to help sustain Ensemble Altera for this and future projects, please consider making a donation in support of our mission at www.EnsembleAltera.com/donate.



*Ensemble Altera is a 501(c)3 tax exempt organization, and all gifts are deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.
Our Tax ID number is 86-1879375.*