



CONDUCTOR AMY RYAN

with special guests

RIAM Junior Choir

Conductor Brian Dungan

Saturday 20th December 2025
St. Mary's, Haddington Rd., Dublin

Christmas With Cuore

Cuore Chamber Choir | Amy Ryan

Resonet in Laudibus - Jacobus Gallus (Handl)

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O Magnum Mysterium - Javier Busto

God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen - Ola Gjeilo (Irish premiere)

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Hodie Christus Natus Est - Francis Poulenc

Noël Nouvelet - Sofia Söderberg

Hymne à la Vierge - Pierre Villette

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Carúl Fáilte - Séamas de Barra

Sol de Invierno - Andrés Gallo (European premiere)

A Welsh Carol - Rhona Clarke (World premiere)

~

The Kerry Christmas Carol - Jonathan Dove (Irish premiere)

Now May We Singen - Cecilia McDowall

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening - Eric Whitacre

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RIAM Junior Choir | Brian Dungan

Go Tell It on the Mountain - arr. Wolfgang Gentner

Snow Angel (Movement No 5) - Sarah Quartel

Piano: Órán Halligan | Cello: Eavan O'Sullivan

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Ding Dong Merrily on High - Arbeau arr. Charles Wood

Jingle Bells - James Pierpont, arr. Graham Buckland

Please **hold your applause** until the end of each section.

As this concert is being recorded, please **turn off your phone now**.

There will be no interval. When the concert finishes, please vacate the church promptly.

Welcome to Cuore's Christmas Concert in the beautiful surroundings of St. Mary's Church. We hope you enjoy our performance, which features a range of classic and contemporary music from around the world that we are sure will get you in the holiday spirit. Nollaig Shona daoibh go léir!

Cuore Chamber Choir is an internationally award-winning mixed-voice Dublin-based choir founded by conductor Amy Ryan and Patricia O' Neill in 2014. The choir consists of thirty singers from a range of nationalities and ages, committed to high-quality performances of rewarding music, from early polyphony to contemporary premieres.

Cuore has consistently achieved high standards including Gold at the International Choir Competition *Ave Verum*, Baden, Austria (2024) and two second prizes at the Tallinn International Choir Festival (2023). Closer to home, Cuore achieved first place in RTÉ lyric fm's *Choirs for Christmas* competition (2024), at the Feis Ceoil (2023), Cork (2018), Mayo (2016), Sligo (2016) and New Ross (2015). Cuore has a particular affinity for the music of living composers, having been awarded special prizes for contemporary music by RTÉ lyric fm (2024), in Tallinn (2023), the Feis Ceoil (2023) and Cork (2022 and 2018).

Beyond competitions, the choir engages in charitable performances, collaborations with orchestra in Ireland's National Concert Hall, and its own regular concerts.

Amy Ryan is a conductor and educator from Killarney. She lectures in music at RIAM and previously at TCD. Amy founded the award-winning Cuore Chamber Choir and is Artistic Director of UCD Philharmonic Choir. She also conducts the Irish-language ladies choir, Cór Duibhlinne, and the professional choir of St. Stephen's Church, Mount St.

Amy has guested with the UCD Symphony Orchestra conducting concerts including works by Sibelius, Brahms and Richard Strauss. She has prepared choruses for Irish National Opera, Blackwater Valley and Lyric Opera, and has also performed as a cellist and flautist across Europe and the U.S.A.

Amy studied under renowned conductors and holds advanced qualifications in choral conducting and pedagogy from the Kodály Institute of the Liszt Academy of Music, Hungary. She was Chairperson of Kodály Ireland from 2018-2022 and was appointed to the board of Sing Ireland in December 2022.

In April 2026, Amy will conduct the premiere of a new large-scale work by Rhona Clarke as part of Music Network's 40th anniversary celebrations.

Cuoresters Performing This Evening

Sopranos: Helen Blackmore^{‡4}, Caoilin Crowley, Sarah Cunningham, Sofia-Rose Deeleman, Monica Donlon, Caoimhe Duggan^{*}, Emma Harrington, Muireann Lynch, Mary Nugent, Marguerite Smith, Rose Sherezade Suhrab, Kata Szita.

Altos: Sofia Ortiz Curtis, Máire Ledwith, Lorraine O'Connell, Ellen O'Driscoll, Caoilin O'Meara², Margaret Samahita, Laura Slattery, Carmel Whelan.

Tenors: Desmond Cooper, Warwick Harte, Richard McCullough, Torin Nolan[†], Garrath Patterson⁵, Kieran Tully, Glenn White.

Basses: John Horan[†], Karl Leavy¹, Roddie Mac Aonghusa³, Manus Mac Gearailt, Cathal McGuinness, Brían Merriman, Bryan Mullen, Kevin Sheedy, Joost Slingerland.

† *soloist for 'The Kerry Christmas Carol'*

‡ *soloist for 'Sol de Invierno'*

* *soloist for 'Hymne à la Vierge'*

1,2,3,4,5 *section announcers*

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The support of our audience is crucial to bring you events such as tonight's concert. We invite individuals and corporate bodies to **join our Friends and Patrons** programme, to receive benefits such as free guest tickets and reserved seating. Visit cuore.ie/support or scan the QR code on rear.

Coming Soon for Cuore

To stay up to date with all our exciting plans, **sign up for our newsletter** at cuore.ie/list or **follow @CuoreChoir** on your favorite social media channels.

Our next major performance in April 2026 features the third and final of our 10th anniversary commissions, from Cuore alumna, Anne-Marie O'Farrell. This commission has been made possible through an Arts Council grant.

We will be holding **auditions in January**. Prospective members should have strong sight-reading ability and recent high-level choral experience. For further details, please visit cuore.ie/join or the QR code on rear.

Programme Notes

***Resonet in Laudibus*, Jacobus Gallus (1550-1591)**

Gallus (also known as Handl) was born in Carniola, then part of the Habsburg Empire, now present day Slovenia. He spent much of his career in Prague and other musical centres of Central Europe, and is a notable late-Renaissance composer, admired for his clear polyphonic style and effective text setting.

This is one of his most familiar Christmas motets. Drawing on a medieval carol melody, Gallus creates a vibrant and jubilant texture, using lively imitation and moments of rich harmony to illuminate the festive text. The result is a bright, uplifting work that remains a favourite in the Advent and Christmas repertoire.

*Resonet in laudibus cum iucundis plausibus
Sion cum fidelibus: apparuit,
quem genuit Maria.*

Sunt impleta, quae praedixit Gabriel.

Eia, eia, Virgo deum genuit

Quod divina voluit clementia.

Hodie apparuit in Israel,

ex Maria virgine est natus rex.

Let praises resound with joyful applause
Zion with the faithful: he has appeared,
who was borne by Mary.

It is fulfilled, what was foretold by Gabriel.

Hurray, hurray, A virgin gave birth to God

Who wanted to give divine mercy.

Today he has appeared in Israel,

Of the Virgin Mary is born the King.

***O Magnum Mysterium*, Javier Busto (b. 1949)**

Javier Busto was born in San Sebastián, Spain, and graduated from Valladolid University with a doctorate in medicine. Having developed his self-taught musical skills, he studied choral conducting with Erwin List. He was conductor of the Eskifaia Choir (1978–1994). Currently, he is founder and conductor of the award-winning Cantemus Koroa in San Sebastián.

O Magnum Mysterium exemplifies quintessential Busto choral writing through varied textures and tempi with poignant harmonies, all of which depict the sacred text, *O Great Mystery*.

*O magnum mysterium et admirabile sacramentum
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum
jacentem in praesepio!*

Beata Virgo cujus viscera

meruerunt portare Dominum Christum.

Alleluia!

O great mystery and inexplicable wonder
That animals should see the Lord
Lying in the crib!

Blessed is the Virgin whose body

Was worthy to bear Christ the Lord.

Alleluia!

***God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen*, Ola Gjeilo (b. 1978): Irish premiere**

Norwegian-born Ola Gjeilo began learning piano and composition at the age of five. He studied classical composition at the Norwegian Academy of Music before continuing his education at The Juilliard School and later earning a bachelor's degree from the Royal Academy of Music in London. Now based in

the United States, Gjeilo is celebrated worldwide for his prolific output, distinguished by lush harmonies and cinematic style.

Dating from the 16th century, *God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen* is one of the oldest surviving Christmas carols. It has undergone many transformations over the centuries. Gjeilo's arrangement offers another strikingly atmospheric reinterpretation. Scored for double choir, the traditional melody, often heard in unison in one choir, is enriched with flowing polyphonic lines and warm resonant harmonies from the second choir. The rhythmic drive, often syncopated, and the harmonic changes propel the familiar tune forward. The choir dialogues back and forth with the well-known "Tidings of joy" phrase, building the crescendo of praise to an almost frenzied finale! The result is a piece that feels comfortingly familiar yet refreshingly contemporary.

***Hodie Christus Natus Est*, Francis Poulenc (1899 - 1953)**

Poulenc was one of the group of young French composers known as *Les Six*, who sought to move away from both Germanic musical formality and French Impressionism. Their aim was to write in a more direct and uncomplicated style, and Poulenc became the most successful and widely recognised of them.

Composed in 1952, *Hodie Christus Natus Est* is the final motet in Poulenc's *Four Motets for the Christmas Season*. Written with the lightness and clarity of a madrigal, it conveys a sense of exuberant, almost childlike joy in its celebration of the Nativity. The text rejoices in the birth of Christ, building to the familiar acclamation "Gloria in excelsis Deo". The motet's energetic, disjunct melodic writing and frequent dotted rhythms create a bright, festive character, while also presenting a technical challenge for performers.

<i>Hodie Christus natus est,</i>	Today Christ is born,
<i>Hodie Salvator apparuit,</i>	Today the Savior appears.
<i>Hodie in terra canunt angeli,</i>	Today angels sing to the earth,
<i>Laetantur archangeli.</i>	Archangels rejoice.
<i>Hodie exultant justi, dicentes:</i>	Today the just rejoice, saying:
<i>Gloria in excelsis Deo, Alleluia.</i>	Glory to God in the highest, Alleluia.

***Noël Nouvelet*, Sofia Söderberg (b. 1972)**

Söderberg is a Swedish composer and conductor whose work spans both choral and operatic traditions. She has served as conductor and artistic director of the Danish Chamber Choir Camerata in Copenhagen, chorus master at Malmö Opera, and as soloist and conductor with Skånes Dansteater, Teater Insite, and Operaverkstan Malmö. Söderberg is currently the conductor and artistic director of the internationally-acclaimed Svanholm Singers.

Noël Nouvelet is a late 15th-century French Christmas carol which celebrates the figures in the crèche, the handmade nativity scenes that remain a cherished part of French Christmas traditions, and displayed in homes and town squares. At the time, this song was sung by families at home and at community gatherings rather than as part of the liturgy in churches.

This rhythmic and dynamic arrangement preserves the carol's modal character while infusing it with fresh harmonic colours and rhythmic vitality. It opens with a gentle, almost hypnotic ostinato that evokes the timelessness of the original melody. The music gradually builds through contrasting homophony and polyphony, with the melody moving from one voice part to another.

Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.

Dévotes gens, crions à Dieu merci!

Chantons Noël pour le roi nouvelet,

Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.

L'ange disait: "Pasteurs, partez d'ici,

L'ame en repos et le coeur réjouit:

En Bethléem trouverez l'agnelet."

Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.

En Bethléem, étant tous réunis

Trouvent l'enfant, Joseph, Marie aussi,

La crèche était au lieu d'un bercelet.

Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.

Christmas comes anew, O let us sing Noel.

Pious people, let us cry to God for mercy!

Sing we Noel for Christ, the newborn King,

Christmas comes anew, O let us sing Noel.

The Angel said, "O shepherds leave here,

Let your spirit be calm and your heart rejoice:

In Bethlehem you will find the little lamb."

Christmas comes anew, O let us sing Noel.

In the manger bed, the shepherds found the child;

Joseph was there, and the Mother Mary mild.

Sing we Noel for Christ, the newborn King,

Christmas comes anew, O let us sing Noel!

Hymne à la Vierge, Pierre Villette (1926-1998)

As a child, Villette was a chorister at Rouen Cathedral under the direction of Maurice Duruflé. He attended the *Conservatoire National Supérieure de Musique* in Paris, where he was a contemporary of Pierre Boulez. Villette's output comprises mainly intimate small-scale works for chamber ensembles and choirs. Like Duruflé, much of Villette's sacred music draws on Gregorian chant combined with a harmonic style inspired by Messiaen and Poulenc.

Composed in the mid-1950s, *Hymne à la Vierge* is perhaps Villette's best known work. This tender and beautifully intimate setting of a poem by Roland Bouheret is dedicated to the composer's future wife, Josette. The hymn's beguilingly simple melody is sung by the soprano line throughout with the other three parts providing 'sumptuous' chromatic inflections.

Ô toute belle Vierge Marie,

Votre âme trouve en Dieu le parfait amour

Il vous revêt du manteau de la Grâce

comme une fiancée parée de ses joyaux. Alléluia.

Je vais chanter, ta louange, Seigneur,

O fairest Virgin Mary,

Your soul finds in the Lord perfect love;

He clothes you in robes of grace

Like a bride attired with jewels. Alleluia.

I will sing thy praise, O Lord,

*Car tu as pris soin de moi,
Car tu m'as enveloppé du voile de l'innocence.*

*Vous êtes né avant les collines,
Ô sagesse de Dieu, porte du Salut;
Heureux celui qui marche dans vos traces
Qui apprête son cœur à la voix de vos conseils.
Car tu m'as faite avant le jour
Car tu m'as fait précéder,
le jaillissement des sources.*

*Avant les astres vous étiez présente
Mère du Créateur au profond du ciel.
Quand Dieu fixait les limites du monde
Vous partagiez son cœur étant à l'œuvre avec lui.*

for thou hast looked after me,
and covered me with the veil of innocence.

You were born before the hills,
O wisdom of the Lord, Gate of Redemption;
blessed be he who walks in your steps
and tunes his heart to your counsels.
for thou hast made me before the dawn
And before the gushing of springs.

Before the stars you were there,
Mother of the Creator, in the highest
when God was setting the world's limits
you shared his love
as you laboured with him.

Cariúl Fáilte, Séamas de Barra (b. 1955)

Cork-based composer, musicologist and lecturer, Séamas de Barra has been commissioned by the King's Singers, Cork International Choral Festival and the Master of Music of the Chapels Royal, HM Tower of London, among others. Oxford University Press commissioned this exciting setting of the composer's own text, which captures "the immediacy and directness of expression characteristic of Irish devotional folk poetry". The macaronic Irish and Latin text unfolds over three verses and refrains, and celebrates the birth of the Christ child, alternately lauded as King of Heaven, King of the Angels and King of the Earth. The music is replete with vibrant additive rhythms, whirlwind-like scalar passages and dramatic harmonic shifts, evoking the joy and excitement of the Christmas story.

*Fáilte romhat, a Rí na bhflaitheas!
Fáilte romhat, a Aon-Mhic Dé,
A rugadh do Mhuire, mathair 'gus maighdean,
Chun go sábhálfá sinn ón olc.
Scéala na Nollag canamis uile:
hodie Christus natus est!*

*Fáilte romhat, a Rí na naingeal,
A thánaig go teach na bpian anuas,
'S a chodail i stábla bocht go humhal,
Chun go sábhálfá sinn ón olc.*

*Fáilte romhat, a Rí na cruinne!
Le báthas cuirimis guth le do ghlóir!
Ár nadúr daonna do ghlacais, a Íosa,
Chun go sábhálfá sinn ón olc.*

Welcome, King of heaven!
Welcome, Son of God,
Who was born of Mary, mother and virgin,
To save us all from evil.
Tidings of Christmas we sing together:
Today Christ is born!

Welcome, King of the angels,
Who came down to the house of pain,
And humbly slept in a lowly manger
To save us all from evil.

Welcome, King of creation!
With joy we give voice to your glory!
Our humanity you assumed, Jesus,
To save us all from evil.

***Sol de Invierno*, Andrés Gallo (b. 1987): European Premiere**

Sol de Invierno (Winter Sun) is a choral work by Colombian composer Andrés Gallo, who sang tenor with Cuore while he was studying in Dublin. Its title evokes the contrast of light and cold, reflected in the music's delicate textures and lyrical vocal writing.

This piece makes use of independent melodic lines that often overlap to create shimmering harmonic clusters. Gallo employs subtle shifts in dynamics, textural layering, and careful voice leading to draw out the contrast between brightness and shadow suggested by the title. There are moments of close harmony alongside more open, spacious passages, requiring careful balance and blend from the choir. This performance marks the European premiere of the work, which was awarded third prize in the Busan Composition Competition in 2015, demonstrating Gallo's skill in modern, expressive choral writing that is both challenging and rewarding to perform.

*De las nubes caen gotas
Unas grandes y muy gordas
tocan suelo y mojan otras
pero tú que eres chiquita,
al bajar el sol te quita
y en el aire te evapora.
Eres virga que otro día caerá.
Luego el Hielo ya enojado
frío, seco, congelado, cae duro y suena fuerte
ahuyentando así a la gente,
pero el sol, a ti granizo,
ya tendido tú en el piso,
siempre te derretirá.
La tormenta ha cesado,
es el sol quien ha ganado,
ya en la noche sólo duerme
que así llueva y llueva fuerte,
esa luna que te alumbra,
es la luz que te promete,
que muy pronto es otro día,
y que ya amanecerá.*

Raindrops fall from the clouds
Some big and very thick ones
Touch the ground and soak others
But you, who are so little
When coming down the sun takes you away
And in the air he evaporates you.
You are a virga which will fall another day.
Then, the already mad ice
Cold, dry and frozen falls hard and sounds loudly
Thus scaring people away
But as you, hail,
are already lying on the ground,
The sun will always melt you down.
The storm has subsided
It's the sun who has won
He sleeps alone at night
Even if it rains and rains heavily
The moon that shines upon you
Is the light that promises
Very soon it will be another day
And it will get light in time.

***A Welsh Carol*, Rhona Clarke (b. 1958): World premiere**

This is a setting of traditional lyrics associated with Pembrokeshire in Wales. Also known as *Levy-Dew* or *A New Year Carol*, they celebrate the tradition of sprinkling water on passers-by, using a holly branch or other evergreens, as a purification ritual. Although the meaning is uncertain, it is thought that

‘levy-dew’ may refer to ‘*leveẏ a Dieu*’ (raise to God). The ‘seven bright gold wires’ refer to the Seven Churches of Asia mentioned in the New Testament, Book of Revelations. The ‘Fair Maid’ may refer to the Virgin Mary, who is also symbolised by holly in the well-known *The Holly and the Ivy*; the first verse and chorus of which are given a fresh setting here.

Commissioned by members and friends of Cuore to celebrate the choir’s 10th Anniversary, tonight is the world premiere of this piece.

The Kerry Christmas Carol, Jonathan Dove (b. 1959): Irish Premiere

Originally commissioned by the St. Louis Chamber Choir, Cuore is delighted to give the Irish premiere of Jonatha Dove’s *The Kerry Christmas Carol*. Setting a short poem by Kerry native Sigerson Clifford (1913-1984), the text reflects on Christmas in rural Kerry, with simple images of winter, home, and community. It draws on the old traditional tale that the Holy Family would return to earth annually on Christmas Eve, seeking lodgings.

Dove’s piece is founded on two elements: one is a lyrical lively tune that lodges in the memory; the other is an insistent rhythm that permeates much of the carol, evoking the urgency of preparing the house for the Holy Family’s arrival. Written for double choir, gentle harmonies and antiphonal writing emphasise the text, letting the voices speak without unnecessary ornamentation. However, towards the end, a rising chromatic line heard against the main melody, darkens the mood, foreshadowing the journey to Calvary.

Now May We Singen, Cecilia McDowall (b.1951)

Cecilia McDowall is one of the UK’s leading composers of sacred and secular choral music. McDowall’s distinctive style fuses fluent melodic lines with occasional dissonant harmonies and rhythmic exuberance. *Now may we singen* was composed for the Concord Singers in 2006.

The text of the 15th Century carol is set in a linear style, spare in texture, to resonate with the words. This joyful, dance-like carol was first performed at the Corn Exchange, Bedford, December 2007, conducted by Mary Lock and is written in memory of Michael Lock.

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening, Eric Whitacre

In Eric Whitacre’s own words, this piece has had a “long, strange history.” He first set Robert Frost’s beloved 1923 poem more than 25 years ago, creating a choral miniature of quiet wonder and suspended time. It received only a handful of performances before Whitacre was informed by the Frost estate that he could no longer use the text due to copyright restrictions.

Unwilling to abandon the music entirely, Whitacre turned to his longtime collaborator, poet Charles Anthony Silvestri, who crafted a new text to fit the existing score. This version became *Sleep*, now one of Whitacre's most widely performed works and a favourite of choirs around the world.

In recent years, however, Frost's poem has entered the public domain, allowing Whitacre once again to pair his original music with Frost's words. He has noted that the two versions, existing side by side, conjure markedly different atmospheres: where *Sleep* offers a sense of serenity and gentle closure, Frost's text brings what Whitacre describes as a new "intention, edge, and unknowing" to the piece. The history of the work illustrates the profound power of text to shape musical meaning, even when the notes themselves remain unchanged.

Cuore performed the Irish premiere in November 2025, restoring Whitacre's music to the poetic landscape that first inspired it.

***Ding Dong Merrily on High*, Thoinot Arbeau (1520-1595) arr. Charles Wood (1866-1926)**

This lively joyful carol originated in France in the sixteenth century. Originally a dance tune first published in *Orchesographie* by Thoinot Arbeau, the English words were composed by the Anglican priest George Ratcliffe Woodward (1848-1934). This popular harmonisation by Charles Wood, contrasts chordal verses with contrapuntal chorus, capturing the spirit of the angels singing *Gloria*, *Hosanna in excelsis*.

***Jingle Bells*, James Pierpont (1822-1893), arr. Graham Buckland (b. 1951)**

Jingle Bells began life not as a Christmas carol but simply as a winter song. James Pierpont wrote it in the 1850s, originally under the title *One Horse Open Sleigh*, capturing the fun and chaos of dashing through the snow rather than any festive scene. Its catchy refrain and easy good humour meant that it soon became associated with Christmas, eventually becoming one of the best-known seasonal songs worldwide.

Graham Buckland's arrangement brings a fresh lift to Pierpont's familiar tune. Buckland adds rhythmic interest and a touch of harmonic sparkle, giving the choir plenty to enjoy without losing the straightforward charm of the original.

Acknowledgements

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