

THE SUNDAY BOYS

present

*A Very Queer Christmas
Our Solstice Night*

**Manchester Cathedral
Saturday 21 December, 7pm**



Manchester

Cathedral



THE SUNDAY BOYS

We are an unauditioned, LGBTQ+, low-voice choir that rehearses on Sunday evenings in central Manchester.

From small beginnings, The Sunday Boys have grown to a choir 80+ strong and have performed across the city, the country and internationally.

Performing at tonight's concert are:

Michael Amatt
Ryan Arief
Stephen Armour
Martin Ashcroft
Alix Ashton
Jonathan Barber
Ben Baughan
Kezia Bryant
Philip Bryce
Cas Burton
Adam Butler
David Calder
David Clark
Jacob Coley
John Copestake
Dean Dalton
Joshua Davidson
Clive Davies
Josh Dawson
Jofferey Denning
Chris Dent
Andrew Desmier
Sebastien Desprez
Phill Fairhurst
Iain Foster
Emmanuel Gianquitto
Kit Giroux

James Grant
Andrew Green
Xander Gurnee
Ali Hafiz
Chris Hallam
Hamzah Hamid
Martin Hardman
David Haw
Sam Hawkins
Matt Haworth
Chris Hibbert
Callum Hogg
Tim Hunsley
Alexander James
Steph James
Daniel Jarvis
Leif Jerram
Will Joyce
Nick Kirby
Matt Laxton
Justas Limsa
Jay Linney
David Major
Liam Mansfield
Alex Merry
Mattie Muldoon
Maurice Nagington

Pedro Nogueira
Joseph Owen
Gareth Parkinson
Alistair Peet
David Plaister
Di Pu
Mark Rapa
Aben Ripley
Ian Rohde-Bell
Ken Rohde-Bell
Reuben Rowlands
Paul Ryan
Mark Sabine
Matt Saint
Scott Smith
Jose Souza
Rye Strutt
Adam Summers
Ben Thomas
Dàvin Többen
Grae Tower
Liam Trippier
Daniel Ventre
Richard Wardingley
Jason Webber

WELCOME

Michael Betteridge | Artistic Director

Winter has firmly settled around us with its blankets of snow, morning frosts crunching underfoot, and stark bitter chills in the air. Today marks the beginning of the winter solstice, heralded by the shortest day as well as the longest night. From this point on the darkness gradually recedes, the days slowly lengthen and a gentle journey towards spring and summer begins.

This evening we will celebrate the mystery of darkness by exploring its strength, and its beauty, in music and in words. As we banish the cold and gather together, we embark on a journey, shedding light on what darkness really means.

Tonight's concert brings this reflection to life with a suite of moving texts, woven throughout the evening. Inspired by the songs in our programme, these words by writer and artist Mark Croasdale, performed by actor Julie Hesmondhalgh, explore the essence of darkness, the festive season and our innermost feelings about them both.

Our programme tonight is a heady cocktail of new and old, modern and traditional, bringing together well known Christmas carols with new and less familiar melodies. Our annual queer carol this year is composed by Lucy Armstrong, with words by Rebecca Hurst, and is a theatrical and vibrant depiction of a chance encounter with a handsome stranger at a Christmas party. We also have new arrangements of music by Joy Becker, a Manchester based singer/songwriter who performed with us in this very space in 2021 and *Robin, Why Do You Sing?* by Dominie Hooper, our first ever queer carol commission in 2019.

So sit back and let our voices take you on a journey from darkness to light, on this, our solstice night.

Follow along

We have created a webpage designed to enhance your experience by providing easy access to song lyrics and brief descriptions of the music. This allows you to follow along with the narrative or themes of each piece, deepening your connection to the performance. **Please keep your screen brightness as low as possible. For accessibility the page has been designed to limit brightness.**

Scan
here



PROGRAMME

First Half

In the Bleak Midwinter

Gustav Holst (words: Christina Rossetti) (arr. Michael Betteridge)

Reading: 'Am I Not Beautiful?'

Julie Hesmondhalgh

Solstice Carol

Wyrd Sisters

Every Passing Season

Joy Becker (arr. Michael Betteridge)

Reading: 'Pause'

Julie Hesmondhalgh

Wonders in the Sky

The Waiting Room (arr. Adam Summers)

Robin, Why Do You Sing?

Dominie Hooper (arr. Michael Betteridge)

The Rose

Ola Gjeilo (words: Christina Rossetti)

Reading: 'On the Backs of Blue Whales'

Julie Hesmondhalgh

White Christmas

Irving Berlin

December Will Be Magic Again

Kate Bush (arr. Simon Pearson)

Interval

Second Half

Gaudete

Trad arr. Suzzie Vango

Reading: 'Fill Me Heartily'

Julie Hesmondhalgh

Carol of the Bells

Mykola Leontovych (arr. Peter J. Wilhousky)

The Sundayshire Wassail

Trad arr. Harry Castle

The Longest Night (world premiere)

Lucy Armstrong (words: Rebecca Hurst)

Reading: 'Smother Me in Darkness Please'

Julie Hesmondhalgh

Silent Night

Franz Xaver Gruber (arr. Dan Forrest)

Reading: 'To Bed'

Julie Hesmondhalgh

Reading: 'When Light is Shared'

Julie Hesmondhalgh

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Trad arr. Dan Forrest

ARTISTS



JULIE HESMONDHALGH | She/Her | Actor

Julie is best known for her award winning role as Hayley in *Coronation Street*, she has also appeared in *Happy Valley*, *Doctor Who*, *Inside No 9*, *Broadchurch* (for which she was BAFTA nominated) and most recently *Alma's Not Normal* and *Mr Bates vs the Post Office*.

Theatre roles include *Punch* at Nottingham Playhouse which will be transferring to the Young Vic in London in 2025, Derek Jarman's *Blue Now* at Factory International and many plays at Manchester's Royal Exchange. Julie co-runs Take Back, a political theatre collective and the fundraising group 500 Acts of Kindness.

She has written two books - *A Working Diary* and *An Actor's Alphabet: an A-Z of Stuff I've Learnt and Stuff I'm Still Learning*.



MICHAEL BETTERIDGE | He/Him | Artistic Director

Michael is a composer and choral conductor based in Manchester. Specialising in working with young and leisure-time music makers and in theatrical settings, he has led choral and opera performances across the UK and abroad, most often giving new works their premieres, including his own.

After studying composition at the Royal Northern College of Music, he was one of the first recipients of Sing for Pleasure's Young Conductors Programme. More recently he has been involved in projects such as *From Footy Fan to Opera Star* - training real-life football fans to become an opera chorus for a new opera with tenor Nicky Spence, Sky Arts and Grange Park Opera.



MARK CROASDALE | They/Them | Writer

Mark is a writer, maker & facilitator inciting gentle radical change through intimate encounters. Using storytelling, world building and wellbeing practices, Mark works to reframe the 'normal' world around us to uncover complexity and wonder in the mundane.

Recent work includes *Barbara*, an immersive theatrical experience that sensitively explores the subject of dementia through the lens of how we care for those we love and how we care for ourselves. Supported by Arts Council England, touring 2025.



LUCY ARMSTRONG | She/Her | Composer

Lucy is a graduate of the RNCM and has created works for the Bergen National Opera, Borealis Saxophone Quartet, and Cambridge Philharmonic. Passionate about outreach, she has collaborated on school and community projects, crafting operas and orchestral works.

Currently a Glyndebourne resident, her recent endeavours include works for the London Sinfonietta and other leading ensembles, storytelling and collaborations with prominent artists across the UK and Europe.



REBECCA HURST | She/Her | Writer

Rebecca is a writer, opera-maker, illustrator, and researcher. She has published a poetry collection, *The Iron Bridge* with Carcanet and a pamphlet, *The Fox's Wedding*, with The Emma Press.

Her music theatre and choral works, created with composers, have been widely performed across the UK and Europe. Recent commissions include *Voices of the Sands* as Deal Festival, *Looking West* for Presteigne and Ryedale Festivals and *The Gardener* at Salford Choral Society.

Rebecca lectures in Creative Writing at the University of Manchester and leads workshops in schools, museums, and libraries.



ADAM SUMMERS | He/They | Arranger

Adam studied bassoon and composition at the Royal Northern College of Music. He focused on fostering creativity in young people, working as the vocal lead for Sefton Music Hub and as a performing arts practitioner with Artis Education. A versatile multi-instrumentalist, Adam teaches students aged 8-68 and works as a conductor, arranger, and accompanist in Greater Manchester and the north of England.

Adam has performed across the UK with orchestras and chamber groups. He is a Sunday Boy and a founding member Manchester-based five-piece ensemble of Sherpa K.



TOM HENDERSON | He/Him | Pianist

Tom studied piano with Melvyn Cooper at Warwick University. Whilst there, he performed as a soloist at the Butterworth Hall, and as a conductor and répétiteur for Warwick Student Opera (now Opera Warwick).

After graduating, Tom pursued a career as a chartered tax adviser alongside work as an accompanist. In June 2024 he performed as piano soloist at the Bridgewater Hall for Streetwise Opera. He has accompanied The Sunday Boys for more than three years.

Thank you to our Friends

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Support our mission to champion choral excellence and commission new and exciting music.

For more
information
visit our
website



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Design by Michael Amatt