

umeri

DRAKE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI CHOIR
AIMEE BECKMANN-COLLIER, CONDUCTOR

**THE LESSONS, CAROLS, AND
REFLECTIONS OF
CHRISTMAS**



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15
3:00 PM

ST. AMBROSE CATHEDRAL
SIXTH AVENUE & HIGH STREET
DOWNTOWN DES MOINES

ABOUT THIS CONCERT

The Lessons, Carols, and Reflections of Christmas, presented today by *Umeri*, the Drake University alumni choir, is patterned on *The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols of Christmas* offered annually at King's College, Cambridge University, in the United Kingdom. That festival is a more than one-hundred-year-old tradition presented in the King's College Chapel on Christmas Eve and broadcast around the world; a festival that, at its inception, was a response to a world changed by the devastation of World War I.

Until the late nineteenth century, Christmas carols were performed by singers visiting homes; they were not heard in churches. But in 1878 John Stainer introduced carols into choral evensong at St. Paul's Cathedral in London and in 1880 Edward White Benson, Bishop of Truro, created a predecessor to the later King's College festival at Truro Cathedral in Cornwall. Benson was concerned about the excessive consumption of alcohol during the holiday season and wanted to attract revelers from pubs into the church.

Benson's experimental festival of carols, choral music, and readings was quite successful and became the model for the now legendary *Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols* that has been performed at King's College, Cambridge, since 1918. The King's College Festival was established by Eric Milner-White, Dean of the College, in response to the tragedies of World War I. The BBC has broadcast the festival since 1928 and it has been televised since 1954. The Festival is heard by millions of listeners across the globe each Christmas Eve, including in the United States, where it has been broadcast live on National Public Radio stations since 1979. (You can hear the live broadcast on Iowa Public Radio at 9:00 am on December 24.)

Umeri began its musical life in 2019 by presenting *The Lessons, Carols, and Reflections of Christmas* in order to

provide an opportunity for listeners to enjoy the music of the season in a reflective atmosphere that allows for a more expansive contemplation of the meaning of Christmas. Our concert is based on the King's College model but offers a unique recasting of its structure in order to focus on specific aspects of the Christmas narratives.

This service of lessons and carols is built upon readings from the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. Even a brief excerpt evokes additional words and visions from our hearts and memories.

We surround these passages
with music and song,
with silence,
with words of insight and hope.

Now the service unfolds,
a privileged moment
to nourish us on our pilgrim way.

This tapestry of voices and visions enfolds us, to speak
of peace victorious over the ways of death,
of ancestors in faith who endured, strong in hope,
of light that scatters the darkness,
of strangers and foreigners welcomed in,
of love so great as to take flesh and dwell among us.

Enter now into this ancient story,
that our hearts and our hope be strengthened
and we too might endure, strong in hope.



THE LESSONS, CAROLS, AND REFLECTIONS OF CHRISTMAS

Processional

Personent Hodie

German melody, 1630
setting by Lara Hoggard
arr. William P. Dougherty

Umeri and brass quartet

Let youthful voices resound today,
Joyfully praising Him who is born for us,
Who is given unto us by the most high God,
and brought forth from a virgin.

He is born in the world, is wrapped in swaddling cloths
And placed in a manger in a stable of beasts.
He is ruler over all things.
The prince of darkness has lost his prey!

Three wise men come, bearing gifts.
They have found the child by following a little star.
Adoring the Lord, they offer Him gold, incense, and myrrh.

Let all young choristers now sing as did the angels,
praising Him who has come into all the world:
“Glory to God in the highest!”
(medieval text, first printed in *Piae Cantiones*, 1582)

Bidding Prayer

Rev. Timothy Fitzgerald

First Lesson – Isaiah 9: 2 and 6

Miss Fiona Gongol

Reflection

To Know The Dark

Wendell Berry

Dr. Gesine Gerhard

Lux aurumque

Eric Whitacre
(b.1970)

Umeri

*Light, warm and heavy as pure gold
And the angel's sing softly to the newborn baby.*

(text – Edward Esch;
Latin translation by Charles Anthony Sivestri)

Second Lesson – Isaiah 11:6-8, 9

Mr. Brian Gongol

Reflection

Sonnet, Trinity 18

Madeline L'engle

Dr. Eric Saylor

Thou Shalt Know Him When He Comes

Hal Hopson
(b.1933)

Umeri

*Thou shalt know Him when He comes,
Not by any din of drums,
Nor the manner of His airs,
Nor by anything He wears.*

*Thou shalt know Him when He comes,
Not by His crown or His gown,
But His coming known shall be by the holy harmony
Which His coming makes in Thee.*

Thou shalt know Him when He comes.
(text – anonymous)

Third Lesson – Luke 1:30-34

Mr. Brian Gongol

Reflection

Holy Bewilderment
from *Into the Mess and Other Jesus Stories*
Ms. Michele Whitty

Debie Thomas

O magnum mysterium

Morten Lauridsen
(b.1943)

Umeri

*O great mystery, and wondrous sign,
That animals should see the newborn Lord lying in their manger!
Blessed is the Virgin whose womb was worthy
to bear the Lord Jesus Christ. Alleluia!*
(text – responsory for Matins of the Nativity)

Fourth Lesson – Luke 2:4, 6-7

Miss Fiona Gongol

Reflection

Made Flesh

Luci Shaw

Dr. Sue Mattison

Deo Gratias

James McCray
(1938-2024)

Umeri

*A child was born in Bethlehem,
Rejoice for that, Jerusalem!
For low he lay within a stall,
Yet he shall rule over all.*

*He let himself a servant be,
That all mankind he might set free.*

*So worship we now this Prince of Peace
And sing we all,
Deo gracias! (Thanks be to God!)*
(text – adapted from a sixteenth-century German carol)

A Babe is Born

William Mathias
(1934-1992)

Umeri

*A babe is born all of a may (maiden),
To bring salvation unto us.
To him we sing both night and day,
Veni Creator Spiritus (Come, Creator Spirit)*



*At Bethlehem, that blessed place,
The child of bliss now born he was;
And him to serve God give us grace,
O lux beata Trinitas. (O light of the blessed Trinity)*

*There came three kings out of the East,
To worship the King that is so free,
With gold and myrrh and frankincense,
A solis ortus cardine (from the rising of the sun)*

*The angels came down with one cry,
A fair song that night sung they
In worship of that child:
Gloria tibi Domine (Glory to you, Lord)*

A babe is born all of a may...Noel!

Carol

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Forrest Green
arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams
arr. for choir, brass, organ –
William P. Dougherty

Umeri and audience

Audience/Umeri

*O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.*

Umeri

*How silently how silently, the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him, still the dear Christ enters in.*

Audience/Umeri

*Where children pure and happy pray to the blessed Child.
Where misery cries out to Thee, Son of the mother mild;
Where charity stands watching and faith holds wide the door,
The dark night wakes, the glory beaks, and Christmas comes
once more.*

Fifth Lesson – Luke 2:10-12

Mr. Brian Gongol

Reflection

Song of the Shepherds
from *Waiting on the Word*,
ed. Malcolm Guite

Richard Bauckham

Dr. Richard Deming



The Shepherd's Carol

Bob Chilcott
(b. 1955)

Umeri

*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.*
(text – Clive Sansom, 1910-1981)

Shepherd's Pipe Carol

John Rutter
(b.1945)

Umeri

*Going through the hills on a night all starry
On the way to Bethlehem,
Far away I heard a shepherd boy piping
On the way to Bethlehem.*

*Angels in the sky brought this message nigh:
"Dance and sing for joy that Christ the King
Is come to bring us peace on earth,
And he's lying cradled there at Bethlehem."*

*"Tell me, shepherd boy piping tunes so merrily
On the way to Bethlehem,
Who will hear your tunes on these hills so lonely
On the way to Bethlehem?"*

Angels in the sky brought this message nigh...

*"None may hear my pipes on these hills so lonely
On the way to Bethlehem;
But a King will hear me play sweet lullabies
When I get to Bethlehem."*

*Angels in the sky came down from on high,
Hovered o'er the manger where the babe was lying
Cradled in the arms of his mother Mary,
Sleeping now at Bethlehem.*

*"Where is this new King, shepherd boy piping merrily?
Is he there at Bethlehem?"*

*"I will find him soon by the star shining brightly
In the sky o'er Bethlehem."*

Angels in the sky brought this message nigh...

*May I come with you, shepherd boy piping merrily,
Come with you to Bethlehem?
Pay my homage too at the new King's cradle,
Is it far to Bethlehem?"*

*Angels in the sky brought this message nigh:
Dance and sing for joy that Christ the King
Is born this night in lowly stable yonder,
Born for you at Bethlehem."*

(text – John Rutter)

Sixth Lesson – Matthew 2:7-11

Miss Fiona Gongol

Reflection

By Little and By Little

Dorothy Day

from *Dorothy Day, Selected Writings*;
ed. Robert Ellsberg

Mr. Napoleon Douglas

Before the Song Was Done

Sarah Quartel
(b.1982)

Umeri

*The kings they came from out the south,
All dressed in ermine fine;
They bore him gold and chrysoprase,
And gifts of precious wine.*

*The shepherds came from out the north,
Their coats were brown and old;
They brought him little newborn lambs
They had not any gold.*

*The wise men came from out the east,
And they were wrapped in white;
The star that led them all the way
Did glorify the night.*

*The angels came from heaven high,
And they were clad with wings;
And lo, they brought a joyful song
The host of heaven sings.*

*The kings they knocked upon the door,
The wise men entered in,
The shepherds followed after them
To hear the song begin.*



*The angels sang through all the night
Until the rising sun,
But little Jesus fell asleep
Before the song was done.
(text – Sara Teasdale)*

The First Noel

traditional
arr. William P. Dougherty

Umeri and audience

Audience/Umeri

The first Noel the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in
fields as they lay,
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep, on a cold winter's
night that was so deep.
Noe, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the king of Israel,

Umeri

They looked up and saw a star shining in the east, beyond them far;
And to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day
and night.
Noel, Noel...

And by the light of that same star three Wise Men came from
country far;
To seek for a king was their intent, and to follow the star wherever it
went.
Noel, Noel...

Umeri/Audience

This star drew night to the northwest, o'er Bethlehem it took its rest;
And there it did both stop and stay, right over the place where Jesus lay.
Noel, Noel...

Then entered in those Wise Men three, full reverently upon the knee,
And offered there in his presence, their gold and myrrh and
frankincense.
Noel, Noel

Seventh Lesson – John 1:1--14

Mr Craig Ihnen

O nata lux

David Dickau
(b. 1953)

Umeri

*O light born of light,
Jesus, redeemer of the world,
Mercifully deem worthy and accept
The praises and prayers of your supplicants.
You who once deigned to be clothed in flesh
For the sake of the lost ones,
Grant us to be made members of your holy body.*
(text – responsory for Lauds, Feast of the Transfiguration)

Closing Prayer

Rev. Timothy Fitzgerald

Carol

Joy to the World

Isaac Watts
(1674-1748)

arr. William P Dougherty

Umeri and audience

Audience/Umeri

*Joy to the world! The Lord is come! Let earth receive her King;
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room,
And heav'n and nature sing...*

Umeri

*Joy to the world! The Savior reigns; Let earth her songs employ;
While fields and floods, rock, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy...*

Umeri

*He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nation
prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love...*

Audience/Umeri

*"Glory to God," the sounding skies, with joy their anthems ring;
"Peace to the earth, goodwill to all,"
From heav'n's eternal King...*
(composer's interpretation of Psalm 98)



SUPPORT

We hope you'll consider donating to Umeri, which is entirely supported by audience gifts. You may donate online at <https://alumni.drake.edu/umeri> or give your contribution to singers stationed at the doors following the concert.



Contributors to Umeri during 2024 include:

John Armstrong	Marianne and Frank Ksiazak
Megan and Jon Barrett	Kristina Libbey
Barbara Beatty, M.D.	Rev. John Ludwig
Mary K. Beckmann	Katelyn Mardis
Rev. Lawrence Beeson	Evelyn McKnight and Tom McKnight, M.D.
Virginia Bennett	Elizabeth and Daniel Minnie
Susan and Greg Bridge	Diane Mohrfeld
Trevor Bridge	Heather Nail
George Brucks	Abbi Nelson
Patrick Carroll	Rev. Stephen Orr
Margaret Cavanagh	Rev. David Polich
Amy Deist	Maggie Parker
Richard Deming, M.D.	Thomas Riordan
Lindsay Fiegle	Justin Scheel
Jacob Fross	Amelia and Jeff Schultz
Robert Gernes and Ann Gernes, D.O.	Ben Schultz
Emma Henry	Sarah Vrablic
Darren Henson	Susan Wickham
Barbara and Larry James	Larry and Kathi Zimpleman
Kayleigh Koester	
Tim and Shelli Koester	

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Rev. Timothy Fitzgerald
Joni Kinnan, Drake University
Kyle Lechtenberg
Gabbi Sarcone
Betsy White

umeri

DRAKE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI CHOIR

Aimee Beckmann-Collier, conductor

Susan Ihnen, piano and organ

Soprano

Megan Barrett
Emma Henry
Jennifer Mahl
Katelyn Mardis
Heather Nail
Elizabeth Watson

Alto

Delaney Borja
Samantha Clement
Amy Deist
Megan Houge
Kayleigh Koester
Chelsea Rink
Sarah Vrablic

Tenor

Jon Barrett
Trevor Bridge
Seth Hammond
Ryan Orme

Bass

Noah Brinkmeyer
Patrick Carroll
Jacob Fross
Avery Luepker
Daniel Minnie
Thomas Riordan
Ben Schultz

Brass Quartet

Andrew Bishop, trumpet
Paul Stodolka, trumpet
Caleb Lambert, trombone
Jackson Churchill, trombone



About the Choir

Founded in November 2019, Umeri is an ensemble of alumni of the Drake Choir, Drake University. Seventy-five alumni of the choir live in the Des Moines metro area and, since its inception, fifty-five of them have participated in Umeri. Alumni who have sung in the choir graduated from Drake in the years 1992 through 2022 and represent all Colleges of the University and a plethora of academic disciplines. As alumni, the singers are contributing to the Greater Des Moines community in many professional areas, including education, health care, public relations, finance, marketing, accounting, sports administration, and the arts.

Among their employers are a number of school districts, as well as the Meredith Corporation, Wells Fargo, Nationwide Insurance, US Cellular, Des Moines Performing Arts, the Iowa Arts Council, Iowa Public Radio, ACLU of Iowa, Principal Financial Group, Drake University, Target, the Iowa Events Center, Make-a-Wish Iowa, the Iowa Center for Economic Success, the Iowa High School Girls Athletic Union, the West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce, and Veterans Hospital of Central Iowa.

Umeri, which takes its name from the Latin word for “shoulders,” because Drake Choir members were frequently reminded that they stood on the shoulders of those who came before them, is a project-based ensemble. The choir rehearses 7-10 times preceding a concert, thus requiring a high level of musical independence and advance preparation on the part of each member. Umeri presents three concerts per year. For further information, contact Dr. Aimee Beckmann-Collier (aimee.beckmann-collier@drake.edu).

