

We'll Be Home for Christmas!

The Williamsport Civic Chorus has missed you, our listening family. Just as families throughout the nation are gathering in grateful celebration this winter, we invite you to join us for an in-person concert called "A Rutter Christmas." It will take place on Friday, December 17th, 7 pm, in the spacious sanctuary of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 142 Market Street, in Williamsport.

To minimize the chance of infection, performers as well au-

dience will wear masks inside the church.

John Rutter's music is clean and contemporary. We know you'll enjoy this festive evening of carols, anthems, and other compositions performed by the Chorus with brass quintet accompaniment.

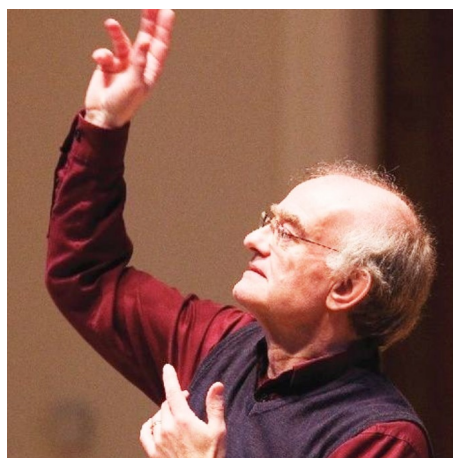
Concert tickets may be purchased in advance for \$8 (students and seniors) and \$10 (general admission) at the Otto

Book Store, R.M. Sides Family Music Center, and [online](#). Tickets bought at the door will cost \$10 and \$12, respectively, and all children under 12 years old as well as supporters with patron tickets will be admitted without charge. 🎵



What Sweeter Music than John Rutter's?

Born in London in 1945, John Rutter studied music at Cambridge University, where he collaborated with Sir David Willcocks in editing the authoritative four volume collection of *Carols for Choirs*. After rising to the position of Director of Music at Cambridge's Clare College, Rutter left academia in 1979. He subsequently founded the Cambridge Singers, a chorus that helped him launch his career of creating, conducting, and recording his own special genre of choral music, much of which is performed at Christmas time. His radiant lyricism and harmony are irresistibly uplifting for listeners and singers alike.



What is it about Rutter's work that quickly wins our affection? His music and words are approachable and mostly familiar. The melodies are bright and fresh

without becoming sentimental or corny. His harmonies, often in major keys, are clever and not totally predictable. Rutter is the master of brevity, engaging the listener without leaving time for the mind to wander. Even his major works like *Gloria* and *Requiem* take less than 30 minutes to perform.

For singers, Rutter keeps us on our toes. His work is fun to sing, while always making us stretch a bit. Take his "Twelve Days of Christmas," for example. How does he keep this familiar, repetitive song from drooping or becoming monotonous? It moves

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Know the Score



Michael Connor

I am excited and look forward joyfully to the moment when the Williamsport Civic Chorus returns to sing in Williamsport. I remember perfectly my first concerts as Music Director of the WCC, and the quality, intensity and personality of a choir that, not by chance, boasts a history of over 75 years. I want to express my very tender feelings and publicly thank all the singers and supporters.

When the pandemic hit, music venues were shut down and concerts were postponed. Did we have any idea that rehearsing and performing would be on hold for so long? How did you occupy your time? Did you develop any new skills?

At first, I didn't expect such a dramatic spiraling of the emergency, nor the deep social wound—beyond the damage to our health—that the pandemic inflicted on us. I lived that time with worry and frustration, but nonetheless in a privileged situation. I took advantage of the circumstances to spend more time with

family, to study, to listen to music, to tackle a few very challenging reads, and to pull out some instruments that had collected more than a few layers of dust.

When the pandemic broke out, my thinking morphed into a sort of urgency. The common denominator was that I would like to offer—regardless of one's religious beliefs—a sort of medicine for the soul; moments of reprieve and optimism.

This season's return is a deliberately diverse one; first, John Rutter's well-known holiday songs that have universal meaning, followed next May with what was to have been our Spring 2020 concert, which never happened, the reflective, prayerful *Sunrise Mass* by Ola Gjeilo.

All of this makes me happy. I missed the stage very much, and, with it, the embrace of our singers, the opportunity to capture our emotions and energy, and the vehicle to engage our community in positive ways. Of course, I am a bit apprehensive as well. I feel like an athlete starting to compete again at the highest level, after a long period of forced rest.

Nonetheless, I am overjoyed by this gradual return to normalcy. The world needs to go back to making culture and frequenting art in order to restore faith and one's own identity. This is the strong message that I would like to convey through our singing and, especially, our rehearsals and concerts.

Our return is a demonstration that people, now more than ever, hunger for beauty and spirituality;

we need to start anew with higher values and dialogue with our souls. No doubt, the pandemic has unequivocally reaffirmed the fact that the world is one big family, inside of which everything is connected. So, the good that you do always comes back, multiplied, and the same goes for the bad.

I would like to send my best regards to all those who have shown continued interest in the WCC, singers, board members and friends. I would like to thank my friends and family for the affection and the trust they continue to give me so generously and to tell them that I can't wait for the joyous moment in which we will be able to perform in-person again. 🎵

"Know the Score" is provided for the enjoyment of our readers by Michael Connor. Currently in his seventh year as music director of the Williamsport Civic Chorus, Michael holds a master's degree in education with music specialization from Bucknell University, having served as a graduate assistant to Dr. William Payn there. Mr. Connor is director of choral activities at Central Mountain High School in Clinton County. A tenor, he has appeared as a frequent vocal soloist with the Chorus and with numerous other performing organizations.

The Williamsport Civic Chorus receives state arts funding support through a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

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williamsportcivicchorus.org



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Facebook

78th SEASON

"A Rutter Christmas"

Friday, Dec. 17, 2021

7 pm

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

142 Market Street

Williamsport

**"Sunrise Mass" and
"The Lake Isle"
by Ola Gjeilo**

Sunday, May 29, 2022

3 pm

St. John's United Methodist
Church

2101 Newberry Street

Williamsport

**ENDOWING FUTURE
CHORAL MUSIC**

The Civic Chorus has developed an endowment fund as we prepare for the future. For more information, please email wccmail@yahoo.com.



Producing a Second Music Video



In Spring 2021, we selected a piece from a recent concert to create a new virtual performance. If reading about a few technical details that entailed some 50 hours of recording and post-production time on my part bores you, just skip to the end!

As in the Fall, we divided into sections and practiced in a socially distanced manner in the Pajama Factory's large Clearstory room. Although this production was similar, it had some new challenges. Learning some lessons from the last production, I changed the vocal microphones to a different stereo matched set. Piano, upright bass and flugelhorn were recorded separately in the same space as the vocals while the soloist was listening to the drum track in headphones. Now you might ask "where is the drummer" when you watch the performance. Well, he was in Milan, Italy! Our drummer produced a set of digital music tracks that I sent to a MIDI drum synthesizer module, which then was mixed to get the final sound.

The video recording, eventually edited on Filmora X, took place in Brandon Park on a hot day for mid-May! And, being a tenor and desiring to sing with the Chorus, I set

up three different video camera angles, two recording at 4K, so zoom-in effects would work in standard HD. I kept them running all the time so I could be part of the fun on the stage. The audio was rough mixed by me and then sent off to a professional mastering service to fine tune everything. Getting nine tracks of audio back still required final adjusting using GarageBand software. Mike Connor, our director, was instrumental in achieving the final sound.

Truth be told, the ultimate sound you hear is not us at the park bandshell, although we are singing and playing. The acoustics there are great for an audience but not for a recording. And as before, the first time anyone heard all of the parts together was when they saw the video. The Chorus cooperated superbly, and I hope you will enjoy Irving Berlin's "Blue Skies" as much as we did in making the short video linked [here](#). 🎵



"A Rutter Christmas"Friday, December 17, 2021
7 pmSt. Mark's Lutheran Church
142 Market Street
Williamsportwilliamsportcivicchorus.org

"The Williamsport Civic Chorus is an open community of singers dedicated to making fine music accessible to all through education, participation, and inspiration."

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fast. The leading lyrics switch unexpectedly among the vocal sections. Sometimes a repeated word comes out on a surprising pitch. And Rutter anticipates the tendency of non-professional singers to 'go flat' by gradually raising the written key of the piece by half steps from F major (one flat) to G flat major (6 flats!) to G major (one sharp).

Supposing that a composer's task is to reach us in our souls, how does Rutter feel about being

called "the composer who owns Christmas," as he was referred to in 2017 by Michael White in the *New York Times*? It's "better than famine, flood or war," Rutter replied at that time. "And I think now of the carols as shortcuts into a listener's musical universe." In that spirit, please join us in celebrating songs that we have known since childhood along with Rutter's own seasonal creations. 🎵

