

Radio 3 CD Review – 'Noel!'

19 December 2001

"...On now to more familiar terrain, with a new collection of carols and anthems from the Bach Choir, and their director, David Hill.

Not for them the ethereal sound of a lone choirboy, starting off 'Once in Roayl David's City' from 100 yards behind the organ loft. The Bach Choir don't leave you in any doubt when their Carol Service is about to begin.

(Plays CD: Arr Hill - O Come All Ye Faithful)

Lots of the great singalong carols are in this collection. Some are done, like that one, in congregational style, while others are arranged more tricky-dickily, often by David Hill himself.

The whole disc feels fresh and enthusiastic, When they have to, the Bach Choir honk it out like troopers; at other times they scale their sound right down, with a delicacy admirable in a group their size. Every now and then the choristers of Winchester Cathedral add to the jubilation, together with the brass players of the Wallace Collection.

My favourite piece in the album was the longest, by a composer I'd never heard of: Morten Lauridsen. It's an unaccompanied motet called 'O Magnum Mysterium'.

(Plays CD: O Magnum Mysterium)

Delicious - the Barber Adagio meeting Elgar's Nimrod in a sort of Scandinavian snowscape. The Bach Choir's Album, NOEL!, comes on Priory records, in conjunction with Novello, who just happen to publish all the arrangements.