



# John Rutter

**“A *Magnificat* that is filled with joy, dancing and fun”**

Door Lillian Mulder-Lubega

Voor de derde keer haalde Muziekcentrum Paul Snoek de wereldberoemde componist, organist en dirigent, John Rutter (1945), naar Soest voor een zangworkshop. Vele zangers in Nederland komen dan bij elkaar om zijn liederen in te studeren. Deze workshops die meestal uitverkocht zijn, worden geleid door il maestro zelf. “My singing days are open to all who love to sing and want to enjoy a day’s choral singing without a concert to worry about”, zegt John Rutter.

Vóór de workshop van 13 oktober 2019 sprak ik hem over zijn *Magnificat*.



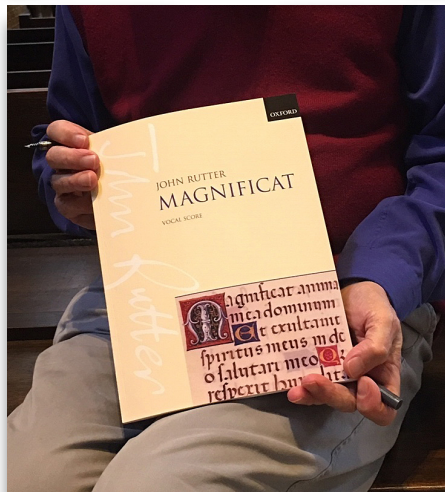
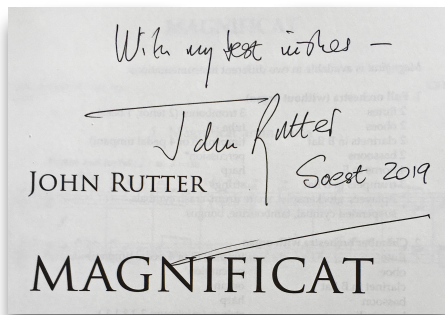
***Magnificat* is the story of the Virgin Mary as told in the gospel of St. Luke (1:46-55). The text has inspired many composers including J. S. Bach and .. yourself. Why did you decided to set it to music?**

I have always loved the words of *Magnificat* because they express the joy of the Virgin Mary on learning that she was going to be the mother of Christ. Like any young mother to be, she is excited. It is a kind of hymn of praise to God, of gratitude and also of thanksgiving. Also that God will raise up the humble (‘Mary is just a humble girl’) and will pull down the mighty from their seat. So it is kind of prophetic as well.

Foto Miep Kramer



It is a beautiful text and I always had intended to set it to music but the reason it took me so long to get round to it, I can tell you in 3 words: Johann, Sebastián and Bach. Because of course Bach's *Magnificat* is one of the most famous and beautiful of the extended settings of that text. Finally I thought: well I would love to set these words to music and nobody is going to think that they will challenge Bach's setting. It would be different.



### When did you compose the music and what inspired you?

It must have been in 1990. My starting point was to say well, in which countries of the world do they celebrate and enjoy the Virgin Mary most. The answer is I suppose in Catholic countries and particularly in the Mediterranean countries like Spain and Italy and in the new world in Central America, Mexico - in the sunshine. And so I thought I would like to do a setting of this almost like a fiesta, you know. One of those days like in the middle of August, the feast of the Assumption. When you go to Spanish or Italian towns, people put on their finest clothes and they dance in the streets and they celebrate and they feast and drink and they think of the Virgin Mary. And so I thought that that is the kind of *Magnificat* I want to write. I wrote it for an occasion in Carnegie Hall in New York where the choirs from all over America were to gather to take part in a concert. I knew they would be excited, just from being in Carnegie Hall in New York. So I wanted to kind of ride on the back of that

excitement and joy, and write a *Magnificat* that is filled with joy and dancing and fun. That was my intention in writing it.

As with anything you write as a composer you think that it will only get one performance. And that has turned out not to be true because this *Magnificat* has had many performances through out the world.

### What can we hear in the music?

You will hear in it a certain amount of may be, Latin American influence, you know, the kind of dancing that you would experience in Mexico of Puerto Rico. Also some of the English tradition perhaps.



**You included a solo-aria, in English, “Of a Rose, a lovely Rose”, while the rest of the text is in Latin. Why?**



Well it is a beautiful medieval poem from the period before the Reformation in England, when the Virgin Mary was often compared to a lovely flower. And it is an image you see in many paintings. I did not want to translate the English text because it is on the subject of the Virgin Mary and in a way likening her presence to the flowers that spread, you know, in branches going into different directions. It is also part of the biblical image of the stem of Jessie. That is why I left it in English. And is not even modern English of course; it is old English that is rather different from modern English. So may be some choirs in some parts of the world might struggle with that a bit. But I am sure you will be fine.

**Do you have any tips for our choir on the way this music should performed?**



Foto Miep Kramer

The most important thing for the choir is to sing this music with a sense of joy and dancing, though not in all the seven movements. The opening and closing movements are very much filled with the idea of the dance. And so you want to sing it in a way that, you hope, will make the audience want to get up and dance. That is the most important thing I would say. The spirit of the music is what you should be looking for.

I hope that it will bring joy to your choir on the occasion of your performance. I send my very best wishes for a successful, happy and joyful *Magnificat* performance. ●

**\*\* Zaterdag 24 oktober 2020 Singing Day  
met John Rutter / Info: [www.paulsnoek.nl](http://www.paulsnoek.nl)**