



Commonwealth Carol Service 2013

Alison Cox OBE, Founder and Co-Director of *The Commonwealth Resounds!* was invited by the Royal Commonwealth Society to organise music for the annual Commonwealth Carol Service at St-Martin-in-The Fields.

Alison says "...when these exciting opportunities arise, I like to try and offer them to different groups of Commonwealth musicians each time, because there are so many talented, hardworking people out there who deserve to have their musical achievements celebrated..."

The musicians identified for this occasion were

- 1) The up-and-coming Natasha Senayaka is one of Sri Lanka's only female composers. She is also a talented choral conductor and was studying in the UK at the time.**



Natasha Senayake (*picture on the left*) was very pleased to take part in the Commonwealth Carol Service. She invited some additional Commonwealth singers to join her Senayake Choir, and trained them carefully over several weeks. The singers made rapid progress and were very excited about the exciting opportunity to perform at St-Martin-In-The Fields.

Natash composed an exquisite carol for the occasion, entitled 'He is Born'. This was performed at the Carol Service by her own Senayake Choir, who gave a memorable, beautiful performance.



Another outstanding young musician to take part in this event was Kavi Pau, a 17-year-old Indian musician.

Alison Cox first met Kavi at the Sound and Music Summer School for Young Composers in 2013 and was immediately struck by his talent, commitment and entrepreneurial approach.

Kavi is a pupil at the Queen Elizabeth School for Boys in Barnet. He is a promising young composer, and is also very keen to conduct. Kavi has a strong interest in choral music, too.



Kavi Pau

Kavi was commissioned by Alison to compose a new piece to perform in the Commonwealth Carol Service. He wrote the piece for a cross-cultural group called 'The Purcell School's Commonwealth Ensemble'



The Purcell School (www.purcell-school.org) is the UK's oldest Specialist Music School and has many pupils with Commonwealth connections, from more than 27 different countries.

Kavi's delightful new piece was called 'Festive Allure'. Here is some information about it, written by Kavi himself.

Festive Allure is a fusion of South Indian Carnatic music and Western classical music. During the composition of this piece, I was very much influenced by contemporary cross-cultural composers as well as traditional folk music from all corners of the world. Festive Allure is scored for violins, celli, bass, flutes, and a set of tablas (Indian drums). The dialogue between the two flutes is particularly interesting and reflects the two cultures well, whilst the underlying rhythmic cycles on the tabla tie the piece together.

The Purcell School's Commonwealth Ensemble (mostly pupils aged 15/16) not only performed in Kavi's piece, but also arranged and performed 6 well-known congregational carols which were performed at intervals throughout the service.

The pianists in the Purcell School's Commonwealth Ensemble arranged carols for themselves to play in duets, which were highly appreciated by the audience as they arrived and departed at each end of the Carol Service.



All-in-all, a wonderful experience for all concerned. Special thanks to Stuart Connick and Alexander Came from the Royal Commonwealth Society, Revd. Richard Carter and Ruth McELvanney from St-Martin-in-the Fields, the tabla player Manjeet Singh and to all those who helped and supported this annual event.

"... an excellent Carol Service yesterday to herald the start of the Christmas season. I sang joyously as I remembered all the Christmas Hymns known from childhood... The RCS Carol Service is a must!"

"it was a fantastic experience for my students; they all returned home with memories that will remain with them for some time... it was very special for them as again they had no experience of a choir and orchestra of that quality."



The Commonwealth Carol Service – December 4th 2013
<https://thercs.org/media/news-and-blog/commonwealth-carol-service-2013/>