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**Allegri: Miserere**
Palestrina: Missa Papae Marcelli, Stabat Mater

"The tone of the choir is superb, the intonation excellent, the acoustic perfect."
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The Sixteen
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Christmas is that most important season of the year when love and hope prevail. Above all, it is a time for families, and we hope that this second volume of traditional carols will yet again bring the spirit of Christmas into your home.

No other festival in the Christian year has inspired so many tunes. The typical carol is one that embraces basic emotions; words and music are both simple and approachable. It is a pity, therefore, that in recent years, arrangements of well-known carols have become so elaborate, to the extent that they almost obscure a well-loved tune.

Our collection is both traditional and genuine; we have kept as close as possible to the original texts, thus avoiding changing their character by wanton modernisation. The tunes have also been preserved in their traditional guise, largely due to the dedication of such composers as Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst and Martin Shaw, who all spent many hours compiling and collating our nation’s folk songs and carols. In general, we have adopted their simple harmonisations from the old Oxford Book of Carols, first published in 1928. Many of these have sadly gone out of fashion (the Gloucestershire Wassail, Masters in this Hall and the Wexford Carol for example), but we hope that, through this recording, they will become a part of the family Christmas once again. We have also included one or two original compositions which, by their unashamed simplicity, capture the joy and sincerity of this most wonderful of seasons.

It only remains for us to wish you all a very happy Christmas where peace, love and goodwill may prosper.

Harry Christopher
1. OF THE FATHER’S HEART BEGOTTEN
Melody from Piae Cantiones, 1582
Words Prudentius (348-413); translation R.F. Davis, 1905

Of the Father’s heart begotten,
Ere the world from chaos rose,
He is Alpha: from that Fountain
All that is and hath been flows;
He is Omega, of all things
Yet to come the mystic Close,
Evermore and evermore.

By his word was all created;
He commanded and ’twas done;
Earth and sky and boundless ocean,
Universe of three in one,
All that sees the moon’s soft radiance,
All that breathes beneath the sun,
Evermore and evermore.

He assumed this mortal body,
Frail and feeble, doomed to die,
That the race from dust created
Might not perish utterly,
Which the dreadful Law had sentenced
In the depths of hell to lie,
Evermore and evermore.

O how blest that wondrous birthday,
When the Maid the curse retrieved,
Brought to birth mankind’s salvation,
By the Holy Ghost conceived;
And the Babe, the world’s Redeemer,
In her loving arms received,
Evermore and evermore.

This is he, whom seer and sibyl
Sang in ages long gone by;
This is he of old revealed
In the page of prophecy;
Lo! he comes, the promised Saviour;
Let the world his praises cry!
Evermore and evermore.

Sing, ye heights of heav’n, his praises;
Angels and Archangels, sing!
Where so’er ye be, ye faithful,
Let your joyous anthems ring,
Ev’ry tongue his name confessing,
Countless voices answering,
Evermore and evermore.

2. THE TRUTH FROM ABOVE
English traditional carol arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

This is the truth sent from above,
The truth of God, the God of love,
Therefore don’t turn me from your door,
But hearken all both rich and poor.
The first thing which I do relate
Is that God did man create,
The next thing which to you I’ll tell
Woman was made with man to dwell.
Thus we were heirs to endless woes,
Till God the Lord did interpose,
And so a promise soon did run
That he would redeem us by his Son.

And at that season of the year
Our blest Redeemer did appear;
He here did live, and here did preach,
And many thousands he did teach.
Thus he in love to us behaved,
To show us how we must be saved;
And if you want to know the way,
Be pleased to hear what he did say.

3. GABRIEL’S MESSAGE
An Old Basque Carol arranged and harmonised by Edgar Pettman (1866-1943)
Words by Rev. S. Baring-Gould (1834-1924)

The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;
“All hail” said he, “thou lovely maiden Mary,
Most highly favour’d lady, Gloria!”

“For know a blessed Mother thou shalt be,
All generations laud and honour thee,
Thy Son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold.
Most highly favour’d lady, Gloria!”
Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,  
“To me be as it pleaseth God,” she said,  
“My soul shall laud and magnify his  
 holy Name.”  
Most highly favour’d lady, Gloria!

Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ was born  
In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,  
And Christian folk throughout the world  
will ever say  
Most highly favour’d lady, Gloria!

4 MASTERS IN THIS HALL

French, arranged by Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

Masters in this hall,  
Hear ye news today  
Brought from over sea,  
And ever I you pray:  
Nowell! Nowell! Nowell!  
Nowell sing we clear!  
Holpen are all folk on earth,  
Born is God’s Son so dear:  
Nowell! Nowell! Nowell!  
Nowell sing we loud!  
God today hath poor folk raised  
And cast a-down the proud.  
Then to Bethlem town  
We went two and two,  
And in a sorry place  
Heard the oxen low:  
Nowell! Nowell! Nowell! etc.

Therein did we see  
A sweet and gladly may  
And a fair old man,  
Upon the straw she lay:  
Nowell! Nowell! Nowell! etc.  
And a little child  
On her arm had she,  
‘Wot ye who this is?’  
Said the hinds to me:  
Nowell! Nowell! Nowell! etc.  
This is Christ the Lord,  
Masters, be ye glad!  
Christmas is come in,  
And no folk should be sad:  
Nowell! Nowell! Nowell! etc.

5 PAST THREE A CLOCK

English traditional carol harmonised by Charles Wood (1866-1926)  
Words by G. R. Woodward (1848-1934)

Past three a clock,  
And a cold frosty morning:  
Past three a clock:  
Good morrow, masters all!

Born is a baby,  
Gentle as may be,  
Son of th’ eternal  
Father supernal.  
Past three a clock, etc.  
Seraph quire singeth,  
Angel bell ringeth;  
Hark how they rime it,  
Time it, and chime it.  
Past three a clock, etc.  
Mid earth rejoices  
Hearing such voices  
Ne’er tofore so well  
Carolling Nowell.  
Past three a clock, etc.  
Hinds o’er the pearly  
Dewy lawn early  
Seek the high stranger  
Laid in the manger.  
Past three a clock, etc.  
Cheese from the dairy  
Bring they for Mary,  
And, not for money,  
Butter and honey.  
Past three a clock, etc.  
Light out of star-land  
Leadeth from far land  
Princes, to meet him,  
Worship and greet him.  
Past three a clock, etc.  
Myrrh from full coffer  
Incense they offer:  
Nor is the golden  
Nugget withholden.  
Past three a clock, etc.  
Thus they: I pray you,  
Up, sirs, nor stay you  
Till ye confess him  
Likewise, and bless him.  
Past three a clock, etc.
**6 JESUS CHRIST THE APPLE TREE**

Elizabeth Poston (1905-1987). Words from *Divine Hymns or Spiritual Songs*, compiled by Joshua Smith, New Hampshire, 1784

The tree of life my soul hath seen,  
Laden with fruit and always green:  
The trees of nature fruitless be  
Compared with Christ the apple tree.

His beauty doth all things excel:  
By faith I know, but nēr can tell,  
The glory which I now can see  
In Jesus Christ the apple tree.

For happiness I long have sought,  
And pleasure dearly I have bought:  
I missed of all; but now I see  
'Tis found in Christ the apple tree.

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**IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER**

Harold Darke (1888-1976). Words by Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

Soloists: Grace Davidson *soprano*, Jeremy Budd *tenor*

In the bleak midwinter,  
Frosty wind made moan,  
Earth stood hard as iron,  
Water like a stone.

Snow had fallen snow on snow,  
Snow on snow,  
In the bleak midwinter long ago.

---

**3 GLOUCESTERSHIRE WASSAIL**

English traditional carol arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams

Wassail, wassail, all over the town!  
Our toast it is white, and our ale it is brown,  
Our bowl it is made of the white maple tree;  
With the wassailing bowl we'll drink to thee.

And here is to Fillpail and to her left ear,  
Pray God send our master a happy New Year,  
A bowl of strong beer; I pray you draw near,  
And our jolly wassail it's then you shall hear.

And here's to the maid in the lily white smock,  
Who tripped to the door and slipped back the lock!  
Who tripped to the door and pulled back the pin,  
For to let these jolly wassailers in.
In dulci jubilo
Now sing with hearts aglow!
Our delight and pleasure
Lies in praesepio,
Like sunshine is our treasure
Matris in gremio.
Alpha es et O!
O Jesu, parvule,
For thee I long alway;
Comfort my heart's blindness,
O princeps gloriae.
Trahe me post te!

O patris caritas!
O Nati lenitas!
Deeply were we stained
Per nostra criminal;
But Thou for us hast gainèd
Coelorum gaudia,
O that we were there!

Ubi sunt gaudia
In any place but there?
There are angels singing
Nova cantica,
And there the bells are ringing
In Regis curia.
O that we were there!

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! etc.

O come, Thou Day-spring come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine Advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! etc.

O come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! etc.

O come, O come, Thou Lord of Might,
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud, and majesty, and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! etc.

O come, O come, Thou Lord of Might,
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud, and majesty, and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! etc.

Adam lay ybounden,
Bounden in a bond;
Four thousand winter
Thought he not too long.
And all was for an apple,
An apple that he took,
As clerkes finden
Written in their book.
Ne had the apple taken been,
The apple taken been,
Ne had never our lady
Abeen heavené queen.
Blessed be the time
That apple taken was,
Therefore we moun singen,
Deo gracias, Deo gracias, Deo gracias!
Sweet baby, sleep! What ails my dear?
What ails my darling thus to cry?
Be still, my child, and lend thine ear
To hear me sing thy lullaby.

My pretty lamb, forbear to weep;
Be still, my dear; sweet baby, sleep.

Whilst thus thy lullaby I sing,
For thee great blessings ripening be;
Thine eldest brother is a King,
And hath a kingdom bought for thee.

Sweet baby, then, forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

When God with us was dwelling here,
In little babes he took delight:
Such innocents as thou, my dear,
Are ever precious in his sight.

Sweet baby, then, forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

A little infant once was he,
And strength in weakness then was laid
Upon his virgin mother's knee,
That power to thee might be conveyed.
Sweet baby, then, forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

The King of kings, when he was born,
Had not so much for outward ease;
By him such dressings were not worn,
Nor suchlike swaddling-clothes as these.
Sweet baby, then, forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

The wants that he did then sustain
Have purchased wealth, my babe, for thee;
And by his torments and his pain
Thy rest and ease securèd be.

My baby, then, forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

O then bespoke Joseph,
With answer most unkind,
'Let him pluck thee a cherry
That brought thee now with child.'

O then bespoke the baby
Within his mother's womb:
'Bow down then the tallest tree
For my mother to have some.'

Then bowed down the highest tree,
Unto his mother's hand.
Then she cried, 'See, Joseph,
I have cherries at command.'

Then Mary plucked a cherry,
As red as any blood;
Then Mary she went homewards
All with her heavy load.

Joseph was an old man,
And an old man was he,
When he wedded Mary
In the land of Galilee.

Joseph and Mary
Walked through an orchard good,
Where was cherries and berries
So red as any blood.

O then bespoke Mary,
With words so meek and mild,
'Pluck me one cherry, Joseph,
For I am with child.'

When God with us was dwelling here,
In little babes he took delight:
Such innocents as thou, my dear,
Are ever precious in his sight.

Sweet baby, then, forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth
To touch their harps of gold:
'Peace on the earth, goodwill to men,'
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.
Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they bring:
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing!

**PERSONENT HODIE**

German, 1360 arranged by Gustav Holst
Words from *Piae Cantiones*, 1582

PERSONENT HODIE

Magi tres venerunt,
Parvulum inquirunt,
Bethlehem adeunt,
Stellulam sequendo,
Ipsum adorando,
Aurum, thus, thus, thus,
Aurum, thus, thus, thus,
Aurum, thus, et myrrham ei offerendo.

**WEXFORD CAROL**

Irish traditional

Good people all, this Christmas time,
Consider well and bear in mind
What our good God for us has done,
In sending his beloved Son.
With Mary holy we should pray
To God with love this Christmas Day;
In Bethlehem upon that morn
There was a blessed Messiah born.

Under that bed there runs a flood:
The bells of Paradise I heard them ring:
The one half runs water, the other runs blood:
And I love my Lord Jesus above anything.

At the bed's foot there grows a thorn:
The bells of Paradise I heard them ring:
Which ever blows blossom since he was born:
And I love my Lord Jesus above anything.

Over that bed the moon shines bright:
The bells of Paradise I heard them ring:
Denoting our Saviour was born this night:
And I love my Lord Jesus above anything.

**DOWN IN YON FOREST**

Traditional arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams
Soloist: Elin Manahan Thomas soprano

Down in yon forest there stands a hall:
The bells of Paradise I heard them ring:
It's cover'd all over with purple and pall:
And I love my Lord Jesus above anything.

In that hall there stands a bed:
The bells of Paradise I heard them ring:
It's cover'd all over with scarlet so red:
And I love my Lord Jesus above anything.

At the bed-side there lies a stone:
The bells of Paradise I heard them ring:
Which the sweet Virgin Mary knelt upon:
And I love my Lord Jesus above anything.

At the bed's foot there grows a thorn:
The bells of Paradise I heard them ring:
Which ever blows blossom since he was born:
And I love my Lord Jesus above anything.

The night before that happy tide,
The noble Virgin and her guide
Were long time seeking up and down
To find a lodging in the town.
But mark how all things came to pass:
From ev'ry door repell'd, alas!
As long foretold, their refuge all
Was but a humble ox's stall.
Near Bethlehem did shepherds keep
Their flocks of lambs and feeding sheep;
To whom God’s angels did appear,
Which put the shepherds in great fear.
‘Prepare and go’, the angels said,
‘To Bethlehem, be not afraid;
For there you’ll find, this happy morn,
A princely babe, sweet Jesus born.’

With thankful heart and joyful mind,
The shepherds went the babe to find,
And as God’s angel had foretold,
They did our Saviour Christ behold.

Within a manger he was laid,
And by his side a virgin maid,
Attending on the Lord of life,
Who came on earth to end all strife.

There were three wise men from afar
Directed by a glorious star,
And on they wandered night and day
Until they came where Jesus lay.
And when they came unto that place
Where our beloved Messiah was,
They humbly cast them at his feet,
With gifts of gold and incense sweet.

JOYS SEVEN

The first good joy that Mary had,
It was the joy of one;
To see the blessed Jesus Christ
When he was first his Son:
When he was first her son, good man:
And blessed may he be,
Both Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
To all eternity.
The next good joy that Mary had,
It was the joy of four;
To see her own son, Jesus Christ
To read the bible o’er:
To read the bible o’er, good man:
And blessed may he be,
Both Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
To all eternity.

The next good joy that Mary had,
It was the joy of two;
To see her own son, Jesus Christ,
To make the lame to go:
To make the lame to go, good man:
And blessed may he be,
Both Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
To all eternity.

The next good joy that Mary had,
It was the joy of three;
To see her own son, Jesus Christ,
To bring the dead alive:
To bring the dead alive, good man:
And blessed may he be,
Both Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
To all eternity.

The next good joy that Mary had,
It was the joy of six;
To see her own son, Jesus Christ
Upon the Crucifix:
Upon the Crucifix, good man:
And blessed may he be,
Both Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
To all eternity.

The next good joy that Mary had,
It was the joy of seven;
To see her own son, Jesus Christ,
To wear the crown of heaven:
To wear the crown of heaven, good man:
And blessed may he be,
Both Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
To all eternity.
As with gladness men of old
Did the guiding star behold,
As with joy they hailed its light,
Leading onward, beaming bright,
So, most gracious God, may we
Evermore be led to thee.

As with joyful steps they sped,
To that lowly manger-bed,
There to bend the knee before
Him whom heaven and earth adore,
So may we with willing feet
Ever seek thy mercy-seat.

As they offered gifts most rare
At that manger rude and bare,
Pure, and free from sin’s alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to thee our heavenly King.

Holy Jesu, every day
Keep us in the narrow way;
And, when earthly things are past,
Bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide,
Where no clouds thy glory hide.

In the heav’nly country bright
Need they no created light;
Thou its light, its joy, its crown,
Thou its sun which goes not down:
There forever may we sing
Alleluyas to our King.

Unto us a boy is born!
King of all creation,
Came he to a world forlorn,
The Lord of ev’ry nation.
Cradled in a stall was he
With sleepy cows and asses;
But the very beasts could see
That he all men surpasses.

Herod then with fear was filled:
‘A prince’, he said, ‘in Jewry!’
All the little boys he killed
At Bethlem in his fury.

Now may Mary’s son, who came
So long ago to love us,
Lead us all with hearts aflame
Unto the joys above us.
Omega and Alpha he!
Let the organ thunder,
While the choir with peals of glee
Doth rend the air asunder.
Harry Christophers is known internationally as founder and conductor of The Sixteen as well as a regular guest conductor for many of the major symphony orchestras and opera companies worldwide. He has directed The Sixteen choir and orchestra throughout Europe, America and the Far East gaining a distinguished reputation for his work in Renaissance, Baroque and twentieth-century music. In 2000 he instituted the Choral Pilgrimage, a national tour of English cathedrals from York to Canterbury in music from the pre-Reformation, as The Sixteen’s contribution to the millennium celebrations. It raised awareness of this historic repertoire so successfully that the Choral Pilgrimage in the UK is now central to The Sixteen’s annual artistic programme.

In 2008 Harry Christophers was appointed Artistic Director of Boston’s Handel and Haydn Society; he is also Principal Guest Conductor of the Granada Symphony Orchestra as well as enjoying a very special partnership with the BBC Philharmonic with whom he won a Diapason d’Or. He is a regular guest conductor with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and the Orquesta de la Comunidad de Madrid and he has conducted the Hallé, the London Symphony Orchestra and the San Francisco Symphony.

Increasingly busy in opera, Harry Christophers has conducted Monteverdi’s Il ritorno d’Ulisse, Gluck’s Orfeo, Mozart’s Die Zauberflöte, Purcell’s King Arthur and Rameau’s Platée for Lisbon Opera. After an acclaimed English National Opera debut with The Coronation of Poppea he has since returned for Gluck’s Orfeo and Handel’s Ariodante, as well as conducting the UK premiere of Messager’s opera Fortunio for Grange Park Opera. He conducts regularly at Buxton Opera.

Harry Christophers is an Honorary Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, as well as the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and has been awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Music from the University of Leicester.
Robert Quinney is Sub-Organist of Westminster Abbey. In addition to his daily work at the Abbey, he maintains a busy freelance schedule as a soloist and ensemble player, and is also Director of Oundle for Organists, whose residential courses offer inspiring tuition for young organists.

His double compact disc *The Grand Organ of Westminster Cathedral*, recorded in 2004, was Instrumental Disc of the Month in BBC Music, earned a 5-star review in the French journal *Diapason*, and was an Editor’s Choice in *Gramophone*: ‘Alongside his impeccable performances, Quinney’s greatest achievement is to produce music-making which really communicates itself to the listener’.

Robert Quinney read music at King’s College, Cambridge, where he was Organ Scholar from 1995 to 1998. After a year as Acting Sub-Organist at Westminster Abbey, he moved to Westminster Cathedral as Assistant Master of Music in September 2000. Since returning to Westminster Abbey in 2004 he has performed with the Abbey Choir on concert tours to the USA and Australia, on an acclaimed series of recordings, and at several televised services. He is also frequently to be heard performing with ensembles such as The Sixteen, The English Concert, and The King’s Consort.

The Sixteen

**SOPRANO**  Julie Cooper, Grace Davidson, Sally Dunkley, Kirsty Hopkins, Elin Manahan Thomas, Charlotte Mobbs

**ALTO**  Ian Aitkenhead, David Clegg, William Missin, Christopher Royall

**TENOR**  Simon Berridge, Jeremy Budd, Mark Dobell, David Roy

**BASS**  Ben Davies, Eamonn Dougan, Timothy Jones, Stuart Young

**ORGAN**  Robert Quinney

For further information about recordings on CORO or live performances and tours by The Sixteen, call: +44 (0) 20 7936 3420 or email: coro@thesixteen.org.uk

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