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An Early English Christmas

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A Ceremony of Carols
Britten Choral Works II

- A Ceremony of Carols
- A Boy was Born
- A Shepherd’s Carol
- The Sycamore Tree
- Sweet was the Song
- Missa Brevis in D

“…”

TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS CAROLS COLLECTION
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 collection 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 "Carols for Choirs" and the old Oxford Book of Carols, first published in 1928. They include the occasional descant by Sir David Willcocks, now almost as well known as the carols themselves. Amazingly enough, Silent Night appears in very few carol books, and when it does, it is often misquoted. We have provided a simple harmony and an unobtrusive guitar accompaniment that do not detract from Franz Gruber’s famous tune. Many of the carols which appear in these collections have sadly gone out of fashion (the Gloucestershire Wassail, Masters in this Hall and the Wexford Carol for example), but we hope that, through these recordings, 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 Christophers

CD 1 – Volume I
- The first Nowell 5.38
- Once in royal David’s city 4.09
- The Sussex Carol 1.49
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- Hark! The herald angels sing 3.16
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- In the bleak midwinter 4.19
- Gloucestershire Wassail 2.12
- In dulci jubilo 6.57
- O come, O come Emmanuel 3.40
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- Wither’s Rocking Hymn 5.54
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- It came upon the midnight clear 3.09
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- Wexford Carol 4.26
- Joys Seven 2.41
- As with gladness men of old 3.07
- Unto us a boy is born 2.26
Total playing time 67.21
1 The first Nowell

The first Nowell the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay.
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter’s night that was so deep.

Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell, Born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star,
Shining in the east, beyond them far;
And to the earth it gave great light,
And so it continued both day and night

Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell, ...

And by the light of that same star,
Three wise men came from country far;
To seek for a king was their intent,
And to follow the star wherever it went:

Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell, ...

This star drew nigh unto the north-west;
O’er Bethlehem it took its rest,
And there it did both stop and stay
Right over the place where Jesus lay:

Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell, ...

Then entered in those wise men three,
Full reverently upon their knee,
And offered there, in His presence,
Their gold and myrrh and frankincense:

Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell, ...

Then let us all with one accord,
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
That hath made heaven and earth of nought,
And with His Blood mankind hath bought:

Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell, ...

2 Once in royal David’s city

Once in royal David’s city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her baby,
In a manger for His bed.
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little child.

He came down to earth from heaven
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall;
With the poor and mean and lowly
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

And through all His wondrous childhood
He would honour and obey,
Love and watch the lowly maiden,
In whose gentle arms He lay.
Christian children all must be,
Mild, obedient, good as He.

For He is our childhood’s pattern,
Day by day like us He grew,
He was little, weak and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us He knew:
And He feeleth for our sadness,
And He shareth in our gladness.

And our eyes at last shall see Him,
Through His own redeeming love,
For that child so dear and gentle
Is our Lord in heaven above,
And He leads his children on
To the place where He is gone.

3 The Sussex Carol

On Christmas night all Christians sing,
To hear the news the angels bring.
News of great joy, news of great mirth,
News of our merciful King’s birth

Then why should men on earth be so sad,
Since our Redeemer made us glad,
When from our sin He set us free,
All for to gain our liberty.

When sin departs before His grace,
Then life and health come in its place;
Angels and men with joy may sing,
All for to see the new-born King.

All our of darkness we have light,
Which made the angels sing this night;
‘Glory to God and peace to men,
Now and for evermore. Amen.’
While shepherds watched

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

‘Fear not,’ said he, for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind;
‘Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.’

‘To you in David’s town this day
Is born of David’s line
A Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;
And this shall be the sign:
The heavenly Babe you there shall find
To human view displayed
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
And in a manger laid.’

Thus spake the seraph; and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels praising God, who thus
Addressed their joyful song;
‘All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace;
Goodwill henceforth from heaven to men
Begin and never cease.’

I saw three ships

Solos: Ruth Dean soprano, David Roy tenor

I saw three ships come sailing in,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day.
I saw three ships come sailing in,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And what was in those ships all three?
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day.
And what was in those ships all three?
On Christmas Day in the morning.

Our Saviour Christ and his lady,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day.
Our Saviour Christ and his lady,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

Pray, whither sailed those ships all three?
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day.
Pray, whither sailed those ships all three?
On Christmas Day in the morning.

O, they sailed into Bethlehem,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day.
O, they sailed into Bethlehem,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And all the angels in heaven shall sing,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day.
And all the angels in heaven shall sing,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

Then let us all rejoice amain!
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day.
Then let us all rejoice amain!
On Christmas Day in the morning.

Angels from the realms of glory

Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your light o’er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation’s story
Now proclaim Messiah’s birth:
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds in the field abiding,
Watching o’er your flocks by night,
God with man is now residing;
Yonder shines the infant Light:
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great desire of nations;
Ye have seen His natal star:
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Saints before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord, descending,
In His temple shall appear:
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Though an infant now we view Him,
He shall fill His Father’s throne,
Gather all the nations to Him;
Every knee shall then bow down:
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
O holy child of Bethlehem,  
Descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin, and enter in,  
Be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angel  
The great glad tidings tell:  
O come to us, abide with us,  
Our Lord Emmanuel.

Silent night, holy night,  
God's dear Son, bringeth light,  
Saving us from sin's dark thrall,  
Giving life and love to all,  
Christ the Light of the World,  
Christ the Light of the World.  
Franz Xaver Gruber (1787–1863)

Away in a manger,  
no crib for a bed,  
The little Lord Jesus  
laid down His sweet head.  
The stars in the bright sky  
looked down where He lay,  
The little Lord Jesus  
asleep on the hay.  
The cattle are lowing,  
the Baby awakes,  
But little Lord Jesus  
no crying He makes,  
I love Thee, Lord Jesus!  
Look down from the sky,  
And stay by my side  
until morning is nigh.

O little town of Bethlehem  
Solo: Nicola Jenkin soprano

O little town of Bethlehem,  
How still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent stars go by.  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee tonight.

Away in a manger

Silent night, holy night,  
God's dear Son, bringeth light,  
Saving us from sin's dark thrall,  
Giving life and love to all,  
Christ the Light of the World,  
Christ the Light of the World.

Be near me, Lord Jesus;  
I ask Thee to stay  
Close by me for ever,  
and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children  
in Thy tender care,  
And fit us for heaven,  
to live with Thee there.

Rocking

Little Jesus sweetly sleep, do not stir,  
we will lend you a coat of fur.  
We will rock you, rock you, rock you.  
We will rock you, rock you, rock you:  
See the fur to keep you warm,  
Snugly round your tiny form.

Mary's little baby, sleep, sweetly sleep,  
Sleep in comfort, slumber deep;  
We will rock you, rock you, rock you.  
We will rock you, rock you, rock you:  
We will serve you all we can,  
Darling, darling little man.

Silent night, holy night,  
Sleep in heavenly grace,  
Sleep in heavenly grace.

How silently, how silently,  
The wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessing of His heaven.  
No ear may hear His coming;  
But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive Him, still  
The dear Christ enters in.

O morning stars, together  
Proclaim the holy birth,  
And praises sing to God the King,  
And peace to men on earth;  
For Christ is born of Mary;  
And, gathered all above,  
While mortals sleep, the angels keep  
Their watch of wondering love.

How silently, how silently,  
The wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessing of His heaven.  
No ear may hear His coming;  
But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive Him, still  
The dear Christ enters in.

O holy child of Bethlehem,  
Descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin, and enter in,  
Be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angel  
The great glad tidings tell:  
O come to us, abide with us,  
Our Lord Emmanuel.

Silent night, holy night,  
Sleep in heavenly grace,  
Sleep in heavenly grace.

How silently, how silently,  
The wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessing of His heaven.  
No ear may hear His coming;  
But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive Him, still  
The dear Christ enters in.

Away in a manger

Silent night, holy night,  
Starry skies beaming bright,  
Guard the virgin Mother mild,  
Watching o'er the Holy Child,  
Sleep in heavenly grace,  
Sleep in heavenly grace.

Silent night, holy night,  
Shepherds love, hail the light,  
Hark the wondrous angel throng,  
Hail the morn with joyful song:  
Christ the Saviour is born!  
Christ the Saviour is born!
**In dulci jubilo**

Solo octet: Nicola Jenkin, Fiona Clarke soprano, Deborah Miles-Johnson, Robin Bara alto
Andrew Carwood, Neil MacKenzie tenor, Jeremy White, Francis Steele bass

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**In dulci jubilo**

Let us our homage show;
Our heart’s joy reclinheth
In praesepeio
And like a bright star shineth,
Matris in gremio.
Alpha es et O!

**O Jesu Parvule!**
I yearn for Thee alway!
Hear me, I beseech Thee,
**O Puer optime!**
My prayer let it reach Thee,
**O Princeps gloriae!**
Trahe me post te!

**In dulci jubilo**

Let us our homage show;
Our heart’s joy reclinheth
In praesepeio
And like a bright star shineth,
Matris in gremio.
Alpha es et O!

---

**In the bleak midwinter**

Solo: David Roy tenor

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**Ding dong! merrily on high**

Ding dong! merrily on high
In heav’n the bells are ringing:
Ding dong! verily the sky
Is riv’n with angels singing.
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

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**In dulci jubilo**

Let us our homage show;
Our heart’s joy reclinheth
In praesepeio
And like a bright star shineth,
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In heav’n the bells are ringing:
Ding dong! verily the sky
Is riv’n with angels singing.
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

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**In the bleak midwinter**

Solo: David Roy tenor

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**In the bleak midwinter**

Solo octet: Nicola Jenkin, Fiona Clarke soprano, Deborah Miles-Johnson, Robin Bara alto
Andrew Carwood, Neil MacKenzie tenor, Jeremy White, Francis Steele bass

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**In the bleak midwinter**

Solo octet: Nicola Jenkin, Fiona Clarke soprano, Deborah Miles-Johnson, Robin Bara alto
Andrew Carwood, Neil MacKenzie tenor, Jeremy White, Francis Steele bass
Deck the hall

Deck the halls with boughs of holly,
"Fa la la la la, la la la la"
Tis the season to be jolly,
"Fa la la la la, la la la la"
Fill the mead cup, drain the barrel,
"Fa la la la la, la la la la"
Troll the ancient Christmas carol,
"Fa la la la la, la la la la"

In his master's steps he trod,
Where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod
Which the saint had printed.
Therefore, Christian men, be sure,
Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor,
Shall yourselves find blessing.

The holly and the ivy

The holly and the ivy,
When they are both full grown,
The holly bears the crown.
"O the rising of the sun...
And the running of the deer.
The playing of the merry organ,
Sweet singing in the choir.

The holly bears a blossom
As white as any flower;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To be our sweet Saviour.
"O the rising of the sun...

The holly bears a prickle
As sharp as any thorn;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
On Christmas Day in the morn.
"O the rising of the sun...

The holly bears a bough
As white as any snow;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
For to redeem us all.
"O the rising of the sun...

See the flowing bowl before us,
"Fa la la la la, la la la la"
Strike the harp and join the chorus,
"Fa la la la la, la la la la"
Follow me in merry measure,
"Fa la la la la, la la la la"
While I sing of beauty's treasure.
"Fa la la la la, la la la la"

"Sire, the night is darker now,
And the wind blows stronger;
Fails my heart, I know now how,
I can go no longer.'
'Mark my footsteps, my good page;
Tread thou in them boldly;
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly.'

Good King Wenceslas

Good King Wenceslas looked out,
On the feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about,
Deep and crisp and even:

'Brightly shone the moon that night,
Though the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight,
Gathering winter fuel.

'Hither page and stand by me,
If thou know'st it, telling,
Yonder peasant, who is he,
Where and what his dwelling?'
'Sire, he lives a good league hence,
Underneath the mountain,
Right against the forest fence,
By Saint Agnes' fountain.'

'Bring me flesh and bring me wine,
Bring me pine logs hither:
Thou and I will see him dine,
When we bear them thither.'

Page and monarch forth they went,
Forth they went together;
Though the rude wind's wild lament,
And the bitter weather.

'Sire, the night is darker now,
And the wind blows stronger;
Fails my heart, I know now how,
I can go no longer.'
'Mark my footsteps, my good page;
Tread thou in them boldly;
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly.'

In his master's steps he trod,
Where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod
Which the saint had printed.
Therefore, Christian men, be sure,
Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor,
Shall yourselves find blessing.

'Good King Wenceslas looked out,
On the feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about,
Deep and crisp and even:
God rest you merry, Gentlemen

But when to Bethlehem they came,
Whereat this infant lay
They found Him in a manger,
Where oxen feed on hay;
His mother Mary kneeling,
Unto the Lord did pray.
O tidings of comfort and joy.

Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood,
Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas,
All others doth deface.
O tidings of comfort and joy.

See amid the winter’s snow

Soloists: Sally Dunkley soprano, Jeremy White bass

See amid the winter’s snow,
Born for us on earth below,
To save us all from Satan's power,
Promised from eternal years.
Hail, thou ever-blessed morn! ...
Say, ye holy shepherds, say
What your joyful news today;
Wherefore have ye left your sheep
On the lonely mountain steep?
Hail, thou ever-blessed morn! ...

As we watched at dead of night,
Lo, we saw a wondrous light;
Angels singing “Peace on earth”
Told us of the Saviour’s birth.
Hail, thou ever-blessed morn! ...

Sacred Infant, all divine,
What a tender love was thine,
Thus to come from highest bliss
Down to such a world as this.
Hail, thou ever-blessed morn! ...

Teach, O teach us, Holy Child,
By Thy face so meek and mild,
Teach us to resemble Thee,
In Thy sweet humility.
Hail, thou ever-blessed morn! ...

John Goss (1800–80)
Words by Edward Caswall (1814–78)

The Coventry Carol

Solo trio: Ruth Dean soprano, Neil MacKenzie tenor, Jeremy White bass

Lo, within a manger lies
He who built the starry skies;
He who, throned in height sublime,
Sits amid the cherubim.
Hail, thou ever-blessed morn! ...

Say, ye holy shepherds, say
What your joyful news today;
Wherefore have ye left your sheep
On the lonely mountain steep?
Hail, thou ever-blessed morn! ...

‘As we watched at dead of night,
Lo, we saw a wondrous light;
Angels singing “Peace on earth”
Told us of the Saviour’s birth.’
Hail, thou ever-blessed morn! ...

Sacred Infant, all divine,
What a tender love was thine,
Thus to come from highest bliss
Down to such a world as this.
Hail, thou ever-blessed morn! ...

Teach, O teach us, Holy Child,
By Thy face so meek and mild,
Teach us to resemble Thee,
In Thy sweet humility.
Hail, thou ever-blessed morn! ...

O tidings of comfort and joy.
From God our heav’nly Father,
A blessed angel came.
And unto certain shepherds,
Brought tidings of the same,
How that in Bethlehem was born,
The Son of God by name.
O tidings of comfort and joy.

The shepherds at those tidings,
Rejoiced much in mind,
And left their flocks a feeding.
In tempest, storm, and wind,
And went to Bethlehem straightway,
This blessed babe to find.
O tidings of comfort and joy.

Lully, lulla, Thou little tiny Child.
Bye, bye, lully, lullay,
Thou little tiny Child.
Bye, bye, lully, lullay.

O sisters too, how may we do,
For to preserve this day
This poor Youngling for Whom we do sing
Bye, bye, lully, lullay?

Herod the king, in his raging,
Charg’d he hath this day
His men of might, in his own sight,
All young children to slay.
That woe is me, poor Child for Thee!
And ever mourn and may,
For Thy parting neither say nor sing,
Bye, bye, lully, lullay.

Lully, lulla, Thou little tiny Child.
Bye, bye, lully, lullay,
Thou little tiny Child.
Bye, bye, lully, lullay.
O come, all ye faithful

O come, all ye faithful,  
Joyful and triumphant,  
O Come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem  
Come and behold Him,  
Born the King of angels;  
O come, let us adore Him,  
Christ the Lord.

God of God,  
Light of Light,  
Lo! he abhors not the Virgin’s womb;  
Very God,  
Begotten not created.  
O come, let us adore Him...

See how the shepherds,  
Summoned to His cradle  
Leaving their flocks, draw nigh with lowly fear;  
We too will thither  
bend our joyful footsteps;  
O come, let us adore Him...

Lo! Star-led chieftains,  
Magi, Christ adoring,  
Offer Him incense, gold and myrrh;  
We to the Christ child  
Bring our hearts’ oblations;  
O come, let us adore Him...

Hark! the herald angels sing

Hark! the herald angels sing,  
’Glory to the new-born King;  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled!’  
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies.  
With ‘th’ angelic hosts proclaim,  
’Christ is born in Bethlehem!’

Hark! the herald angels sing,  
’Glory to the new-born King’.  

Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail, the Son of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings,  
Risen with healing in His wings.  
Mild, He lays His glory by,  
Born that man no more may die.  
Born to raise the sons of earth,  
Born to give them second birth  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
’Glory to the new-born King’.  

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-47)  
Words by Charles Wesley (1707-88)
Of the Father’s heart begotten

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!
Wheresoe’er ye be, ye faithful,
Let your joyous anthems ring,
Ev’ry tongue his name confessing,
Countless voices answering,
Evermore and evermore.

Melody from Piae Cantiones, 1582
Words Prudentius (348-413); translation R.F. Davis, 1905
The truth from above

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.

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!

Gabriel’s Message

The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;
‘All hail’ said he, “thou lowly 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!”

Masters in this hall

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 Bethlehem town
We went two and two,
And in a sorry place
Heard the oxen low:
Nowell! Nowell! Nowell! etc.

Then 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.

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!

An Old Basque Carol

Therein did we see
A sweet and goodly 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.

French, arranged by Gustav Holst (1874-1934)
Past three a clock

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.

Past three a clock

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

Jesus Christ the apple tree

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 ne’er 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.

I’m weary with my former toil,  
Here I will sit and rest a while:  
Under the shadow I will be,  
Of Jesus Christ the apple tree.

This fruit doth make my soul to thrive,  
It keeps my dying faith alive;  
Which makes my soul in haste to be  
With Jesus Christ the apple tree.

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

In the bleak midwinter

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.

Our God, Heav’n cannot hold Him,  
Nor earth sustain  
Heav’n and earth shall flee away,  
When He comes to reign.  
In the bleak midwinter,  
A stable place sufficed,  
The Lord God Almighty Jesus Christ.
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.

So here is to Cherry and to his right cheek,
Pray God send our master a good piece of beef,
And a good piece of beef that may we all see;
With the wassailing bowl we’ll drink to thee.

And here is to Dobbin and to his right eye,
Pray God send our master a good Christmas pie,
A good Christmas pie that may we all see;
With our 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,
And a happy New Year as e’er he did see;
With the wassailing bowl we’ll drink to thee.

And here is to Colly and to her long tail,
Pray God send our master he never may fail
A bowl of strong beer; I pray you draw near,
And our jolly wassail it’s then you shall hear.

Come, butler, come fill us a bowl of the best,
Then we hope that your soul in heaven may rest;
But if you do draw us a bowl of the small,
Then down shall go butler, bowl and all.

Then 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.

What can I give Him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd,
I would bring a lamb
If I were a wise man,
I would do my part
Yet what I can I give Him, give my heart.

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

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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!
Alpha es et O!
O Jesu, parvule,
For thee I long alway;
Comfort my heart’s blindness,
O puer optime,
With all thy loving kindness,
O princeps gloriae.
Trahe me post te!
Trahe me post te!

O patris caritas!
O Nati lenitas!
Deeply were we stained
Per nostra crimina;
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!

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In dulci jubilo

J.S. Bach: Organ Chorale Prelude BWV 608
Bartholomew Gesius, 1601
J.S. Bach: Organ Chorale Prelude BWV 729
J.S. Bach: In dulci jubilo final verse BWV 368

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English traditional carol
arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams

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8

Gloucestershire Wassail

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.

So here is to Cherry and to his right cheek,
Pray God send our master a good piece of beef,
And a good piece of beef that may we all see;
With the wassailing bowl we’ll drink to thee.

And here is to Dobbin and to his right eye,
Pray God send our master a good Christmas pie,
A good Christmas pie that may we all see;
With our 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,
And a happy New Year as e’er he did see;
With the wassailing bowl we’ll drink to thee.

And here is to Colly and to her long tail,
Pray God send our master he never may fail
A bowl of strong beer; I pray you draw near,
And our jolly wassail it’s then you shall hear.

Come, butler, come fill us a bowl of the best,
Then we hope that your soul in heaven may rest;
But if you do draw us a bowl of the small,
Then down shall go butler, bowl and all.

Then 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

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!
Alpha es et O!
O Jesu, parvule,
For thee I long alway;
Comfort my heart’s blindness,
O puer optime,
With all thy loving kindness,
O princeps gloriae.
Trahe me post te!
Trahe me post te!

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9
O come, O come Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Unto 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 over 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.

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

Ralph Vaughan Williams
Words by George Wither (1588-1667)
The Cherry Tree Carol

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 were 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.’  
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.

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,  
From heav’n’s all gracious King!’  
The world in solemn stillness lay  
To hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come,  
With peaceful wings unfurled;  
And still their heav’nly music floats  
O’er all the weary world;  
Above its sad and lowly plains  
They bend on hov’ring wing;  
And ever o’er its Babel sounds  
The blessed 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!

For lo! the days are hastening on,  
By prophet-bards foretold,  
When, with the ever circling years  
Comes round the age of gold;  
When peace shall over all the earth  
Its ancient splendours fling,  
And the whole world give back the song  
Which now the angels sing.

Traditional English tune adapted by Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900)  
Words by E. H. Sears (1810-1876)
Personent hodie

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

Omnes clericuli,  
Pariter pueri,  
Cantent ut angeli:  
Advenisti mundo,  
Laudes tibi fundo.  
Ideo, o, o,  
Ideo, o, o,  
Ideo gloria in excelsis Deo!

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

Down in yon forest

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.

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.

Traditional arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams

Wexford Carol

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.

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 repelled, 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.

Irish traditional carol

The first good joy that Mary had,
It was the joy of one;
To see the blessed Jesus Christ
When he was first her 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 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 make the blind to see:
To make the blind to see, 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 five;
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.

Irish traditional carol

Joys Seven
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,
So may we with holy joy,
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 earth’s things are past,
Bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide,
Where no clouds thy glory hide.

In the heavenly country bright
Need they no created light;
Though its light, its joy, its crown,
Though 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 every 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.

Unto us a boy is born (Puer nobis)
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.

Abridged from chorale Treuer Heiland by C. Kocher (1786-1872)
arranged by David Willcocks (b.1919)
Words by W. Chatterton Dix (1837-1898)

Words from Piae Cantiones, 1582,
arranged by Geoffrey Shaw (b.1928)
15th century translation, Oxford Book of Carols
Harry Christophers is known internationally as founder and conductor of The Sixteen as well as being 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 Asia-Pacific, gaining a distinguished reputation for his work in Renaissance, Baroque and 20th- and 21st-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. The Pilgrimage in the UK is now central to The Sixteen’s annual artistic programme.

Since 2008 Harry Christophers has been 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 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. With The Sixteen he is an Associate Artist at The Bridgewater Hall in Manchester and features in the highly successful BBC television series, Sacred Music, presented by Simon Russell Beale.

Harry has conducted numerous productions for Lisbon Opera and English National Opera as well as conducting the UK premiere of Messager’s opera Fortunio for Grange Park Opera. He is a regular conductor at Buxton Opera where he initiated a very successful cycle of Handel’s operas and oratorios including Semele, Samson, Saul and Jephtha.

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 by the University of Leicester. He was awarded a CBE in the 2012 Queen’s Birthday Honours.
After three decades of worldwide performance and recording, The Sixteen is recognised as one of the world’s greatest ensembles. Its special reputation for performing early English polyphony, masterpieces of the Renaissance, Baroque and early Classical periods, and a diversity of 20th- and 21st-century music, all stems from the passions of conductor and founder, Harry Christophers.

The Sixteen tours internationally giving regular performances at the major concert halls and festivals. At home in the UK, The Sixteen are ‘The Voices of Classic FM’ as well as Associate Artists of The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. The group also promotes The Choral Pilgrimage, an annual tour of the UK’s finest cathedrals.

The Sixteen’s period-instrument orchestra has taken part in acclaimed semi-staged performances of Purcell’s The Fairy Queen in Tel Aviv and London, a fully staged production of Purcell’s King Arthur in Lisbon’s Belém Centre, and new productions of Monteverdi’s Il ritorno d’Ulisse at Lisbon Opera House and The Coronation of Poppea at English National Opera.

Over 130 recordings reflect The Sixteen’s quality in a range of work spanning the music of 500 years. In 2009 the group won the coveted Classic FM Gramophone Artist of the Year Award and the Baroque Vocal Award for Handel’s Coronation Anthems. The Sixteen also features in the highly successful BBC television series, Sacred Music, presented by Simon Russell Beale.

In 2011 the group launched a new training programme for young singers, called Genesis Sixteen. Aimed at 18- to 23-year-olds, this is the UK’s first fully funded choral programme for young singers designed specifically to bridge the gap from student to professional practitioner.

Robert Quinney is Organist of New College, Oxford. In addition to the daily direction of New College’s world-famous choir, his work comprises teaching, lecturing and examining as a Tutorial Fellow and an Associate Professor at the University Faculty of Music. He also maintains a parallel career as a solo organist, and he is a prolific recording artist: his discs of organ music by J.S. Bach, Elgar, Dupré, Wagner and Brahms – and several CDs with the Choir of Westminster Abbey and The Sixteen – have been widely acclaimed. His first CD with New College Choir – symphony anthems by John Blow, many of which have been recorded for the first time – is due for release in 2016.

Robert Quinney read music at King’s College, Cambridge, where he was Organ Scholar. After four years as Assistant Master of Music at Westminster Cathedral, he became Sub-Organist of Westminster Abbey in 2004. While at the Abbey he performed on concert tours to the United States, Australia and Russia, at several televised services – including the Marriage of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge in April 2011 – and on the 2012 BBC TV documentary Westminster Abbey. In April 2013 he moved to Peterborough Cathedral, where he was Director of Music for 16 months. Between 2009 and 2014 he was Director of Oundle for Organists, whose residential courses continue to attract young organists from all over the world.