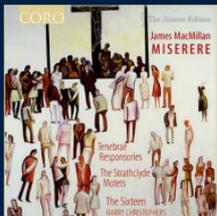


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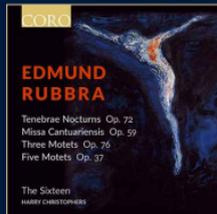
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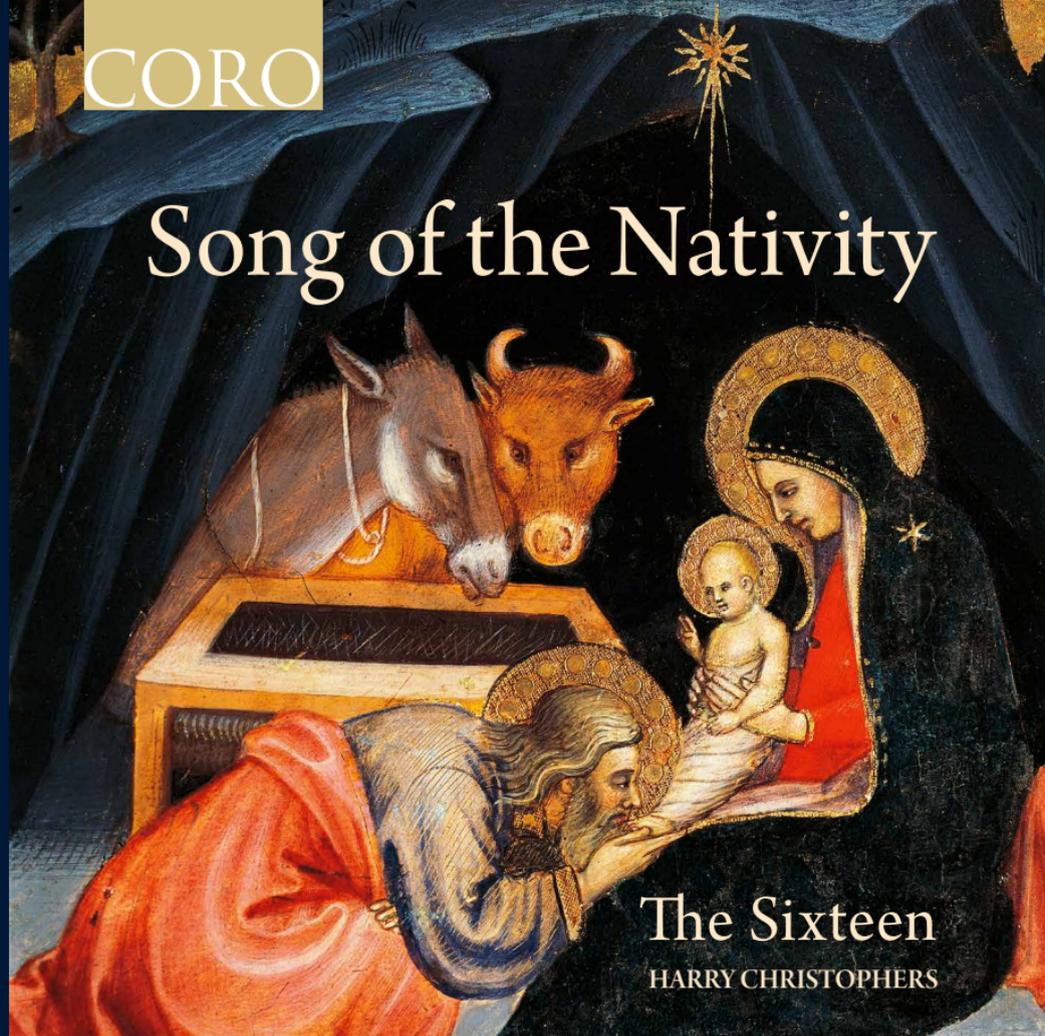


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# Song of the Nativity



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COR16146

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 carols will 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 contemporary. Of the seven traditional carols, we have kept as close as possible to the original texts and have adopted their simple harmonisations from the old Oxford Book of Carols, first published in 1928. Most of these have sadly gone out of fashion (*Somerset Carol* and *A Gallery Carol* for example) but we hope that, through this recording, they will become a part of the family Christmas once again. The bulk of the carols, however, are from our own time. Many of them have become classics in their own right, like the spiritually evocative *O magnum mysterium* by Morten Lauridsen, John Rutter's beautiful setting of *There is a flower* and Peter Warlock's perfect yet tender miniature *Bethlehem Down*. There are many others which in the course of time will also become classics; all of them, 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  
Austin

1	MORTEN LAURIDSEN (b.1943)	O magnum mysterium	6.44
2	HOWARD SKEMPTON (b.1947)	Adam lay ybounden	1.15
3	TRADITIONAL	The Saviour's work	4.04
4	GABRIEL JACKSON (b.1962)	The Christ-child	4.31
5	PETER WARLOCK (1894-1930)	Bethlehem Down	4.50
6	TRADITIONAL	A Gallery Carol	1.41
7	WILL TODD (b.1970)	My Lord has come	3.43
8	JOHN IRELAND (1879-1962)	The Holy Boy	3.25
9	HENRY WALFORD DAVIES (1869-1941)	O little town of Bethlehem	4.14
10	JOHN GARDNER (1917-2011)	When Christ was born of Mary free	1.55
11	CECILIA MCDOWALL (b.1951)	Now may we singen	3.30

[12]	TRADITIONAL	Children's Song of the Nativity	2.08
[13]	BORIS ORD (1897-1961)	Adam lay ybounden	1.14
[14]	ALEC ROTH (b.1948)	Song of the Shepherds	6.00
[15]	TRADITIONAL	Somerset Carol	1.52
[16]	BOB CHILCOTT (b.1955)	The Shepherd's Carol	3.16
[17]	TRADITIONAL	This endris night	2.57
[18]	JOHN RUTTER (b.1945)	There is a flower	4.54
[19]	TRADITIONAL	Christmas Eve	3.42
[20]	ALAN BULLARD (b.1947)	And all the stars looked down	2.36
[21]	TRADITIONAL	Dutch Carol	1.58
[22]	JAMES MACMILLAN (b.1959)	O radiant dawn	3.27
		Total Running Time:	73.58

Christmas, the English name for the Feast of the Nativity, the venerable *Cristes masse*, has been a source of inspiration to generations of artists and a season of comfort and joy for countless souls since early medieval times, the moment when Christ the *sol verus*, the 'true sun', brought eternal light to illuminate dark earth. The poetry of that moment, rooted in the fusion of myth with history, has never lost its power to move and perhaps moves us more than ever in an age when daily news of mankind's destructive agency arises from all-too-human killing fields and slaughter yards. The language of William Tyndale and the King James Bible, of Donne and Milton, Dickens and Hardy, of Rossetti, Dickinson, Eliot and Chesterton, and of unknown, untraceable folk poets has helped give voice to the Christmas story, weaving colourful strands from New Testament narratives and two millennia of Christian contemplation, myth-making

and celebration. Christ, 'that far-beaming blaze of majesty' in Milton's rapt vision of the nativity, stands as the eternal symbol of heaven and earth in one, the human form divine, born not in a high palace but in a low stable to redeem all mankind. It is a story best told in human terms, one touched by common domestic experience, by the joys and fears around new life, the deep-rooted, widely shared belief in salvation, and expressed most directly – yet with the greatest mystery – through music.

*Song of the Nativity* spans six centuries of Christmas music. Its contents reach back to what the congregational pastor and musicologist Erik Routley called 'the singing ages', the time of medieval carols, mystery plays and folk rituals, and also encompass works written within the past decade. Each composition expresses something of the great mystery of the nativity, its mundane setting and transcendent

meaning, its ability to cultivate compassion and fellow feeling. In *Cider with Rosie* Laurie Lee reflects on the spiritual essence of Christmas music-making, recalling the carols he sang as a boy in the Gloucestershire village of Slad. Each year he and his pals would tramp through the snow to reach the remote house of Joseph the farmer and sing their last carol of the day for him. ‘Everything was quiet; everywhere there was the faint crackling silence of the winter night,’ wrote Lee.

‘We started singing, and we were all moved by the words and the sudden trueness of our voices. Pure, very clear, and breathless we sang:

As Joseph was walking  
He heard an angel sing;  
‘This night shall be the birth-time  
Of Christ the Heavenly King.

He neither shall be bornèd  
In Housen nor in hall,

Nor in a place of paradise  
But in an ox’s stall ...’

And two thousand Christmases became real to us then; the houses, the halls, the places of paradise had all been visited; the stars were bright to guide the Kings through the snow; and across the farmyard we could hear the beasts in their stalls. We were given roast apples and hot mince-pies, in our nostrils were spices like myrrh, and in our wooden box, as we headed back for the village, there were golden gifts for all.’

Morten Lauridsen’s *O magnum mysterium* inhabits Lee’s world of still silence, a place welcoming to emotions of ecstasy and bliss. Before moving to Los Angeles in the 1960s to study at the University of Southern California, Lauridsen served as a Forest Service firefighter near Mount St Helens in his home state of Washington. The composer’s empathy for the vast natural

landscapes of the Pacific Northwest resounds in his motet’s shimmering dissonances and merging harmonies. Lauridsen’s work was directly inspired by the painting *Still life with lemons, oranges and a rose* by Francisco Zurbarán (1598-1664). ‘I sought to impart, as Zurbarán did before me, a transforming spiritual experience within what I call ‘a quiet song of profound inner joy’. I wanted this piece to resonate immediately and deeply into the core of the listener, to *illumine* through sound.’

Boris Ord, organist at King’s College, Cambridge from 1929 to 1957, demanded high standards from his choristers. ‘He was tyrant and friend,’ recalled one choral scholar from the early 1930s. ‘There was never a hint of relaxation in the standard expected.... We were certainly left with the impression that, whatever our achievement, Boris could always imagine something better.’ Ord’s only

published composition, *Adam lay ybounden* – a regular fixture in the annual Christmas Eve Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at King’s – stands as an engaging setting of words from a 15th-century carol manuscript. Howard Skempton’s minimalist treatment of the same text, written in 1999, is more austere but no less affecting or memorable than Ord’s. It contemplates the profound mystery of mankind’s long suffering and redemption by the birth of Jesus.

*The Christ-child* was commissioned for the 2009 Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at King’s. Gabriel Jackson furnishes his setting of G.K. Chesterton’s *A Christmas Carol*, first published in 1900, with sonorous harmonies and exquisite transformations of choral texture. The prevailing mood is one of rapt tenderness and reverence, touched not least by a sense of the holy mother’s unconditional love for her only son. Alec

Roth's *Song of the Shepherds* was written in 2013 to mark the quatercentenary of the metaphysical poet Richard Crashaw. It was commissioned by the Church of St Mary the Less in Cambridge, where Crashaw served as priest from 1638 to 1643. Roth, perhaps best known for his collaborations with the Indian novelist and poet Vikram Seth, adapted verses from Crashaw's *In the Holy Nativity of Our Lord God: a Hymn Sung as by the Shepherds* for his rousing a cappella choral setting.

Drink supplied the lubricant essential to the creation of *Bethlehem Down*. Peter Heseltine (known to the musical and occult worlds as Warlock) and his friend, the poet Bruce Blunt, were stone broke in December 1927. To remedy the situation, they decided to write a modern carol and sell it to a daily newspaper. On the journey between The Plough in the Hampshire village of Bishop's Sutton and The Anchor at nearby Ropley, Blunt conceived and hatched the words

to *Bethlehem Down* and sent them to Warlock, who set them to music of considerable sensitivity and sonorous beauty. A copy of the new Christmas part-song appeared a few weeks later in a seasonal supplement published by the *Daily Telegraph*. Blunt later wrote that the pair had 'an immortal carouse on the proceeds and [we] decided to call ourselves "Carols Consolidated"'

Many traditional Christmas carols project the joyful news of Jesus's birth. *Rejoice and be merry* belongs to the rich Anglican tradition of west gallery music. Its words and music were recorded in a tune-book from Dorset, which in turn were published in 1919 as *A Gallery Carol* in Shaw and Dearmer's *The English Carol Book*. The earliest version of the *Dutch Carol* (*A child is born in Bethlehem*) dates to 1599. The English poet R.C. Trevelyan, who was married to the Dutch musician Elizabeth van der Hoeven, translated the macaronic

carol's solo verses into English for *The Oxford Book of Carols* in the late 1920s, leaving its choral refrain to stand in the original Latin.

*The Saviour's work* (*The babe in Bethl'em's mangerlaid*) appears under 'traditional' in the 1913 edition of Shaw and Dearmer's *English Carol Book*. The Rev. Richard Chope in his *Carols for Use in Church* of 1894, gives the anonymous words and music as 'Kentish' in origin, while the piece appears as an 'Old Kentish Carol' in R.R. Terry's 1923 anthology of *Old Christmas Carols*. Whatever its regional roots, this narrative carol makes a strong impression with its distinctive mix of modal and diatonic harmonies. Its tune, noted Erik Routley, 'is very much of the 18th century', while its words 'tell of the preaching as well as the incarnation of Christ'. *Come all you worthy gentlemen* hails from Somerset, where its stirring melody was notated by Cecil Sharp from the singing of a Mr Rapsey of

Bridgwater, who recalled performing the *Somerset Carol* as a child with his friends in the local streets to raise money at Christmas. The *Children's Song of the Nativity*, commonly known as *How far is it to Bethlehem*, marries the traditional English hymn-tune 'Stowey' to words by Frances Alice Chesterton, wife of G.K. Chesterton and an accomplished author of verse, songs and children's drama.

The text of *This endris night* is preserved in a 15th-century manuscript housed today in the Bodleian Library. It belongs to a genre of late-medieval lullaby carols cast in the form of a dialogue between the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus. Other manuscript variants of the carol exist in the National Library of Scotland, the British Library and the library of Balliol College, Oxford. Whereas *This endris night* offers a tender reflection on a mother's love, *The Lord at first did Adam make* charts the broad course from mankind's fall to the 'coming of God's

dear son' and the promise of eternal life to come. The traditional carol, with its refrain specific to *Christmas Eve*, was first published in the version heard on this recording in William Sandys's *Christmas Carols, Ancient and Modern* of 1833. Martin Shaw and Percy Dearmer placed *The Lord at first did Adam make* as the first work in their influential *Oxford Book of Carols*.

The great tradition of Christmas music continues to thrive and grow, not least through the work of Alan Bullard and Bob Chilcott. The former's substantial catalogue of seasonal pieces includes a sublime setting of words by G.K. Chesterton, *And all the stars looked down*. Bullard's Britten-like ability to convey verbal imagery in music is harnessed throughout the piece, especially so in his treatment of poetic similes of the Christ-child's hair. The distinctive combination of Cambridge, Christmas and choral singing helped

shape Bob Chilcott's upbringing. He served as a boy chorister in the 1960s and later as a choral scholar at King's College. *The Shepherd's Carol* was commissioned by King's for its service of lessons and carols in 2000. Chilcott's contemplative piece, made timeless by its folksong idioms, considers the nativity story from the perspective of the shepherds drawn by starlight to Bethlehem.

Almost four decades before Chilcott created his haunting composition, a young Cambridge-based musician made a seminal contribution to the future of sacred Christmas music. John Rutter's work as co-editor of the second volume of *Carols for Choirs* – popularly known as the 'Orange Book' for the colour of its cover – supplied amateur and professional choirs with a rich repertoire of restored and new seasonal compositions, his own *Shepherd's Pipe Carol* among them. *There is a flower*, a

reflective setting of words by the early 15th-century priest and poet John Audelay, was written for the Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, in the mid-1980s. The motet's eloquent simplicity bears witness to its composer's deep feeling for the Christmas message.

The close harmonies of Will Todd's *My Lord has come* complement the loving-kindness of his carol verse. The work was selected for inclusion in a new Christmas anthology, published by Oxford University Press in 2011 to mark the 50th anniversary of *Carols for Choirs 1*. 'Such an exciting moment,' Todd recalls, 'as I have wonderful memories of singing music from the earlier *Carols for Choirs* in my formative years.'

John Ireland served as organist of St Luke's, Chelsea, between 1904 and 1926. *The Holy Boy* was written on Christmas Day 1913, the last before peace was shattered by the guns of war, and perhaps

inspired by the angelic voice of one of his St Luke's choristers. It was first published as the third of four piano preludes, transcribed for organ in 1919, adapted as a song to words by the composer's friend Herbert Brown almost two decades later, and finally fashioned as an unaccompanied choral setting of Brown's Christmas text in 1941. When creating his original setting of *O little town of Bethlehem*, an enduring favourite with Christmas congregations worldwide, Henry Walford Davies, Master of the King's Music from 1934 to 1941, turned to words written upon his return from a visit to the Holy Land by the Philadelphia clergyman Phillips Brooks.

John Gardner's folk-like setting of *When Christ was born of Mary free*, first published in 1963, evokes the sound and spirit of late-medieval English carols by employing unison voices for the verse and two-part polyphony for its Latin refrain. Text and music capture

the ‘mirth and glee’ of the first to hear news of the nativity.

Choral music occupies a central place in the output of Cecilia McDowall. The London-born composer shares John Rutter’s gift for writing music that touches audience hearts. Her unaccompanied Christmas carol *Now we may singen* was written for the Concord Singers and first performed by them in the Bedford Corn Exchange in December 2007. McDowall’s unadorned melodic writing and ringing harmonies evoke an imaginary medieval soundscape, one apt to the setting of an anonymous 15th-century text.

Echoes of Thomas Tallis’s hymn *O nata lux* surface in the opening bars of James MacMillan’s *O radiant dawn*. MacMillan wrote the piece in 2007 for his choir at St Columba’s Catholic Church in Glasgow. It sets an English translation of one of the seven ‘O’

antiphons for Advent, *O oriens, splendor lucis aeternae*, in which Christ’s eternal light is compared to the splendour of the rising sun. MacMillan magnifies the text’s spirit of ecstasy by using repetition and reiteration throughout the work, including two six-fold statements of the word ‘come’ and six final amens.

Christmas, stripped of commercial cynicism and forced seasonal cheer, is above all a celebration of life and love. It begins with a family story that invites compassion to attend the manger stall and for all to reflect on childhood’s corruptible innocence, to set aside hate and fear and search for the ‘meek-ey’d peace’ within. *Song of the Nativity* offers a profound meditation in words and music on the ineffable mystery of love, its fleeting, fragile state when left untended and transcendent force when cherished.

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## 1 MORTEN LAURIDSEN (b.1943) *O magnum mysterium*

*O magnum mysterium,  
et admirabile sacramentum,  
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum  
iacentem in praesepio!  
Beata Virgo, cuius viscera  
meruerunt portare  
Dominum Christum.  
Alleluia.*

O great mystery,  
and wonderful sacrament,  
that the animals see the newborn Lord  
lying in the manger!  
Blessed is the Virgin whose womb  
was worthy to bear  
Christ the Lord.  
Alleluia!

Words: adapted from the Third and Fourth  
Responsories at Matins on Christmas Day

## 2 HOWARD SKEMPTON (b.1947) *Adam lay ybounden*

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 clerkés finden  
Written in theiré book.

Ne had the apple taken been,  
The apple taken been,  
Ne haddé never our lady  
Abeen heaven’s queen.  
Blessed be the time  
That apple taken was!  
Therefore we may singen,  
Deo gracias!

Words: anon. 15th century

③ TRADITIONAL

*The Saviour's work – The babe in Bethl'em's manger laid*

Soloists: Mark Dobell *tenor*, Ben Davies *baritone*

The babe in Bethl'em's manger laid  
In humble form so low,  
By wond'ring angels is surveyed  
Through all His scenes of woe.

*Nowell, Nowell,  
Now sing a Saviour's birth,  
All hail His coming down to earth,  
Who raises us to Heav'n!*

A Saviour! sinners all around  
Sing, shout the wondrous word;  
Let every bosom hail the sound,  
A Saviour! Christ the Lord.

*Nowell, Nowell, etc.*

For not to sit on David's throne  
With worldly pomp and joy,  
He came on earth for sin to atone,  
And Satan to destroy.

*Nowell, Nowell, etc.*

To preach the word of life divine,  
And feed with living bread,  
To heal the sick with hand benign,  
And raise to life the dead.

*Nowell, Nowell, etc.*

He preached, He suffered, bled and died,  
Uplift 'twixt earth and skies;  
In sinners' stead was crucified,  
For sin a sacrifice.

*Nowell, Nowell, etc.*

Well may we sing a Saviour's birth,  
Who need a grace so given,  
And hail His coming down to earth,  
Who raises us to Heaven.

*Nowell, Nowell, etc.*

Words: anon. 15th century

④ GABRIEL JACKSON (b.1962)

*The Christ-child*

Soloist: Julie Cooper *soprano*

The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,  
His hair was like a light.  
(O weary, weary were the world,  
But here is all aright.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast,  
His hair was like a star.  
(O stern and cunning are the kings,  
But here the true hearts are.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,  
His hair was like a fire.  
(O weary, weary is the world,  
But here the world's desire.)

The Christ-child stood at Mary's knee,  
His hair was like a crown,  
And all the flowers looked up at Him,  
And all the stars looked down.

Words: Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936)

⑤ PETER WARLOCK (1894-1930)

*Bethlehem Down*

“When He is King we will give Him the Kings’ gifts,  
Myrrh for its sweetness, and gold for a crown,  
Beautiful robes”, said the young girl to Joseph,  
Fair with her first-born on Bethlehem Down.

Bethlehem Down is full of the starlight  
Winds for the spices, and stars for the gold,  
Mary for sleep, and for lullaby music  
Songs of a shepherd by Bethlehem fold.

When He is King they will clothe Him in grave-sheets,  
Myrrh for embalming, and wood for a crown,  
He that lies now in the white arms of Mary  
Sleeping so lightly on Bethlehem Down.

Here He has peace and a short while for dreaming,  
Close-huddled oxen to keep Him from cold,  
Mary for love, and for lullaby music  
Songs of a shepherd by Bethlehem fold.

Words: Bruce Blunt (1899-1957)

⑥ TRADITIONAL

*A Gallery Carol – Rejoice and be merry*

Rejoice and be merry in songs and in mirth!  
O praise our Redeemer, all mortals on earth!  
For this is the birthday of Jesus our King,  
Who brought us salvation, His praises we’ll sing!

A heavenly vision appeared in the sky;  
Vast numbers of angels the shepherds did spy,  
Proclaiming the birthday of Jesus our King,  
Who brought us salvation, His praises we’ll sing!

Likewise a bright star in the sky did appear,  
Which led the wise men from the East to draw near;  
They found the Messiah, sweet Jesus our King,  
Who brought us salvation, His praises we’ll sing!

And when they were come, they their treasures unfold,  
And unto him offered myrrh, incense and gold.  
So blessed for ever be Jesus our King,  
Who brought us salvation, His praises we’ll sing!

Words: Traditional, Church-gallery Book

7] WILL TODD (b.1970)

*My Lord has come*

Shepherds, called by angels,  
called by love and angels;  
no place for them but a stable.  
My Lord has come.

Sages, searching for stars,  
searching for love in heaven;  
no place for them but a stable.  
My Lord has come.

His love will hold me,  
His love will cherish me,  
love will cradle me.

Lead me, lead me to see Him,  
sages and shepherds and angels;  
no place for me but a stable.  
My Lord has come.

Words: Will Todd

8] JOHN IRELAND (1879-1962)

*The Holy Boy*

Lowly, laid in a manger,  
With oxen brooding nigh,  
The Heav'nly Babe is lying,  
His Maiden Mother by.

Lo! the wayfaring sages,  
Who journey'd far through the wild,  
Now worship, silent, adoring,  
The Boy, The Heav'nly Child.

Leave your work and your playtime,  
And kneel in homage and prayer,  
The Prince of Love is smiling  
Asleep in His cradle there.

Bend your heart to the wonder,  
The Birth, the Mystery mild,  
And worship, silent, adoring,  
The Boy, The Heav'nly Child.

Dim the light of the lantern,  
And bare the mean abode,  
Yet gold and myrrh and incense  
Proclaim the Son of God.

Lowly, laid in a manger  
By Virgin undefiled,  
Come worship, silent, adoring,  
The Boy, The Heav'nly Child.

Words: Herbert S. Brown (dates unknown)

9 HENRY WALFORD DAVIES (1869-1941)

*O little town of Bethlehem*

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.

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

How silently, how silently,  
The wondrous gift is giv'n!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessing of His heav'n.  
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 angels  
The great glad tidings tell:  
O come to us, abide with us,  
Our Lord Emmanuel.

Words: Phillips Brooks (1835-93),  
Bishop of Massachusetts

10 JOHN GARDNER (1917-2011)

*When Christ was born of Mary free*

When Christ was born of Mary free,  
In Beth'lem in that fair city,  
Angels sung e'er with mirth and glee.

*In excelsis gloria,  
Christo paremus cantica,  
in excelsis gloria.*

Herdmen beheld these angels bright,  
To them appeared with great light,  
And said, 'God's Son is born this night.'

*In excelsis gloria etc.*

This King is come to save His kind,  
In the scripture as we find;  
Therefore this song have we in mind:

*In excelsis gloria etc.*

Then, dear Lord, for Thy great grace,  
Grant us the bliss to see Thy face,  
Where we may sing to Thy solace.

*In excelsis gloria etc.*

Words: anon. 15th century

11 CECILIA MCDOWALL (b.1951)

*Now may we singen*

*Refrain:*

*Now may we singen as it is.*

*Quod puer natus est nobis.*

The Babe to us that now is born,  
Wonderful works He hath ywrought,  
He would not loss what was forlorn,  
But boldly again it bought;

*And thus it is Forsooth ywis,  
He asketh nought but that is His.  
Now may we singen as it is.  
Quod puer natus est nobis.*

This bargain loved He right well,  
The price was high and bought full dear.  
Who would suffer and for us feel  
As did that Prince withouten peer?

*And thus it is Forsooth ywis etc.*

His ransom for us hath ypaid;  
Good reason have we to be His.  
Be mercy asked and He be prayed,  
Who may deserve the heavenly bliss.

*And thus it is Forsooth ywis etc.*

To some purpose God made man;  
I trust well to salvation.  
What was his blood that from him ran  
But fence against damnation?

*And thus it is Forsooth ywis etc.*

Almighty God in Trinity,  
Thy mercy we pray with whole heart,  
Thy mercy may all woe make fell  
And dangerous dread from us to start.

*And thus it is Forsooth ywis etc.*

Words: anon. 15th century

12 TRADITIONAL, arr. RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

*Children's Song of the Nativity – How far is it to Bethlehem?*

Soloists: Alexandra Kidgell *soprano*, Jeremy Budd *tenor*

How far is it to Bethlehem?  
Not very far.  
Shall we find the stable room  
Lit by a star?

Can we see the little Child,  
Is He within?  
If we lift the wooden latch  
May we go in?

May we stroke the creatures there,  
Ox, ass, or sheep?  
May we peep like them and see  
Jesus asleep?

If we touch His tiny hand  
Will He awake?  
Will He know we've come so far  
Just for His sake?

Great kings have precious gifts,  
And we have naught,  
Little smiles and little tears  
Are all we brought.

For all weary children  
Mary must weep.  
Here, on His bed of straw  
Sleep, children, sleep.

God in His mother's arms,  
Babes in the byre,  
Sleep, as they sleep who find  
Their heart's desire.

Words: Frances Chesterton (1875-1938)

13 BORIS ORD (1897-1961)

*Adam lay ybounden*

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!

Words: anon. 15th century

14 ALEC ROTH (b.1948)

*Song of the Shepherds*

Soloists: Emilia Morton, Katy Hill *soprano*

Come we shepherds whose blest sight  
Hath met love's noon in nature's night;  
Come lift we up our lofty song,  
To wake the sun that sleeps too long.

Gloomy night embraced the place  
Where the noble infant lay.  
The babe looked up and showed His face;  
In spite of darkness, it was day.  
It was Thy day, sweet and did rise  
Not from the east, but from Thine eyes.

Welcome to our wond'ring sight!  
Eternity shut in a span!  
Summer in Winter! Day in Night!  
Heaven in Earth, and God in Man!  
Great little one, whose glorious birth  
Lifts earth to heaven, stoops heaven to earth.

We saw Thee in Thy balmy nest,  
Bright dawn of our eternal day;  
We saw Thine eyes break from the east,  
And chase the trembling shades away.  
We saw Thee, and we blessed the sight;  
We saw Thee by Thine own sweet light.

Poor world, said I, what wilt thou do  
To entertain this starry stranger?  
Is this the best thou canst bestow?  
A cold and not too cleanly manger?  
Contend, ye powers of heaven and earth,  
To fit a bed for this huge birth.

I saw the curled drops, soft and slow,  
Come hovering o'er the place's head,  
Off'ring their whitest sheets of snow  
To furnish the fair infant's bed.  
Forbear, said I, be not too bold;  
Your fleece is white but 'tis too cold.

I saw th'officials angels bring  
The down that their soft breasts did strow,  
For well they now can spare their wings,  
When heaven itself lies here below.  
Forbear, said I, be not too rough;  
Thy down though soft's not soft enough.

The babe no sooner 'gan to seek  
Where to lay His lovely head,  
But straight His eyes advised His cheek  
'Twixt mother's breasts to go to bed.  
Sweet choice, said I, no way but so,  
Not to lie cold, yet sleep in snow.

Words: Richard Crashaw (1613-1649)  
from 'In the Holy Nativity of Our Lord God:  
a Hymn Sung as by the Shepherds'

15 TRADITIONAL

*Somerset Carol – Come all you worthy gentlemen*

Come all you worthy gentlemen  
That may be standing by,  
Christ our blessed Saviour  
Was born on Christmas Day.  
The blessed Virgin Mary  
Unto the Lord did say,  
O we wish You the comfort  
and tidings of joy.

Christ our blessed Saviour  
Now in the manger lay –  
He's lying in the manger,  
While the oxen feed on hay.  
The blessed Virgin Mary  
Unto the Lord did say,  
O we wish You the comfort  
and tidings of joy.

God bless the ruler of this house,  
And long on may he reign.  
Many happy Christmases  
He live to see again!  
God bless our generation,  
Who live both far and near,  
And we wish them a happy,  
a happy New Year.

Words: traditional

16 BOB CHILCOTT (b.1955)

*The Shepherd's Carol*

We stood on the hills, Lady,  
Our day's work done,  
Watching the frosted meadows  
That winter had won.

The evening was calm, Lady,  
The air so still,  
Silence more lovely than music  
Folded the hill.

There was a star, Lady,  
Shone in the night,  
Larger than Venus it was  
And bright, so bright.

Oh, a voice from the sky, Lady,  
It seemed to us then,  
Telling of God being born  
In the world of men.

And so we have come, Lady,  
Our day's work done,  
Our love, our hopes, ourselves,  
We give to your Son.

Words: Clive Sansom (1910-81)

17 TRADITIONAL  
*This endris night*

This endris night I saw a sight,  
A star as bright as day,  
And ever among, a maiden sung,  
'Lully, by by, lullay.'

This lovely lady sat and sung,  
And to her child did say,  
'My son, my brother, father, dear,  
Why liest Thou thus in hay?

'My sweetest bird, thus 'tis required,  
Though Thou be king veray,  
But nevertheless I will not cease  
To sing "By by, lullay."

The child then spake in His talking,  
And to His mother said,  
'Yea, I am known as heaven-king  
In crib though I be laid.'

'For angels bright down to Me light;  
Thou knowest 'tis no nay.  
And for that sight thou may'st delight  
To sing, "By by, lullay."

'Now, sweet son, since Thou art a king,  
Why art Thou laid in stall?  
Why dost not order Thy bedding  
In some great kingés hall?'

'Methinks 'tis right that king or knight  
Should lie in good array.  
And then among, it were no wrong  
To sing "By by, lullay."

Words: anon. 15th century

18 JOHN RUTTER (b.1945)  
*There is a flower*  
Soloist: Alexandra Kidgell *soprano*

There is a flower sprung of a tree,  
The root thereof is called Jesse,  
A flower of price;  
There is none such in paradise.

This flower is fair, and fresh of hue,  
It fadeth never, but ever is new;  
The blessed branch this flower on grew  
Was Mary mild that bare Jesu;  
A flower of grace;  
Against all sorrow it is solace.

The seed hereof was Goddes sand,  
That God Himself sowed with His hand,  
In Nazareth, that holy land,  
Amidst her arbour a maiden found;  
This blessed flower  
Sprang never but in Mary's bower.

When Gabriel this maid did meet,  
With 'Ave Maria' he did her greet;  
Between them two this flower was set  
And safe was kept, no man should wit,  
Till on a day  
In Bethlem it could spread and spray.

When that fair flower began to spread  
And His sweet blossom began to bed,  
Then rich and poor of every land  
They marvelled how this flower might spread,  
Till kingés three  
That blessed flower came to see.

Alleluia.

Angels there came from heaven's tower  
To look upon this freshele flower,  
How fair He was in His colour  
And how sweet in His savour;  
And to behold  
How such a flower might spring in gold.

Words: John Audelay (*fl.*1426)

19 TRADITIONAL

*Christmas Eve - The Lord at first did Adam make*

The Lord at first did Adam make  
Out of the dust and clay,  
And in his nostrils breathed life,  
E'en as the Scriptures say.  
And then in Eden's Paradise  
He placed him to dwell,  
That he within it should remain  
To dress and keep it well.

*Now let good Christians all begin  
An holy life to live,  
And to rejoice and merry be,  
For this is Christmas Eve.*

Now mark the goodness of the Lord  
Which He for mankind bore,  
His mercy soon He did extend,  
Lost man for to restore;  
And then for to redeem our souls  
From death and hellish thrall,  
He said His own dear Son should be  
The Saviour of us all.

*Now let good Christians all begin etc.*

Now for the blessings we enjoy,  
Which are from Heaven above,  
Let us renounce all wickedness  
And live in perfect love.  
Then shall we do Christ's own command,  
Ev'n His own written word,  
And when we die, in Heaven shall  
Enjoy our living Lord.

*Now let good Christians all begin etc.*

And now the tide is nigh at hand,  
In which our Saviour came;  
Let us rejoice, and merry be,  
In keeping of the same.  
Let's feed the poor and hungry souls,  
And such as do it crave;  
Then when we die, in Heaven we  
Our sure reward shall have.

*Now let good Christians all begin etc.*

Words: Traditional

20 ALAN BULLARD (b.1947)

*And all the stars looked down*

The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,  
His hair was like a light.  
(O weary, weary were the world,  
But here is all aright.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast,  
His hair was like a star.  
(O stern and cunning are the kings,  
But here the true hearts are.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,  
His hair was like a fire.  
(O weary, weary is the world,  
But here the world's desire.)

The Christ-child stood at Mary's knee,  
His hair was like a crown,  
And all the flowers looked up at Him,  
And all the stars looked down.

Words: Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936)

21 TRADITIONAL

*Dutch Carol – A child is born in Bethlehem*

Soloist: Emilia Morton *soprano*

A child is born in Bethlehem,  
Awaiteth Him all Jerusalem.

*Amor, amor, amor, amor!*  
*Quam dulcis est amor!*

The Son took upon Him humanity,  
That to the Father thus draws nigh.

*Amor, amor etc.*

The angels above were singing then,  
Below were rejoicing the shepherd men.

*Amor, amor etc.*

Now let us all with the angels sing,  
Yea, now let our hearts for gladness spring.

*Amor, amor etc.*

Words: traditional Dutch carol (1599)  
translated: R.C. Trevelyan

22 JAMES MACMILLAN (b.1959)

*O radiant dawn*

O Radiant Dawn, Splendour of eternal Light, Sun of Justice:  
come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

Isaiah had prophesied, 'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;  
upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone.'  
Amen.

Words: Magnificat Antiphon for 21st December

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.



Photograph: Marco Borggreve

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 Messenger'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.

# § The Sixteen

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, Artistic Associate of Kings Place and hold a 2015-2016 Artist Residency at Wigmore Hall. 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 150 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, with the support of the Genesis Foundation, 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.

## The Sixteen

SOPRANO	ALTO	TENOR	BASS
Julie Cooper	Ian Aitkenhead	Simon Berridge	Ben Davies
Sally Dunkley	Daniel Collins	Jeremy Budd	Robert Evans
Camilla Harris	Edward McMullan	Mark Dobell	Tim Jones
Katy Hill	Kim Porter	George Pooley	Rob Macdonald
Alexandra Kidgell			
Emilia Morton			

RECORDING PRODUCER: Mark Brown

RECORDING ENGINEER: Mike Hatch (Floating Earth)

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