

# This Christmas Night

## Contemporary Carols

The Choir of Worcester College, Oxford

Stephen Farr conductor 1, 3, 5-7, 9-10, 12-15, 18-19 and organ 2, 4, 8, 11, 16-17, 20

Edward Turner conductor 2, 4, 11, 16, 17 and organ 7, 9, 13, 19

Nicholas Freestone organ 6

#### About Stephen Farr:

'[Farr's]breadth of vision, intense sense of purpose and brilliant technique combine to make this a recording which [...] deserves repeated listening'

Gramophone

'[Farr] brought an inventive flair to his choice of registers, offering a reading of notable light and shade' Tempo

Hafliði Hallgrímsson (b. 1941) 1. Joseph and the Angel *	[3:43]	Mark-Anthony Turnage 11. Claremont Carol *	[4:08]
Anthony Piccolo (b. 1946) 2. I look from afar	[6:19]	<b>Howard Skempton</b> (b. 1947) 12. There is no rose *	[2:39]
Thomas Hyde (b. 1978) 3. Sweet was the song *	[2:07]	<b>Gabriel Jackson</b> (b. 1952) 13. Hush! my dear *	[3:30]
Mark-Anthony Turnage (b. 1960) 4. Christmas Night *	[2:45]	Peter Maxwell Davies (b. 1934) 14. Fleecy Care Carol *	[2:58]
<b>John McCabe</b> (b. 1939) 5. Mary laid her child	[2:21]	Cecilia McDowall (b. 1951) 15. Of a Rose *	[2:48]
Malcolm Williamson (1931-2003) 6. This Christmas Night	[3:06]	<b>Geoffrey Bush</b> (1920-1998) 16. 'Twas in the year that King Uzziah died	[3:05]
Matthew Martin (b. 1976) 7. I sing of a Maiden *	[2:29]	Elisabeth Lutyens (1906-1983) 17. Nativity	[5:55]
<b>Thomas Hyde</b> 8. Improvisation on 'Puer Natus' *	[5:16]	<b>Edmund Rubbra</b> (1901-1986) 18. Let us securely enter	[2:18]
Judith Bingham (b. 1952) 9. Tu creasti Domine *	[4:02]	Kenneth Leighton (1929-1988) 19. O leave your sheep	[4:14]
Richard Allain (b. 1965) 10. Balulalow *	[1:50]	20. Veni Redemptor – A Celebration	[10:16]

Total playing time

[75:59]

<sup>\*</sup> world premiere recording



The Choir of Worcester College, Oxford recording in the chapel of Keble College, Oxford

#### This Christmas Night

The theme of the Christmas story continues to inspire composers the world over, with more choral music written for this particular season than any other in the Church's calendar. The tradition is perhaps strongest in the British Isles, with its long-established and flourishing choral tradition that includes the creation of the ubiquitous service of Nine Lessons and Carols, which dates from 1880. This programme of works for the Christmas period, either by British composers or those who have lived in Britain, attempts to bring together some lesser-known works from the latter half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, with a selection linked with Worcester College, Oxford.

No fewer than three of the composers represented in this recording have strong connections with Worcester College, the earliest of these being Edmund Rubbra (1901-1986), who was a fellow of the college and lecturer at the newly formed Faculty of Music from 1947 until his retirement in 1968. A composer largely known for his work as a symphonist (he wrote eleven works in the genre), he also composed a substantial body of – mostly sacred – choral works. The tune for th short and relatively simple carol, Let us

securely enter, Op. 93, was written in 1924, with the harmonisation completed some years later in 1956, along with a dedication to the Elizabethan Singers. Rubbra himself translated the original French text (Entrez-y tous en sureté) by the seventeenth-century writer, Christin Prost.

It was during his time as a student of Classics at The Queen's College, Oxford that Kenneth Leighton (1929-1988) first came into contact with Rubbra. As student and lecturer, they began at Oxford during the same year, with Rubbra (along with Bernard Rose) providing guidance to Leighton during his subsequent B.Mus. studies. Following study in Rome with the avant garde composer Goffredo Petrassi and university appointments in Leeds and Edinburgh, it was ultimately as Rubbra's successor that Leighton returned to Oxford as a Fellow of Worceseter College in 1968. Just two years later in 1970. Leighton was tempted back to Edinburgh to become the Reid Professor, a post which he held until his untimely death in 1988.

Both Veni Redemptor – A Celebration, Op. 93 and O leave your sheep take their inspiration from existing themes. The solo organ work Veni Redemptor is based on the plainsong Advent hymn Veni, redemptor gentium (Come, thou redeemer of the earth) – a hymn thought to have been written by

leave your sheep is an arrangement of a French carol. The earlier of these two works. O leave your sheep, was written in July of 1962 at the request of the publisher Novello for inclusion in the volume Sing Nowell. Veni Redemptor - A Celebration was commissioned by William Mathias for the 1985 North Wales International Music Festival and was first performed in September 1985 by the organist John Scott in St Asaph Cathedral. Leighton described the hymn as a 'celebration of Christmas which gives expression to awe and majesty

St Ambrose of Milan (340-397) - while O

The piece continues to grow in stature until the final cadenza statement of the plainsong. composer to have an association with Worcester College - was a student at

as well as to joy and brightness', which is

that gives way to a resplendent Allegro.

reflected in the concentrated introduction

Thomas Hyde (b. 1978) - the most recent both Oxford and London's Royal Academy of Music, before being appointed a lecturer in music at Worcester College in 2008. The

first of his two works in this recording,

Sweet was the song, was composed in

Chamber Choir and dedicated to the

2003 to a commission from the Hampstead

composer's sister. A gently rocking lullaby

Radio 3 and the EBU and first performed by Stephen Farr in St Paul's Church, Knightsbridge. Subsequently incorporated into his Suite on Plainchant Themes, Op. 12, the work builds gradually and almost

underlies an expressive and exquisitely

William Ballet, taken from the early-

crafted setting of this well-known text by

seventeenth century manuscript Lute book

in Trinity College, Dublin. In contrast to the

calm of Sweet was the Song, is the intricate

toccata-like Improvisation on 'Puer natus',

Op. 12 No. 1, for solo organ. It was written

in 2010 for a Christmas broadcast on BBC

relentlessly in intensity towards an ebullient statement of the plainsong in the closing stages of the work.

As one of the most prolific living British composers, Mark-Anthony Turnage (b. 1960) has written only a handful of choral works. The two settings here for upper voices and organ - Christmas Night and Claremont

Carol - lack nothing of the unique and idiomatic style found in many of his larger scores. The immense variety of genres that influence Turnage's work - including jazz and blues as well as popular styles are clear from the opening of Christmas Night, which was written for Reverend

a former Bishop of Truro - speaks of Christ

Joseph Hawes and All Saints, Fulham. The text by The Right Reverend William Ind -

in Tunbridge Wells, Claremont Carol is a setting of the familiar Joseph Mohr text Silent Night. Treated strophically, each verse goes through a variation before the syncopated opening theme becomes

bringing light to the world in the dead of

night. Composed for the Claremont School

augmented accentuating the luxurious harmony.

A member of the BBC Singers for many years and subsequently their composer-inassociation from 2004 to 2009. Judith Bingham (b. 1952), has returned regularly to the choral medium. Born in Nottingham

and raised in Mansfield and Sheffield, she studied singing and composing at London's Royal Academy of Music, where her tutors included Alan Bush and Eric Fenby, with further lessons from Hans Keller, A winner of many awards - including no fewer than four British Composer Awards - Bingham

has also written for diverse groups including orchestral, instrumental, concertos, chamber, and brass groups, in addition to

her considerable choral output. Tu creasti Domine was written in 1989 and later revised in 2011. A setting of a text by the Anglo-French writer and poet Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953), the influence of the French

organ school on Bingham's music is clear,

with a keen sense of harmony that often

borders on exotic, while the closing image

Born and brought up in Sydney, Australia. Malcolm Williamson (1931-2003) spent much of his life in England, eventually becoming

of paradise remains unresolved.

the first non-British holder of the title of Master of the Queen's Music, a post he held from 1975 until his death. This Christmas Night is a setting of a text by Mary Wilson, a poet perhaps more well-known for being

the wife of former British Prime Minister. Harold Wilson. A rich and sumptuous setting of the text. Williamson captures the warmth of the Christmas story.

Successor to Malcolm Williamson as Master of the Queen's Music. Sir Peter Maxwell Davies (b. 1934) trained at the then Royal

Manchester College of Music and was part of the influential New Music Manchester

Group along with Harrison Birtwistle. Alexander Goehr and the pianist John Ogdon. Dedicated to HM The Queen and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh for Christmas 2010. Fleecv Care Carol was premiered on 12 December in the same year by the Choir of the Chapel Royal, St James's Palace, conducted by Andrew Gant. It was the latest in a series of carols that Maxwell Davies has composed

each year since his appointment as Master

of the Queen's Music as a personal gift to the sovereign, and is a setting of an English

folk song. In a fairly straightforward strophic

carol Maxwell Davies combines a folk-like melody with his own distinctive musical language.

Like Maxwell Davies, John McCabe (b. 1939) was also a student at the Royal Manchester College of Music – in the generation following the New Music Manchester Group – and is well-known as both a pianist and a composer. Studying under Gordon Green and Thomas B. Pitfield, McCabe was a prolific writer of music from an early age and has since written a wide range of genres. Mary laid her child is a setting of

a text by the Cumbrian poet. Norman

Nicholson (1914-1987). McCabe echoes the unequivocal writing of Nicholson in

his accessible yet uncompromising carol.

Born in Chester, and a pupil of Cornelius Cardew, the music of Howard Skempton (b. 1947) is immediately identifiable through its refined economy and stillness, often tranquil but deceptively simple. The uncluttered quality of many of Skempton's works is typified by **There is no rose** – a setting of an anonymous fifteenth-century carol, which focuses on the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary – the virtuous rose that brought Jesus into the world.

A former composer-in-association with the National Youth Choir of Great Britain,

Richard Allain (b. 1965) has written in a diverse number of musical genres including choral and music theatre, while maintaining a career in music education, and is an innovative and creative voice in contemporary music. The Scots text of **Balulalow** – attributed to the sixteenth-century poets and brothers James, John, and Robert Wedderburn from Dundee – is a gentle yet luxurious lullaby for the infant Christ.

Currently a rising star in British music, Matthew Martin (b. 1976) has been commissioned to write for most of the major choirs in the UK as well as further afield. Also well known as an organist and choir director – having held positions at Magdalene and New Colleges in Oxford, and in Canterbury and Westminster Cathedrals – Martin studied in Oxford and at the Royal Academy of Music in London and is currently organist and composer-in-residence at the London Oratory Church. I sing of a maiden was first performed in December 2010 by the Choir of Merton College Oxford under their director Benjamin Nicholas, and is a setting of a fifteenth-century

Another established figure in British choral music is Gabriel Jackson (b. 1962), whose output for the genre is quite prolific. Currently composer-in-association with the BBC Singers in succession to Judith Bingham, Jackson

English hymn to the Blessed Virgin Mary.



was born in Bermuda, was a chorister at Canterbury Cathedral, and studied at the Royal College of Music in London. With a text by Isaac Watts, **Hush! my dear** is a simple Iullaby which typifies Jackson's unique harmonic language, with instructions that the scoring and dynamics for each verse can be varied freely.

Known as a composer of accessible yet uncompromising music in a number of genres Cecilia McDowall (b. 1951) composes music that is particularly expressive and communicative. Written for Alan Lloyd Davies and the Goodworth Singers, **Of a Rose** is an energetic folk-inspired setting of this paean to the Blessed Virgin Mary. While a contemporary flavour colours the score as a whole, there is a prevailing modal quality to the melodic and harmonic

material throughout, while the brisk pace

is combined with a slightly irregular metre.

The composer Geoffrey Bush (1920-1998) studied at Balliol College, Oxford, and for much of his life taught music at university level, firstly at Oxford and then at the University of London. He wrote some six operas, two symphonies, concertos and a good number of songs in addition to his contribution to the choral repertoire. The dramatic cascading organ semiquavers that open 'Twas in the year that King

Uzziah died characterise the remainder of the piece, along with the bold unison melody 'in the 5th Mode: a metrical form of the Sanctus', the text from The Book of Isaiah, speaking of Isaiah's vision of Heaven.

The pioneering serial composer Elisabeth Lutyens (1906-1983) was perhaps always an outsider to a cautious musical establishment in Britain, although her music is now more appreciated and understood than ever before. In Nativity Lutyens provides a lyrical setting of a text by W.R. Rodgers. An extended soprano then baritone solo gives way to an urgent and almost sinister mood for unison sopranos and tenors, before a return to the calm of the baritone solo

(b. 1941) has spent the largest part of his career living and working in the UK, firstly as a cellist with the English Chamber Orchestra and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and latterly purely as a composer. Written specially for this recording by Hallgrímsson, Joseph and the Angel sets a text from the Sloane Manuscript (1396), often known as the 'Cherry Tree Carol'. It begins with a simple melody from the sopranos, with another voice part being added each subsequent verse, leading to the uncomplicated warmth of the full choir.

Hailing from Iceland, Hafliði Hallgrímsson

Born and raised in New Jersey, Anthony Piccolo (b. 1946) trained as a pianist and composer in the USA, and subsequently in Britain where he lived for nine years. Piccolo served as a lay clerk in a number of British cathedrals including Canterbury, Lichfield and St Paul's in London. Among the works he wrote while in the UK is I look from afar, which was commissioned for the Royal School of Church Music St Albans Diocesan Choirs Festival in 1982. Using the familiar words of the Advent Matins Responsory, Piccolo provides a detailed response to the text in an expressive work of great variety, often coloured by obvious influences of jazz and blues.

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Stephen Farr

Texts	
(excluding texts in copyright)	As Joseph was a-walking
	He heard an Angel sing:
Hafliði Hallgrímsson	"This night there shall be born
<ol> <li>Joseph and the Angel</li> </ol>	Our Heavenly King;
	He neither shall be christened
As Joseph was a-walking	In white wine nor in red,
He heard an Angel sing:	But in the fair spring water
"This night there shall be born	As we were christened."
Our Heavenly King;	Noel, Noel, Noel.
He neither shall be born	
In housen nor in hall,	From the Sloane MS. (1396)
Nor in the place of Paradise,	
But in an ox's stall."	Anthony Piccolo
Noel, Noel.	2. I look from afar
As Joseph was a-walking	I look from afar:
He heard an Angel sing:	and lo, I see the power of God coming,
"This night there shall be born	and a cloud covering the whole earth.
Our Heavenly King;	Go ye out to meet him and say:
He neither shall be clothed	Tell us, if thou art he who shall reign
In in purple nor in pall,	over the people of Israel?
But all in fair linen	All ye inhabiters of the earth,
As wear babies all."	and ye children of men,
Noel, Noel, Noel.	rich and poor, one with another,
	Go ye out to meet him and say:
As Joseph was a-walking	Hear, O thou shepherd of Israel,
He heard an Angel sing:	thou that leadest Joseph like a flock,
"This night there shall be born	Tell if thou art he.
Our Heavenly King;	Lift up your heads O ye gates,
He neither shall be rocked	and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors
In silver nor in gold,	and the king of glory shall come in
But in a wooden cradle That rocks on the mold."	who shall reign over the people Israel.
	Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
Noel, Noel, Noel.	and to the Holy Ghost.
	Advent Matins Reponsery

To his mother's hower 3. Sweet was the song As dew in April That falleth on the flower. Sweet was the song the Virgin sang, When she to Bethlem Juda came, He came all so still And was delivered of a son. Where his mother lav That blessed Jesus hath to name: As dew in April Lulla, lulla, lullaby. That falleth on the spray. Sweet Babe, sang she, 'my Son, And eke a saviour born, Mother and maiden Who hast vouchsafed from on high Was never none but she-To visit us that were forlorn: Well may such a lady Lulla, lulla, lullaby.' Godes mother be. And rocked him sweetly on her knee. Fifteenth-century English William Rallet (from the MS. Lute book, early-seventeenth century Richard Allain Trinity College, Dublin) Matthew Martin

Thomas Hyde

7. I Sing of a Maiden

I sing of a maiden

That is makeless; King of all kings

To her son she ches.

Where his mother was As dew in April

That falleth on the grass.

He came also still

10. Balulalow

O my deare hert, young Jesu sweit, prepare thy credil in my spreit, and I sall rock thee in my hert and never mair from thee depart.

But I sall praise thee evermoir with sanges sweit unto thy gloir; the knees of my hert sall I bow,

and sing that richt balulalow.

Wedderburn (1567)

He came all so still

11 Claremont Carol Coarse and hard thy Saviour lav When his birthplace was a stable And his softest bed was hav. Silent night, holy night, All is calm, all is bright. See the kindly shepherds round him, Round young virgin mother and child, Telling wonders from the sky! Holy infant so tender and mild. Where they sought him, there they found him, Sleep in heavenly peace, With his Virgin Mother by. Sleep in heavenly peace. May'st thou live to know and fear him, Silent night, holy night, Trust and love him all thy days: Shepherds quake at the sight. Then go dwell for ever near him, Glories stream from heaven above. See his face, and sing his praise! Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia. Christ the Saviour is born, Isaac Watts Christ the Saviour is born. Peter Maxwell Davies Silent night, holy night, 14. Fleecy Care Carol All is calm, all is bright. Round young virgin mother and child, Holy infant so tender and mild, As Shepherds tend their fleecy care, Silent night, holy night, A heav'nly angle does appear, Son of God, love's pure light. "Shepherds, attend, to you I bring Glad tidings of a new-born King. Joseph Mohr In Bethlem's town this blessed morn A saviour of mankind is born. Born of a spotless virgin pure. Gabriel Jackson Free from all sin and guile secure." 13. Hush! mv dear "In swaddling clothes this babe behold. Hush! mv dear. lie still and slumber: No costly garb his limbs enfold. Holy angels guard thy bed! Laid in a manger: there you'll find Heavenly blessings without number The great redeemer of mankind. Gently falling on thy head. Arise, your tender care forsake, With hasty steps your journey take To David's city there you'll see The pattern of humanity."

Soft and easy is thy cradle,

Mark-Anthony Turnage

Sing Alleluia, all rejoice. English folk poem from Napton, Warwickshire Cecilia McDowall

To save us from eternal death

The great Messiah came to earth.

Then let us all with united voice

15. Of a Rose

Alleluia.

Alleluia.

Listen, lordynges, old and yonge,

How this rose began to sprynge; Such a rose to mine lykynge In all this world ne knowe I non.

Alleluia The aungel came from hevene tour

To greet Marye with gret honour, Sevde she should bere the flour That should breke the findes bond

The flower sprong in heye Bethlem, That is both bryht and schen: The rose is Mary hevene gwene.

Out of here the blosme sprong. Alleluia The ferste braunche is ful of myht.

That is bothe brod and long.

Full of his glory, earth and heaven, both." That sprong on Chrystemesse nyht. The sterre schon over Bethlem bryht

Alleluia The thredde braunche is good and swote. It sprang to hevene crop and rote.

The secunde braunche sprong to helle,

The fiendes power doup to felle:

Therein myht non soule dwelle:

Blyss'd be the time the rose sprong!

There to dwell and ben our bote:

Ev'ry day it schewit in prystes hond. Alleluia.

Fourteenth-century English

**Geoffrey Bush** 16. 'Twas in the year that King Uzziah died

'Twas in the year that King Uzziah died.

A vision by Isaiah was aspied: A lofty throne the Lord was set thereon: And with his glory all the temple shone.

Bright Seraphim were standing round about.

Six wings had every of that quire devout. With twain he awesome veil'd his face, and so With twain he dreadful veil'd his feet below. With twain did he now hither, thither fly: And thus allowed did one to other cry: "Holy is God, the Lord of Sabaoth.

And at their cry the lintels moved apace. And clouds of incense fill'd the Holy Place. Isaiah 6: 1-4

Adapted by G.R. Woodward

19. O leave your sheep  O leave your sheep, Your lambs that follow after, O leave the brook, The pasture and the crook, No longer weep, Turn weeping into laughter, O shepherds, seek your goal. Your Lord, who cometh to console.  You'll find him laid within a simple stable, A babe new born, in poverty forlorn, In love array'd, A love so deep 'tis able To search the night for you, 'Tis he! The Shepherd true.  O kings so great, a light is streaming o'er you,  More radiant for	naring its duties with one of the few boys' noirs remaining in the Oxbridge choral adition, the Choir of Worcester College, wford typically sings two services a eek in the eighteenth-century college napel, providing opportunities for noral and organ scholars. The choir is ade up primarily of students from orcester College together with members om other colleges and from outside e student body.  The mixed choir sings a broad variety of usic, from contemporary works by symposers associated with the college to edieval English polyphony and a range music in between. As well as making equent recordings The choir performs oncerts in and outside of Oxford on a gular basis as well as undertaking foreign thome tours and making day trips to sing cruices in cathedrals throughout England.	Soprano Zoe Bonner Rebecca Field Angelika Ketzer Rachel Knight Eleanor Pettit Jennifer Snapes Hannah Thomas Klementyna Zastawniak  Alto Jake Barlow Kay Douglass Claire Eadington Giles Pilgrim Morris Hannah Stout  Tenor Guy Cutting Michael Hawkes Stuart McKerracher Edward Saklatvala  Bass Jonathan Arnold Matthew Cheung Salisbury
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### Stephen Farr

Stephen Farr is Director of Music at St Paul's Church, Knightsbridge, and at Worcester College, Oxford, posts which he combines with a varied career as soloist, continuo player, and conductor. He was Organ Scholar of Clare College, Cambridge, graduating with a double first in Music and an MPhil in musicology. He then held appointments at Christ Church, Oxford, and at Winchester

and Guildford Cathedrals

A former student of David Sanger and a prizewinner at international competition level, he has an established reputation as one of the leading recitalists of his generation, and has appeared in the UK in venues including the Royal Albert Hall (where he gave the premiere of Judith Bingham's *The Everlasting Crown* in the BBC Proms 2011); Bridgewater Hall; Symphony Hall, Birmingham; Westminster Cathedral; King's College, Cambridge, St Paul's Celebrity Series and Westminster Abbey: he also appears frequently on BBC Radio 3 as both

He has performed widely in both North and South America (most recently as guest soloist and director at the Cartagena International Music Festival), in Australia, and throughout Europe.

performer and presenter.

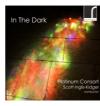
He has a particular commitment to contemporary music, and has been involved in premieres of works by composers including Patrick Gowers, Francis Pott and Robert Saxton; he also collaborated with Thomas Adès in a recording of *Under Hamelin Hill*, part of an extensive and wide-ranging discography.

His concerto work has included engagements

with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra and the London Mozart Players: he made his debut in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw in 2005. He has also worked with many other leading ensembles including the Berlin Philharmonic (with whom he appeared in the premiere of Jonathan Harvey's Weltethos under Sir Simon Rattle in October 2011), Florilegium, the Bach Choir, Holst Singers, BBC Singers, Polyphony, The English Concert, London Baroque Soloists, City of London Sinfonia, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Wallace Collection, Endymion Ensemble, the Philharmonia, Academy of Ancient Music, Britten Sinfonia and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment.

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Cover image: Detail from the Polyptych of San Pancrazio: Predella panel (before 1338)
by Bernardo Daddi (1290-1350)

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