

The Cambridge Singers Christmas Album

directed by JOHN RUTTER



Collegium
RECORDS

The Cambridge Singers Christmas Album



CAROLS AND CHRISTMAS MUSIC have always formed a part of the Cambridge Singers' recorded repertoire, and this album picks out some of my personal favourites. Most of the 23 items are taken from the two albums *Christmas with the Cambridge Singers* and *Christmas Day in the Morning*, and there are four previously unreleased tracks which were squeezed out of those two albums and which I am happy to have found space for here.

There are three strands to the programme: traditional carols; choruses and motets; and composers' carols. In fact these categories are not as separate as they might appear. Composers have always loved to take traditional melodies and incorporate them into their own compositions, sometimes considerably elaborating them in the process: think of all those *L'homme armé* masses or of Bach's chorale treatments. The art of the arranger, widely thought of as a twentieth-century invention, is as old as composition itself. When we listen to a 'traditional' carol sung by a choir, we are in fact generally hearing the work of an identifiable composer who has arranged, in his own style, a melody by an unidentifiable or obscure composer from an earlier era.

The earliest examples on this album are Victoria's *O magnum mysterium* (1572), a four-voiced motet where the melodic outlines are based on a Gregorian chant, and Scheidt's *In dulci jubilo* (1620), which takes one of the best-loved of all Christmas carols and turns it into a resplendent double-choir motet with two antiphonal trumpet parts. Arrangements or compositions? It hardly matters. The point is that composers of the past had no qualms about taking traditional material and making it their own, and neither should we. Simplicity—as in Walford Davies's classic setting of *The holly and the ivy*—is sometimes a virtue, but let us also admire and enjoy the skill and invention of, for example, David Willcocks, who is capable of taking a fairly ordinary piece of raw material such as *Blessed be that maid Mary* and turning it into a radiant little choral tone-poem filled with variety and colour. On a larger scale, Vaughan Williams did the same with his evergreen *Fantasia on Christmas Carols* (1912), which transforms the handful of rustic carols upon which it is based, raising them to an altogether more symphonic level.

Sometimes, of course, a composer may simply take a seasonal text and set it to music

which is entirely new. Sweelinck's *Hodie Christus natus est*, Handel's *For unto us a child is born*, Adolphe Adam's *O holy night* and Berlioz's *Shepherds' Farewell* use no musical material borrowed from anyone else, though Handel's chorus did start life as an Italian love duet—and Berlioz, to take a rise out of the critics, at first claimed that his *Shepherds' Farewell* was the work of a (fictional) earlier composer named Pierre Ducré.

Carols will continue to be written as long as artists continue to be inspired by Christmas itself. The final section of this collection pays tribute to five composers—Vaughan Williams, Warlock, Britten, Leighton, and Tavener—who notably enriched the Christmas repertoire in the twentieth century. A quality these composers share is the ability to write with transparent, childlike sincerity, capturing the sense of wonder which lies at the heart of the Christmas story.

JOHN RUTTER

The Cambridge Singers

Sopranos: Caroline Ashton, *Donna Deam, †Judith English, *Ruth Holton, †Karen Kerlake, Simone Mace, *Jo Maggs, †Jocelyn Miles, Mary Mure, †Olive Simpson, *Alison Smart, †Penelope Stow, *Nancy-Jane Thompson, Clare Wallace, *Susanna Watson, Julia Wilson-James

Altos: Nicola Barber, †Jane Bolam, †Patrick Craig, *Peter Gritton, †Natanya Hadda, Mary Hitch, †Frances Jellard, *Nicola-Jane Kemp, *Melanie Marshall, *Susanna Spicer

Tenors: Harvey Brough, †David Dunnett, *Andrew Gant, Paul Gordon, †Robert Graham-Campbell, *Mark LeBrocq, *Jeremy Taylor, †Christopher Walker, †Nicholas Wilson, *Richard Edgar Wilson

Basses: †Edward Caswell, †Michael Chambers, *Donald Greig, †Bruce Hamilton, †Patrick Lee-Browne, James Mure, *James Ottaway, †Charles Pott, *Christopher Purves, *Benjamin Thompson, †Julian Walker

*Tracks 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19 only

†Tracks 2, 4, 6, 9, 10, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23 only

The Cambridge Singers Christmas Album

The Cambridge Singers • Stephen Varcoe (*baritone*)

City of London Sinfonia
conducted by John Rutter

Total playing time: 77' 30"

Note: Words credits are given at the end of each text.

ENGLISH TRADITIONAL CAROLS

- 1 **The holly and the ivy** (2' 53")
arranged by H. Walford Davies
- 2 **Blessed be that maid Mary** (2' 32")
arranged by David Willcocks
- 3 **Somerset Wassail** (2' 05")
arranged by John Rutter

EUROPEAN TRADITIONAL CAROLS

- 4 **Shepherds, in the field abiding** (2' 52")
French, arranged by David Willcocks
- 5 **The Infant King** (2' 48")
Basque, arranged by David Willcocks
Soprano solo: Caroline Ashton
- 6 **What is this lovely fragrance?** (3' 23")
French, arranged by Healey Willan
- 7 **Gabriel's message** (2' 50")
Basque, arranged by David Willcocks
Soprano solo: Ruth Holton

-
- 8** **Still, still, still** (2' 13")
German, arranged by John Rutter
- 9** **Quittez, pasteurs** (2' 27")
French, arranged by John Rutter
- 10** **Un flambeau, Jeannette, Isabelle** (2' 02")
French, arranged by John Rutter

- 11** **Personent hodie** (1' 43")
German, arranged by John Rutter

CHORUSES AND MOTETS

- 12** **The shepherds' farewell** (3' 37")
Hector Berlioz (1803–69)

- 13** **O holy night** (4' 37")
Adolphe Adam (1803–56)

- 14** **O magnum mysterium** (4' 00")
T. L. de Victoria (1548–1611)

- 15** **Hodie Christus natus est** (2' 50")
J. P. Sweelinck (1562–1611)

- 16** **For unto us a child is born** (4' 08")
G. F. Handel (1685–1759)

- 17** **In dulci jubilo** (3' 21")
Samuel Scheidt (1587–1654)
Solo trumpets: Michael Meeks, Edward Hobart
Chamber organ: John Scott

COMPOSERS' CAROLS

- 18** **Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child** (3' 07")
Kenneth Leighton (1929–88)
Soprano solo: Caroline Ashton

-
- 19** **A New Year Carol** (2' 15")
Benjamin Britten (1913–76)
Harp: Rachel Masters

- 20** **Balulalow** (2' 01")
Peter Warlock (1894–1930)
Soprano solo: Karen Kerlake

- 21** **I saw a fair maiden** (2' 58")
Peter Warlock

- 22** **The Lamb** (3' 24")
John Tavener (*b.* 1944)

- 23** **Fantasia on Christmas Carols** (11' 27")
R. Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)
Baritone solo: Stephen Varcoe
Cello solo: Stephen Orton

Tracks 1 and 18 published by Novello & Co.

Tracks 3, 10, 11, and 13 published by Hinshaw Music, Inc. (in USA), Oxford University Press (in all other countries)

Tracks 2, 4, 5, 7, and 9 published worldwide by Oxford University Press

Track 6 published by Gordon V. Thompson Music (Canada)

Track 8 published worldwide by Hinshaw Music, Inc.

Track 19 published by Boosey & Hawkes Ltd

Track 22 published by Chester Music

Track 23 published by Stainer & Bell Ltd

Tracks 1, 4, 5, 7, 12, and 19 are included in *100 Carols for Choirs*, edited by David Willcocks and John Rutter (Oxford University Press).

Tracks 14, 15, and 17 are included in the Oxford Choral Classics volume *Christmas Motets*, edited by John Rutter.

English traditional carols

1 The holly and the ivy

This folk carol, probably of eighteenth-century origin, was published in the form it is known today in 1911 by Cecil Sharp in his collection *English Folk Carols*. The following year Walford Davies, then organist of the Temple Church in London, made the present setting which has remained perhaps the simplest and best.

The holly and the ivy
When they are both full grown;
Of all the trees that are in the wood
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.

The holly bears a berry
As red as any blood;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To do poor sinners good.

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

The holly bears a bark
As bitt'r as any gall;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
For to redeem us all.

*English traditional carol
arranged by H. Walford Davies (1869–1941)*

2 Blessed be that maid Mary

As with many carols and hymns, *Blessed be that maid Mary*, which first appeared in Wood and Woodward's *Cowley Carol Book* of 1902, was an editorially-arranged marriage between a melody and a text of quite separate origins. The melody is from William Ballet's Lute Book (c. 1590), and the text is a modernized version by Woodward of a fifteenth-century original from the Sloane Manuscript. David Willcocks's setting was written for the choir of King's College, Cambridge, and was first published in *Carols for Choirs* in 1961.

Blessed be that maid Mary;
Born he was of her body;
Very God ere time began,
Born in time the Son of Man.
*Eya! Jesus hodie
Natus est de virgine.*

In a manger of an ass
Jesu lay and lulled was;
Born to die upon the tree
Pro peccante homine.

Sweet and blissful was the song
Chanted of the angel throng,
'Peace on earth', Alleluya.
In excelsis Gloria.

Fare three kings from far-off land,
Incense, gold and myrrh in hand;
In Beth'lem the Babe they see,
Stelle ducti lumine.

Make we merry on this fest,
In quo Christus natus est;
On this child I pray you call,
To assoil and save us all.

English traditional melody arranged by David Willcocks
Words by G. R. Woodward (1848–1934)

3 Somerset Wassail

Like *The holly and the ivy*, this rollicking ditty is a folk carol collected by Cecil Sharp, and is notable for one of the most quaintly obscure lines in all carol literature: 'The girt dog of Langport he burnt his long tail'. Sharp believed it referred to the eighth-century Danish invasion of that Somerset village. According to another theory, the girt (= great) dog was a spectral hound.

Wassail, and wassail, all over the town!
The cup it is white and the ale it is brown;
The cup it is made of the good ashen tree,
And so is the malt of the best barley:
For it's your wassail, and it's our wassail!
And it's joy be to you, and a jolly wassail!

O master and mistress, are you all within?
Pray open the door and let us come in;
O master and mistress a-sitting by the fire,
Pray think upon poor trav'lers, a-trav'ling in the mire.

O where is the maid, with the silver-headed pin,
To open the door, and let us come in?
O master and mistress, it is our desire
A good loaf and cheese, and a toast by the fire.

The girt dog of Langport he burnt his long tail,
And this is the night we go singing wassail:
O master and mistress, now we must be gone;
God bless all in this house till we do come again.

English traditional carol arranged by John Rutter

European traditional carols

4 Shepherds, in the field abiding

Like *Blessed be that maid Mary*, this was a Wood-Woodward creation: its French folk melody, *Les anges dans nos campagnes*, was first published in 1842, and its text by Woodward was based on the Christmas antiphon *Quem vidistis, pastores*.

Shepherds, in the field abiding,
Tell us, when the seraph bright
Greeted you with wondrous tiding,
What ye saw and heard that night.
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

We beheld (it is no fable)
God incarnate, King of bliss,
Swathed and cradled in a stable,
And the angel-strain was this:

Quiristers on high were singing
Jesus and his virgin-birth;
Heav'nly bells the while a-ringing
'Peace, goodwill to men on earth.'

Thanks, good herdmen, true your story;
*Have with you to Bethlehem:
Angels hymn the King of Glory;
Carol we with you and them.

French traditional melody arranged by David Willcocks
Words by G. R. Woodward

*Have with you = I am ready to go with you.

5 The Infant King

This and *Gabriel's message* (track 7) are the two best-loved of a number of Basque folk carols first published in Charles Bordes' collection of 1895 and popularized in the English-speaking world by their publication in the *University Carol Book* with Sabine Baring-Gould's excellent English texts. For many years both carols were regularly sung at King's College, Cambridge.

Sing lullaby!
Lullaby baby, now reclining,
Sing lullaby!
Hush, do not wake the Infant King.
Angels are watching, stars are shining
Over the place where he is lying:
Sing lullaby!

Sing lullaby!
Lullaby baby, now a-sleeping,
Sing lullaby!
Hush, do not wake the Infant King.
Soon will come sorrow with the morning,
Soon will come bitter grief and weeping:
Sing lullaby!

Sing lullaby!
Lullaby baby, now a-doing,
Sing lullaby!
Hush, do not wake the Infant King.
Soon comes the cross, the nails, the piercing,
Then in the grave at last reposing:
Sing lullaby!

Sing lullaby!
Lullaby! is the babe awaking?
Sing lullaby!
Hush, do not stir the Infant King,
Dreaming of Easter, gladsome morning,
Conquering Death, its bondage breaking:
Sing lullaby!

Basque carol arranged by David Willcocks
Words by S. Baring-Gould (1834–1924)

6 What is this lovely fragrance?

There are many choral settings of this ravishing French carol (its melody an unlikely first cousin to the drinking song *Fill ev'ry glass* from *The Beggar's Opera*), and Healey Willan's is surely one of the loveliest. He was a Canadian organist-composer, originally from London, whose contribution to Canadian musical life is fondly remembered there.

What is this lovely fragrance wafting
Like to the scents of flow'rs in spring!
Shepherds, O tell us, whence such beauty,
Hear you not heav'nly carolling?
What is this lovely fragrance wafting
Like to the scents of flow'rs in spring.

What is this light so fair, so tender
Breaking upon our wond'ring eyes?
Never the Morning Star so radiant
Followed his course o'er eastern skies.
What is this light so fair, so tender,
Breaking upon our wond'ring eyes?

Shepherds, O haste with eager footsteps
Seek the Saviour, born today.
Low at His feet we lay our treasure,
Heart's adoration, love for aye.
Shepherds, O haste with eager footsteps
Seek the Saviour, born today.

*French traditional carol arranged by Healey Willan (1880–1968)
Words translated from the French by Ysobel*

7 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 known a blessed Mother thou shalt be,
All generations laud and honour thee,
Thy Son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold,
Most highly favour'd lady, Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,
'To me be as it pleaseth God,' she said,
'My soul doth laud and magnify his holy name.'
Most highly favour'd lady, Gloria!

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

*Basque carol arranged by David Willcocks
Words by S. Baring-Gould*

8 Still, still, still

Of a similar period and style to *Stille Nacht*, this Tyrolean folk carol was first noted in 1819 and published in 1865 in a collection of Salzburg folk songs edited by V. M. Süß.

Still, still, still: the night is calm and still.
The Christ child in his crib lies sleeping,
Angels round him watch are keeping.
Still, still, still: the night is calm and still.

Sleep, sleep, sleep: sweet Jesus, softly sleep,
While Mary sings and gently holds you,
Safely in her arms enfolds you.
Sleep, sleep, sleep: sweet Jesus, softly sleep.

Joy, joy, joy; glad tidings of great joy!
For through God's holy incarnation
Christ is born for our salvation.
Joy, joy, joy; glad tidings of great joy!

German carol translated and arranged by John Rutter

9 Quittez, pasteurs

This carol and the next, both of French rural origin with drone basses, form such a natural pair that we had to juxtapose them. *Un flambeau* probably relates to the Provençal custom of building Christmas cribs with model figures of the Holy Family. Torches also figure in Christmas celebrations in that part of Europe.

Quittez, pasteurs,
Vos brebis, vos houlettes,
Votre hameau
Et le soin du troupeau;
Changez vos pleurs,
En une joie parfaite,
Allez tous adorer
Un Dieu qui vient vous consoler.

Vous le verrez
Couché dans une étable,
Comme un enfant
Nu, pauvre, languissant;
Reconnaissez
Son amour ineffable
Pour nous venir chercher.
Il est le fidèle berger.

Rois d'Orient
L'étoile vous éclaire;
A ce grand roi
Rendez hommage et foi.
L'astre brillant
Vous mène à la lumière
De ce soleil naissant;
Offrez l'or, la myrrhe et l'encens.

Esprit divin
A qui tout est possible,
Percez nos cœurs
De vos douces ardeurs;
Notre destin

*Come leave your sheep,
Your ewes with lambs a-feeding,
O shepherds, hear
Our message of good cheer;
No longer weep;
The angels tidings heeding,
To Bethlem haste away!
Our Lord is born this happy day.*

*He lieth there
Within a lowly manger;
An infant poor
He languisheth full sore.
God's loving care
Hath saved us all from danger
And brought us to his fold;
Now own his faithful love revealed of old.*

*Ye sages three
Arrayed in royal splendour,
Your homage pay;
A king is born this day.
The star ye see
Its radiance must surrender
Before our Sun most bright;
Your gifts are precious in his sight.*

*Come Holy Ghost,
Of blessings source eternal,
Our souls inspire
With thy celestial fire;
The heav'nly host*

Par vous devient paisible;
Dieu prétend nous donner
Le ciel en venant s'incarner.

10 Un flambeau, Jeannette, Isabelle

Un flambeau, Jeannette, Isabelle,
Un flambeau, courons au berceau!
C'est Jésus, bonnes gens du hameau,
Le Christ est né, Marie appelle,
Ah! ah! que la mère est belle,
Ah! ah! que l'Enfant est beau!

C'est un tort quand l'Enfant sommeille,
C'est un tort de crier si fort.
Taisez-vous, l'un et l'autre d'abord!
Au moindre bruit, Jésus s'éveille.
Chut! chut! chut! il dort à merveille,
Chut! chut! chut! voyez comme il dort!

Doucement dans l'étable close,
Doucement, venez un moment!
Approchez, que Jésus est charmant!
Comme il est blanc, comme il est rose!
Do! Do! Do! que l'Enfant repose!
Do! Do! Do! qu'il rit en dormant!

11 Personent hodie

The immediate source of this jovial carol is a Swedish school song-book of 1582, *Piae Cantiones*, notable for the many good tunes it contains (including that now sung to *Good King Wenceslas*). Both melody and text derive from a much earlier German collection, the Moosburg Gradual of 1355–60.

*Praise Christ the Lord supernal
And sing the peace on earth.*

French traditional carol arranged by John Rutter

*Bring a torch, Jeannette, Isabella!
Bring a torch, to the cradle run!
It is Jesus, good folk of the village,
Christ is born and Mary's calling,
Ah! ah! beautiful is the Mother!
Ah! ah! beautiful is her son.*

*It is wrong when the Child is sleeping,
It is wrong to talk so loud.
Silence, all, as you gather around,
Lest your noise should waken Jesus;
Hush! hush! see how fast he slumbers;
Hush! hush! see how fast he sleeps!*

*Softly to the little stable,
Softly for a moment come!
Look and see how charming is Jesus,
How he is white, his cheeks are rosy!
Hush! hush! see how the Child is sleeping;
Hush! hush! see how he smiles in dreams!*

French traditional carol arranged by John Rutter

Personent hodie
Voces puerulae,
Laudantes jucunde
Qui nobis est natus,
Summo Deo datus,
Et de vir-, vir-, vir-,
Et de vir-, vir-, vir-,
Et de virgineo
Ventre procreatus.

In mundo nascitur
Pannis involvitur,
Praesepi ponitur
Stabulo brutorum,
Rector supernorum.
Perdidit, -dit, -dit,
Perdidit, -dit, -dit,
Perdidit spolia
Princeps infernorum.

(1. Let youthful voices resound today, sweetly praising the most high God's gift, born to us of a virgin's womb. 2. He is born on earth, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger in an animals' stable, the ruler of the heavens. The prince of hell has lost his spoils. 3. Three wise men came seeking the young child, and went to Bethlehem, following the star. They worshipped him, offering gold, frankincense and myrrh. 4. Let all clerks and boys sing like the angels that thou art come to earth, pouring forth praises to thee: therefore sing 'Glory to God in the highest'.)

Words and melody: 'Piae Cantiones', 1582, arranged by John Rutter

Choruses and motets

[12] The shepherds' farewell

This gentle, pastoral chorus, popular in Britain ever since it was published with English text by Novello in the early 1900s, opens Part II of Berlioz's oratorio *L'enfance du Christ* (1854) and was the seed from which the work sprang. During a dull card party Berlioz had idly sketched the music as an organ piece and was persuaded to add suitable words,

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

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

which led him to imagine a biblical scene where the shepherds bade farewell to the Holy Family as they embarked on their flight into Egypt. Out of this grew the whole oratorio.

Thou must leave thy lowly dwelling,
The humble crib, the stable bare,
Babe, all mortal babes excelling,
Content our earthly lot to share.
Loving father, loving mother
Shelter thee with tender care!

Blessed Jesus, we implore thee
With humble love and lowly fear,
In the land that lies before thee,
Forget not us who linger here!
May the shepherd's lowly calling,
Ever to thy heart be dear!

Blest are ye beyond all measure,
Thou happy father, mother mild!
Guard ye well your heav'nly treasure,
The Prince of Peace, the Holy Child!
God go with you, God protect you,
Guide you safely through the wild!

*Words and music: Hector Berlioz (1803–69) from 'L'enfance du Christ', Op. 25
Words translated by Paul England*

[13] O holy night

It is startling to recall that this much-loved cornerstone of the Christmas repertory was, within living memory, banned by radio stations in the American South because of the 'socialist' and anti-slavery sentiments of its text. The author, de Roquemaure, was a friend of the composer and a leading intellectual light in Paris during the period leading up to the 1848 revolution; the translator was the American abolitionist John Sullivan Dwight (1812–93). The composer, Adolphe Adam, remembered mainly for his attractive

ballet score to *Giselle* and for this, his *Cantique de Noël*, spent most of a busy life prolifically writing operas and ballets in Paris. Ironically, the 1848 revolution led to his bankruptcy when a new opera house he had backed was forced to close due to the fighting.

O holy night! The stars are brightly shining,
It is the night of the dear Saviour's birth;
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Till he appeared, and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.
Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!
O night divine! O night when Christ was born.

Truly he taught us to love one another;
His law is love and his Gospel is peace.
Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother,
And in his Name all oppression shall cease.
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,
Let all within us praise his holy Name.
Christ is the Lord, then ever, ever praise we,
His power and glory evermore proclaim.

Adolphe Adam (1803–56), arranged by John Rutter
Words: Cappeau de Roquemauve (1808–77), tr. J. S. Dwight

14 O magnum mysterium

Victoria, the leading Spanish composer of the Renaissance, worked in Rome as organist, choirmaster and priest, and gained a wide reputation from his published compositions, all of them sacred. *O magnum mysterium*, from his first motet collection of 1572, has remained one of his best-known pieces, a succinct expression of the mystery and the joy of Christmas.

O magnum mysterium, et admirabile sacramentum, ut animalia viderunt Dominum natum jacentem in praesepio: O beata Virgo, cujus viscera meruerunt portare Dominum Jesum Christum. Alleluia.

(O great mystery and wonderful sacrament, that animals should see the new-born Lord lying in a manger: Blessed is that Virgin, whose womb deserved to bear Jesus Christ our Lord. Alleluia.)

T. L. de Victoria (1548–1611)

Words: Matin Responsory for Christmas Day

15 Hodie Christus natus est

This sparkling and joyous motet first appeared in 1619 as one of 37 *Cantiones Sacrae* by Sweelinck, published in Antwerp, all five-voiced and with Latin texts. A delightful feature is the appearance of bell-like figures to the word 'noe', replacing some of the customary alleluias.

Hodie, hodie Christus natus est.
Noe, Noe, Noe.
Hodie, hodie Salvator apparuit.
Alleluia.
Hodie, hodie in terra canunt angeli,
Laetantur archangeli.
Noe, Noe, Noe.
Hodie, hodie exultant justi dicentes:
Gloria in excelsis Deo, alleluia.
Noe, Noe, Noe.

(Today, today Christ is born. Nowell, Nowell, Nowell. Today, today the Saviour has appeared, alleluia. Today, today the angels sing on earth, the archangels rejoice. Nowell, Nowell, Nowell. Today, today the righteous are glad and say: Glory to God in the highest, alleluia. Nowell, Nowell, Nowell.)

J. P. Sweelinck (1562–1621)

Words: Magnificat Antiphon for Christmas Day Vespers

16 For unto us a child is born

Handel wrote the Italian duet on which the opening strains of this renowned chorus are based in 1741, shortly before *Messiah*. Its text, beginning ‘No, di voi non vuo fidarmi’, explains the curious accentuation of ‘For’ in the *Messiah* adaptation.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

*G. F. Handel (1685–1759), from 'Messiah'
Words: Isaiah 9, v. 6*

17 In dulci jubilo

Samuel Scheidt worked as a court and church musician in his native town of Halle—also Handel’s birthplace. *In dulci jubilo*, a festive and splendid Venetian-style double-choir motet with two florid trumpet parts, comes from the composer’s first published collection, the *Cantiones Sacrae Octo Vocum* of 1620.

In dulci jubilo

Nun singet und seid froh!

Unsers Herzen Wonne

Leit *in praeseptio*,

Und leuchtet als die Sonne

Matris in gremio.

Alpha es et O!

(In sweet jubilation now sing and rejoice! Our heart’s bliss lies in the manger, and shines like the sun in his mother’s lap. You are Alpha and Omega!)

*Samuel Scheidt (1587–1654)
Words and melody: 14th-century German*

Composers’ carols

18 Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child

Written in 1948 when its composer was only eighteen, this poignant and dramatic setting of the so-called *Coventry Carol* text has become one of Leighton’s best-known shorter works. (One might guess that he wrote it soon after encountering Delius’s *On hearing*

the first cuckoo in spring.) He began his musical career as a chorister in Wakefield Cathedral, and his final post was as Professor of Music at Edinburgh University. Church and choral music figure largely in his published work.

Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child,

By by, lully lullay.

O sisters too, how may we do
For to preserve this day
This poor youngling, for whom we sing
By by, lully lullay.

That woe is me, poor child for thee!
And ever morn and may,
For thy parting nor say nor sing
By by, 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.

*Kenneth Leighton (1929–88)
Words from the Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors, 1591*

19 A New Year Carol

Like *Lully, lulla*, this simple, timeless jewel was one of its composer’s juvenilia. It comes from his *Friday Afternoons* (1936), a collection of twelve children’s songs which takes its title from the weekly slot once customarily given to class singing in the English school system. The symbolism of the folk text has been much discussed. It may relate to the Welsh custom of bringing fresh spring water with evergreen sprigs as a New Year gift. ‘Levy dew’ is probably a corruption of ‘Levez Dieu’, a reference to the elevation of the Host at the Eucharist. The ‘seven bright gold wires’ could be the seven candles (i.e. churches) and ‘the bugles that do shine’ the trumpets of the Apocalypse, two images from the Book of Revelation.

Here we bring new water from the well so clear,
For to worship God with, this happy New Year.

*Sing levy dew, sing levy dew, the water and the wine;
The seven bright gold wires and the bugles that do shine.*

Sing reign of Fair Maid, with gold upon her toe,
Open you the West Door, and turn the Old Year go.

Sing reign of Fair Maid, with gold upon her chin,
Open you the East Door, and let the New Year in.

[20] Balulalow

Peter Warlock—composer mainly of songs, champion of Tudor music, bohemian and melancholic—wrote perhaps the loveliest English carols of his time, their melodies often inspired by the lute-songs he loved, their harmonic flavour owing something to his hero Frederick Delius. *Balulalow*, a setting of a Scots dialect version of a cradle song by Luther, was one of a set of three carols dating from 1925; *I saw a maiden* was written two years later.

O my dear heart, young Jesus sweet,
Prepare thy cradle in my spreit,
And I sall rock thee in my heart,
And never mair from thee depart.

But I sall praise thee evermore,
With sangis sweet unto thy gloir;
The knees of my heart sall I bow,
And sing that richt balulalow.

Peter Warlock (1894–1930)

Words: James, John and Robert Wedderburn, 1567

[21] I saw a fair maiden

I saw a fair maiden sitten and sing,
She lulled a little child, a sweetë lording.
Lullay, mine liking, my dear son, my sweeting,
Lullay, my dear heart, mine own dear darling.

That same Lord is He that made allë thing,
Of allë lordis He is Lord, of allë kingës King.

There was mickle melody at that childës birth,
All that were in heaven's bliss they made mickle mirth.

Pray we now to that Child, and to His mother dear,
Grant them His blessing that now maken cheer.

Peter Warlock
Words: 15th-century English

[22] The Lamb

This 1984 Blake setting has, strictly speaking, no seasonal reference except the one line in the second verse 'He became a little child', but it has become a Christmas favourite thanks in part to inclusion in the King's College Christmas Eve Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. The rapt, mystical atmosphere of the piece is very typical of its composer, most of whose extensive output is of sacred music, generally involving voices.

Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee;
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb.
He is meek, and he is mild,
He became a little child.
I, a child, and thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb, God bless thee!
Little Lamb, God bless thee!

John Tavener (b. 1944)

Words: William Blake (1757–1827)

[23] Fantasia on Christmas Carols

Vaughan Williams began collecting folk-songs around 1906, and the *Fantasia* of 1912 was one of the early fruits of his new-found enthusiasm for the genre. A composer's note in the score tells us that 'this *Fantasia* is founded upon the following traditional English carols: (1) *The Truth sent from above* (Herefordshire), (2) *Come all you worthy gentlemen* (Somerset), (3) *On Christmas night* (Sussex), (4) *The fountain* (Herefordshire, tune only), together with fragments of other well-known carol tunes.' [These include *The first Nowell*, *A virgin most pure*, and *Here we come a-wassailing*.]

All these carols are woven into a succinct and structurally well-knit fabric which, like

so much of the best Christmas music, seems to encompass both mystery and joy. The *Fantasia* was an immediate success (it was premièred at the 1912 Three Choirs Festival in Hereford) and has remained one of its composer's most-played works.

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 will relate
Is that God did man create,
The next thing which to you I'll tell,
Woman was made with man to dwell.

And they did eat, which was a sin,
And thus their ruin did begin,
Ruined themselves, both you and me,
And all of their posterity.

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.

Then, after this, 'twas God's own choice
To place them both in Paradise,
There to remain, from evil free,
Except they ate of such a tree.

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 pray.
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 pray.
O we wish you the comfort and tidings of joy!

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.

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

Solo

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 New Year.

Choir (at the same time)

From out of darkness we have light,
Which makes the angels sing this night,
'Glory to God and peace to men
Both now and evermore, Amen.'

*R. Vaughan Williams (1872–1958), based on English traditional melodies
Words: English traditional*



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