



*Christus natus est !*

*The*  
**John Rutter**  
**Christmas**  
**Album**

THE CAMBRIDGE SINGERS

THE CITY OF LONDON SINFONIA

DIRECTED BY

**JOHN RUTTER**

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# *The* John Rutter Christmas Album



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**THIS ALBUM GATHERS TOGETHER** most of the carols I have composed over the years, plus a sprinkling of my arrangements of traditional carols, grouped to form a programme which narrates, reflects upon, and celebrates the Christmas story.

I have always enjoyed carols ever since I first sang them as a member of my school choir, and it was not long before I began to write carols of my own—in fact my first two published compositions, written in my teens, were the *Nativity carol* and the *Shepherd's pipe carol*. This was more subversive than it sounds: at the time, the only officially approved style of composition for a classically-trained music student was post-Webernian serialism, which never appealed to me much, and writing Christmas carols was an undercover way of slipping a tune or two into circulation at a time of year when music critics are generally on vacation. No one seemed to mind, so from time to time I have continued to write and arrange carols, encouraged by Sir David Willcocks, my senior co-editor on several volumes of the *Carols for Choirs* series.

For any musician involved in choral music, Christmas is an especially joyous time, and I am indeed happy that it has played a part in my musical life for so many years.

*JOHN RUTTER*

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# The John Rutter Christmas Album

The Cambridge Singers • The City of London Sinfonia

with Stephen Varcoe (baritone)

directed by John Rutter

Total playing time: 78' 05"

## Prologue

- [1] **Wexford Carol** (3' 58") Irish traditional carol  
arranged by John Rutter  
Baritone solo: Stephen Varcoe

## The Christmas story

- [2] **Jesus child** (3' 18")  
Words and music: John Rutter
- [3] **There is a flower** (4' 04")  
Words: John Audelay (15<sup>th</sup> cent.)  
Music: John Rutter  
Soprano solo: Ruth Holton
- [4] **Donkey carol** (3' 32")  
Words and music: John Rutter
- [5] **Wild wood carol** (3' 07")  
Words and music: John Rutter  
Baritone solo: Gerald Finley

## Christmas Night

- [6] **Angels' carol** (3' 14")  
Words and music: John Rutter
- [7] **Nativity carol** (4' 20")  
Words and music: John Rutter
- [8] **Mary's lullaby** (3' 27")  
Words and music: John Rutter

- [9] **Star carol** (2' 50")  
Words and music: John Rutter
- [10] **Candlelight carol** (4' 06")  
Words and music: John Rutter
- [11] **Shepherd's pipe carol** (2' 54")  
Words and music: John Rutter
- [12] **Christmas lullaby** (4' 04")  
Words and music: John Rutter
- [13] **Dormi, Jesu** (4' 35")  
Words: medieval, and S. T. Coleridge  
Music: John Rutter

## Christmas reflections

- [14] **Love came down at Christmas** (2' 30")  
Words: Christina Rossetti  
Music: John Rutter
- [15] **Sans Day carol** (3' 07") Cornish traditional carol  
arranged by John Rutter
- [16] **I wonder as I wander** (2' 52") Appalachian carol  
collected by John Jacob Niles (*G. Schirmer, Inc.*)  
arranged by John Rutter  
Baritone solo: Gerald Finley
- [17] **What sweeter music** (4' 18")  
Words: Robert Herrick  
Music: John Rutter

## Christmas joy

- [18] **Joy to the world** (2' 30")  
Words: Isaac Watts  
Music: Lowell Mason  
arranged by John Rutter

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- [19] **I saw three ships** (2' 10") English traditional carol  
arranged by John Rutter
- [20] **Deck the hall** (1' 40") Welsh traditional carol  
arranged by John Rutter
- [21] **The very best time of year** (3' 40")  
Words and music: John Rutter
- [22] **We wish you a merry Christmas** (1' 42") English traditional carol  
arranged by John Rutter

### Epilogue

- [23] **Silent night** (3' 52")  
Words: tr. from Josef Mohr  
Melody: Franz Gruber  
arranged by John Rutter

### Printed music information

Tracks 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 17, and 19 are published by Oxford University Press (in all countries).

Tracks 5, 6, 10, 12, 13, 16, 20, 21, and 22 are published by Hinshaw Music, Inc. in USA, and by Oxford University Press (in all other countries).

Track 18 is published by Hinshaw Music, Inc. (in all countries).

Track 23 is published by Collegium Music Publications (in all countries).

Note: track 1 is available only in the Oxford anthologies *Carols for Choirs 3* and *100 Carols for Choirs*; track 15 is available only in *Carols for Choirs 2* and in *100 Carols for Choirs*; track 19 is available only in *Carols for Choirs 3* and in *100 Carols for Choirs*.

### CD information

Tracks 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 19, 20, 21 and 22 are taken from the Collegium album *Christmas Day in the Morning* (COLCD 121).

Tracks 3, 7, 10 and 16 are taken from *Christmas Night* (COLCD 106).

Tracks 6, 17, 18 and 23 are taken from *Christmas with the Cambridge Singers* (COLCD 111).

Tracks 13 and 14 were specially recorded for this album.

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## Prologue

### [1] Wexford carol

This lovely Irish carol first became widely known when Vaughan Williams included it in *The Oxford Book of Carols* in 1928; it had been noted down and sent to him by Dr W. H. Gratton Flood, who heard it sung in Wexford. The present arrangement was made in 1978, for inclusion in *Carols for Choirs 3*.

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

The night before that happy tide  
The noble Virgin and her guide  
Were long time seeking up and down  
To find a lodging in the town.  
But mark how all things came to pass:  
From ev'ry door repell'd, alas!  
As long foretold, their refuge all  
Was but an humble oxen stall.

Near Bethlehem did shepherds keep  
Their flocks of lambs and feeding sheep;  
To whom God's angels did appear  
Which put the shepherds in great fear.  
'Prepare and go', the angels said,

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‘To Bethlehem, be not afraid;  
For there you’ll find, this happy morn,  
A princely babe, sweet Jesus born.’

With thankful heart and joyful mind  
The shepherds went the babe to find,  
And as God’s angel had foretold,  
They did our Saviour Christ behold.  
Within a manger he was laid,  
And by his side the virgin maid,  
Attending on the Lord of life,  
Who came on earth to end all strife.

Good people all, this Christmas time,  
Consider well and bear in mind  
What our good God for us has done,  
In sending his beloved Son.

*Irish traditional carol  
arranged by John Rutter*

## The Christmas story

### **2** Jesus child

Caribbean music became widely popular in Britain from the 1950s, and this carol shows its influence. It was written in 1973 for the choir of St Albans School at the invitation of its young director, Simon Lindley (later to become a significant figure in the church music world in Britain).

Have you heard the story that they’re telling ’bout Bethlehem,  
Have you heard the story of the Jesus child?

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How he came from heaven and was born in a manger bed?  
Mary was his virgin mother pure and mild.

*Sing alleluia, brothers, sing alleluia, sisters,  
Worship the Jesus child and praise his mother mild.  
‘Glory to God on high!’ the angel hosts above are singing:  
Listen to the story of the Jesus child.*

Have you heard the story of the poor humble shepherd men,  
Sitting on the hillside with their flocks at night?  
Suddenly the angel tells them: ‘Hurry to Bethlehem;  
Go and find the Jesus child, the world’s new light.’

Jesus child, lying at Bethlehem,  
Sleeping safe at Mary’s knee,  
Save my soul and bring me to paradise,  
Let me join the angels singing glory to thee.

Have you heard the story of the kings from the orient,  
Following the star that’s shining over his head?  
Offering their precious gifts of gold, myrrh and frankincense,  
Kneeling with the ox and ass before his bed?

Brothers, let us celebrate the birth of the Jesus child,  
Sisters, come and welcome him, the new-born King;  
Praise the Lord who sent him down from heaven at Christmas time;  
Young and old and rich and poor, his praises sing.

*Words and music: John Rutter*

### **3** There is a flower

The text of this carol is one of many early English lyrics that have been set to music by British composers; its author was a Shropshire monk of the early fifteenth century who

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was both deaf and blind. The imagery of the poem is of a 'Jesse tree', often depicted in medieval painting and stained glass. The music was written in 1985 at the invitation of Dr George Guest, then director of the choir of St John's College, Cambridge.

*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†,

\*sand = gift  
†bed = bud

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Then rich and poor of every land  
They marvelled how this flower might spread,  
Till kinges three  
That blessed flower came to see.

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.

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

*Words: John Audelay, 15th cent.  
Music: John Rutter*

#### 4 Donkey carol

Like *Jesus child*, this was written for Simon Lindley and his St Albans School choir, in 1977. It is the one of the rather few Christmas carols in five-eight time.

Donkey riding over the bumpy road,  
Carry Mary, all with her heavy load;  
Follow Joseph, leading you on your way  
Until you find a stable, somewhere to rest and stay.

Donkey watching over the Jesus child,  
See the baby, all with his mother mild;  
Hear the angels singing their song on high:  
'Nowell, nowell, nowell', their carolling fills the sky.

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Donkey resting all in a manger stall,  
With the oxen worship the Lord of all.  
Hush, he lies asleep on his bed of hay  
While Mary sings so sweetly ‘Lulla, lullalay.’

Donkey skip for joy as you go your way;  
Alleluia, Jesus is born today.  
Hark, the bells ring out with their message clear:  
Rejoice and sing that Christ our Saviour divine is here.

*Words and music: John Rutter*

### 5 The wild wood carol

This carol is extracted from John Rutter’s musical version of Kenneth Grahame’s children’s classic *The Wind in the Willows*, written for The King’s Singers in 1981. The text reflects on the role of the animals in the Christmas story.

Sing O the wild wood, the green holly,  
The silent river and barren tree;  
The humble creatures that no man sees:  
Sing O the wild wood.

A weary journey one winter’s night;  
No hope of shelter, no rest in sight.  
Who was the creature that bore Mary?  
A simple donkey.

And when they came into Beth’lem Town  
They found a stable to lay them down;  
For their companions that Christmas night,  
An ox and an ass.

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And then an angel came down to earth  
To bear the news of the Saviour’s birth;  
The first to marvel were shepherds poor,  
And sheep with their lambs.

Sing O the wild wood, the green holly,  
The silent river and barren tree;  
The humble creatures that no man sees:  
Sing O the wild wood.

*Words and music: John Rutter*

### Christmas night

#### 6 Angels’ carol

Originally commissioned as a duet, to be sung by the two prizewinners in a Choirboy and Choirgirl of the Year competition in England in 1987, this was later reworked by the composer for mixed-voice choir, in which version it is performed here.

Have you heard the sound of the angel voices  
Ringing out so sweetly, ringing out so clear?  
Have you seen the star shining out so brightly  
As a sign from God that Christ the Lord is here?  
Have you heard the news that they bring from heaven  
To the humble shepherds who have waited long?  
*Gloria in excelsis Deo, gloria in excelsis Deo!*  
Hear the angels sing their joyful song.

He is come in peace in the winter’s stillness,  
Like a gentle snowfall in the gentle night;  
He is come in joy like the sun at morning

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Filling all the world with radiance and with light.  
He is come in love as the child of Mary;  
In a simple stable we have seen his birth:  
*Gloria in excelsis Deo, gloria in excelsis Deo!*  
Hear the angels singing 'Peace on earth'.

He will bring new light to a world in darkness,  
Like a bright star shining in the skies above;  
He will bring new hope to the waiting nations  
When he comes to reign in purity and love.  
Let the earth rejoice at the Saviour's coming;  
Let the heavens answer with the joyful morn:  
*Gloria in excelsis Deo, gloria in excelsis Deo!*  
Hear the angels singing 'Christ is born'.

*Words and music: John Rutter*

#### 7 Nativity carol

Written in 1963, this was one of its composer's earliest pieces. It was published in 1967 with organ accompaniment, and later scored for strings by the composer.

Born in a stable so bare,  
Born so long ago;  
Born 'neath light of star  
He who loved us so.

*Far away, silent he lay,  
Born today, your homage pay,  
Christ is born for aye,  
Born on Christmas Day.*

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Cradled by mother so fair,  
Tender her lullaby;  
Over her son so dear  
Angel hosts fill the sky.

Wise men from distant far land,  
Shepherds from starry hills  
Worship this babe so rare,  
Hearts with his warmth he fills.

Love in that stable was born  
Into our hearts to flow;  
Innocent dreaming babe,  
Make me thy love to know.

*Words and music John Rutter*

#### 8 Mary's lullaby

At the time this was written, in 1978, John Rutter was Director of Music at Clare College, Cambridge. The choir was recording a Christmas television programme which, at the run-through the day before filming, was discovered to be almost three minutes short. *Mary's lullaby* was written overnight to fill the gap.

See the child that Mary bore  
On her lap so softly sleeping:  
In a stable cold and poor,  
Ox and ass their vigil keeping.

*Sing lullaby, sing lullaby,  
My own dear son, my child;  
Lullaby, sing lullaby;  
Lullaby, my little baby.*



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Flights of angels round his head  
Sing him joyful hymns of greeting:  
'Peace on earth, goodwill to men.'  
Each to each the song repeating.

Shepherds kneeling by his bed  
Offer homage without measure;  
Wise men, by a bright star led,  
Bring him gifts of richest treasure.

*Words and music: John Rutter*

### 9 Star carol

For many years, the annual Christmas concert given by The Bach Choir in London's Royal Albert Hall has been a seasonal highlight, not least because for part of the concert the children of the audience are invited to join the choir onstage to sing carols. In 1971 David Willcocks, as conductor of The Bach Choir, asked John Rutter to write a new carol with a refrain simple enough to be taught to the children onstage and immediately performed by them, together with the adults. *Star carol* was the response.

Sing this night, for a boy is born in Bethlehem,  
Christ our Lord in a lowly manger lies;  
Bring your gifts, come and worship at his cradle,  
Hurry to Bethlehem and see the son of Mary!

*See his star shining bright  
In the sky this Christmas Night!  
Follow me joyfully;  
Hurry to Bethlehem and see the son of Mary!*

Angels bright, come from heaven's highest glory,  
Bear the news with its message of good cheer:

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'Sing, rejoice, for a King is come to save us,  
Hurry to Bethlehem and see the son of Mary!'

See, he lies in his mother's tender keeping;  
Jesus Christ in her loving arms asleep.  
Shepherds poor, come to worship and adore him,  
Offer their humble gifts before the son of Mary.

Let us all pay our homage at the manger,  
Sing his praise on this joyful Christmas Night;  
Christ is come, bringing promise of salvation;  
Hurry to Bethlehem and see the son of Mary!

*Words and music: John Rutter*

### 10 Candlelight Carol

This was written in response to a commission from the Church of the Assumption, Pittsburgh, in 1984. Originally for organ, the accompaniment was later scored by the composer for flute, oboe, harp and strings, in which version it is performed here.

How do you capture the wind on the water?  
How do you count all the stars in the sky?  
How can you measure the love of a mother,  
Or how can you write down a baby's first cry?

*Candlelight, angel light, firelight and starglow  
Shine on his cradle till breaking of dawn.  
Gloria, gloria in excelsis Deo!  
Angels are singing; the Christ child is born.*

Shepherds and wise men will kneel and adore him,  
Seraphim round him their vigil will keep;

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Nations proclaim him their Lord and their Saviour,  
But Mary will hold him and sing him to sleep.

Find him at Bethlehem laid in a manger:  
Christ our Redeemer asleep in the hay.  
Godhead incarnate and hope of salvation:  
A child with his mother that first Christmas Day.

*Words and music: John Rutter*

### 11 Shepherd's pipe carol

Along with the *Nativity carol*, this was John Rutter's earliest published composition. It dates from 1965, and was specially written for inclusion in his first carol recording.

Going through the hills on a night all starry  
On the way to Bethlehem,  
Far away I heard a shepherd boy piping  
On the way to Bethlehem.

*Angels in the sky brought this message nigh:  
Dance and sing for joy that Christ the new-born King  
Is come to bring us peace on earth,  
And he's lying cradled there at Bethlehem.'*

'Tell me, shepherd boy piping tunes so merrily  
On the way to Bethlehem,  
Who will hear your tunes on these hills so lonely  
On the way to Bethlehem?'

'None may hear my pipes on these hills so lonely  
On the way to Bethlehem;  
But a King will hear me play sweet lullabies  
When I get to Bethlehem.'

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*Angels in the sky came down from on high,  
Hovered o'er the manger where the babe was lying  
Cradled in the arms of his mother Mary,  
Sleeping now at Bethlehem.*

'Where is this new King, shepherd boy piping merrily,  
Is he there at Bethlehem?'  
'I will find him soon by the star shining brightly  
In the sky o'er Bethlehem.'

'May I come with you, shepherd boy piping merrily,  
Come with you to Bethlehem?  
Pay my homage too at the new King's cradle,  
Is it far to Bethlehem?'

*Angels in the sky brought this message nigh:  
Dance and sing for joy that Christ the infant King  
Is born this night in lowly stable yonder,  
Born for you at Bethlehem.'*

*Words and music: John Rutter*

### 12 Christmas lullaby

This was one of three carols commissioned by The Bach Choir in 1989 to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of their conductor, Sir David Willcocks.

Clear in the darkness a light shines in Bethlehem:  
Angels are singing, their sound fills the air.  
Wise men have journeyed to greet their Messiah;  
But only a mother and baby lie there.

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*'Ave Maria, ave Maria':  
Hear the soft lullaby the angel hosts sing.  
'Ave Maria, ave Maria,  
Maiden, and mother of Jesus our King'.*

Where are his courtiers, and who are his people?  
Why does he bear neither sceptre nor crown?  
Shepherds his courtiers, the poor for his people,  
With peace as his sceptre and love for his crown.

What though your treasures are not gold or incense?  
Lay them before him with hearts full of love.  
Praise to the Christ child, and praise to his mother  
Who bore us a Saviour by grace from above.

*Words and music: John Rutter*

### 13 Dormi, Jesu

The Latin text of this lullaby has been known and admired for centuries: it was translated into English by Coleridge, and there are musical settings by Rubbra and by Webern (one of the very few twelve-note carols in existence). The present setting was written at the invitation of Stephen Cleobury, Director of Music at King's College, Cambridge, for the King's Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols in 1999.

Dormi, Jesu! mater ridet,  
Quae tam dulcem somnum videt,  
Dormi, Jesu, dormi, Jesu blandule.

*Dormi Jesu, blandule.*

Si non dormis, mater plorat  
Inter fila cantans orat,  
Blande, veni, blande, veni, somnule.

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Sleep, sweet baby! My cares beguiling:  
Mother sits beside thee, smiling;  
Sleep, my darling, sleep, my darling, tenderly.

*Words: Latin, origin unknown; English, S. T. Coleridge (1772–1834)  
Music: John Rutter*

## Christmas reflections

### 14 Love came down at Christmas

The simplicity of Christina Rossetti's text is reflected in this setting, which dates from 1971. It was written for a Christmas concert given by the Louis Halsey Singers in London.

Love came down at Christmas,  
Love all lovely, Love divine;  
Love was born at Christmas,  
Star and angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,  
Love incarnate, Love divine;  
Worship we our Jesus:  
But wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,  
Love be yours and love be mine;  
Love to God and all men,  
Love for plea, and gift, and sign.

*Words: Christina Rossetti (1830–94)  
Music: John Rutter*

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**15 Sans Day carol**

The title of this folk carol is a corruption of St Day, the Cornish village (named after a Breton saint) where it was heard and written down in the early twentieth century. Like the *Wexford carol*, it owes its fame to inclusion in *The Oxford Book of Carols*. John Rutter's setting, one of a number of carol arrangements he made while a student at Cambridge in the 1960s, gained currency from performances by King's College Choir.

Now the holly bears a berry as white as the milk,  
And Mary bore Jesus, who was wrapped up in silk.  
*And Mary bore Jesus Christ our Saviour for to be,  
And the first tree in the greenwood, it was the holly!*

Now the holly bears a berry as green as the grass,  
And Mary bore Jesus, who died on the cross.

Now the holly bears a berry as black as the coal,  
And Mary bore Jesus, who died for us all.

Now the holly bears a berry, as blood is it red,  
Then trust we our Saviour, who rose from the dead.

*Cornish traditional carol arranged by John Rutter*

**16 I wonder as I wander**

The musical folklorist and singer John Jacob Niles collected this haunting carol in the Appalachian mountains in the 1930s. It was first published in his collection *Songs of the Hill Folk* and soon became widely known in North America, both from Niles's own solo performances and in choral arrangements. More recently it has gained a place in the English carol repertory; the present setting, for unaccompanied choir with baritone solo, dates from 1981.

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I wonder as I wander out under the sky,  
How Jesus, the Saviour, did come for to die.  
For poor ornery people like you and like I:  
I wonder as I wander out under the sky.

When Mary birthed Jesus, 'twas in a cows' stall,  
With wise-men and farmers and shepherds and all.  
But high from God's heaven a star's light did fall,  
And the promise of ages it then did recall.

If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing:  
A star in the sky, or a bird on the wing;  
Or all of God's angels in heaven to sing,  
He surely could have had it, 'cause he was the King.

*(The first verse is repeated.)*

*Appalachian carol collected by John Jacob Niles  
arranged by John Rutter  
(by permission of G. Schirmer Ltd. London)*

**17 What sweeter music**

Like *Dormi, Jesu*, this was written for the King's College Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, in 1987. Robert Herrick's text (part of a New Year's Day masque set to music by William Lawes) seems to sum up the whole ethos of the carol genre as many composers and poets have understood it.

What sweeter music can we bring  
Than a carol, for to sing  
The birth of this our heavenly King?  
Awake the voice! Awake the string!

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Dark and dull night, fly hence away,  
And give the honour to this day,  
That sees December turned to May.

Why does the chilling winter's morn  
Smile, like a field beset with corn?  
Or smell like a meadow newly-shorn,  
Thus, on the sudden? Come and see  
The cause, why things thus fragrant be:  
'Tis he is born, whose quickening birth  
Gives life and lustre, public mirth,  
To heaven, and the under-earth.

We see him come, and know him ours,  
Who, with his sunshine and his showers,  
Turns all the patient ground to flowers.  
The darling of the world is come,  
And fit it is, we find a room  
To welcome him. The nobler part  
Of all the house here, is the heart.

Which we will give him; and bequeath  
This holly, and this ivy wreath,  
To do him honour; who's our King,  
And Lord of all this revelling.

What sweeter music can we bring,  
Than a carol, for to sing  
The birth of this our heavenly King?

*Words: Robert Herrick (1591–1674)*  
*Music: John Rutter*

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## Christmas joy

### 18 Joy to the world

The musical origins of this nineteenth-century Christmas hymn are not clear. It appeared under the title *Antioch* in an English collection of 1834, then in a number of hymnals edited by the American Lowell Mason, who was the first to wed it to Isaac Watts's text. Both collections describe it as 'from Handel', perhaps on the strength of the resemblance of its opening phrase to *Glory to God* and *Lift up your heads* from *Messiah*. John Rutter's setting, made in 1981 at the request of his American publisher, was conceived as a tribute to the tune's presumed Handelian parentage.

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare him room,  
And heav'n and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Saviour reigns!  
Let men their songs employ;  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of his righteousness  
And wonders of his love.

*Words: Isaac Watts (1674–1748)*  
*Music: Lowell Mason (1792–1872)*  
*arranged by John Rutter*

### 19 I saw three ships

This is not the familiar, jig-like tune generally associated with these words, but another English folk tune (or rather, children's street song) which was wedded to the text by

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Martin Shaw in his valuable but little-known collection *The English Carol Book* in 1913. John Rutter's setting was made for The Bach Choir in 1977.

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

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

O, they sailed in to Bethlehem . . .

And who should be in those three ships . . .  
But Joseph and his Lady?

And he did whistle and she did sing . . .

And all the bells on earth shall ring . . .

And all the angels in heav'n shall sing . . .

Then let us all rejoice amain . . .

*English traditional carol arranged by John Rutter*

#### **20** Deck the hall

This setting of a convivial Welsh carol calls for some agility on the part of the choir. It was written for the Cambridge Singers; the occasion was a Christmas television programme from Canterbury Cathedral in 1983.

Deck the hall with boughs of holly, *fa, la la, &c.*  
'Tis the season to be jolly,  
Fill the mead cup, drain the barrel,  
Troll the ancient Christmas carol,

---

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

Fast away the old year passes,  
Hail the new, ye lads and lassies,  
Laughing, quaffing all together,  
Heedless of the wind and weather,

*Welsh traditional carol arranged by John Rutter*

#### **21** The very best time of year

This was written in 1984 as a Christmas present for Gene and Audrey Grier, two noted American choral musicians who were among the first to welcome the composer into the American choral community on his early visits there in the 1970s and 80s.

Christmas trees and boughs of holly,  
Yuletide logs and mistletoe;  
Candles burning bright, and meadows frosty white,  
And faces in the firelight's glow;  
Sounds of happy children's voices  
Singing carols that you love to hear;  
Then the silence of the night  
And the winter air so still and clear.

Feels like you could reach and touch the sky,  
Or catch a star and fly away;  
Feels like you could wish for peace on earth,  
And all at once it would come, some day.

Families and friends together

---

Feel a special kind of love and cheer,  
Sharing all the joys of Christmas time,  
The very best time of year.  
The very best time,  
That strange, enchanted time,  
That shining, magic time of year.

*Words and music: John Rutter*

## 22 We wish you a merry Christmas

During the 1970s and 80s, John Rutter wrote for the renowned vocal ensemble the King's Singers. One minor fruit of this happy association was an arrangement of *We wish you a merry Christmas*, for use as a final encore at Christmas concerts when the audience simply refused to go home. He later adapted it for mixed choir, as heard here.

We wish you a merry Christmas,  
We wish you a merry Christmas,  
We wish you a merry Christmas  
And a happy New Year.

*Good tidings we bring to you and your kin:  
We wish you a merry Christmas  
And a happy New Year.*

Now bring us some figgy pudding . . .  
And bring some out here.

For we all like figgy pudding . . .  
So bring some out here.

And we won't go till we've got some . . .  
So bring some out here.

---

We wish you a merry Christmas . . .  
And a happy New Year.

*English traditional carol, arranged by John Rutter*

## Epilogue

### 23 Silent night

In 1988 the BBC conducted a poll to select the top ten Christmas carols of all time. Predictably, perhaps, *Silent night* topped the list, and was chosen to close the television programme from Wells Cathedral featuring all ten. As musical director of the programme, John Rutter was asked for a new arrangement, with a 40-second orchestral postlude during which the end titles would roll. This gave an opportunity for music to take over where words left off, bringing the programme (and this album) to a tranquil conclusion.

Silent night, holy night,  
All is calm, all is bright;  
Round yon virgin mother and child.  
Holy infant so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night,  
Shepherds first saw the sight:  
Glories stream from heaven afar,  
Heav'nly hosts sing Alleluia:  
Christ the Saviour is born!

Silent night, holy night,  
Son of God, love's pure light;  
Radiance beams from thy holy face,  
With the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

*Words: tr. from Josef Mohr (1792–1848)  
Music: Franz Gruber (1787–1863)  
arranged by John Rutter*



Photo: PETRINA HUGHES

The Cambridge Singers in session

S. A. *p delicately*  
 1. Go-ing through the hills on a night all star-ry On the way to Beth-le-hem,—  
 2. Tell me, shep-herd boy pi-ping tunes so mer-ri-ly  
 T. B. *mp crisp and rhythmic* *p delicately*

An extract from the composer's manuscript of the *Shepherd's pipe carol* (1966)





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