

**CHANDOS**  
SUPER AUDIO CD

# ON CHRISTMAS NIGHT

CHOIR OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE  
ANDREW NETHSINGHA



Painting by Sebastian Stief (1811-1889) © Lebrecht Music & Arts Photo Library

Franz Xaver Gruber, 1846, with the opening phrase of 'Silent night'

## On Christmas Night

**John Rutter** (b. 1945)

- 1** **What sweeter music\*** **4:35**  
For Stephen Cleobury and the Choir of King's College, Cambridge  
Andante tranquillo

### Traditional French

- 2** **Noël nouvelet\*** **3:36**  
Arranged by Stephen Jackson (b. 1951)  
For the Choir of St Peter ad Vincula, H.M. Tower of London  
**Julius Foo** treble  
Moderato – Poco meno mosso – Tempo I

**James Burton** (b. 1974)

- 3** **Balulalow** **2:25**  
Gentle

**William Mathias** (1934–1992)

- 4 **A babe is born, Op. 55\*** 3:24  
Giocososo, alla danza

**Harold Darke** (1888–1976)

- 5 **In the bleak mid-winter\*** 4:46  
To M.A.C.  
Julian Gregory tenor  
Moderato e tranquillo

**Traditional French**

- 6 **Ding! dong! merrily on high\*** 2:48  
Arranged by Mack Willberg (b. 1955)  
For the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Craig Jessop, Music Director  
Freddie James second organ part  
Quickly, with articulation

**Elizabeth Poston** (1905–1987)

- 7 **Jesus Christ the apple tree** 3:16

## Traditional English

- 8 **I saw three ships\*** 2:02  
Arranged by Philip Marshall (1921 – 2005)  
To K.J.  
Allegro ritmico

## Sir Richard Rodney Bennett (b. 1936)

- 9 **Out of your sleep** 1:44  
For Michael Nicholas and the Choir of St Matthew's Church,  
Northampton  
Allegro fluente – Poco sostenuto e tranquillo

## Peter Warlock (1894 – 1930)

- 10 **Benedicamus Domino** 1:25  
Quick

## John Joubert (b. 1927)

- 11 **There is no rose** 2:47  
Andantino semplice – Poco più lento – Lento

## Traditional English

- 12** **Tomorrow shall be my dancing day** **2:00**  
Arranged by Sir David Willcocks (b. 1919)  
Allegretto

## Matthew Martin (b. 1976)

- 13** **Adam lay ybounden** **3:13**  
Calm and unhurried

## Matheo Flecha the Elder (attrib.) (?1481 – ?1553)

- 14** **Riu, riu, chiu** **2:37**  
Huw Leslie baritone (verse 2)  
Henry Neill baritone (verse 3)  
Basil MacDonald bass (verse 4)  
Geoffrey Clapham bass (verse 5)  
Brisk and firm

### Traditional English

- 16 **O little town of Bethlehem\*** 3:42  
Arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 – 1958)  
and Sir Thomas Armstrong (1898 – 1994) (descant in last verse)

### Traditional German

- 16 **Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen** 2:54  
Arranged by Michael Praetorius (1571 – 1621) (verse 1)  
and Donald Cashmore (b. 1926)  
Sostenuto – Meno mosso – Più animato

### Christopher Robinson (b. 1936)

- 17 **Make we joy** 2:09  
Lively

### Felix Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847)

- 18 **Hark! the herald angels sing\*** 3:15  
Last verse arranged by Christopher Robinson

**Sir John Tavener** (b. 1944)

- 19** **The Lamb** **3:50**  
For Simon's third birthday  
With extreme tenderness, flexible, always guided by the words -  
Poco meno mosso - A tempo, moving forward - Poco meno mosso

**Michael Finnissy** (b. 1946)

*premiere recording*

- 20** **Telling** **4:06**  
**Peter Hicks** treble  
Slowly, gently

**Kenneth Leighton** (1929 - 1988)

- 21** **Coventry Carol** **3:17**  
**Julius Foo** treble  
Andante (cullante) - Un poco più mosso, più liberamente -  
Più mosso, agitato - Tempo I

## Traditional English

22 **On Christmas night\*** 2:03  
(Sussex Carol)  
Arranged by Sir Philip Ledger (b. 1937)  
Brightly

## Franz Xaver Gruber (1787–1863)

23 **Silent night** 3:13  
Arranged by Sir Philip Ledger  
Peacefully

## John Francis Wade (1711/12–1786)

24 **O come, all ye faithful\*** 4:02  
Arranged by Sir David Willcocks  
TT 74:22

John Challenger organ\*  
Choir of St John's College, Cambridge  
Andrew Nethsingha



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Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, with Andrew Nethsingha

## Choir of St John's College, Cambridge

### Director of Music

Andrew Nethsingha

### Senior Organ Scholar

John Challenger

### Junior Organ Scholar

Freddie James

### *treble*

Ethan Bamber

Alexander Bower-Brown

Francis Bushell

Jason Cobb

Alec D'Oyly

Julius Foo

Peter Hicks

Matthew Holman

Alexander Jones

Andrew Jones

Robert Murray-John

Rufus Pawsey

Justin Stollery

Matthew Supramaniam

Michael Tuft

Jed Upjohn

### *counter-tenor*

Thomas Blackie

Dominic Collingwood

Nicholas Edwards

Timothy Teague

### *tenor*

Guy Edmund-Jones

Julian Gregory

Samuel Oladeinde

Bradley Smith

Pablo Strong

### *bass*

Geoffrey Clapham

Huw Leslie

Daniel Macklin

Basil McDonald

Henry Neill

## On Christmas Night

### Introduction

Advent is a cherished season at St John's. More convivial than Christmas, when most students desert Cambridge for hearth and home, it has been the occasion of an annual BBC Radio 3 broadcast from the College Chapel since 1981. Advent serves as an upbeat to the celebration of the Nativity, and though liturgical purists may insist that it is a penitential season, most members of St John's are happy to complete the first term of the academic year with a glimpse of the splendours of Christmas to come.

The repertoire recorded here spans the entire period from Advent through to the Nativity itself. Indeed, one work – Tavener's *The Lamb* – has no more than a tenuous connection with Christmas, though it has become a staple of carol services in recent years. The music falls into three broad categories – original works, arrangements of popular songs, and congregational hymns. In reality, however, the distinctions are far from watertight: as the notes below make clear, even the hymns can be construed in some measure as original works, for they all involve significant arrangements of pre-existing material.

### What sweeter music

The CD opens with John Rutter's *What sweeter music*, one of the works commissioned by Stephen Cleobury for the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at King's College, Cambridge, where it was premiered in 1987. The words are adapted from a poem first published in 1648 by the 'Cavalier Poet', Robert Herrick. Although it is marked to be 'Sung To The King In The Presence At Whitehall', the circumstances surrounding its creation are poignant: at the time, King Charles I was a prisoner of parliamentary forces, and he would shortly be beheaded. Herrick's images of the Christ Child turning winter to summer draw from Rutter one of his most winning melodies, replete with the expressive leaps that are a hallmark of his style.

### Noël nouvelet

*Noël nouvelet* is an arrangement of a traditional French carol which is perhaps better known in English-speaking lands as 'Now the green blade rises'. The principal melody, which is in the Dorian mode, bears more than a passing resemblance to the Marian hymn 'Ave, maris stella'. In

his arrangement, written for the Choir of St Peter ad Vincula, the Parish Church of the Tower of London, Stephen Jackson subjects the melody to a number of inventive treatments, including canons and descants; the arrangement is also marked by the occasional harmonic frisson.

#### **Balulalow**

The text of *Balulalow* has been set by numerous composers over the years, including Peter Warlock and Benjamin Britten (in *A Ceremony of Carols*). 'Balulalow' is a Scottish dialect word meaning 'lullaby', and the text is a sixteenth-century version of Luther's famous Advent chorale 'Vom Himmel hoch'. James Burton, a former St John's College Choral Scholar and now Director of Oxford's Schola Cantorum, creates a highly intimate setting with delicate hints of close-harmony idioms.

#### **A babe is born**

William Mathias's *A babe is born* was written for the Cardiff Polyphonic Choir and first appeared in 1971. The anonymous fifteenth-century text is macaronic in style – that is to say, it mixes English and Latin words (in this case, phrases from well-known Latin hymns). Mathias's trademark parallel fourths and fifths may occasionally suggest

the influence of Hindemith, but here they evoke an appropriately seasonal impression of ringing bells.

#### **In the bleak mid-winter**

Christina Rossetti probably wrote her much loved poem *In the bleak mid-winter* in the 1870s; however, it first came to light only in 1904, ten years after her death. Two years later Holst's setting (the hymn tune becoming known as 'Cranham') appeared in *The English Hymnal*, laying the foundations for the text's iconic status. The setting by Harold Darke heard here was written shortly afterwards, in 1909, at a time when Darke was still a student at the Royal College of Music. Although his setting is more ambitious than Holst's – for a start, it includes verses for treble (here sung by the treble section) and tenor – its unaffected tunefulness has endeared it to generations of choirs. In fact, in 2008 fifty-one choir directors in the UK and US voted it the most popular of all Christmas carols.

#### **Ding! dong! merrily on high**

Mack Wilberg is best known as the Music Director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and his arrangement of *Ding! dong! merrily on high* was written for that choir and its previous director, Craig Jessop. The melody, though now so closely associated with Anglophone

Christmas celebrations, is in fact French in origin, and so bears close comparison with the melody of *Noël nouvelet*. The text, like that of *A babe is born*, is macaronic. Wilberg's arrangement depends for much of its effect on the dazzling organ part, which gives free rein to all manner of bell-like effects.

#### **Jesus Christ the apple tree**

Elizabeth Poston is now known almost exclusively for *Jesus Christ the apple tree*. However, she was a woman of many parts. A protégée of Ralph Vaughan Williams and Peter Warlock, she was intimately involved in the establishment of the forerunner of Radio 3, the Third Programme, for which she went on to write numerous scores. She also appeared as a soloist, premiering among other works Walter Leigh's Concertino for Piano and Strings. However, it was her interest in folksongs – she edited several volumes – that is perhaps most relevant here. Poston's text is taken from a New England source, and though the music of *Jesus Christ the apple tree* has often been described as a folksong, it is in fact entirely original.

#### **I saw three ships**

Philip Marshall was a pivotal figure in English church music in the latter decades of the twentieth century. His career was centred in

the north of England, and his most significant appointment was as Organist of Lincoln Cathedral. The arrangement of *I saw three ships* heard here is typically well crafted, with the tune, which first appeared in print in the nineteenth century, never seriously challenged by its accompaniment. Curiously, the carol seems to have originated in Derbyshire, a landlocked county – though it is perhaps worth noting in this context that Bethlehem, too, is far from any known shipping routes!

#### **Out of your sleep**

For the text of *Out of your sleep*, Richard Rodney Bennett reached back to an anonymous fifteenth-century manuscript held in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Though his reputation rests nowadays mostly on his film scores and on his work as a jazz pianist, Bennett has had a multi-faceted career. Traces of his training with Pierre Boulez and other modernists can be found in the tightly wrought motivicism of the writing; the fluid metrical patterns, on the other hand, hint at jazz. The carol is one of a set of five written for Michael Nicholas and the Choir of St Matthew's Church in Northampton and premiered there in 1967.

#### **Benedicamus Domino**

It is a season of the year that I dislike  
more and more as time goes on, and the

Christmas atmosphere and festivities  
induce for me an extremity of gloom and  
melancholy.

Thus wrote Peter Warlock in 1930, only weeks before his untimely end. (Opinions vary as to the cause of death; it has been variously described as accident, suicide, or murder.) For all of Warlock's protestations, *Benedicamus Domino* has not a hint of the morbid. Rather, we can detect in it a lively fascination with early music: rhythms are sprung, and both melody and harmony have a distinctly modal tinge.

#### **There is no rose**

Although a highly versatile composer who has published works in many genres, John Joubert is best known for his choral music, in particular the two carols *There is no rose* and *Torches*. The text of the former is taken from a fifteenth-century Cambridge manuscript, and Joubert uses very modest means in setting the words. No accidentals are required, and the simple two-part texture of the opening is later combined in effortless but telling counterpoint with complementary pairs of voices.

#### **Tomorrow shall be my dancing day**

Like *I saw three ships*, *Tomorrow shall be my dancing day* first appeared in print in

William B. Sandys's *Christmas Carols Ancient and Modern*, a collection dating from 1833. Sandys was a Fellow of the London Society of Antiquaries, and his interest in preserving traditional songs such as these anticipates by several decades the efforts of more famous pioneers such as Cecil Sharp. The text, with its central image of life as a dance, probably goes back to mediaeval times; the arrangement by Sir David Willcocks, quondam Director of Music of King's College, Cambridge, makes appropriate play with syncopations.

#### **Adam lay ybounden**

Matthew Martin's setting of *Adam lay ybounden* was first performed in 2006 by the choir of Westminster Cathedral, of which Martin was Assistant Master of Music at the time. The fifteenth-century macaronic text has been set by several English composers, perhaps most famously by Boris Ord. In his version, Martin eschews all suggestions of overt rejoicing, creating instead a meditative setting with incantatory elements and repeated, though veiled references to the 'Ave, maris stella' chant heard also in *Noël nouvelet*.

#### **Riu, riu, chiu**

*Riu, riu, chiu* has been attributed by some authorities to Matheo Flecha the Elder; others claim it to be an anonymous work. What

seems beyond dispute is that the original version of the melody was a *villancico*, a type of Spanish popular song performed in the vernacular. The song found new currency in the twentieth century through the advocacy of groups as diverse as The King's Singers and The Monkees. The title is made up of nonsense syllables that supposedly represent the singing of a nightingale.

#### **O little town of Bethlehem**

The hymn *O little town of Bethlehem* appears here in the familiar arrangement by Ralph Vaughan Williams. In the last verse, Sir Thomas Armstrong's well-known descant is employed.

#### **Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen**

*Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen*, a Marian hymn, first appeared in print in the late sixteenth century. Today it is most commonly heard in the harmonisation by Michael Praetorius. In the version recorded here, Donald Cashmore juxtaposes Praetorius's harmonies, which are used in the first verse, with two variants of his own. The latter, though close in spirit to their predecessors, reveal greater harmonic licence.

#### **Make we joy**

The words of *Make we joy* are taken from the same manuscript as those of *Out of*

*your sleep*. Commissioned by the City of Birmingham Choir, it employs yet another macaronic text. The setting, by a former Director of Music at St John's College, Christopher Robinson, uses the same techniques of additive rhythms as were observed in Bennett's carol. However, in keeping with the celebratory nature of the text, the character of the music is predominantly lively.

#### **Hark! the herald angels sing**

Christopher Robinson also provides the arrangement of *Hark! the herald angels sing* recorded here. The tune derives from Mendelssohn, and two verses of the familiar harmonisation by William H. Cummings are followed by a reharmonisation and descant by Robinson.

#### **The Lamb**

Sir John Tavener's *The Lamb* has become a modern classic in the three decades since it was first published. Dedicated to Tavener's nephew Simon, who was three years old at the time, it was apparently composed in a single afternoon. The setting uses a seven-note pitch set that is both symmetrical itself and treated symmetrically. For all the technical sophistication, the effect is one of beguiling innocence. Tavener ascribed the

work's great popularity to Blake's child-like vision; as he observed, the world

is starved of this precious and sacred dimension in almost every aspect of life.

#### **Telling**

Michael Finnissy, though often described as an arch modernist, has written several very approachable works for choir. *Telling* first appeared in 2008 in a collection of new carols by contemporary composers. Almost entirely homophonic in style, it relies for its effect on a refined harmonic sensibility.

#### **Coventry Carol**

The text of the *Coventry Carol* is taken from a mystery play called 'The Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors', which was traditionally performed in Coventry during the Christmas season. The words, a mother's lament for her doomed child, capture the moment in the play just before Herod's soldiers burst in to slaughter the innocent. The version heard here was written by Kenneth Leighton, a native of Wakefield which, curiously, also has a tradition of mystery plays. Leighton's highly touching setting, whose effectiveness depends greatly on an extended treble solo, was written while Leighton was a student of Classics at Queen's College, Oxford.

#### **On Christmas night**

Both text and melody of *On Christmas night* were transcribed by two of the greatest pioneers of the folksong revival, Cecil Sharp and Ralph Vaughan Williams. The former recorded the carol in Gloucestershire, the latter near Horsham – hence the alternative title of 'Sussex Carol'. The arrangement recorded here is by Sir Philip Ledger, who succeeded Sir David Willcocks as Director of Music at King's College, Cambridge.

#### **Silent night**

Ledger again features as the arranger of the following piece, *Silent night*. The story of the carol's genesis is not entirely clear, though there seems little reason to doubt that it was first performed on Christmas Eve 1818 in the Church of St Nicholas in Oberndorf in Austria. Some critics have detected hints of yodelling in the melody, and the original version would almost certainly have possessed a much more vigorous quality than the familiar cradlesong interpretation preserved by Ledger.

#### **O come, all ye faithful**

Over the years, the melody of *O come, all ye faithful* has been ascribed to a number of composers, including Handel and Gluck. However, it is now well established that

it was composed by John Francis Wade, an eighteenth-century hymn writer, who harboured Jacobite sympathies and was forced to flee to France after the failure of the 1745 rising. In fact, one scholar, Bennett Zon, has gone so far as to argue that it was a tribute to the Jacobite cause. According to this interpretation, the 'fideles' (the 'faithful') are the followers of Bonnie Prince Charlie, Bethlehem is a commonly used cipher for England, and 'regem angelorum' (the 'King of Angels') can be linked to the 'King of the English' ('regem anglorum'). The hymn-tune, crowned by Sir David Willcocks's glorious descant, provides a fitting conclusion to such a wide-ranging celebration of music for the Advent and Christmas seasons.

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**John Challenger** began his musical education as a Chorister at Hereford Cathedral. He studied at Hereford Cathedral School, where he obtained diplomas from Trinity College, London and the Royal College of Organists. Subsequently he was appointed Organ Scholar of St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, where he studied with Jeremy Filsell. He obtained his Fellowship of the Royal College of Organists in 2008. He joined St John's College, Cambridge in October 2008 as Junior Organ Scholar, and

in October 2010 became the Senior Organ Scholar. In addition to carrying out his duties with the College Choir, he is President of the College Music Society and directs the St John's Singers, the College's mixed-voice choir. As a recitalist he has performed across the UK, Europe, and the USA.

**The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge** is one of the finest collegiate choirs in the world, known and loved by millions from its recordings, broadcasts, and concert tours. The services follow the Cathedral tradition of the Church of England, and the Choir has fulfilled this role in the life of the College since the 1670s. The Choir consists of sixteen Choristers and four Probationers, all educated at St John's College School, where they receive a unique musical education in the hands of the Director of Music, Andrew Nethsingha; Choristers receive bursaries of between 66% and 100% of fees at the School. The alto, tenor, and bass parts are taken by young men who are usually undergraduate members of the College and who are selected to their places in the College Choir (and therefore to the University) as Choral Scholars. Two Organ Scholars assist the Director of Music in the running of the Choir, attending the daily rehearsals, and accompanying the services in Chapel.

Each term the Choir sings Bach Cantatas liturgically with the St John's Sinfonia.

The Choir possesses a distinctive, rich, expressive sound which sets it apart from most other English cathedral choirs. For several decades it has performed around the world, including the USA, Canada, Brazil, South Africa, Japan, and Australia, and has recently visited such European concert venues as the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Budapest Palace of Arts, and Bregenz Festival, as well as the BBC Proms. The Choir's repertoire contains a wide variety of works from all periods during the past 500 years. The College commissions much new music, the Choir giving around four premieres a year. In 2011 commissions have been fulfilled by James MacMillan, James Long, John Rutter, Judith Weir, and Jonathan Harvey. Under its legendary former conductors George Guest, Christopher Robinson, and David Hill, the Choir of St John's College, Cambridge has over the last fifty years produced an extraordinary and extensive discography, including three critically acclaimed CDs under its recently signed contract with Chandos Records. St John's is the only British choir to webcast services weekly throughout the year. [www.sjcchoir.co.uk](http://www.sjcchoir.co.uk)

Performing as a conductor and organist in North America, South Africa, China, and

throughout Europe, **Andrew Nethsingha** has since 2007 been Director of Music at St John's College, Cambridge, where his innovations have included weekly webcasts and a termly Bach cantata series. With Margaret Faultless he recently founded the period instrument ensemble St John's Sinfonia. He received his early musical training as a chorister at Exeter Cathedral, where his father was organist for over a quarter of a century. He later studied at the Royal College of Music, where he won seven prizes, and at St John's College, Cambridge. He held Organ Scholarships under Christopher Robinson at St George's, Windsor, and George Guest at St John's, before becoming Assistant Organist at Wells Cathedral. He was subsequently Director of Music at Truro and Gloucester cathedrals. Additionally, he has held the positions of Artistic Director of the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival and Musical Director of the Gloucester Choral Society, among others, and served as President of the Cathedral Organists' Association. Andrew Nethsingha has worked with some of the UK's leading orchestras. His concerts with the Philharmonia Orchestra and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra have included performances of Britten's *War Requiem*, Mahler's Eighth Symphony, Elgar's *The Kingdom*, symphonies by Beethoven, and Gershwin's *An American in Paris*. He has

also worked with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, London Mozart Players, Britten Sinfonia, and BBC Concert Orchestra, and recently conducted at the BBC Proms

and the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam. He regularly runs choral courses in various countries, including, this year, France and the USA.



John Challenger



© Paul Marc Mitchell

Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, with Andrew Nethsingha

**1 What sweeter music**

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

Dark and dull night, fly hence away,  
And give the honour to this day,  
That sees December turn'd 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 quick'ning birth  
Gives life and lustre, public mirth,  
To heaven and the under earth.

We see him come, and know him ours,  
Who, with his sun-shine and his show'rs,  
Turns all the patient ground to flow'rs.

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 heav'nly King?

Robert Herrick (1591 – 1634),  
abridged and altered

**2 Noël nouvelet**

Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.  
Dévotes gens, crions à Dieu merci!  
Chantons Noël pour le roi nouvelet.  
Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.

L'ange disait: 'Pasteurs, partez d'ici,  
L'âme en repos et le cœur réjoui;  
En Bethléem trouverez l'agnelet.'  
Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.

En Bethléem, étant tous réunis,  
Trouvent l'enfant, Joseph, Marie aussi.  
La crèche était au lieu d'un bercelet.  
Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.

Bientôt les rois, par l'étoile éclaircis,  
De l'Orient dont ils étaient sortis,  
À Bethléem vinrent un matin.  
Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.

Voici mon Dieu, mon sauveur Jésus Christ,  
Par qui sera le prodige accompli  
De nous sauver par son sang vermeillet!  
Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.

Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.  
Dévotes gens, crions à Dieu merci!  
Chantons Noël pour le roi nouvelet.  
Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.

Anonymous (fifteenth century)

[Christmas comes anew, let us sing Noel!  
Faithful people, let us shout to God, 'Thanks!'  
Sing we Noel for the new King.  
Christmas comes anew, let us sing Noel!

The angel said, 'Shepherds, leave this place!  
Let your spirit be calm and your heart rejoice.  
In Bethlehem you will find the little lamb.'  
Christmas comes anew, let us sing Noel!

In Bethlehem, all gathered together  
they found the child, with Joseph and Mary  
too.

The manger was in place of a cradle.  
Christmas comes anew, let us sing Noel!

Soon, the Kings, by the bright star,  
from the Orient which they had left,  
to Bethlehem came one morning.  
Christmas comes anew, let us sing Noel!

Here is my God, my saviour Jesus Christ,  
through whom the wonder will be fulfilled.  
To save us, through his scarlet blood,  
Christmas comes anew, let us sing Noel!

Christmas comes anew, O let us sing Noel!  
Faithful people, let us shout to God, 'Thanks!'  
Sing we Noel for the new King.  
Christmas comes anew, let us sing Noel!

Translation: Marion Jackson]

### **Balulalow**

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

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

Traditional Scottish (sixteenth century)

**4 A babe is born**

A babe is born all of a may,  
To bring salvation unto us.  
To him we sing both night and day.  
*Veni, Creator Spiritus.*

At Bethlehem, that blessed place,  
The child of bliss now born he was;  
And him to serve God give us grace,  
*O lux beata Trinitas.*

There came three kings out of the East,  
To worship the King that is so free,  
With gold and myrrh and frankincense,  
*A solis ortus cardine.*

The angels came down with one cry,  
A fair song that night sung they  
In worship of that child:  
*Gloria tibi Domine.*

A babe is born all of a may,  
To bring salvation unto us.  
To him we sing both night and day.  
*Veni, Creator Spiritus. Noel!*

Anonymous (fifteenth century)

**5 In the bleak mid-winter**

In the bleak mid-winter  
Frosty wind made moan,  
Earth stood hard as iron,  
Water like a stone;  
Snow had fallen,  
Snow on snow,  
In the bleak mid-winter, long ago.

Our God, Heav'n cannot hold him,  
Nor earth sustain;  
Heav'n and earth shall flee away  
When he comes to reign:  
In the bleak mid-winter  
A stable place sufficed  
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

Enough for him, whom cherubim  
Worship night and day,  
A breastful of milk  
And a mangerful of hay;  
Enough for him, whom angels  
Fall down before,  
The ox and ass and camel which adore.

What can I give him,  
Poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd  
I would bring a lamb,

If I were a Wise Man  
I would do my part,  
Yet what I can I give him, give my heart.

Christina Rossetti (1830 – 1894)

**6 Ding! dong! merrily on high**

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

E'en so here below, below,  
Let steeple bells be swungen,  
And 'lo, io, io!  
By priest and people sungen!  
*Gloria! Hosanna in excelsis!*

Pray you, dutifully prime  
Your matin chime, ye ringers!  
May you beautifully rime  
Your evetime song, ye singers!  
*Gloria! Hosanna in excelsis!*

George Ratcliffe Woodward (1848 – 1934)

**7 Jesus Christ the apple tree**

The tree of life my soul hath seen,  
Laden with fruit and always green:  
The trees of nature fruitless be  
Compared with Christ the apple tree.

His beauty doth all things excel:  
By faith I know, but ne'er can tell  
The glory which I now can see  
In Jesus Christ the apple tree.

For happiness I long have sought,  
And pleasure dearly I have bought:  
I missed of all; but now I see  
'Tis found in Christ the apple tree.

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

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

from *Divine Hymns or Spiritual Songs* (1784)

**8 I saw three ships**

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

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

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

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

O they sail'd into Bethlehem,  
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,  
O they sail'd into Bethlehem,  
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And all the bells on earth shall ring,  
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,  
And all the bells on earth shall ring,  
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And all the angels in heav'n shall sing,  
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,  
And all the angels in heav'n shall sing,  
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And all the souls on earth shall sing,  
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,  
And all the souls on earth shall sing,  
On Christmas Day in the morning.

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

Traditional English

**9 Out of your sleep**

Out of your sleep arise and wake,  
For God mankind now hath ytake.  
All of a maid without any make;  
Of all women she beareth the bell.

And through a maidè fair and wise,  
Now man is made of full great price;  
Now angels knelen to man's service,  
And at this time all this befell.

Now man is brighter than the sun;  
Now man in heav'n on high shall won;  
Blessèd be God this game is begun  
And his mother the Empress of hell.

That ever was thrall now is he free;  
That ever was small now great is she;  
Now shall God deem both thee and me  
Unto his bliss if we do well.

Now man he may to heaven wend;  
Now heav'n and earth to him they bend.  
He that was foe now is our friend.  
This is no nay that I you tell.

Now blessèd Brother, grant us grace,  
At doomès day to see thy face,  
And in thy court to have a place,  
That we may there sing thee nowell.

Anonymous (fifteenth century)

**[10] Benedicamus Domino**

Procedenti puero,  
Eya, nobis annus est!  
Virginis ex utero – Gloria! laudes! –  
Deus homo factus est et immortalis.  
Sine viri semine  
Natus est de virgine;

Sine viri copia  
Natus est ex Maria.  
In hoc festo determino  
Benedicamus Domino.

from Sloane MS 2593

[For the advent of a child,  
Hurrah! the season is upon us.  
From a virgin's womb – Glory! Praises!  
God has been made man – and immortal.  
Without seed of a man  
He has been born of a virgin;  
Without recourse to a man  
He has been born of Mary.  
Upon this festal tide  
Let us bless the Lord.

Translation revised: Max Kramer]

**[11] There is no rose**

There is no rose of such virtue  
As is the rose that bare Jesu: *Alleluia*.

For in this rose containèd was  
Heav'n and earth in little space: *Res  
miranda*.

By that rose we may well see  
There be one God in Persons Three: *Pares  
forma*.

Then leave we all this worldly mirth  
And follow we this joyous birth:

*Transeamus.*

Anonymous (fifteenth century)

**12 Tomorrow shall be my dancing day**

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day:  
I would my true love did so chance  
To see the legend of my play,  
To call my true love to my dance:

Sing O my love, O my love, my love, my  
love;

This have I done for my true love.

Then was I born of a virgin pure,  
Of her I took fleshly substance;  
Thus was I knit to man's nature,  
To call my true love to my dance:

Sing O my love, O my love, my love, my  
love;

This have I done for my true love.

In a manger laid and wrapp'd I was,  
So very poor, this was my chance,  
Betwixt an ox and a silly poor ass,  
To call my true love to my dance:

Sing O my love, O my love, my love, my  
love;

This have I done for my true love.

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day:  
I would my true love did so chance  
To see the legend of my play,  
To call my true love to my dance:

Sing O my love, O my love, my love, my  
love;

This have I done for my true love.

from an old Cornish poem

**18 Adam lay ybounden**

Adam lay ybounden,  
Bounden in a bond;  
Four thousand winter  
Thought he not too long.

And all was for an apple,  
An apple that he took,  
As clerkes finden,  
Written in their book.

Ne had the apple taken been,  
The apple taken been,  
Ne had never Our Lady  
A been heav'né queen.

Blessed be the time  
That apple taken was,  
Therefore we moun singen:  
*Deo gracias!*

Anonymous (fifteenth century)

<sup>14</sup> **Riu, riu, chiu**

Riu, riu, chiu, la guarda ribera:  
Dios guardó el lobo de nuestra cordera.

El lobo rabioso la quiso morder,  
mas Dios poderoso la supo defender;  
quisole hazer que no pudiesse pecar,  
ni aun original esta Virgen no tuviera.

Este qu'es nacido es el gran monarca,  
Cristo patriarca de carne vestido;  
hanos radimido con sezer chiquito,  
aunqu'era infinito, finito se hiziera.

Muchas profeçias lo han profetizado;  
Y aun en nuestros dias lo hemos  
alcançado.  
A Dios humanado vemos en el suelo  
Y al hombre en el cielo por que el le qui  
siera.

Yo vi mil garçones que andavan cantando,  
Por aqui volando haziendo mil sonos,  
Diziendo a gascones: Gloria sea'n el çielo  
Y paz en el suelo, pues Jesus nasçiera.

Attributed to  
Juan del Encina (1468 – 1529 / 30)

[Riu, riu, chiu, the river protects her:  
God kept the wolf from our lamb.

The rabid wolf tried to bite her  
But God Almighty knew how to defend her;  
He desired to make her unable to sin,  
Not even original sin had this virgin.

This one who is born is the great monarch,  
Christ the Patriarch, clothed in flesh;  
He has redeemed us by becoming small,  
Although he was infinite, he has become  
finite.

Many prophecies foretold him;  
And now, in our time, we have reached  
their fulfilment.  
God made human we see on the earth,  
And man in heaven because he wished it.

I saw a thousand youths that went singing,  
Flying about, making a thousand sounds,  
Saying to the Gascons Glory be in heaven  
And peace in the earth, since Jesus has  
been born.

Translation: David Waddilove and Max Kramer]

**15 O little town of Bethlehem**

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

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

How silently, how silently,  
The wondrous gift is giv'n!

So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessings of his heav'n.  
No ear may hear his coming;  
But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive him, still  
The dear Christ enters in.

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

Phillips Brooks (1835–1893)

**16 Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen**

Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen  
aus einer Wurzel zart;  
wie uns die Alten sungen  
von Jesse kam die Art  
und hat ein Blümlein bracht  
mitten im kalten Winter  
wohl zu der halben Nacht.

Das Röslein, das ich meine,  
davon Jesaías sagt;

hat uns gebracht alleine  
Marie, die reine Magd:  
Aus Gottes ew'gem Rat  
hat sie ein Kind geboren  
wohl zu der halben Nacht.

Das Blümelein so kleine,  
das duftet uns so süß;  
mit seinem hellen Scheine  
vertreibt's die Finsternis.  
Wahr'r Mensch und wahrer Gott,  
hilft uns aus allem Leide,  
rettet von Sünd' und Tod.

Anonymous (sixteenth century)

[A rose there is a-springing  
from tender roots on earth;  
as ancient men were singing  
from Jesse came its birth  
and now this little flower  
appears in coldest winter  
at this, the midnight hour.

This rose, the stem of Jesse,  
by prophets once foretold;  
Mary alone has brought us  
the Child promised of old.  
By God's eternal power  
the Maid has borne the infant  
at this, the midnight hour.

The flower so small and slender  
shines through with radiance bright;  
to us so sweet and tender,  
dispels the darkest night.  
True man with God's true power,  
helps us from all our suffering,  
saves us from death's dark hour.

Translation: Donald Cashmore (b. 1926)  
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#### **17** Make we joy

Make we joy now in this fest  
*In quo Christus natus est: Eya!*

*A Patre unigenitus*  
Through a maiden is come to us:  
Sing we to her and say, 'Welcome,  
*Veni, Redemptor gentium.*'

Make we joy now in this fest  
*In quo Christus natus est: Eya!*

*A solis ortus cardine*  
So mighty a lord was none as he:  
He on our kind his peace hath set,  
*Adam parens quod polluit.*

Make we joy now in this fest  
*In quo Christus natus est: Eya!*

*O lux beata, Trinitas!*  
He lay between an ox and ass,  
And by his mother, maiden free.  
*Gloria tibi, Domine!*

Make we joy now in this fest  
*In quo Christus natus est: Eya!*

Anonymous (fifteenth century)

**18 Hark! the herald angels sing**

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

Christ, by highest heaven adored,  
Christ, the everlasting Lord:  
Late in time behold him come,  
Offspring of a virgin's womb;  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,  
Hail, the incarnate Deity!

Pleased as man with man to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel.  
Hark! the herald angels sing  
Glory to the new-born King.

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

Various authors

**19 The Lamb**

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!

William Blake (1757–1827)

### **[20] Telling**

Soon must I sing with rejoicing,  
For the time it is run.  
Of a wee child all undefiled,  
The King of Heaven's Son.

His blood so red for thee was shed,  
The price it was not small.  
Remember well that which I tell,  
And come when Jesu call.

Man stands in doubt, and seekst about,  
Where that they mayst him see.  
Idols they set, riches to get,  
Fashioned from stone and tree.

His blood so red for thee was shed,  
The price it was not small.  
Remember well that which I tell,  
And come when Jesu call.

Mankind I call which lies in thrall,  
For love he made thee free.  
To pay the debt the price was great,  
From Hell he ransomed thee.

His blood so red for thee was shed,  
The price it was not small.  
Remember well that which I tell,  
And come when Jesu call.

Anonymous (sixteenth century)

### **[21] Coventry Carol**

Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child,  
By, by, lully, lullay,  
Lully, thou little tiny child,  
Lully, lulla, lullay.

O sisters too, how may we do  
For to preserve this day?  
This poor youngling for whom we 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 children young to slay.

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

*from The Pageant of the Shearmen  
and Tailors (fifteenth century)*

## **22 On Christmas night**

(Sussex Carol)

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

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

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

All out of darkness we have light,  
Which makes the angels sing this night:  
'Glory to God and peace to men,  
Now and for evermore. Amen.'

Traditional English

## **23 Silent night**

Silent night, holy night,  
All is dark, save the light  
Shining where the mother mild  
Watches over the holy child.  
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night,  
Shepherds first saw the sight,  
Heard the angel-song alleluia,  
Loud proclaiming near and far:  
'Christ our Saviour is here.'

Silent night, holy night,  
God's own son, oh how bright  
Shines the love in thy holy face,  
Shines the light of redemption and grace,  
Christ the incarnate God.

Josef Mohr (1792 – 1848)

Translation: Sir David Willcocks (b. 1919)

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**24 O come, all ye faithful**

O come, all ye faithful,  
Joyful and triumphant,  
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;  
Come and behold him  
Born the King of Angels:

O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord!

God of God,  
Light of Light,  
Lo! he abhors not the Virgin's womb;  
Very God,  
Begotten, not created:

O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angels,  
Sing in exultation,  
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above;  
Glory to God  
In the highest:

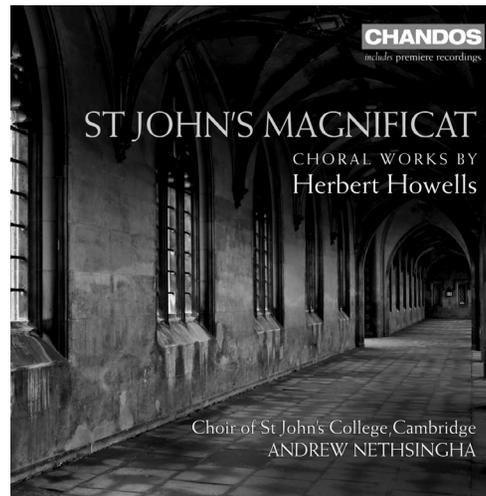
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord!

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,  
Born this happy morning,  
Jesu, to thee be glory giv'n;  
Word of the Father,  
Now in flesh appearing:

O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord!

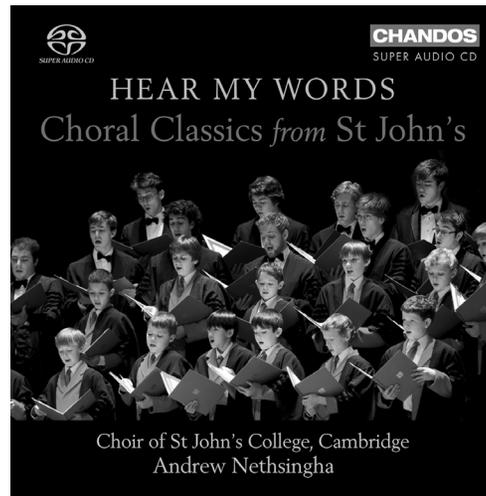
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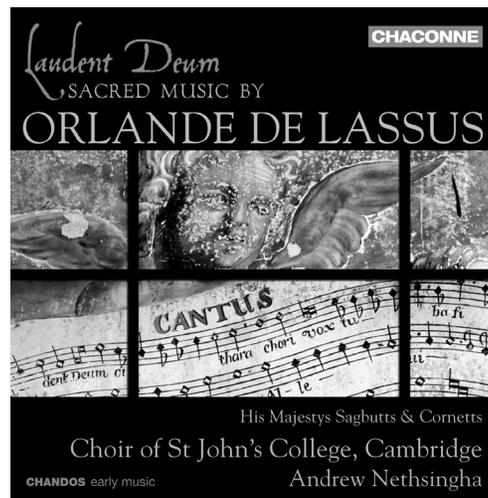
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**Recording producer** Rachel Smith  
**Sound engineer** Jonathan Cooper  
**Editor** Peter Newble  
**A & R administrator** Mary McCarthy  
**Recording venue** St John's College Chapel, Cambridge; 14 – 16 January 2011  
**Front cover** Photograph of members of the Choir of St John's College, Cambridge  
© Paul Marc Mitchell  
**Back cover** Photograph of Andrew Nethsingha by Ronald Knapp  
**Design and typesetting** Cassidy Rayne Creative ([www.cassidyrayne.co.uk](http://www.cassidyrayne.co.uk))  
**Booklet editor** Finn S. Gundersen  
**Publishers** Oxford University Press (*What sweeter music, A babe is born, Ding! dong! merrily on high, Tomorrow shall be my dancing day, Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen, Make we joy, Telling, On Christmas night, Silent night*), Novello & Co., Ltd (*Noël nouvelet, Coventry Carol*), Copyright Control (*Balulalow, In the bleak mid-winter, There is no rose, O little town of Bethlehem, Hark! the herald angels sing, O come, all ye faithful*), Elizabeth Poston / Campion Press (*Jesus Christ the apple tree*), Philip Marshall (*I saw three ships*), Universal Edition (*Out of your sleep*), Faber Music Ltd (*Adam lay ybounden*), Chester Music (*The Lamb*)  
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Country of origin UK



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Andrew Nethsingha

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Choir of St John's College, Cambridge/Nethsingha

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ON CHRISTMAS NIGHT

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## ON CHRISTMAS NIGHT

- |    |   |      |          |
|----|---|------|----------|
| 1  | John Rutter: What sweeter music*  | 4:35 |          |
| 2  | Traditional French: Noël nouvelet*<br>Julius Foo treble   | 3:36 |          |
| 3  | James Burton: Balulalow   | 2:25 |          |
| 4  | William Mathias: A babe is born, Op. 55*  | 3:24 |          |
| 5  | Harold Darke: In the bleak mid-winter*<br>Julian Gregory tenor  | 4:46 |          |
| 6  | Traditional French: Ding! dong! merrily on high*<br>Freddie James second organ part   | 2:48 |          |
| 7  | Elizabeth Poston: Jesus Christ the apple tree   | 3:16 |          |
| 8  | Traditional English: I saw three ships*   | 2:02 |          |
| 9  | Sir Richard Rodney Bennett: Out of your sleep   | 1:44 |          |
| 10 | Peter Warlock: Benedicamus Domino   | 1:25 |          |
| 11 | John Joubert: There is no rose  | 2:47 |          |
| 12 | Traditional English: Tomorrow shall be my dancing day   | 2:00 |          |
| 13 | Matthew Martin: Adam lay ybounden   | 3:13 |          |
| 14 | Matheo Flecha the Elder (attrib.): Riu, riu, chiu<br>Huw Leslie baritone (verse 2) • Henry Neill baritone (verse 3)<br>Basil MacDonald bass (verse 4) • Geoffrey Clapham bass (verse 5) | 2:37 |          |
| 15 | Traditional English: O little town of Bethlehem*  | 3:42 |          |
| 16 | Traditional German: Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen   | 2:54 |          |
| 17 | Christopher Robinson: Make we joy   | 2:09 |          |
| 18 | Felix Mendelssohn: Hark! the herald angels sing*  | 3:15 |          |
| 19 | Sir John Tavener: The Lamb  | 3:50 |          |
| 20 | Michael Finnissy: Telling ( <i>premiere recording</i> )<br>Peter Hicks treble   | 4:06 |          |
| 21 | Kenneth Leighton: Coventry Carol<br>Julius Foo treble   | 3:17 |          |
| 22 | Traditional English: On Christmas night*  | 2:03 |          |
| 23 | Franz Xaver Gruber: Silent night  | 3:13 |          |
| 24 | John Francis Wade: O come, all ye faithful*   | 4:02 |          |
|    |   |      | TT 74:22 |
- John Challenger organ\*  
Choir of St John's College, Cambridge  
Andrew Nethsingha

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