



cantabile
The London Quartet

A Song for Christmas

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Total playing time: 77'47

* Chris Hatt *piano*

The London Quartet would like to thank:

David and Mary Bowerman, Felicity Lott, Robin Tyson, Laszlo Harkanyi, David Foster, Annick-Patricia Carrière, Thomas Van der Spiegel, Peter Martin Jacob, Andrea Heister, Silvan Isenring, Carole Sterckx, Ilker Ersil, Firat Dadaş, Mihai Coser, Robert Roman, Sofie Haag, Live Arts Management, Jeremy Richardson, all at the St. Bride Foundation, Jonathan Knowles, Jonathan Butcher, Hugh Wooldridge – and of course our families.

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 Edited by Andrew Mellor and Claire Hay
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If Christmas and the New Year are times for celebrating the Old and the New, then *A Song for Christmas* warmly embraces both. It is yet another fruit of our old friendship with David and Mary Bowerman at Champs Hill and at the same time the first album to feature the newest incarnation of The London Quartet. We first started discussing the idea of a Christmas disc over a seasonal meal after a Christmas concert in Champs Hill, and indeed one of the great joys of this project is that we have thus had ample time to plan and prepare before recording – a luxury one is not always afforded. We were also able to make sure that we would once again have Chris Hatt with us in amongst his packed schedule.

The result is a collection of almost entirely new arrangements and pieces new to our repertoire, including some fresh home-grown creations. We have, however, made sure to include some old friends in the shape of a few perennial classics which everyone expects to hear us sing every Christmas. We felt that to leave them out would be akin to decorating the tree without a couple of essential items which all the family love.

And if Christmas is a time for friends, then to our delight we have found a number of dear old pals popping in; Ben Parry, with the wonderful *Christmas Cards* written with Garth Bardsley and which Ben kindly arranged for us, and Alexander L'Estrange, whose exquisite *Epiphany Carol*, with a stunning text from Alex's wife, Joanna, we felt brought a special extra dimension to the programme. We had first met Carroll Coates, composer of the album's title song, some years ago in Oregon, when he had handed us *A Song for Christmas*, which we always

hoped one day to have the chance to record. Most fortuitous of all for us was that our timetable for the album coincided with Paul Plummer having some rare availability in London. Paul accompanied us on countless occasions, from Turkey to Berlin to Canada, until his own principal sphere of activities moved initially to Germany, then Austria and now Scotland. On this occasion he was not of course at the piano, but rather helped us both with our languages and with our vocal preparation. It was an added bonus to have him sit in for some of the sessions in Sussex, which were produced by Andrew Mellor, another old friend and veteran of our previous Champs Hill album. And to crown it all, a stunning cover image from one of our most supportive friends of all, Jonathan Knowles.

Thus surrounded by our extended family in the perfect working atmosphere of Champs Hill, we were in the most relaxed and festive of spirits to sing out *A Song for Christmas*.

Miles Sarah-Anne Christopher Paul

1 **A SONG FOR CHRISTMAS**

CARROLL COATES, arr. CANTABILE – THE LONDON QUARTET

Carroll Coates (b. 1929) is an English composer and songwriter. He wrote the music and lyrics for dozens of songs, often for films, throughout the 1950s and into the 1990s. Coates' songs have been recorded frequently by many artists including Frank Sinatra. In 2008 Coates contacted the London Quartet to arrange to meet them following their concert in Oregon. Knowing he was attending, the ensemble made sure to include their arrangement of his iconic standard *London By Night*. At their meeting the group were honoured when he handed them the score to *A Song For Christmas*, which Coates wrote both the music and lyrics for. Here the London Quartet presents a beautiful version of the song for just piano and voices, capturing Coates sumptuous jazz harmonies and later, swinging rhythms.

Now the year is ending
And we're homeward wending,
Gathering from near and far;
Maybe this December
We could all remember
Just how fortunate we are ...

Christmastime's a time for Love,
It's love we get to share,
Not just things that Santa brings for Christmas, (Christmas!)
With mistletoe and candle glow
To lend that festive air,
There's no mood like gratitude for Christmas, (Christmas!)

Bless'd enough are we
Just to spend the Season,
Safe within the fold,
Not out there in the cold!

If Peace on Earth, Goodwill to All is still a dream sublime (1st time)
Tho' Peace on Earth, Goodwill to All are hills we've still to climb (2nd time)
Now's the time to fill the night with voices bright and strong,
Say a pray'r then sing a song for Christmas!

Carroll Coates b. 1929

2 **BETHLEHEM DOWN**

BRUCE BLUNT / PETER WARLOCK, arr. CANTABILE – THE LONDON QUARTET

A notorious and intriguing character in British musical History, Peter Warlock (1894–1930) was a pseudonym of Philip Arnold Heseltine, which he used to reflect his interest in the occult. He is best known as a composer of songs and other vocal music. *Bethlehem Down* – a setting of a poem by Warlock's friend Bruce Blunt – was the winning entry in the Daily Telegraph's annual Christmas carol competition, after the composer and lyricist submitted the piece in 1927. Reputedly Warlock and Blunt only entered the competition to fund a bout of heavy drinking; however, despite its origin, the result is a truly sublime work, surely amongst the most reflective and poignant in all Christmas music.

When he is King we will give him the Kings' gifts,
Myrrh for its sweetness, and gold for a crown,
"Beautiful robes," said the young girl to Joseph,
Fair with her first-born on Bethlehem Down.

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

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

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

Bruce Blunt 1899–1957

OUR JOYFUL'ST FEAST

CHRISTOPHER STEEL, arr. CANTABILE – THE LONDON QUARTET

Our Joyful'st Feast is in fact three short carols by the British composer Christopher Steel (1938–1991). Steel's music has been compared to his contemporaries Walton and Britten and includes seven symphonies, choral works and music for the organ. These three carols are entitled: *What Sweeter Music (Herrick's Carol)*, *There Was a Time for Shepherds* and *A Christmas Carol* and demonstrate Steel's warm, chromatic harmonic pallet.

3 **WHAT SWEETER MUSIC (HERRICK'S CAROL)**

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!

Dark and dull night fly hence away,
And give the honour to this day
That sees December turned to May.
If we may ask the reason, say...

**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.

Robert Herrick 1591–1674

4 **THERE WAS A TIME FOR SHEPHERDS**

**There was a time for Shepherds
When a heav'nly choir was heard,
They found the holy baby,
And the truth of God's own word.**

Our Lord became a Shepherd
From his cradle in the straw,
He gathers us from straying
From darkness and death's door.
Let's share the world at Christmas
As with joy and praise we sing,
He shares our daily living,
Who is Shepherd, Lord and King.

Anthea Steel 1940–2015

5 **A CHRISTMAS CAROL**

So now is come our joyful'st feast;
Let every man be jolly,
Each room with ivy leaves is drest
And every post with holly.
Though some churls at our mirth repine,
Round your foreheads garlands twine,
Drown sorrow in a cup of wine,
And let us all be merry.
Now all our neighbours chimneys,
And Christmas blocks are burning,

The ovens, they with baked meats choke,
And all their spits are turning.
Without the door let sorrows lie,
And if for cold it hap to die,
We'll bury't in a Christmas pie
And evermore be merry
The wenches with their wassail-bowls
About the street are singing,
The boys are come to catch the owls,
The wild-mare in is bringing.
Our kitchen-boy hath broke his box,
And to the dealing of the ox
Our honest neighbours come by flocks,
And here they will be merry.
Then wherefore in these merry days
Should we I pray be duller?
No let us sing our roundelays
To make our mirth the fuller;
And whilst thus inspired we sing
Let all the streets with echoes ring:
Woods, and hills, and everything
Bear witness we are merry.

George Wither 1588–1667

6 THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

TRADITIONAL ENGLISH / FREDERIC AUSTIN / CANTABILE – THE LONDON QUARTET, arr. KNIGHT

Traditionally Christmas Day is the first of twelve days of celebration and merrymaking. In the past there was particular celebration on the evening of the fifth of January, or Twelfth Night. The exact origins and meaning of the song are not clear but in 1780 a children's book, *Mirth without Mischief* was published containing a Twelfth Night 'memories-and-forfeits' game, in which a leader recited a verse with gifts sent from their 'true love'. Other players added verses until one of the players made a mistake and were obliged to give the other players a sweet or a kiss. Over the years there have been many versions, and in France and Scotland the melody and words are slightly different. The well-known melody now associated with it was derived from a 1909 arrangement of a traditional folk melody by English composer Frederic Austin, who first introduced the now familiar prolongation of the verse "five gold rings".

On the first day of Christmas my true love sent to me
A partridge in a pear tree.

On the second day of Christmas my true love sent to me
Two turtle doves and a partridge in a pear tree.

On the third day of Christmas my true love sent to me
Three French hens ... and a partridge in a pear tree.

On the fourth day of Christmas my true love sent to me,
Four calling birds ... and a partridge in a pear tree.

On the fifth ... five gold rings...

On the sixth and the seventh ... seven swans a-swanning, six Geese a-laying...

On the eighth ... eight Maids a-milking...

On the ninth and the tenth ...ten lords a-leaping, nine ladies waiting...

On the eleventh and the twelfth ... twelve drummers drumming, eleven pipers piping...

So in the twelve days of Christmas my love had sent to me:
12, 11, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and a partridge in a pear tree.

Traditional

7 **I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS**

KIM GANNON / WALTER KENT / BUCK RAM, arr. CANTABILE – THE LONDON QUARTET

Bing Crosby recorded *I'll be Home For Christmas* in 1943 and since then hundreds of artists have recorded their own version of the song, including Elvis Presley, Whitney Houston and Dolly Parton. The song is sung from the point of view of a soldier stationed overseas during WWII, writing a letter to his family but ends with the melancholy line: "I'll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams".

Kim Gannon 1900–1974

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8 **HAVE YOURSELF A MERRY LITTLE CHRISTMAS**

HUGH MARTIN / RALPH BLANE, arr. CANTABILE – THE LONDON QUARTET

In 1944, Judy Garland recorded *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*, a song written by Hugh Martin and Ralph Blane for the MGM musical *Meet Me in St. Louis*. The song originally expressed the sadness of a family at the prospect of leaving their home in St. Louis, Missouri to move to New York. In order to include the song on his 1957 album 'A Jolly Christmas' Frank Sinatra requested some changes to the lyrics to make them more cheerful, and since then the song has been recorded many times by artists including Ella Fitzgerald, Luther Vandross and more recently, Sam Smith.

Ralph Blane 1914–1995

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9 **GOOD KING WENCESLAS HAD A FARM**

TRADITIONAL (PIÆ CANTIONES) / TRADITIONAL ENGLISH /
JOHN MASON NEAL AND THOMAS HELMORE, arr. CANTABILE – THE LONDON QUARTET

This is an original take on the well-known carol *Good King Wenceslas*, which is itself based on the legend of a Czech king who helps a peasant on the Feast of Stephen (December 26th). In 1853, John Neale and Thomas Helmore wrote the 'Wenceslas' lyrics to the tune of a traditional Finnish melody. Thanks to a remark by the composer Tanera Dawkins (who is married to Mark Fleming, the London Quartet's second tenor) that the well-known Christmas Carol fits with other well known nursery rhymes, Mark has created this entertaining new version.

Good King Wenceslas looked out,
On the Feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about,
Deep and crisp and even;
Brightly shone the moon that night,
Though the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight,
Gath'ring winter fuel.

"Hither, page, and stand by me,
If thou know'st it telling,
Yonder peasant, who is he?
Where and what his dwelling?"

"Sire he lives a good league hence,
Underneath the mountain,
Right against the forest fence,
By St Agnes' fountain."

"Bring me flesh, and bring me wine,
Bring me pine logs hither:
Thou and I shall see him dine,
When we bear them thither."
Page and monarch, forth they went,
Forth they went together;
Through the rude wind's wild lament
And the bitter weather.

In his master's steps he trod,
Where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod
Which the saint had printed.
Therefore Christian men, be sure,
Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor,
Shall yourselves find blessing.
Good King Wenceslas stepped out.

John Mason Neale 1818–1866

Ah... a farm
Ah... E I O
On that farm he had a cow
E I E I O
with a moo moo here, moo moo there
Here a moo, there a moo
Everywhere a moo moo
Old MacDonald had a Farm E I E I O

Old MacDonald had a Farm
E I E I O
And on that farm he had a sheep
E I E I O
with a baa baa here, baa baa there
Here a baa, there a baa
Everywhere a baa baa
Old MacDonald had a Farm E I E I O

Old MacDonald had a Farm
E I E I O
And on that farm he had a dog
E I E I O
with a woof woof here, woof woof there
Here a woof, there a woof
Everywhere a woof woof
Old MacDonald had a Farm
E I E I O – moo / baa / woof!

Traditional

10 INTROIT CAROL

TRADITIONAL PEASANT'S SONG / MARK FLEMING, EDVARD GRIEG

This *Introit Carol* is another piece inspired by Mark's wife Tanera Dawkins, who often plays Grieg's *Peasant Song* from his *Lyric Pieces*, book VIII, Op.65. Mark realised that this would be a great melody to which he could add Christmas words.

A Babe in a Manger, Three Kings coming by,
And angel-led Shepherds who wonder why
It all came to pass, and so with joy we ever sing
To God, who has sent us all this great King.

But how can these things that occurred long ago
Ring true through the tinsel and sleighs and snow?
With love in your hearts you can make Christmas anew
With family and friends all around you.

Just think of the coming price to pay
For Christ, who lies resting upon the hay.
This season of joy filled with colours gold and blue
Has family and friends all around you.
Love will surround you.

Mark Fleming b. 1965

11 THE CHRISTMAS WALTZ

SAMMY CAHN / JULE STYNE arr. CANTABILE – THE LONDON QUARTET

Along with the new, jolly version of *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*, *The Christmas Waltz* also featured on Frank Sinatra's 'A Jolly Christmas' album. Sinatra specifically requested that Styne and Cahn write him a Christmas song during a particularly hot summer in Los Angeles as a B-Side for a new recording of *White Christmas*. In this new version, various Chopin waltzes make brief appearances, including Chopin's *Minute Waltz* Op.64 No.1 in the introduction, and later his *Grande Valse Brillante* Op.18.

Sammy Cahn 1913–1993

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12 **EPIPHANY CAROL**

JOANNA FORBES L'ESTRANGE / ALEXANDER L'ESTRANGE

Alexander L'Estrange (b. 1974) set his wife Joanna Forbes L'Estrange's beautiful poem to create this wonderful *Epiphany Carol*. The piece demonstrates L'Estrange's style which is rooted in the English choral tradition, but draws freely on the composer's passion for jazz. The ensemble enjoyed working on this piece with the composer who was also the bassist and arranger for some of the London Quartet's 'Songs of Cricket' album.

Is it gold that you bring?
Is it a present for the King
Is that your special, special offering?
But far more precious than the gold
So often we have heard it told
Is our beloved blue-green world...

**Oh bring me, oh bring me a present for the future
A present for the future.**

Is it frankincense you bring?
Is it a present for the King
Is that your special, special offering?
However fair the frankincense
Its perfume warming to our sense
Our planet's need remains immense...

Is it myrrh that you bring?
Is it a present for the King
Is that your special, special offering?
If only could those drops of myrrh
A sense of longing in us stir
To make Earth's blessings as they were...
A present for *our* future.

Joanna Forbes L'Estrange b. 1971

13 **SUSA NINA – STILLE NACHT – SILENT NIGHT**

JOZEF SIMONS / ARMAND PREUD'HOMME / JOSEPH MOHR / FRANZ GRUBER,
arr. CANTABILE – THE LONDON QUARTET

Franz Gruber (1781–1863) famously set the young priest Joseph Mohr's lyrics to *Stille Nacht* in 1818, before the two of them performed the work together at a Christmas Eve service that year at St Nicholas parish church in Oberndorf, Austria. *Susa Nina* is by Flemish composer, Armand Preud'homme (1904–1986). This haunting melody was conceived to fit with the well-known carol and the London Quartet has created a new arrangement exploring the combination.

Sint Jozef bereidde die wondere nacht
Van 't zuiverste strooisel een beddeke zacht
Daarop heeft Maria met schamele vlijt
Haar schreiende kindje te slapen geleid.

Susa Nina, 't hemelse hof in een armen stal
En engelen wieken naar 't aardse dal
En vullen de sferen met feestgeschal
Susa Nina, voor de Koning van 't heeal.

Jozef Simons 1888–1948

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht!
Alles schläft, einsam wacht
Nur das traute, hochheilige Paar.
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!

Joseph Mohr 1792–1848

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
Jesus Lord, at Thy Birth!

Translation: Anonymous

*Saint Joseph prepared, that wondrous night,
From the purest straw bedding, a soft sleeping-place.
Whereupon Maria with humble diligence
Led her crying Child to sleep.*

*Hushabye, the Heavenly court in a poor stable.
And angels wing their way down to the earthly valley
And fill the spheres with the noise of celebration.
Hushabye, for the King of the Universe.*

Translated by Cantabile – The London Quartet

*Silent night, holy night!
Everything is sleeping; solely keeping watch
Is the close, most holy couple.
Sweet boy with curly hair,
Sleep in Heavenly peace!*

Translated by Cantabile – The London Quartet

14 **A FESTIVAL OF CAROLS IN TWO MINUTES**

This fantastic piece *A Festival of Carols in Two Minutes* is the ensemble's own arrangement and challenges the listener to see how many carols and Christmas songs they can identify.

Once in a manger, one Silent Night,
Christ was born of Mary,
Which made the Angels sing that night.
The cattle are lowing,
While Shepherds watched, in fields where they lay
They left their flocks a-feeding
For the City of David
Frosty wind made moan.
Good morrow masters all,
Oh, the rising of the sun and the running of
Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer
Gloria, Hosanna in Excelsis
Mmmm
See how the shepherds
Found him in a manger
Asleep on the hay
And by the light
Leading onward beaming bright
Dashing through the snow
Deep and crisp and even
Three Kings from Persian lands afar
Bearing gifts we traverse with
Incense, Gold and Myrrh in hand
Alpha es et O Israel
Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly
We Wish You a Merry Christmas
And a ding dong merrily
On Christmas Day in the Morning
Cantabile – The London Quartet

15 **CHRISTMAS IN MY HEART**

ROB TYGER / KAY DENNAR, arr. CANTABILE – THE LONDON QUARTET

Christmas in my Heart was recorded in 2005 by German singer-songwriter Sarah Connor, and was the lead single of her album of the same name. In this version the London Quartet have added their trademark close-harmony sound.

Lyrics not reproduced here owing to copyright restrictions

16 **SÜßER DIE GLOCKEN NIE KLINGEN**

TRADITIONAL GERMAN, arr. CANTABILE – THE LONDON QUARTET

This is a new arrangement by Cantabile – The London Quartet of the traditional German carol *Süßer die Glocken nie klingen*. The carol's words describe how sweet the bells of Christmas sound and that their ringing spreads the message of peace, love and Christmas joy.

Süßer die Glocken nie klingen
Als zu der Weihnachtszeit,
's ist, als ob Engelein singen
wieder von Frieden und Freud'.
Wie sie gesungen in seliger Nacht,
Glocken mit heiligem Klang,
klinget die Erde entlang!

O, wenn die Glocken erklingen,
schnell sie das Christkindlein hört:
Tut sich vom Himmel dann schwingen
eilig hernieder zur Erd'.
Segnet den Vater, die Mutter, das Kind,
Glocken mit heiligem Klang,
klinget die Erde entlang!

*Sweeter the bells never rang
Than at Christmastime
It is as if little angels are singing
Once again about peace and joy
As they sang in that blessed night,
Bells with a holy sound
Ring out along the whole Earth!*

*Oh, when the bells ring out
The Christ-child hears them quickly
He swings down from Heaven and
And hurries quickly to Earth.
He blesses father, mother and child.
Bells with a holy sound
Ring out along the whole Earth!*

Klinget mit lieblichem Schalle
über die Meere noch weit,
dass sich erfreuen doch alle
seliger Weihnachtszeit.
Alle aufjauchzen mit herrlichem Sang!
Glocken mit heiligem Klang,
klinget die Erde entlang!

Wilhelm Kritzinger 1816–1890

*Ring with a lovely resonance
Far out over the seas
So that all may partake of the joy
Of the blessed Christmastime.
All shout out with glorious song!
Bells with a holy sound
Ring out along the whole Earth!*

Translated by Cantabile – The London Quartet

17 **INFANT HOLY, INFANT LOWLY**

TRADITIONAL POLISH / TRANSLATED EDITH M. G. REED, arr. DAVID WILLCOCKS

David Willcocks (1919–2015) was a British choral conductor, organist and composer. He is particularly known for his widely used choral arrangements of Christmas carols, many of which were originally written or arranged for the *Service of Nine Lessons and Carols* at King's College, Cambridge where he directed the choir from 1957 to 1974. *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly*, which is a traditional Polish carol, is one of many such arrangements published in *Carols for Choirs*, and this is the ensemble's tribute to the father of the English carol service.

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly,
For his bed a cattle stall,
Oxen lowing, little knowing
Christ the babe is Lord of all.
Swift are winging
Angels singing
Nowells ringing
Tidings bringing;
Christ the babe is Lord of all

Flocks were sleeping,
Shepherds keeping
Vigil till the morning new,
Saw the glory,
Heard the story
Tidings of a Gospel true.
Thus rejoicing
Free from sorrow
Praises voicing
Greet the morrow;
Christ the babe was born for you

Traditional Polish, tr. Edith M. G. Reed 1885–1933

18 **QUELLE EST CETTE ODEUR AGRÉABLE ?**

TRADITIONAL FRENCH, arr. CANTABILE – THE LONDON QUARTET

Quelle est cette odeur agréable ? is a well-known French nativity carol that has the rather unusual theme of a beautiful smell. A translation of the title might be “Whence is that goodly fragrance flowing?”, and the words explain that there is a fragrance unlike any encountered before even among spring flowers, arising from the stable.

Quelle est cette odeur agréable,
Bergers, qui ravit tous nos sens ?
S'exhale-t-il rien de semblable
Au milieu des fleurs du printemps ?

Mais quelle éclatante lumière
Dans la nuit vient frapper nos yeux ?
L'astre de jour, dans sa carrière,
Fut-il jamais si radieux !

A Bethléem, dans une crèche
Il vient de vous naître un Sauveur
Allons, que rien ne vous empêche
D'adorer votre rédempteur

*What is this pleasant fragrance,
Shepherds, which delights all our senses?
Does anything similar emanate
Amidst the flowers of spring?*

*But what dazzling light
Comes in the night to strike our eyes?
The morning sun, in its trajectory
Was it ever so radiant!*

*In Bethlehem, in a crib
A Saviour has just been born to you
Let us go, may nothing prevent you
From adoring your Redeemer*

Dieu tout puissant, gloire éternelle
Vous soit rendue jusqu'aux cieux.
Que la paix soit universelle
Que la grâce abonde en tous lieux.

Traditional French

*God all-powerful, may eternal glory
Be returned to you up into the Heavens
May peace be universal
May mercy abound in all places.*

Translated by Cantabile – The London Quartet

19 THE WEXFORD CAROL

TRADITIONAL IRISH, arr. CANTABILE – THE LONDON QUARTET

One of the oldest Christmas carols in the European tradition, *The Wexford Carol* is named after County Wexford in Ireland. It was championed by William Flood (1859–1928) who was organist and musical director at St. Aidan's Cathedral in Enniscorthy. He transcribed the carol from a local singer, and had it published in the *Oxford Book of Carols*. Cantabile – The London Quartet has previously recorded an *a cappella* version, but this is a new arrangement by the ensemble with piano accompaniment.

**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 this morn
There was a blessed Messiah born

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 angel said
“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
Traditional Irish

20 CHRISTMAS CARDS

GARTH BARDSLEY / BEN PARRY

Ben Parry (b. 1965) is a British composer, conductor, singer and arranger. A collaboration with Garth Bardsley, an actor, singer, writer and director, *Christmas Cards* is an amusing piece about sending and receiving cards. This was originally a solo song but Ben Parry, a great friend of Cantabile, arranged the piece specially for them.

I've heard people say that the postman knocks twice
But that saying, it seems is somewhat imprecise
Let me tell you the truth, and the truth is quite shocking
For the man from the mail he keeps knocking
And knocking...

I am surrounded by cards, Christmas cards they abound
Everywhere that I look Christmas cards can be found
And I'm really astounded not to say quite dumb-founded
To know that my friends really love me

On the ground by then door there's a Christmas card mound
And the pile it has grown to proportions profound
Though the postman is browned off
My day has been crowned off
In knowing my friends really love me

There are cards on the mantelpiece and cards on the chairs
There are cards in the sitting room and cards on the stairs
Cards stand to attention in the kitchen extension
There are even a few cards in the room I daren't mention

There are cards on the landing and on Mum's four-poster
There are cards in the oven and cards in the toaster
There are cards on the telly and pinned to dad's belly
And the cards in the sock draw are a little bit smelly

There are sixty-three robins and fifty-four mangers
Twelve angels, nine shepherds and three Power Rangers
And forty-four donkeys, the number keeps mounting
And so many stars that I couldn't keep counting

There are hundreds of hounds chasing fugitive foxes
And pictures of mice in big woolly socks
And baskets of kittens and puppies are charming
Though dogs hung in stockings I find quite alarming

Na na

There are snow-covered houses and a snow-covered steeple
A snow-covered snowman and snow-covered people
There are snow-covered gentlemen in tight lederhosen
It's really SNOW wonder they're clearly half-frozen

Thirty-two churches with bells that are ringing
Six Marys, five Josephs, four choirs loudly singing
And holly with berries and mistletoe for kissing
Three camels, Two magi, no wait...
One is missing!

I am surrounded by cards, Christmas cards they abound
Everywhere that I look Christmas cards can be found
And I'm really astounded and a little confounded
In knowing my friends, just knowing my friends
My fabulous, marvellous, glorious, wonderful friends really love me

Christmas cards, Christmas cards, Christmas cards!

Garth Bardsley b. 1965

21 **LET IT SNOW! LET IT SNOW! LET IT SNOW!**

SAMMY CAHN / JULE STYNE, arr. CANTABILE – THE LONDON QUARTET

Another song by the writing partnership of Cahn and Styne, *Let it Snow! Let it Snow!* was written during a heatwave in 1945. There have been many notable recordings by artists including Dean Martin, Bing Crosby and more recently, Kylie Minogue and Rod Stewart. In 1950 Frank Sinatra recorded a version with The Swanson Quartet, providing the initial inspiration for this new arrangement by Cantabile – The London Quartet.

Sammy Cahn 1913–1993

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22 **THE BIRDS**

HILAIRE BELLOC / PETER WARLOCK, arr. CANTABILE – THE LONDON QUARTET

Hilaire Belloc (1870–1953) was an Anglo-French writer, best known for his cautionary tales and religious poetry. This is another piece by Peter Warlock, who set several of Belloc's poems to music. He composed *The Birds* in 1926.

When Jesus Christ was four years old
The angels brought Him toys of gold
Which no man ever had brought or sold

And yet with these He would not play
He made Him small fowl out of clay
And blessed them till they flew away

Tu creasti Domine

Oh, Jesus Christ Thou child so wise
Bless mine hands and fill mine eyes
And bring my soul to Paradise
Hilaire Belloc 1870–1953

23 **NATIVITIE**

JOHN DONNE / MARK FLEMING

This is a new piece written by Mark Fleming for his London Quartet colleagues. John Donne (1572–1631) was the most outstanding of the English metaphysical poets and Mark has long admired his extraordinary and moving poems. In this the author reflects on the incarnation, in which the infinite becomes small enough to be contained within his mother's womb. Fleming's *a cappella* setting provokes the listener to ponder the profound mystery in these words.

Immensity cloistered in thy dear womb,
Now leaves his welbelov'd imprisonment,
There he hath made himself to his intent
Weak enough, now into our world to come;
But Oh, for thee, for him, hath th'Inne no roome?
Yet lay him in this stall, and from the Orient,
Stars, and wisemen will travel to prevent
Th'effect of Herod's jealous general doom;
Seest thou, my Soul, with thy faith's eyes, how he
Which fills all place, yet none holds him, doth lie?
Was not his pity towards thee wondrous high,
That would have need to be pitied by thee?
Kiss him, and with him into Egypt goe,
With his kind mother, who partakes thy woe.

John Donne 1572–1631

24 **TWELVE DAYS TO CHRISTMAS**

SHELDON HARNICK / JERRY BOCK, arr. CANTABILE – THE LONDON QUARTET

Twelve Days to Christmas was written for the musical *She Loves Me*, which was produced on Broadway and in the West End in the 1960s. With lyrics by Sheldon Harnick and music by Jerry Bock, the song appears towards the end of the show. The musical is set in a perfume shop and features carollers, shop assistants and shoppers making last-minute preparations for Christmas.

Sheldon Harnick b. 1924

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25 **WHAT ARE YOU DOING NEW YEAR'S EVE?**

FRANK LOESSER, arr. CANTABILE – THE LONDON QUARTET

Unusually for the composer of such classics as *Baby it's Cold Outside* and the musical *Guys and Dolls*, Frank Loesser (1910–1969) didn't write *What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?* for a show, movie or even a specific singer. Since he composed it in 1947 it has been used in dozens of films and has been recorded by a huge number of artists.

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26 **WONDERFUL CHRISTMASTIME**

PAUL McCARTNEY, arr. CANTABILE – THE LONDON QUARTET

Paul McCartney (b. 1942) wrote and recorded *Wonderful Christmastime* entirely on his own during sessions for his solo album 'McCartney II' in 1979. In this arrangement Cantabile recreates the iconic synthesizers of the introduction with their voices.

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Notes by James Woodhall

I CANTABILE – THE LONDON QUARTET

The London Quartet is one of Britain's longest-established vocal ensembles. Since they became widely known in the early 1980s they have mastered a wide array of musical styles which they have taken to a worldwide audience, always remaining true to their core vocal texture which is unmistakably rooted in the great English choral tradition. The London Quartet's origins at Cambridge University, where they were founded as Cantabile, lay in revue as well as in music, and their flair for the stage continues to keep them in demand in theatres and cabaret as well as in concert halls and at festivals. Indeed, they featured for over a year in London's West End in *Blondel*, a musical by Tim Rice and the late Stephen Oliver. Stephen composed two pieces for the quartet: *Commuting*, a hilarious quick-fire entertainment featuring no fewer than twelve characters, and the towering *Ricerare No.4*, which was commissioned and later staged by leading British actor and director Simon Callow.

The London Quartet has appeared in an enormous variety of venues singing programmes encompassing early polyphony, jazz and contemporary music. Although essentially an *a cappella* group they have appeared with numerous leading artists and ensembles, from big band to symphony orchestra. Their output of recordings covers a correspondingly broad spectrum, from live concerts in London, South Africa, and Singapore through early French *chansons*, eighteenth-century glees and catches, contemporary music (*Jonah* by Leopold Godowsky III and *Passions* by Stephen McNeff) to settings with jazz trio, big band and full orchestra of standards and hits from the West End and Hollywood.

This is the London Quartet's second recording with Chris Hatt at the piano; he joined them alongside Rory Bremner, Sir Richard Stilgoe and Sir Tim Rice on their 2011 disc *Songs of Cricket*. It is also their second album for Champs Hill Records; *Songs of Love and War*, released in 2014, on which they were accompanied by Malcolm Martineau, was nominated for a Contemporary A Cappella Recording Award (CARA) as Best Classical Album.

For more information, please visit thelondonquartet.com



Sarah-Ann Cromwell *soprano*



Christopher O'Gorman *tenor*



Mark Fleming *tenor*



Michael Steffan *baritone*



Chris Hatt is a conductor and composer of long and distinguished pedigree. He has been Musical Director on more than twenty shows, most recently conducting *Guys and Dolls* in London's West End and, for a number of years, *Billy Elliot – The Musical* (not only in the West End but also for cinema and on DVD). He has composed music for BBC Television, and his musical *Destiny* is regularly performed throughout the UK, as well as two shows written for children. Chris and The London Quartet first worked together in 2008 in the Tim Rice / ABBA musical *Chess in Concert* at the Royal Albert Hall (also released on DVD) starring Josh Groban and Idina Menzel, on which Chris was Musical Associate.

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