

[1] Christmas Day*Gustav Holst (1874-1934)**Words: traditional*

Good Christian men, rejoice
 With heart, and soul, and voice;
 Give ye heed to what we say:
 News! News!
 Jesus Christ is born today:
 Ox and ass before him bow,
 And he is in the manger now.
 Christ is born today!

God rest you merry, gentlemen,
 Let nothing you dismay,
 Remember Christ our Saviour
 Was born on Christmas day,
 To save us all from woe and sin,
 When we were gone astray.
O tidings of comfort and joy.

In Bethlehem, in Jewry,
 This blessed Babe was born,
 And laid within a manger,
 Upon that holy morn;
 The which his mother, Mary,
 Did nothing take in scorn.
O tidings of comfort and joy.

Good Christian men, rejoice
 With heart, and soul, and voice;
 Now ye hear of endless bliss:
 Joy! Joy!
 Jesus Christ was born for this!
 He hath oped the heav'nly door,
 And man is blessed evermore.
 Christ was born for this!

Come, ye lofty, come, ye lowly,
 Let your songs of gladness ring;
 In a stable lies the Holy,
 In a manger rests the King;
 See, in Mary's arms reposing,
 Christ by highest heav'n adored;
 Come, your circle round him closing,
 Pious hearts that love the Lord.

The first Nowell the angels did say,
 Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
 In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
 On a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the King of Israel.

Come, ye poor, no pomp of station
 Robes the child your hearts adore:
 He, the Lord of all salvation,
 Shares your want, is weak and poor:
 Oxen, round about behold them;
 Rafters naked, cold and bare,
 See the shepherds, God has told them
 That the Prince of Life lies there.

Come, ye children, blithe and merry,
 This one child your model make;
 Christmas holly, leaf and berry,
 All be prized for his dear sake;
 Come, ye gentle hearts, and tender,
 Come, ye spirits, keen and bold;

All in all your homage render,
 Weak and mighty, young and old.

High above a star is shining,
 And the Wisemen haste from far:
 Come, glad hearts, and spirits pining:
 For you all has risen the star.
 Let us bring our poor oblations,
 Thanks and love and faith and praise:
 Come, ye people, come, ye nations,
 All in all draw nigh to gaze.

Now to the Lord sing praises,
 All you within this place,
 And with true love and brotherhood
 Each other now embrace;
 This holy tide of Christmas
 All others doth deface.
O tidings of comfort and joy.

Good Christian men, rejoice
 With heart, and soul, and voice;
 Now ye need not fear the grave:
 Peace! Peace!
 Jesus Christ was born to save!
 Calls you one, and calls you all,
 To gain his everlasting hall:
 Christ was born to save!

[2] There is no rose*John Joubert (b. 1927)**Words: traditional*

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

For in this rose contained 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.

[3] Sir Christèmas*William Mathias (1934-92)**Words: traditional*

Nowell, nowell!
 Who is there that singeth so?
 I am here, Sir Christèmas.
 Welcome, my lord Sir Christèmas!
 Welcome to all, both more and less,
 Come near, come near.

Dieu vous garde, beaux sieurs,
 Tidings I you bring:
 A maid has borne a child full young,
 Which causeth you to sing:
Nowell, nowell.

Christ is now born of a pure maid;
 In an ox-stall he is laid,
 Wherefore sing we at a brayde:

Nowell, nowell.

Buvez bien, par toute la compagnie.
Make good cheer and be right merry,
And sing with us now joyfully:
Nowell, nowell!

[4] Here is the little door

Herbert Howells (1892-1983)
Words by Frances Chesterton (1875-1938)

Here is the little door, lift up the latch, oh lift!
We need not wander more but enter with our gift;
Our gift of finest gold,
Gold that was never bought or sold;
Myrrh to be strewn about his bed;
Incense in clouds about his head;
All for the child that stirs not in his sleep,
But holy slumber hold with ass and sheep.

Bend low about his bed, for each he has a gift;
See how his eyes awake, lift up your hands, O lift!
For gold, he gives a keen-edged sword
(Defend with it thy little Lord!)
For incense, smoke of battle red
Myrrh for the honoured happy dead;
Gifts for his children, terrible and sweet,
Touched by such tiny hands and
Oh such tiny feet.

[5] A spotless Rose

Herbert Howells
Words: traditional

A spotless Rose is blowing,
Sprung from a tender root,
Of ancient seers' foreshowing,
Of Jesse promis'd fruit;
Its fairest bud unfolds to light
Amid the cold, cold winter,
And in the dark midnight.

The Rose which I am singing,
Whereof Isaiah said,
Is from its sweet root springing
In Mary, purest Maid;
For through our God's great love and might,
The Blessed Babe she bare us
In a cold, cold winter's night.

[6] In terra pax – Christmas scene

Gerald Finzi (1901-56)
Words by Robert Bridges (1844-1930)
and from the Gospel of St Luke

A frosty Christmas Eve
when the stars were shining
Fared I forth alone
where westward falls the hill,
And from many a village
in the water'd valley
Distant music reach'd me
peals of bells a-ringing:
The constellated sounds
ran sprinkling on earth's floor
As the dark vault above
with stars was spangled o'er.
Then sped my thoughts to keep
that first Christmas of all

When the shepherds watching
by their folds ere the dawn
Heard music in the fields
and marvelling could not tell
Whether it were angels
or the bright stars singing.

*And there were in the same country shepherds abiding
in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And
lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory
of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore
afraid. And the angel said unto them:*

*Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great
joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this
day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the
Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the
babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of
the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to
God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will
toward men.*

But to me heard afar
it was starry music
Angels' song, comforting
as the comfort of Christ
When he spake tenderly
to his sorrowful flock:
The old words came to me
by the riches of time
Mellow'd and transfigured
as I stood on the hill
Heark'ning in the aspect
of th'eternal silence.

Three carols

Peter Warlock (1894-1930)
Words: traditional

[7] Tyrley, tyrlow

About the field they pipèd right,
So merrily the shepherds began to blow.
A-down from heaven that is so high.
Tyrley, tyrlow, tyrley, tyrlow, tyrley, tyrlow.

Of angels there came a company
With merry songs and melody,
The shepherds anon gan them aspy.
Tyrley, tyrlow ...

The shepherds hied them to Bedlem
To see that blessed sun his beam.
And there they found that glorious leme.
Tyrley, tyrlow ...

Now pray we to that meke child,
And to his mother that is so mild,
The which was never defiled.
Tyrley, tyrlow ...

That we may come unto his bliss
Where joy shall never miss.
Then may we sing in Paradise.
Tyrley, tyrlow ...

I pray you all that be here
For to sing and make good cheer

In the worship of God this year.
Tyrley, tyrlow ...

[8] Balulalow

O my dear hert, young Jesu sweet,
Prepare thy credil in my spreit,
And I sall rock thee in my hert,
And never mair from thee depart.
But I sall praise thee evermore
With sangis sweet unto thy glor.
The knees of my heart sall I bow,
And sing that richt Balulalow.

[9] As I sat under a sycamore tree

As I sat under a sycamore tree,
I looked me out upon the sea
A Christmas day in the morning.

I saw three ships a-sailing there,
The Virgin Mary and Christ they bare
A Christmas day in the morning.

He did whistle and she did sing,
And all the bells on earth did ring,
A Christmas day in the morning.

And now we hope to taste your cheer,
And wish you all a happy new year,
A Christmas day in the morning.

[10] A hymn of the Nativity

Kenneth Leighton (1929-88)
Words by Richard Crashaw (c. 1613-1649)

We saw thee in thy balmy nest,
Young dawn of our eternal day;
We saw thine eyes break from the East,
And chase the trembling shades away:
We saw thee, and we blest the sight,
We saw thee by thine own sweet light.

I saw th'obsequious seraphim
Their rosy fleece of fire bestow,
For well they now can spare their wings,
Since Heaven itself lies here below.
Well done, said I; but are you sure
Your down, so warm, will pass for pure?

No, no, your King's not yet to seek
Where to repose his royal head;
See, see how soon his new-bloom'd cheek
'Twixt mother's breasts is gone to bed!
Sweet choice, said we; no way but so,
Not to lie cold, yet sleep in snow!

Welcome to our wond'ring sight
Eternity shut in a span!
Summer in winter, day in night!
Heaven in earth! and God in man!
Great little one, whose glorious birth
Lifts earth to Heav'n, stoops Heaven to earth.

To thee, meek Majesty, soft King
Of simple graces and sweet loves!
Each of us his lamb will bring,
Each his pair of silver doves!
At last, in fire of thy fair eyes,
Ourselves become our own best sacrifice!

[11] What sweeter music

John Rutter (b. 1945)
Words by Robert Herrick (1591-1674)

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 nearly 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 underearth.
We see him come, and know him ours,
Who, with his sunshine 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, 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.

[12] Tomorrow shall be my dancing day

John Gardner (b. 1917)
Words: traditional

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, 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 ...

In a manger laid and wrapped 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 ...
Then afterwards baptized I was;
The Holy Ghost on me did glance,
My Father's voice heard from above,
To call my true love to my dance.
Sing O my love ...

[13] A babe is born

William Mathias
Words: traditional

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!

Folk songs of the four seasons – Winter

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)
Words: traditional

[14] Children's Christmas song

We've been awhile a-wandering
Amongst the leaves so green,
But now we come a-wassailing
So plainly to be seen.
*For it's Christmas time, when we travel far and near;
May God bless you and send you a happy new year.*

We are not daily beggars
That beg from door to door;
We are your neighbours' children,
Whom you have seen before.
For it's Christmas time ...

Good Master and good Mistress,
While you're sitting by the fire,
Pray think of us poor children
That wander in the mire.
For it's Christmas time ...

We've got a little purse
Made of leathern ratchin skin
We want a little of your money
To line it well within.
For it's Christmas time ...

Bring us out a table,
And spread it with a cloth,
Bring us out a mouldy cheese
And some of your Christmas loaf.
For it's Christmas time ...

[15] Wassail song

Wassail, Wassail all over the town,
Our bread it is white and our ale it is brown,
Our bowl it is made of the white maple tree;
In the Wassail bowl we'll drink unto thee.

Here's a health to the horse and to his right eye.
Pray God send our Master a good Christmas pie,
A good Christmas pie as ever I did see,
In the Wassail bowl we'll drink unto thee.

Here's a health to the ox and to his broad horn.
Pray God send our Master a good crop of corn.
A good crop of corn as ever I did see;
In the Wassail bowl we'll drink unto thee.

Here's a health to the cow and to her long tail.
Pray God send our Master a good cask of Ale;
A good cask of Ale as ever I did see
In the Wassail bowl we'll drink unto thee.

Come butler, come fill us a bowl of the best,
Then I pray your soul in heaven may rest,
But if you do bring us a bowl of the small,
May the devil take butler, bowl and all!

Then here's to the maid in the lily white smock,
Who tripped to the door and slipped back the lock,
Who tripped to the door and pulled back the pin,
For to let these jolly Wassailers walk in.

[16] In Bethlehem city

In Bethlehem city in Judea it was
That Joseph and Mary together did pass,
All for to be taxed when thither they came,
For Caesar Augustus commanded the same.
*Then let us be merry, cast sorrow aside,
Our Saviour Christ Jesus was born on this tide.*

But Mary's full time being come as we find,
She brought forth her first born to save all mankind;
The inn being full, for the heavenly guest
No place could she find to lay him to rest.
Then let us be merry ...

Then they were constrained in a stable to lie,
Where horses and asses they used for to tie.
Their lodging so simple they took in no scorn,
But against the next morning our Saviour was born.
Then let us be merry ...

Then God sent an angel from Heaven so high,
To certain poor shepherds in fields where they lie,
And bade them no longer in sorrow to stay
Because that our Saviour was born on this day.
Then let us be merry ...

Then presently after the shepherds did spy,
Vast numbers of angels did stand in the sky;
So merry were talking, so sweetly did sing,
All glory and praise to our heavenly King.
Then let us be merry ...

[17] God bless the Master

God bless the Master of this house
With happiness beside;
Where e'er his body rides or walks,
Lord Jesus be his guide.

God bless the mistress of this house
With gold chain round her breast,
Where e'er her body sleeps or wakes,
Lord, send her soul to rest.

God bless your house, your children too,
Your cattle and your store,
The Lord increase you day by day
And send you more and more.