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NAXOS

THE FIRST NOWELL

Christmas Carols
Through the Ages

The Edison Singers logo is located in the bottom left corner. It features the words "the edison singers" in a white, lowercase, serif font. The text is arranged in two lines: "the edison" on the top line and "singers" on the bottom line. A stylized, golden, swirling graphic element surrounds the text.

the edison
singers

The Edison Singers
Noel Edison

THE FIRST NOWELL

Christmas Carols Through the Ages

- Traditional**
- ① **Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day** (arr. Stuart Nicholson, b. 1948, for choir and organ, 2012) 2:41
(Text: Traditional)
- Gustav Holst (1874–1934)**
- ② **In the Bleak Midwinter** (1904/05, arr. Ola Gjeilo, b. 1978, for choir, 2012) 5:15
(Text: Christina Rossetti, 1830–1894)
- John Jacob Niles (1892–1980)**
- ③ **I Wonder as I Wander** (1933, arr. Matthew O’Donovan for choir and organ, 2012) 4:35
(Text: Traditional)
- Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562–1621)**
- ④ **Hodie Christus natus est, SwWV 163** (1619, arr. Noel Edison, b. 1958, for choir and organ, 2004) 3:58
(Text: Christmas Day Vespers antiphon)
- Traditional**
- ⑤ **Sans Day Carol** (arr. John Rutter, b. 1945, for choir and organ, 1969) 3:27
(Text: Traditional – Cornish)
- Boris Ord (1897–1961)**
- ⑥ **Adam lay ybounden** (1957) 1:07
(Text: Anonymous English carol, c. 1400)
- Traditional**
- ⑦ **Go Tell It on the Mountain** (19th century, arr. Paul Halley, b. 1952, for choir, 2003) 3:46
(19th century spiritual)
- Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)**
- ⑧ **Lux Aurumque** (2000) 3:08
(Text: Edward Esch, b. 1970, Latin translation by Charles Anthony Silvestri, b. 1965)
- Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)**
- ⑨ **Five English Folk Songs – No. 5. Wassail Song** (1913) 2:42
(Text: Traditional – English)
- Sally Beamish (b. 1956)**
- ⑩ **In the Stillness** (2007) 1:49
(Text: Katrina Shepherd)

	Traditional	
11	Ding Dong! Merrily on High (arr. Charles Wood, 1866–1926, and Matthew Larkin, b. 1963, for choir and organ, 1924/2022) (Text: George Ratcliffe Woodward, 1848–1934)	2:23
	Traditional	
12	A Virgin Most Pure (arr. C. Wood for choir) (Text: Traditional)	2:51
	Healey Willan (1880–1968)	
13	Hodie, Christus natus est (1935) (Text: Christmas Day Vespers antiphon)	1:58
	Traditional	
14	Coventry Carol (15th century, arr. Martin Shaw, 1875–1958, for choir, 1919) (Text: Traditional)	2:07
	Franz Xaver Biebl (1906–2001)	
15	Ave Maria (Angelus Domini) (before 1959, arr. 1985) (Text: Marian antiphon)	6:53
	Traditional	
16	My Dancing Day (arr. Bob Chilcott, b. 1955, for choir, 2005) (Text: Traditional)	1:54
	Franz Xaver Gruber (1787–1863)	
17	Silent Night (1818) (arr. Silas Chinsen, b. 1994, for choir and organ, 2022) (Text: Josef Mohr, 1792–1848, English translation by John Freeman Young, 1820–1855)	3:08
	Traditional	
18	The First Nowell (arr. Paul Halley, b. 1952, and John Stainer, 1840–1901, for choir and organ, 1871/2005) (Text: Traditional – Cornish)	5:38

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The First Nowell

Christmas Carols Through the Ages

I have always enjoyed the music of Christmas. When I was a young treble in a church choir in Toronto, I always looked forward to the month of December when we had several carol services and concerts, and singing around private clubs in the city. It was an exciting time and the music to me, at that time of year, was never boring or uninteresting. Those singing gigs, to this day, left me with many happy memories of yore.

Even though I have been in the choral music business for over 45 years, I still look forward to the month of December with all the concerts and all the wonderful music that is written for the season. It's hard for me to say that I've got one favourite piece because I don't think I do. I have many favourites, depending on the mood and the occasion. Sometimes I love the most spiritual and haunting like Eric Whitacre's *Lux Aurumque*, sometimes I love something jolly and romping like *Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day*, sometimes I love a very simple carol like the *Coventry Carol*, sometimes I enjoy something more complex and demanding.

All that is to say that the music of Christmas comes in many forms, shapes and emotions, but its principal element is one of nostalgia, memories of childhood, memories of past gatherings with family and friends, adult memories of good times and sometimes sad times, but it's one that always conjures up a deep emotion of good will towards all. It's amazing to think that a little newborn would somehow bring so much hope and humanity to our rather fragile world.

This is the season like no other that inspires composers, through many artistic endeavours, to bring us new and often enthralling music year after year!

I would like to personally thank my dear friends, Bill Hurren, Stephen Truchan and Canon Robert Hulse, without whom this recording would not have been possible.

Noel Edison

The art of the Christmas carol extends back to the Middle Ages, producing a rich and complex tradition over the centuries which continues to the present day. The carol genre covers a variety of styles, involving poetic forms both popular and courtly. The international nature of the carol brings together a vast array of diverse characteristics, each expressing similar religious sentiments and beliefs but created in a wide spectrum of musical idioms ranging from polyphony to simple straightforward melodies.

1 16 Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day

Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day is a traditional carol whose origins may be from as early as the 14th century. Its first published appearance was in William B. Sandys' anthology, *Christmas Carols, Ancient and Modern* (1833). The fascinating tune has attracted many composers to make arrangements of it, including Chilcott, Holst, Stravinsky, Willcocks and Rutter.

The verses tell the story of the Incarnation, characterised as a 'dancing day' and may have been sung at the beginning of a medieval mystery play (which would explain the third line of the first stanza):

*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 the dance*

2 In the Bleak Midwinter

The text of *In the Bleak Midwinter* was written by Christina Rossetti (1830–1894) and published under the title *A Christmas Carol* in *Scribner's Monthly* in January 1872. The poem was first presented within book form in *Goblin Market, The Prince's Progress and Other Poems* (Macmillan, 1875). Gustav Holst set Rossetti's words to music and *In the Bleak Midwinter* appeared later in *The English Hymnal*.

3 I Wonder as I Wander

The composer, singer, and folklorist from Louisville, Kentucky, John Jacob Niles (1892–1980), renowned as 'the Dean of the American Balladeers', first heard *I Wonder as I Wander* at a meeting of Evangelicals in Murphy, North Carolina: 'A girl had stepped out to the edge of the little platform attached to the automobile. She began to sing. Her clothes were unbelievably dirty and ragged, and she, too, was unwashed. Her ash-blond hair hung down in long skeins ... But, best of all, she was beautiful, and in her untutored way, she could sing. She smiled as she sang, smiled rather sadly, and sang only a single line of a song.'

The girl, named Annie Morgan, sang the song several times, being paid for each repetition. From this impromptu performance Niles retrieved 'three lines of verse, a garbled fragment of melodic material, and a magnificent idea', and went on to compose the familiar version of *I Wonder as I Wander* popular today. The first performance of the work took place on 19 December, 1933, at the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, North Carolina. The carol was published in his anthology, *Songs of the Hill-Folk*, the following year.

4 Hodie Christus natus est, SwWV 163

Hodie Christus natus est ('Today Christ is Born') was originally a Gregorian chant. The music here is a beautiful setting by Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562–1621), the great Dutch composer, organist and teacher. Sweelinck composed a large variety of psalms and canticles, motets, chansons, madrigals and canons, as well as keyboard music which included fantasias and toccatas.

5 Sans Day Carol

The titles of *Sans Day Carol*, a traditional Cornish carol, refers to St Day, situated in a former mining area between the village of Chacewater and Redruth, where the carol was discovered at the turn of the 20th century. Gilbert Hunter Doble (1880–1945), Anglican priest and Cornish historian, first heard it sung by W.D. Watson, head gardener of the Borough of Penzance, who is said to have learned the song from Thomas Beard, a villager in St Day. The music is arranged here by John Rutter (b. 1945), the eminent English composer, conductor, editor and arranger.

6 Adam lay ybounden

Adam lay ybounden goes back to the 15th century and its source is Sloane MS 2593 in the British Library. It was printed in *The Oxford Book of Carols* (1928) with a melody by Peter Warlock and is sung each year by King's College Choir on Christmas Eve. The theme of the carol is that though Adam's sin in taking the apple led to thousands of years of spiritual bondage, if the apple had not been taken the glories of Christianity would not have been revealed.

7 Go Tell It on the Mountain

Go Tell It on the Mountain, originally an African American spiritual from around 1865, was compiled by John Wesley Work Jr. (1871–1925), the great African American collector of folk songs and spirituals as well as choral director, educationalist and songwriter. The work was first published in *Religious Folk Songs of the Negro (As Sung on the Plantations)* (The Institute Press, Hampton 1909).

The final line of the original chorus proclaims that *Jesus Christ is born*. In 1963 the singers Peter, Paul and Mary sang a version which changed the last words of the Chorus to *Let my people go*, transforming the spiritual into a freedom song for the civil rights movement.

8 Lux Aurumque

Lux Aurumque ('Light and Gold'), written in 2000 by the American composer Eric Whitacre (b. 1970), is a setting of an English poem translated into Latin by the (somewhat mysterious) Charles Silvestri. The carol was composed as a commission from the Master Chorale of Tampa Bay, and dedicated to Dr Jo-Michael Scheibe. In 2010 Whitacre conducted a Virtual Choir version of the composition on YouTube featuring 185 singers from 12 countries, a project which has been viewed millions of times.

9 Five English Folk Songs – No. 5. Wassail Song

'Wassailing', as the words of the carol describe, was a traditional English custom of celebration, moving through the town with bread and ale and a special wassail bowl. 'Wassail' is an ancient toast meaning 'Good health!' The term also refers to a special mulled cider consumed on the Twelfth Night of Christmas. This setting of the traditional poem was written in 1913 by the great English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958). During his formative years in the early decades of the 20th century, Vaughan Williams was an indefatigable collector of some 800 original English folk songs. *Wassail Song* was later included among his publication *Five English Folk Songs* 'Freely Arranged for Unaccompanied Chorus'.

10 In the Stillness

This setting of a poem by Katrina Shepherd is from the English composer Sally Beamish (b. 1956). *In the Stillness* is a beautiful evocation of a characteristic Christmas atmosphere.

Sally Beamish, born in London, first studied viola at the Royal Northern College of Music before fully embarking on her career as a composer. Her prolific output includes orchestral and chamber works, ballets, concertos, choral pieces and instrumental works. Sally Beamish was the recipient of an honorary doctorate from the University of Glasgow in 2001, is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and in 2020 was awarded an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

11 Ding Dong! Merrily on High

Ding Dong! Merrily on High was originally a secular dance melody of the 16th century. But the carol as we know it first appeared in 1924 in *The Cambridge Carol-Book: Being Fifty-two Songs for Christmas, Easter, And Other Seasons* with words by George Ratcliffe Woodward (1848–1934), an Anglican priest who for many years lived in Little Walsingham in Norfolk. The tune was harmonised by his friend, the Irish composer, organist, and teacher, Charles Wood (1866–1926), who became professor of music at Cambridge University in 1924.

12 A Virgin Most Pure

This carol was originally included in the *New Carols for this Merry Time of Christmas* (1661). *A Virgin Unspotted* is believed to be founded on *A Virgin Most Pure*.

The verses are written in 3/4 time, changing the chorus to a more lively 6/8 rhythm. Thus the structure of the text alternates between the restrained narrative of the Christmas story followed by the exuberant significance of the Nativity's message. The most familiar arrangement of the work is by Charles Wood (1866–1926) with further arrangements in recent times by David Willcocks and John Rutter.

13 Hodie, Christus natus est

Hodie, Christus natus est ('Christ is Born Today') was originally a Gregorian chant performed at Christmas. The text is taken from the liturgy of the vesper service for Christmas Day, taking as its inspiration the words of Luke 2:11: 'For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.'

14 Coventry Carol

The *Coventry Carol*, originating in the 15th century, was associated with traditional performances in Coventry of a mystery play entitled *The Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors*. The play and the carol depict the evil activities of Herod and his Massacre of the Innocents narrated in the Gospel of St Matthew, Chapter 2. Thus the carol is quite sombre in mood.

15 Ave Maria

Ave Maria, a setting of the *Angelus* as well as the *Ave Maria* and composed in the late 1950s, is the best-known work of the music of Franz Xaver Biebl (1906–2001). The composer, born in Bavaria, became choir director of St Maria in Munich and assistant professor in voice at the Mozarteum in Salzburg in the late 1930s. Having been conscripted in 1943 for military service, he was a prisoner of war between 1944 and 1946 in a prison camp in Michigan. After the war he returned home to Germany and was appointed musical director in Fürstenfeldbruck, Bavaria, not far from Munich.

Wilbur Skeels (b. 1938), author, translator and editor, who published some of Biebl's choral music, wrote the following programme note explaining the circumstances of *Ave Maria*'s composition: 'Herr Biebl told me that when he was organist/choirmaster and teacher in the Fürstenfeldbruck parish near Munich one of the choristers in his church choir was a fireman. It was usual for companies, factories, police and fire departments, etc. to sponsor an employees' choir, which would often participate in choral competitions and festivals with similar choirs. The fireman asked Biebl to compose something for his fireman's choir for such an occasion.' The result was the *Ave Maria* (double male choir version).

17 Silent Night

The melody of *Silent Night* (from the German *Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht*), was composed in 1818 by Franz Xaver Gruber, schoolmaster and organist in the small village of Arnsdorf. The carol was first performed on Christmas Eve of that year in nearby Oberndorf bei Salzburg, Austria. The German text, written in 1816, was by the young priest, Father Joseph Mohr, who requested Gruber to set the poem to music. The Oberndorf church organ had been damaged by flood waters and thus Gruber provided an accompaniment for guitar.

18 The First Nowell

Finally, *The First Nowell*, originally of Cornish origin, is one of the best loved of all carols. The original date of it is uncertain but goes well back before the 18th century. The first published version was in *Christmas Carols, Ancient and Modern* (1833), edited by William B. Sandys, a lawyer. In 1871 Sir John Stainer (1840–1901), the English composer and organist produced a four-part arrangement which has established itself as the most popular setting.

Graham Wade

Traditional

1 Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day

(Text: Traditional)

1. 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;

Chorus

Sing, oh! my love, oh! my love, my love, my love,
This have I done for my true love

2. 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.

Chorus

3. 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.

Chorus

Gustav Holst (1874–1934)

2 In the Bleak Midwinter

(Text: Christina Rossetti, 1830–1894)

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

2. Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him
Nor earth sustain;
Heaven 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.

3. 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.

John Jacob Niles (1892–1980)

3 I Wonder as I Wander

(Text: Traditional)

1. I wonder as I wander out under the sky,
How Jesus the Savior did come for to die.
For poor orn'ry people like you and like I ...
I wonder as I wander out under the sky.

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

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

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562–1621)

④ **Hodie Christus natus est, SwWV 163**

(Text: Christmas Day Vespers antiphon)

Hodie Christus natus est: (Noel!)
hodie Salvator apparuit: (Alleluia!)
hodie in terra canunt Angeli,
lætantur Archangeli: (Noel!)
hodie exsultant iusti, dicentes:
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Alleluia! (Noel!)

*Today Christ is born: (Noel!)
today the Savior has appeared: (Alleluia!)
today the Angels sing,
the Archangels rejoice: (Noel!)
today the righteous rejoice, saying:
Glory to God in the highest.
Alleluia! (Noel!)*

Traditional

⑤ **Sans Day Carol**

(Text: Traditional – Cornish)

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

2. Now the holly bears a berry as green as the grass,
And Mary bore Jesus, who died on the cross,
And Mary bore Jesus Christ our Saviour for to be,
And the first tree in the greenwood, it was the holly.
Holly! Holly!

3. Now the holly bears a berry as black as the coal,
And Mary bore Jesus, who died for us all,
And Mary bore Jesus Christ our Saviour for to be,
And the first tree in the greenwood, it was the holly.
Holly! Holly!

4. Now the holly bears a berry as blood is it red,
Then trust we our Saviour, who rose from the dead.
And Mary bore Jesus Christ our Saviour for to be,
And the first tree in the greenwood, it was the holly.
Holly! Holly!

And the first tree in the greenwood, it was the holly!

Boris Ord (1897–1961)

⑥ **Adam lay ybounden**

(Text: Anonymous English carol, c. 1400)

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 clerkës finden
Written In their book.

Ne had the apple taken been,
The apple taken been,
Ne had never our Lady
A-beene heavené queen.

Blessed be the time
That apple taken was,
Therefore we moun singen,
Deo Gracias!

Traditional

⑦ **Go Tell It on the Mountain**

(19th century spiritual)

Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.
Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.

1. While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent
flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light.

2. The shepherds feared and trembled, when lo,
above the earth
rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Saviour's birth!

3. Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.

Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)

8 **Lux Aurumque** (2000)

(Text: Edward Esch, b. 1970,

Latin translation by Charles Anthony Silvestri, b. 1965)

Lux,
Calida gravisque pura velut aurum
Et canunt angeli molliter
modo natum.

*Light,
warm and heavy as pure gold
and angels sing softly
to the new-born babe.*

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Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

9 **Five English Folk Songs – No. 5. Wassail Song**

(Text: Traditional – English)

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

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

3. Here's a health to the ox and to his right horn,
Pray God send our master a good crop of corn,
A good crop of corn as e'er I did see,
In the Wassail bowl we'll drink unto thee.

4. And here's to the ox and his long tail.
Pray God send our master a good cask of ale.
A good cask of ale as e'er I did see.
In the Wassail bowl we'll drink to thee.

5. Come butler, come fill us a bowl of the best;
Then I pray that 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!

6. Then here's to the maid in the lily white smock,
Who tripp'd to the door and slipp'd back the lock;
Who tripp'd to the door and pull'd back the pin,
For to let these jolly Wassailers walk in.

Sally Beamish (b. 1956)

10 **In the Stillness**

(Text: Katrina Shepherd)

In the stillness of a church
Where candles glow,
In the softness of a fall
Of fresh white snow,
In the brightness of the stars
That shine this night,
In the calmness of a pool
Of healing light,
In the clearness of a choir
That softly sings,
In the oneness of a hush
Of angels' wings,
In the mildness of a night
By stable bare,
In the quietness of a lull
Near cradle fair,
There's a patience as we wait
For a new morn,
And the presence of a child
Soon to be born.

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Traditional

11 Ding Dong! Merrily on High

(Text: George Ratcliffe Woodward, 1848–1934)

1. Ding Dong! Merrily on high
In heav'n the bells are ringing
Ding, dong! Verily the sky
Is riv'n with angel singing
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis

2. E'en so here below, below
Let steeple bells be swungen
And i-o, i-o, i-o
By priest and people sungen
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis

3. Pray ye dutifully prime
Your matin chime, ye ringers
May ye beautifully rime
Your evetime song, ye singers
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis

Traditional

12 A Virgin Most Pure

(Text: Traditional)

1. A virgin most pure, as the prophets do tell,
Hath brought forth a baby, as it hath befell;
To be our Redeemer from death, hell, and sin,
Which Adam's transgression had wrapped us in.
Refrain: Aye, and therefore be merry;
Rejoice, and be you merry; Set sorrow aside;
Christ Jesus our Saviour was born at this tide.

2. In Bethlehem Jewry a city there was,
Where Joseph and Mary together did pass,
And there to be taxèd with many one mo',
For Caesar commanded the same should be so.
Refrain

3. 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.
Refrain

4. Then presently after the shepherds did spy
A number of angels that stood in the sky;
They joyfully talkèd and sweetly did sing,
'To God be all glory our heavenly King.'

Healey Willan (1880–1968)

13 Hodie, Christus natus est (1935)

(Text: Christmas Day Vespers antiphon)

Hodie Christus natus est:
Hodie Salvator apparuit:
hodie in terra canunt angeli:
lætantur archangeli:
hodie exsultant iusti dicentes:
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Alleluia!

Today is Christ born:

today the Saviour has appeared:

today on earth the angels sing:

The archangels rejoice:

today the righteous rejoice saying:

Glory to God in the highest.

Alleluia!

Traditional

14 Coventry Carol

(Text: Traditional – from the *Peagans of the Shearman and Tailors*)

Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child,
By, by, Lully, lullay.
O sisters too, how may we do
For to preserve this day
This poor youngling for whom we sing,
'By, by, Lully, lullay'?

Herod the king, in his raging,
Chargèd he hath this day
His men of might in his own sight
All young children to slay.

That woe is me, poor child, for thee
And ever mourn and day
For thy parting neither say nor sing,
'By, by, Lully, lullay.'

Franz Xaver Biebl (1906–2001)

15 Ave Maria (Angelus Domini)

(Text: Marian antiphon)

Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariae
et concepit de Spiritu Sancto.

Ave Maria, gratia plena,
Dominus tecum,
benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus.

Maria dixit:
Ecce ancilla Domini
Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.

Ave Maria ...

Et verbum caro factum est
Et habitavit in nobis.

Ave Maria ...

Sancta Maria, mater Dei,
ora pro nobis peccatoribus.
Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis
nunc et in hora mortis nostrae.
Amen.

*The Angel of the Lord announced to Mary
And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.*

*Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee:
blessed art thou amongst women,
And blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, Jesus.*

*Mary said:
Behold the handmaiden of the Lord.
Do to me according to your word.*

Hail Mary ...

*And the Word was made flesh
And dwelt among us.*

Hail Mary ...

*Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us now and at the hour of our death.
Amen.*

Traditional

16 My Dancing Day

(Text: Traditional)

1. 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;

Chorus
Sing, oh! my love, oh! my love, my love, my love,
This have I done for my true love

2. 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.

Chorus

3. 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.

Chorus

Franz Xaver Gruber (1787–1863)

17 Silent Night (1818)

(Text: Josef Mohr, 1792–1848, English translation
by John Freeman Young, 1820–1855)

1. Silent night! Holy night!

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

2. Silent night! Holy night!

Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing 'Alleluia',
Christ the Saviour is born,

3. Silent night, holy night!

Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,

Traditional

18 The First Nowell

(Text: Traditional – Cornish)

1. The first Nowell the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
in fields as they lay keeping their sheep
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Nowell, born is the King of Israel.

2. They lookèd up and saw a star
shining in the east beyond them far;
and to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night.
Nowell, born is the King of Israel.

3. And by the light of that same star
three wise men came from country far;
to seek for a king was their intent,
and to follow the star wherever it went.
Nowell, born is the King of Israel.

4. This star drew nigh to the north-west:
o'er Bethlehem it took its rest;
and there it did both stop and stay,
right over the place where Jesus lay.
Nowell, born is the King of Israel.

5. Then entered in those wise men three,
full reverently upon their knee,
and offered there, in his presence,
their gold and myrrh and frankincense.
Nowell, born is the King of Israel.

6. Then let us all with one accord
sing praises to our heavenly Lord
who hath made heaven and earth of nought,
and with his blood mankind hath bought.
Nowell, born is the King of Israel.



Photo: Joe Carrere

Matthew Larkin



Photo: Eric Harrison

One of Canada's leading liturgical musicians for many years, Matthew Larkin has served as director/associate director of music at a number of significant Canadian parishes, including St John's Church, Victoria; St Matthew's Church, Ottawa; St James Cathedral, Toronto; Christ Church Cathedral Ottawa and St Thomas's Church, Toronto. He attended the University of Toronto (as organ scholar of Trinity College), and the Royal College of Music (UK), with studies in organ performance, choral direction, conducting and composition. A Fellow of the Royal Canadian College of Organists, Larkin is known worldwide as a recitalist, accompanist and recording artist, and is currently the artistic director of Caelis Academy Ensemble (which he founded in 2016), and custodian of music at St Andrew's Church, Ottawa. He maintains a full calendar of engagements, and divides his time between Ottawa and Toronto. Larkin has been featured on both the Naxos and ATMA Classique labels, and is represented by Domoney Artists.

The Edison Singers

Canadian chamber choir The Edison Singers was founded in 2019 by Dr Noel Edison, and under his direction has quickly become known for its rich, warm sound, versatility, dexterity and clarity of texture. Annual auditions are held for current and aspiring choristers, which ensures the preservation and integrity of this trademark sound. The Edison Singers produces live performances and outreach and educational programmes across its native province of Ontario to help promote and increase the public's understanding, interest and appreciation of the arts by providing excellent choral music experiences and training in public spaces, senior citizens' homes, churches, community centres and learning institutions. The ensemble has been praised as one of the finest chamber choirs in Canada making significant contribution to the musical life of local communities. The Edison Singers is committed to presenting Canadian repertoire and collaborating with other artists from across Canada and around the world. www.theedisonsingers.com

Soprano

Holly Chaplin
Catherine D'Addario
Lara Housez
Jolanta Lorenc
Cristina Pisani
Julie Surian
Karis Tees

Alto

Mekhriban Mamedova
Caroline Schmidt
Nellie Scholtes
Leanne Vida
Katie Walshaw

Tenor

Lanny Fleming
Valdis Jevtejevs
Shawn Oakes
Kaspars Reinis
Steve Surian
Marcel van Helden

Bass

Silas Chinsen
Keith Hagerman
Adam Kuiack
Mike Lepock
Nathan Walton
Taylor Webb

Noel Edison



Dr Noel Edison is a versatile and charismatic conductor who has long been recognised as one of the leading choral conductors in Canada. As past artistic director and conductor of Canadian ensembles the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, The Elora Singers and the fully-professional Parish choir of St John's Anglican Church Elora, and current artistic director and conductor of The Edison Singers, Edison is widely recognised for his skilful interpretive work with both choir and orchestra. Dr Edison is the recipient of numerous distinguished awards including the Order of Ontario, the province's highest honour, and the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012. Edison has produced over 26 recordings under the Naxos international label with his various choirs, and many of these recordings have earned nominations for both GRAMMY and JUNO awards.

The Edison Singers, overleaf

Top row: Dr Noel Edison

Middle row, from left to right: Catherine D'Addario, Marcel van Helden, Karis Tees,
Julie Surian, Steve Surian, Lanny Fleming, Heather Fleming, Cristina Pisani

Bottom row, from left to right: Leanne Vida, Mike Lepock, Carolyn Schmidt, Silas Chinsen,
Nellie Scholtes, Katie Walshaw, Shawn Oakes, Valdis Jevtejevs, Mekhriban Mamedova

the edison singers



Photos: Sophie Hogan

The Christmas carol has its origins in the Middle Ages but it has since embraced a wide variety of musical backgrounds. In this album, religious sentiment is set in many different contexts – from the mystery plays to an African American spiritual, from its origins in Gregorian Chant and 16th-century secular dance to traditional examples rooted in poetry. Some of the most famous and beautiful examples are heard alongside energising contemporary carols to present a tapestry of the genre across the centuries.



THE FIRST NOWELL

Christmas Carols Through the Ages

1 Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day	2:41	10 In the Stillness	1:49
2 In the Bleak Midwinter	5:15	11 Ding Dong! Merrily on High	2:23
3 I Wonder as I Wander	4:35	12 A Virgin Most Pure	2:51
4 Hodie Christus natus est	3:58	13 Hodie, Christus natus est	1:58
5 Sans Day Carol	3:27	14 Coventry Carol	2:07
6 Adam lay ybounden	1:07	15 Ave Maria (Angelus Domini)	6:53
7 Go Tell It on the Mountain	3:46	16 My Dancing Day	1:54
8 Lux Aurumque	3:08	17 Silent Night	3:08
9 Wassail Song	2:42	18 The First Nowell	5:38

Matthew Larkin, Organ **1 3-5 11 17 18**

The Edison Singers • Noel Edison

A detailed track list and publishers' details can be found inside the booklet.

Sung texts and translations are included in the booklet,
and may also be accessed at www.naxos.com/libretti/574475.htm

Recorded: 2–4 April 2022 at the Basilica of Our Lady Immaculate, Guelph, Ontario, Canada

Producer, engineer and editor: Norbert Kraft • Booklet notes: Graham Wade

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and that of Stephen Truchan (in memory of lifelong partner Lindsay Smith)
and Canon Robert Hulse as sponsors of this recording.

Cover design by Michael Hale

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