



The WONDER of CHRISTMAS

Elora Festival Singers
Noel Edison
Michael Bloss, Organ

THE WONDER OF CHRISTMAS

1	H.J. Gauntlett (1805-76): Once in royal David's city Vv. 1-5 harmonised by A.H. Mann (1850-1929), V. 6 arr. David Willcocks (b. 1919) <i>Teresa Mahon, soloist</i>	3:50
2	Trad. English, arr. Bob Chilcott (b. 1955): My Dancing Day	1:50
3	Trad. English, arr. Paul Halley (b. 1952): What Child Is This?	3:25
4	Benjamin Britten (1913-67): A Boy Was Born	2:10
5	Stuart Thompson (b. 1969): The holly and the ivy	3:20
6	Robert H. Young (b. 1923): Who is He in Yonder Stall	3:55
7	Jean Mouton (c. 1459-1522): Nesciens mater virgo virum	3:55
8	W.J. Kirkpatrick (1838-1921), arr. Bob Chilcott (b. 1955): Away in a Manger <i>Sheila Dietrich, soloist</i>	2:51
9	16th c. French, arr. Mack Wilberg (b. 1955): Ding dong! Merrily on high <i>Organ part by Peter Stevens (b. 1987)</i>	2:06
10	Adolphe Adam (1803-56): O Holy Night	4:33
11	Howard Skempton (b. 1947): Adam lay y-bounden	1:20
12	Mark Sirett (b. 1952): Ecce concipies	3:10
13	John Tavener (1944-2013): Rocking	1:54
14	Trad. Basque, arr. Gerald Brown: Gabriel's Message	3:08
15	Trad. Appalachian, arr. Leonard Enns (b. 1948): I Wonder as I Wander	4:24
16	John Rutter (b. 1945): There is a Flower <i>Sheila Dietrich, soloist</i>	4:22
17	Michael Praetorius (1571-1621) / Jan Sandström (b. 1954): Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming	3:33
18	Paul Halley (b. 1952): The First Nowell	5:34

Elora Festival Singers

Soprano	Alto	Tenor	Bass
Lesley Bouza	Julia Barber	Chris Fischer	Michael Cressman
Emma Culpeper	Andrea DeBoer-Jones	Bryan Rankine	Jeff Enns
Sheila Dietrich	Heather Fleming	Steve Surian	Paul Grambo
Kate Gurnham	Anna Lubinsky	Steve Szmutni	Lawrie McEwan
Alyssa Kerfoot	Nellie Scholtes	Joel Vanderzee	Marc Michalak
Teresa Mahon			Jordan Scholl
Emily Wall			

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The Wonder of Christmas

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.

The hymn, *Once in royal David's city* 1, was written by Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-95) from County Tyrone, Ireland, who wrote more than 400 hymns throughout her life. She was profoundly influenced by John Keble and other members of the Oxford Movement, the High Church Anglicans who wished for a return to the traditional liturgy, symbolism and theology. Her hymns for children, published in 1848 and reprinted some seventy times by the end of the nineteenth century, also included such favourites as *All Things Bright and Beautiful*, and *There is a Green Hill Far Away*. In 1850 she married the Revd Williams Alexander, who became Bishop of Derry and later Archbishop of Ireland. This version was partly harmonised by Arthur Henry Mann (1850-1929), English organist and composer of hymn tunes who lived in Cambridge, England, for most of his life. The final verse was arranged by Sir David Willcocks (b. 1919), the distinguished British choral conductor, organist, and composer and Director of Music at King's College, Cambridge (1957-1974) and later Principal of the Royal College of Music, London.

In contrast, *My Dancing Day* 2 is a traditional carol, possibly from as early as the fourteenth 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 Holst, Stravinsky, Willcocks, and Rutter. The arrangement here is by Bob Chilcott (b. 1955), one of the world's most widely performed choral composers and an eminent conductor of choirs. 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 my dance.*

Another popular nineteenth century carol, is *What Child Is This?* 3 written by William Chatterton Dix during a serious illness aged 29 in 1865. The carol is sung to the traditional melody of *Greensleeves*. This arrangement is by Paul Halley (b. 1952), an English-born composer who undertook early musical training in Ottawa, Canada, before becoming organ scholar at Trinity College, Cambridge. Since 2007, he has been based in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he is Director of Chapel Music at the University of King's College.

A Boy Was Born 4, composed by Benjamin Britten between 1932 and 1933 when he was a student at the Royal College of Music in London, stands in the catalogue as his Opus 3. The work received its first performance on the BBC on 23rd February, 1934. In this performance only the theme is sung, omitting the six variations that follow in the original version.

The holly and the ivy 5, a traditional carol at least as old as the seventeenth century, was included in a modernised version in Cecil J. Sharp's collection of songs, hymns and carols of 1911. The religious symbolism of the holly and the ivy in terms of Christianity has been much discussed but the emblematic use of these images extends back to Druidic and Roman times. The popularity of decorating households with holly for Christmas goes back several centuries. The words of the carol are however rich with mystical, poetic, and religious connotations, referring to the birth, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The setting is by Stuart Thompson, a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music who became Director of Music for the Cathedral and Diocese of Leeds, England, and later Director of Music at Caterham School. His arrangement of *The holly and the ivy* won *The Times* carol competition in 2011.

*Who is He in Yonder Stall?*⁶ was written, both words and music, in 1866 by Benjamin R. Hanby (1833-67), from Rushville, Ohio. He became principal of an academy in Seven Mile, Ohio and later worked for music publishers. Altogether Hanby composed over five dozen songs. In his carol the question posed in the verse is answered each time in the refrain:

*Who is He in yonder stall
At whose feet the shepherds fall?
'Tis the Lord! O wondrous glory!
'Tis the Lord, the king of glory!
At his feet we humbly fall,
Crown Him! Crown Him, Lord of all!*

This arrangement is by Dr Robert H. Young (1923-2011), the prolific American composer and conductor, who founded the Baylor Chamber Singers and was on the faculty of Baylor University between 1962 and 1993.

*Nesciens mater virgo virum*⁷, composed by Jean Mouton (c.1459-1522), is one of the masterpieces of the era, a quadruple canon based on a plainchant. After an early career in the priesthood and master of the chapel in Amiens, Mouton became principal composer for the French court where he joined the chapel of Queen Anne of Brittany and her husband, Louis XII, and was later in the service of François I. In this capacity he wrote a number of works and Masses for state occasions.

A particular favourite among traditional Christmas repertoire throughout the world is *Away in a Manger*⁸. This piece appeared in an anthology of hymns, *The Little Children's Book for Schools and Families*, edited by James R. Murray (1841-1905), published in Philadelphia in 1885. It is not known who originally wrote the words, though at one time it was believed the carol was based on a hymn by Martin Luther. The music was written by William J. Kirkpatrick (1838-1921), originally from Pennsylvania, and later settled in Philadelphia where he became closely associated with the Grace Methodist Episcopal Church. Throughout his life he was a prolific writer of hymns. The arrangement is by Bob Chilcott.

*Ding dong! Merrily on high*⁹ was originally a secular

dance melody of the sixteenth century. But the carol as we know it first appeared in 1924 in *The Cambridge Carol Book* 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. The arrangement is by Mack Wilberg (b. 1955), eminent composer, pianist, and conductor, a former Professor of Music at Brigham Young University, and Music Director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the Temple Square Chorale.

*O Holy Night*¹⁰ goes back to the nineteenth century when in 1847 Adolphe Adam composed the music of *Cantique de Noël* to the French poem *Minuit, chrétiens* by Placide Cappeau (1808-77), a wine-merchant and poet. The carol was given its first performance in 1847 by Emily Laury, the opera singer. In 1855 John Sullivan Dwight (1813-93), a Unitarian minister, teacher, and music journalist from Boston, Massachusetts, translated the carol from the French, and it is his version which is performed here.

The next carol, *Adam lay y-bounden*¹¹, goes back to the fifteenth 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 immediately following the First Lesson. 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. The setting is by Howard Skempton (b. 1947), composer and accordionist, born in Chester, England. He studied in London with Cornelius Cardew and has written in excess of 300 compositions. His output includes orchestral works, concertos, chamber music, choral pieces and instrumental writing.

*Ecce concipies*¹² was written by the Slovenian composer Jacobus Handl (1550-91), who wrote some 500 sacred works. The Latin text is *Ecce concipies et paries filium et vocabis nomen eius Jesum*. In Luke 1: 31-33 the angel Gabriel says to Mary, *And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son and shall call*

his name JESUS. This version is by Mark Sirett (b. 1952), Canadian composer and conductor, who founded the Cantabile Choirs of Kingston in 1996. His compositions have been performed across Canada, and he has received many commissions from eminent choirs.

*Rocking*¹³ is a carol that often has other titles such as *Little Jesus* or *Rocking Song*. Originally of Czech Origin, it was collected in the 1920s by Miss Jacubickova as *Hajej, nunjei*, and translated by Percy Dearmer (1867-1936), Anglican priest and liturgist, for *The Oxford Book of Carols* (1928). This version, arranged by the esteemed British composer John Tavener (1944-2013), was commissioned by the BBC for the 2006 BBC Radio 3 Choir of the Year, Chantage, and first performed by them at the British Composer Awards in Glaziers Hall, London, on 5th December 2007.

*Gabriel's Message*¹⁴ comes from a Basque carol which paraphrases the account of the Annunciation in St Luke 1, 26-38 and Luke 1, 46-55. The verses were rendered by Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924), a priest and scholar in the Church of England, who wrote a number of hymns including *Onward Christian Soldiers* and *Now the Day is Over*. The arrangement is by Gerald Brown.

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*¹⁵ 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 19th 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. The setting heard on this recording is by Leonard Enns (b. 1948), the eminent Canadian composer, teacher and choral director, founder of the DaCapo Chamber Choir.

*There is a Flower*¹⁶ is a poem by John Audelay (d. 1426), and has been set to music by John Rutter (b. 1945), one of the most gifted composers of carols in the twentieth century. The simple, straightforward words are charged with beauty and religious intensity.

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

*Lo How a Rose E'er Blooming*¹⁷ is taken from the German poem of the sixteenth century, *Es ist ein Ros entsprungen*. Theodore Baker (1851-1934), a musicologist and organist from New York who later lived in Germany, wrote a translation in 1894. The tune most often performed nowadays, published in the Speyer Hymnal (Cologne, 1599), was harmonised by Michael Praetorius in 1609. The setting is by Jan Sandström (b. 1954), the prolific Swedish composer of a vast catalogue of orchestral and choral works. Born in Vilhelmina, Lapland, Sandström studied in Stockholm and northern Sweden before being appointed Professor of Composition at the University School of Music, in Pitea. His arrangement of this carol has become an international success.

Finally, *The First Nowell*¹⁸, one of the best loved of all carols, is presented here in a further setting by Paul Halley. The original date of this is uncertain and probably goes well back before the eighteenth century. The first published version was in *Carols Ancient and Modern* (1833), edited by William Sandys (1792-1874), a lawyer by profession. 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

Elora Festival Singers



Photo: Sophie Hogan

As a GRAMMY®- and two-time Juno-nominated chamber choir, The Elora Festival Singers (EFS) has established itself as one of the finest professional choirs in Canada. Founded in 1980 by Noel Edison as the principal choral ensemble of the Elora Festival, EFS continues to attract praise and attention at home and abroad. Since 1997, the choir has been the professional core of the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir and the Toronto Mendelssohn Singers. EFS is renowned for its diverse styles, commitment to Canadian repertoire, and for collaborations with other Canadian artists. Through regular concert series, recordings, broadcasts, and touring, the choir continues to reach audiences all over the world to showcase Canadian musical talent. With numerous releases on the Naxos label, the EFS is known for its rich, warm sound and clarity of texture.

With many thanks ...

This recording of the Elora Festival singers has been generously underwritten by Ellen Pearson and Susan Brown, longtime supporters and friends of the Elora Festival Singers, and the J. Nicholas Brown Christmas CD Fund. This recording honours two remarkable men of many talents and diverse interests, J. Nicholas Brown and William B. Pearson, who would both be very pleased to be part of this special project.

Noel Edison



Photo: Sophie Hogan

Noel Edison has earned a reputation for being one of the most versatile and charismatic conductors in the world today. As Artistic Director and conductor of two world-class Canadian ensembles, the large-scale Toronto Mendelssohn Choir and the chamber-sized Elora Festival Singers, Edison also serves as organist and choirmaster of St John's Anglican Church in Elora, leading one of the few fully professional church choirs in Canada. Edison is widely recognized and appreciated for his skilful interpretive work with both choir and orchestra. His vision has been to create a community in which performers and listeners can gather to enjoy great music. Under his leadership, the Elora Festival Singers has emerged as a national jewel, receiving both Juno and GRAMMY® nominations and releasing many critically-acclaimed recordings. The University of Guelph conferred upon Edison the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Music; he was appointed to the Order of Ontario, the province's highest honour; and in 2012 he received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal.

1 Once in royal David's city

Music: H.J. Gauntlett (1805-76), Vv. 1-5 harmonised by A.H. Mann (1850-1929); V. 6 arr. David Willcocks (b.1919)
Words: C.F. Alexander (1818-95)

Once in royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her Baby
In a manger for His bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ, her little Child.

He came down to earth from heaven
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall;
With the poor, and mean, and lowly,
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

And through all His wondrous childhood,
He would honour and obey,
Love, and watch the lowly maiden,
In whose gentle arms He lay;
Christian children all must be
Mild, obedient, good as He.

And our eyes at last shall see him,
Through his own redeeming love,
For that child so dear and gentle
Is our Lord in heav'n above;
And he leads his children on
To the place where he is gone.

Not in that poor lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see him; but in heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high;
When like stars his children crowned
All in white shall wait around.

2 My Dancing Day

Music: Trad. English, arr. Bob Chilcott (b. 1955)
Words: Trad. English

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, 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.

(Chorus)

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)

3 What Child Is This?

Music: Trad. English, arr. Paul Halley (b. 1952)
Words: W.C. Dix (1837-98)

What child is this, who, laid to rest,
on Mary's lap is sleeping,
whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
while shepherds watch are keeping?

Refrain:

This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the babe, the son of Mary.

Why lies he in such mean estate
where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christians, fear, for sinners here
the silent Word is pleading.

(Refrain)

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh,
come, peasant, king, to own him;
the King of kings salvation brings,
let loving hearts enthrone him.

(Refrain)

4 A Boy Was Born

Music: Benjamin Britten (1913-67)
Words: 16th c. German,
tr. Percy Dearmer (1867-1936)

A Boy was Born in Bethlehem;
Rejoice for that, Jerusalem!

Alleluya.
He let himself a servant be,
That all mankind he might set free:
Alleluya.

Then praise the Word of God who came
To dwell within a human frame:
Alleluya.

5 The holly and the ivy

Music: Stuart Thompson (b. 1969)
Words: Trad. English

The holly and the ivy,
When they are both full grown,
Of all the trees that are in the wood,
The holly bears the crown:

Refrain:

The rising of the sun
And the running of the deer,

The playing of the merry organ,
Sweet singing in the choir.
The holly bears a blossom,
As white as the lily flower,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
To be our sweet saviour.

(Refrain)

The holly bears a berry,
As red as any blood,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To do poor sinners good:

(Refrain)

The holly bears a prickle,
As sharp as any thorn,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
On Christmas Day in the morn.

(Refrain)

The holly bears a bark,
As bitter as any gall,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
For to redeem us all:

(Refrain)

6 Who is He in Yonder Stall

Music: Robert H. Young (b. 1923)
Words: Benjamin Russell Hanby (1833-67)

Who is He in yonder stall,
at whose feet the shepherds fall?
'Tis the Lord, O wondrous story,
'tis the Lord, the King of glory.
At his feet we humbly fall;
Crown Him, crown Him Lord of all!

Who is He, who stands and weeps,
at the grave where Laz'rus sleeps?
'Tis the Lord, O wondrous story,

'tis the Lord, the King of glory.
At his feet we humbly fall;
Crown Him, crown Him Lord of all!
Who is He in Calvary's throes,
asks for blessings on His foes?
'Tis the Lord, O wondrous story,
'tis the Lord, the King of glory.
At his feet we humbly fall;
Crown Him, crown Him Lord of all!

Who is He who from the grave
comes to seek and help and save?
It is the Lord, O wondrous story,
'tis the Lord, the King of glory.
At his feet we humbly fall;
Crown Him, crown Him Lord of all!

7 Nesciens mater virgo virum

Music: Jean Mouton (c. 1459-1522),
Words: Antiphon for the Octave of the Nativity

Nesciens mater virgo virum
peperit sine dolore salvatorem saeculorum;
ipsum Regem angelorum sola virgo lactabat,
ubera de caelo plena.

*(Not knowing a man, the Virgin Mother
Brought forth, without pain, the Saviour of the World,
The king of angels, suckled by the Virgin,
With milk from Heaven.)*

8 Away in a Manger

Music: W.J. Kirkpatrick (1838-1921),
arr. Bob Chilcott (b. 1955)
Words: Anon. (19th c. American)

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus lay down his sweet head;
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
And stand by my side till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
And fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

9 Ding dong! Merrily on high

Music: 16th c. French, arr. Mack Wilberg (b. 1955)
Words: G.R. Woodward (1848-1934)

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!
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!*

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!
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!*

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

10 O Holy Night

Music: Adolphe Adam (1803-56)
Words: John Sullivan Dwight (1813-93)

O holy night! the stars are brightly shining,
It is the night of our dear Saviour's birth;
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary soul rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn;
Fall on your knees, Oh, hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born!
O night, O holy night, O night divine!

Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is love and His gospel is peace.
Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother,
And in His Name all oppression shall cease.
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,
Let all within us praise His holy name;
Christ is the Lord, Oh, praise His name forever!
His pow'r and glory evermore proclaim!
His pow'r and glory evermore proclaim!

11 Adam lay y-bounden

Music: Howard Skempton (b. 1947)
Words: Anon. English carol

Adam lay y-bounden,
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.
Nor had one apple taken been,
The apple taken been,
Then had never Our Lady
A-been heaven's queen.
Blessed be the time

That apple taken was.
Therefore we may singen
Deo gratias!

12 Ecce concipies

Music: Mark Sirett (b. 1952)
Words: Luke 1: 31-33

Ecce concipies, et paries filium,
et vocabis nomen eius Jesum.
Hic erit magnus, et Filius Altissimi vocabitur.
Super solium David,
et super regnum eius sedebit,
et regnabit in domo Jacob in aeternum:
Et regni eius non erit finis.

(And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.)

13 Rocking

Music: John Tavener (1944-2013)
Words: Trad. Czech, tr. Percy Dearmer (1867-1936)

Little Jesus, sweetly sleep, do not stir;
We will lend a coat of fur,
We will rock you, rock you, rock you,
We will rock you, rock you, rock you,
See the fur to keep you warm,
Snugly round your tiny form.

Mary's little baby, sleep, sweetly sleep,
Sleep in comfort, slumber deep;
We will rock you, rock you, rock you,
We will rock you, rock you, rock you,
We will serve you all we can,
Darling, darling little man.

14 Gabriel's Message

Music: Trad. Basque, arr. Gerald Brown
Words: Trad. Basque (based on Luke 1.46-55)

The angel Gabriel from Heaven came,
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;
"All hail," said he, "thou lowly maiden Mary,
Most highly favour'd lady," Gloria.

"For known a blessed Mother thou shalt be,
All generations laud and honour thee,
Thy son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold.
Most highly favour'd lady," Gloria.

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,
"To me be as it pleaseth God," she said,
My soul shall laud and magnify His Holy Name."
Most highly favour'd lady, Gloria.

Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ, was born
In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say
Most highly favour'd lady. Gloria!

15 I Wonder as I Wander

Music: Trad. Appalachian, arr. Leonard Enns
(b. 1948); Words: Trad. Appalachian

I wonder as I wander out under the sky
how Jesus the Saviour did come for to die
for poor or'n'ry people like you and like I.
I wonder as I wander out under the sky.

When Mary birthed Jesus, all in a cow's stall,
came wise men and farmers and shepherds and all
and high from God's heav'ns, a star's light did fall;
the promise of ages it then did recall.

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

I wonder as I wander out under the sky
how Jesus the Saviour did come for to die
for poor or'n'ry people like you and like I.
I wonder as I wander out under the sky.

16 There is a Flower

Music: John Rutter (b. 1945)
Words: John Audelay (15th c.)

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

This flow'r is fair and fresh of hue.
It fadeth never, but ever is new;
The blessed branch this flow'r on grew
Was Mary mild that bare Jesu;
A flow'r of grace;
Against all sorrow it is solace.

The seed hereof was Goddes sand (gift),
That God himself sowed with his hand,
In Nazareth that holy land,
Amidst her arbour a maiden found;
This blessed flow'r
Sprang never but in Mary's bower.

When Gabriel this maid did meet,
With 'Ave Maria' he did her greet;
Between them two this flow'r was set
And safe was kept, no man should wit,
Till on a day
In Bethlehem
It could spread and spray.

When that fair flow'r began to spread
And his sweet blossom began to bed (bud),
Then rich and poor of ev'ry land
They marvelled how this flow'r might spread.
Till kinges three
That blessed flower came to see.
Alleluia.

Angels there came from heaven's tower
To look upon this freshele flow'r,
How fair he was in his colour
And how sweet in his savour;
And to behold
How such a flow'r might spring in gold.

There is a flow'r sprung of a tree,
The root there of is called Jesse,
A flow'r of price
There is none such in paradise.

17 Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming
Music: Michael Praetorius (1571-1621) /
Jan Sandström (b. 1954)
Words: Theodore Baker (1851-1934)

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming
from tender stem hath sprung!

Of Jesse's lineage coming,
as men of old have sung.

It came, a floweret bright,
amid the cold of winter,

When half spent was the night.

18 The First Nowell
Music: Paul Halley (b. 1952)
Words: Trad. English

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.

Refrain:
*Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
born is the King of Israel!*

They looked 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.

(Refrain)

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.

(Refrain)

This star drew nigh to the northwest,
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest,
And there it did both stop and stay
Right over the place where Jesus lay.

(Refrain)

Then entered in those wise men three
Full reverently upon their knee,
And offered there in his presence
Their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense.

(Refrain)

Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heav'nly Lord;
That hath made heaven and earth of nought,
And with his blood mankind hath bought.

(Refrain)

The Elora Festival Singers, conducted by internationally acclaimed director Noel Edison, is one of the most exciting of contemporary choirs. Their disc of Eric Whitacre's choral music (8.559677) was nominated for a GRAMMY® in 2010. Now they turn to the art of the Christmas carol, a genre covering a variety of styles, both popular and refined, each piece expressing religious sentiments and beliefs. The music ranges from much-loved settings to new works, from polyphony to more straightforward melodies, in a recital stretching from the Middle Ages to the music of today.

THE WONDER OF CHRISTMAS

1 Once in royal David's city* 3:50	10 O Holy Night* 4:33
2 My Dancing Day 1:50	11 Adam lay y-bounden 1:20
3 What Child Is This?* 3:25	12 Ecce concipies 3:10
4 A Boy Was Born 2:10	13 Rocking 1:54
5 The holly and the ivy* 3:20	14 Gabriel's Message* 3:08
6 Who is He in Yonder Stall* 3:55	15 I Wonder as I Wander 4:24
7 Nesciens mater virgo virum 3:55	16 There is a Flower 4:22
8 Away in a Manger 2:51	17 Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming 3:33
9 Ding Dong! Merrily on high* 2:06	18 The First Nowell* 5:34

*** Michael Bloss, Organ**

Elora Festival Singers • Noel Edison

To honour two remarkable men of many talents and diverse interests,
J. Nicholas Brown and William B. Pearson.

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

The sung texts can be found inside the booklet,

and may also be accessed at www.naxos.com/libretti/573421.htm

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