

WIGMORE HALL

Friday 22 December 2023
7.30pm

Hey for Christmas

Siglo de Oro

Hannah Ely soprano*
Fiona Fraser soprano
Stephanie Franklin alto
Rebekah Jones alto*
Chris Fitzgerald-Lombard tenor*
Oscar Golden-Lee tenor
Patrick Allies baritone, director
David Le Prevost baritone
Piers Connor Kennedy bass
Ben Rowarth bass*

Spinacino Consort

Eric Thomas lute, theorbo, director
Aaron McGregor violin
Claire Horáček viol
Annemarie Klein recorders

Callum Armstrong bagpipes,
recorders
Tom Hollister percussion

*soloist

Collected by John Playford
(c.1623-1686)

Trad/English

Thomas Ravenscroft (c.1592-1635)

Trad/Irish

John Dowland (1563-1626)

Anon

William Byrd (c.1540-1623)

Collected by John Playford

William Byrd

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Trad/English

Collected by John Playford

Martin Peerson (c.1571-1651)

Collected by John Playford

Traditional

Trad/English

Granny's Delight (pub. 1702) *arranged by Spinacino Consort*

As I Outrode This Enderes Night

Remember, O thou man (pub. 1611)

The Darkest Night in December

The Earl of Essex Galliard (pub. 1604)

Sweet was the song the Virgin sang *arranged by
Thomas Hamond*

O Magnum Mysterium (pub. 1607)

Drive the Cold Winter Away (pub. 1651) *arranged by Siglo de Oro
and Spinacino Consort*

Interval

In winter cold (pub. 1611)

The Beggar Boy (pub. 1651) *arranged by Spinacino Consort*

The truth sent from above

Sir Christmas *attributed to Richard Smert*

Paul's Wharf (pub. 1651) *arranged by Spinacino Consort*

Upon my lap my sovereigne sits (pub. 1620)

A Wassail Tune (pub. 1651) *arranged by Spinacino Consort*

Now to Conclude Our Christmas Mirth

Hey for Christmas

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Picture the scene. It's 24 December, at some point in the mid-17th Century. You have just arrived at your relatives' for Christmas at their house in London. After weeks of restraint during Advent, they have 12 days of revelry lined up for you. There will be feasting: meat, cake, custard, ale. But more importantly, there will be lots of music.

Of course, there will be beautiful carols. Some – by the 17th Century – are already timeless classics: *As I Outrode this Enderes Night*, with its bouncy refrain, has its origins in the mystery plays in medieval Coventry. And *Sir Christemas* was composed in the 15th Century, possibly by **Richard Smet**, a vicar choral at Exeter Cathedral. It combines virtuosic duos with solid choruses sung in three parts. Others are old tunes that have been brought up-to-date for early modern tastes, such as **Thomas Hamond's** skilful arrangement of *Sweet was the song the Virgin sang*, four voices intertwining in a lullaby full of the nuance of Baroque harmony.

Just as important to the festive entertainment as the singing is the dancing. Fortunately your family has just the right combination of plucked and bowed strings, woodwind and percussion to get the party going, and the band strikes up with a series of tunes published by **John Playford**, the London bookseller who had his shop in the porch of Temple Church. Playford's *The Dancing Master*, first issued in 1651, contained over a hundred melodies, together with instructions for those on the dance floor. The tunes vary widely in style and mood, from the vibrant energy of *Granny's Delight* and *Paul's Wharf* to the wintry melancholy of *The Beggar Boy*. Some of the tunes published by Playford have associated texts, such as *Drive the Cold Winter Away*. The words that match this hearty tune hail the delights of the 12 days of Christmas: food, drink, carols, carousing and warming fires.

Some members of your family have connections to London's music scene, and therefore their sheet music collection includes pieces by the finest composers of the day. One rare gem is *Upon my lap my sovereign sits* by the English musician **Martin Peerson**, appointed Master of the Choristers at St Paul's Cathedral in the 1620s. The conceit of the piece is that the infant Christ is on the poet's lap, being sung soothing lullabies. And it would probably be the Catholic members of your family who have brought along **William Byrd's** Latin Mass propers for Christmas. These include his *O Magnum Mysterium*, with its elegant yet concise polyphonic lines, relating the wonder of Christ's birth in a lowly manger. From the secular world of the partsong, Byrd's *In winter cold* has a moralistic message. The words by the poet Geoffrey Whitney tell the story of the grasshopper

and the ant, one of whom spent summer enjoying themselves and failing to prepare for winter. Byrd is alive to the nuance of every word, from the grasshopper's plaintive cries to the ant's haughty put-downs.

Alongside Peerson and Byrd are two of their contemporaries, both of whom would have been suitable guests at a musical Christmas party. **Thomas Ravenscroft** was a singer, composer, music theorist and collector of tunes, who was best known for his collections of catches and rounds. His *Remember, O thou man* begins in a slightly stern style, but softens into a sweet retelling of the Christmas story. Renowned lutenist and composer **John Dowland** is represented by *The Earl of Essex Galliard*. The Earl associated with this jaunty tune is Robert Devereux, for a time a favourite of Queen Elizabeth I before his eventual downfall.

Alongside these 16th and 17th-century tunes are three that are harder to date with any confidence. Two of these are found in an Irish collection: the *Kilmore Carols*, the survival of which is credited to the 18th-century priest Fr Peter Devereux. *The Darkest Night in December* has an ornamented melody that lilts and soars as it tells the story of Jesus's birth, while *Now to Conclude Our Christmas Mirth*, with its more jaunty rhythms, was intended to be heard on the twelfth day of Christmas. *The truth sent from above* is a simple English song with a rich text that links the fall of man to Christ's redeeming arrival on earth. The survival of these tunes owes much both to an oral tradition dating back centuries, and to folksong collectors who preserved them in written form.

The programme ends with the riotous festive ballad *Hey for Christmas*. The text was published in the mid-17th Century as a ballad-sheet, a cheap mass-printed format. The melody was specified as *Dargason*, a contemporary dance tune. The words tell the story of young people gathering at Christmas time at their village green for roasted pig, mustard, beer and morris dancing. The more they drink, the more wild the dancing becomes, eventually spilling over into violence against the fiddle player. Only some of the party-goers make it home in one piece, and even fewer manage to pay their bills...

We would be delighted if you would like to join in the light-hearted chorus:

Then hey for Christmas once a year
When we'll have cakes, both ale and beer,
And to our christmas feast there comes,
Young men and maids to shake their bums.

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From *The Dancing Master* collected by
John Playford (c.1623-1686)

Granny's Delight (pub. 1702)
arranged by Spinacino Consort

Trad/English

As I Outrode This Enderes Night
Traditional

As I outrode this enderes night,
Of three jolly shepherds I saw a sight,
And all about their fold a star shone bright:
*They sang terli terlow;
So merrily the shepherds their pipes can blow.*

Down from heaven, from heaven so high,
Of angels there came a great company,
With mirth and joy and great solemnity,
*They sang terli terlow;
So merrily the shepherds their pipes can blow.*

Thomas Ravenscroft (c.1592-1635)

Remember, O thou man (pub. 1611)
Thomas Ravenscroft

Remember, O thou man,
Thy time is spent:
Remember, O thou man,
How thou cam'st to me then,
And I did what I can,
Therefore repent!

Remember God's goodness,
O thou man,
And promise made.
Remember, O thou man,
How his only Son is sent,
Our sins for to redress:
Be not afraid!

The angels all did sing,
O thou man,
On Sion hill;
The angels all did sing
Praises to our heav'nly King,
And peace to man living,
With right good will.

To Bethl'em did they go,
O thou man,
This thing to see:
To Bethl'em did they go,
To see whether it was so,
Whether Christ was born or no

To set us free.
In Bethl'em He was born,
O thou man,
For mankind dear.
In Bethl'em was he born
For us that were forlorn,
And therefore took no scorn,
Our sins to bear.

Give thanks to God always,
O thou man,
With heart most jolly,
Give thanks to God always,
Upon this blessed day.
Let all men sing and say:
'Holy, Holy!'

Trad/Irish

The Darkest Night in December
Anonymous

The darkest midnight in December,
No snow, no hail, nor winter storm,
Shall hinder us for to remember,
The Babe that on this night was born.
With shepherds we are come to see,
This lovely Infant's glorious charms,
Born of a maid as prophets said,
The God of Love in Mary's arms.

No costly gifts can we present Him,
No gold nor myrrh nor odours sweet.
But if with hearts we can content Him
We humbly lay them at his feet.
'Twas but pure love that from above
Brought Him to save us from all harms
So let us sing and welcome Him,
The God of Love in Mary's arms.

Four thousand years from the creation
The world lay groaning under sin
No one could e'er expect salvation
No one could enter Heaven.
'Twas Adam's fall had damned us all
To Hell, to endless pains forlorn:
'Twas so decreed we'd have ne'er been freed,
Had not this heavenly Babe been born.

Ye blessed angels join our voices
Let your gilded wings beat fluttering over,
Whilst every soul set free rejoices,
And every devil must adore.
We'll sing and pray that He always may
Our Church and clergyman defend,
God grant us grace in all our days,
A merry Christmas and a happy end.

*Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment
have ended.*

John Dowland (1563-1626)

The Earl of Essex Galliard (pub. 1604)

Anon

Sweet was the song the Virgin sang

arranged by Thomas Hamond

Anonymous

Sweet was the song the Virgin sang,
When she to Bethlem Juda came,
And was deliver'd of her Son,
Who blessed Jesus hath to name.
'Lullaby, Sweet Babe!' sang she.

'My Son and eke my Saviour born
Which hast vouchsafed from on high
To visit us that were forlorn.
Lullaby, Sweet Babe!' sang she.
And rock'd Him featly on her knee.

William Byrd (c.1540-1623)

O Magnum Mysterium O great mystery

(pub. 1607)

Liturgical text

O magnum mysterium et admirabile sacramentum, ut animalia viderent Dominum natum jacentem in praesepio. O beata Virgo, cujus viscera meruerunt portare Dominum Jesum Christum. Ave Maria, gratia plena: Dominus tecum.	O great mystery and wonderful sacrament, that beasts should see the birth of our Lord, lying in a manger. O blessed virgin, whose womb was worthy to bear Christ our Lord. Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
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From *The Dancing Master* collected by

John Playford

Drive the Cold Winter Away (pub. 1651)

arranged by Siglo de Oro and Spinacino Consort

Anonymous

All hail to the days that merit more praise
Than all the rest of the year,
And welcome the nights that double delights,
As well for the poor as the peer!
Good fortune attend each merry man's friend,
That doth but the best that he may;
Forgetting old wrongs, with carols and songs,
To drive the cold winter away.

Thus none will allow, of solitude now,
But merrily greets the time:

To make it appear, of all the whole year,
That this is accounted the Prime.
December is seen, apparelled in green,
And January fresh as May:
Comes dancing along with a cup and a song,
To drive the cold winter away.

This time of the year is spent in good cheer,
And neighbours together do meet,
To sit by the fire, with friendly desire,
Each other in love do greet;
Old grudges forgot, are put in the pot,
All sorrows aside they lay,
The old and the young doth carol his song,
To drive the cold winter away.

To mask and to mum kind neighbours will come
With wassails of nut-brown ale,
To drink and carouse to all in the house,
As merry as bucks in the dale;
Where cake, bread and cheese is brought for your fees,
To make you the longer stay;
At the fire to warm will do you no harm,
To drive the cold winter away.

When Christmastide comes in like a bride,
With holly and ivy clad,
Twelve days in the year, much mirth and good cheer,
In every household is had;
The country guise is then to devise
Some gambols of Christmas play,
Whereat the young men do best that they can,
To drive the cold winter away.

Interval

William Byrd

In winter cold (pub. 1611)

Geoffrey Whitney

In Winter cold when tree and bush was bare,
And frost had nipped the roots of tender grass,
The Ants with joy did feed upon their fare,
Which they had stored while Summer season was,
To whom for food a Grasshopper did cry,
And said she starved if they did help deny.

Whereat an Ant with long experience wise,
And frost and snow, had many Winters seen,
Inquired what in Summer was her guise.
Quoth she, I sung and hopped in meadows green.
Then quoth the Ant, content thee with thy chance,
For to thy song now art thou like to dance.

From *The Dancing Master* collected by

John Playford

The Beggar Boy (pub. 1651)
arranged by Spinacino Consort

Trad/English

The truth sent from above
Anonymous

This is the truth sent from above,
The truth of God, the God of love;
Therefore don't turn me from your door,
But hearken all, both rich and poor.

The first thing, which I do relate,
That God at first did man create
The next thing, which to you I tell,
Woman was made with him to dwell.

Then after this, 'twas God's own choice
To place them both in Paradise,
There to remain from evil free
Except they ate of such a tree.

But they did eat, which was a sin,
And thus their ruin did begin;
Ruined themselves, both you and me,
And all of their posterity.

Thus we were heirs to endless woes,
Till God the Lord did interpose
For so a promise soon did run
That He'd redeem us with a Son.

And at this season of the year
Our blest Redeemer did appear
He here did live, and here did preach,
And many thousands He did teach.

Thus He in love to us behaved,
To show us how we must be saved
And if you want to know the way
Be pleased to hear what He did say.

Sir Christemas
attributed to Richard Smert
Anonymous

Nowel, Nowel, Nowel, Nowel,
Who is there, that singeth so Nowel
Nowel, Nowel?

I am here, Sir Christmas
Welcome, my lord Sir Christmas,
Welcome to all both more and less;

Come near Nowel.

Dieu vous gard beausieur, tidings I you bring,
A maid hath born a child full young,
The which causeth me to sing.
Nowel.

Christ is now born of a pure maid,
In an ox stall he is laid,
Wherefore sing we all at abraid,
Nowel.

Buvez bien par tutte la compagnie,
Make good cheer and be right merry,
And sing with us now joyfully,
Nowel.

From *The Dancing Master* collected by
John Playford

Paul's Wharf (pub. 1651)
arranged by Spinacino Consort

Martin Peerson (c.1571-1651)

Upon my lap my souveraigne sits (pub. 1620)
Richard Rowlands

Upon my lap my Souveraigne sits,
And leans upon my brest,
Meanetime His love maynetaines my life,
And gives my sense her rest.

Sing lullaby, my little Boye,
Sing lullaby, mine onely joy.

When thou by sleep art overcome,
Repose, my Babe, on me,
So may thy mother and thy nurse,
Thy cradle also be.

Sing lullaby...

From *The Dancing Master* collected by
John Playford

A Wassail Tune (pub. 1651)
arranged by Spinacino Consort

Traditional

Now to Conclude Our Christmas Mirth

Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have ended.

Trad/English

Hey for Christmas

Traditional

Come Robin Ralph, and little Harry,
And merry Thomas at our Green,
Where he shall meet with Bridget and Sary,
And the finest young wenches that ere were seen:

*Then hey for Christmas once a year
When we'll have cakes, both ale and beer,
And to our christmas feast there comes,
Young men and maids to shake their bums.*

For Gammer Nichols has gotten a Custard
My Neighbour Wood a roasted Pig,
And Widow Franklin hath beer & mustard,
And at the Thatcht house there is good swig.
Then hey for Christmas once a year ...

There's a fiddler for to play ev'ry Dance
When the young Lads and Lasses meet:
With which the Men & Maids will prance,
With the fiddler before them down the street:
Then hey for Christmas once a year ...

The Morice dancers will be ready
Meat and Drink enough to lade ye:
And in a Fools dress will be little Neddy,
To entertain our Christmas Lady:
Then hey for Christmas once a year ...

And when that they shall all appear,
That are to be at our brave Wakes,
To eat up the Meat, and drink up the Beer,
And to play at cards for Ale and Cakes:
Then hey for Christmas once a year ...

Then Grace and sweetest Winnifret,
And all the Lasses on the place,
When that the young men they have met
See how the Devils-dream they'll trace:
Then hey for Christmas once a year ...

They side and then turn round about
And briskly trip it to each other:
And when they have danced it out,
They presently call for another:
Then hey for Christmas once a year ...

Ralph leading up with Sue in 's hand,
And Briget being by Robins side,
You'd laugh to see how they do stand:
With their heads together and feet so wide
Then hey for Christmas once a year ...

The dance being done the fiddler plays Kissum
Which Dick and Harry soon did so,
And Randal the Taylor could not missum,
But he must kiss his Partner too.
Then hey for Christmas once a year ...

Then they sat down to their good cheer,
And pleasant were both Maids and Men,
And having dined and drank their beer,
They rose and went to dance again,
Then hey for Christmas once a year ...

Thus they did daunce from noon till night,
And were as merry as Cup and Can,
Till they had tired the Fidler quite,
and the sweat down their buttocks ran.
Then hey for Christmas once a year ...

Then they went to the little thatcht house,
And plaid at Cards a game or two,
And with the good Liquor did so carouse,
That they made drunk both Tom and Hugh.
Then hey for Christmas once a year ...

The rest unto Hot-cockles went,
But Neddy gave Nelly a blow too hard,
That all together by the ears they went,
And all their sporting soon was mar'd.
Then hey for Christmas once a year ...

The Pots flew about the glasses were broke
Doll was taring Mol by the Quife,
Richard was pulling John by the throat,
At which the Hostess drew her knife.
Then hey for Christmas once a year ...

They took the Fidler and broke his pate
And threw his fiddle into the fire:
And drunkenly went home so late,
That most of them fell in the mire.
Then hey for Christmas once a year ...

The men went away and paid ne'r a groat,
But left the Maids to pay for their chear,
Bekah was forced to pawn her laste coat,
And Hanne to leave her Garget there:
Then hey for Christmas once a year ...

And so my merry ballad is Ended,
When the Maids come again to these wakes
They'l first see the young lads manners mended
And make them pay for ale and Cakes.
Then hey for Christmas once a year ...