

# Medieval Christmas

Only the smallest amount of medieval music survives: musicians and composers were largely anonymous and their work often went unrecorded. But thankfully a handful of manuscripts have come down to us, filled with rich and varied music for instruments and voices on touching themes which tell the stories of the boy Christ and his mother, Mary.

1. Noël I
2. Riu, riu, chiu
3. There is no rose
4. Lullay: I saw
5. Verbum Patris
6. Alleluia: A nywe werk is come on honde
7. Angelus ad virginem
8. Noël II
9. Coventry Carol
10. Nowell, nowell
11. Bransle de l'Official
12. Puer natus est nobis
13. Sanctus – Lionel Power (c1375–1445)
14. Edi be thu Heven-Queene
15. Virga ac diadema – Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179)
16. Noël III
17. Gaudete!
18. Hayl, Mary, ful of grace
19. Viderunt Omnes
20. Synge we to this mery cumpane
21. English carols

*Sospiri* directed by Christopher Watson

Claire Eadington

Sophie Biddell

Miranda Laurence

John Stainsby

John Duggan

Christopher Watson

Will Dawes

with

William Lyons & Nicholas Perry, pipes, hurdy-gurdy,  
recorder and shawm

CCL CDG1191

Cover image: *December street scene in the snow*  
French School 15th century Musée Condé,  
Chantilly, France/Lauros/Giraudon/  
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This album brings many of these works together, from the famous 'Coventry Carol' and 'There is no rose' to some of the less well-known works such as 'Synge we to this mery cumpane' and 'Hayl, Mary, ful of grace'. In addition we have added new arrangements by William Lyons of some very famous medieval Christmas tunes. He and his colleague Nicholas Perry play several different sets of medieval bagpipes. Perry's hurdy-gurdy adds a real zing, and Lyons' recorder and shawm bring yet another musical timbre to the cheerful medleys of sound.

And we do have two named composers. Lionel Power (c1375–1445) was connected during a major part of his career with the cathedral in Canterbury. He may have travelled in English territories in Northern France as well as possibly being a member of the English Chapel Royal. The rounded, mellifluous sound of his 'Sanctus' (track 13) is typical of English music of the period, and it was with this special quality that Power and his fellow countrymen inspired a new generation of European composers. This substantial work forms the still centre of the recording, with the text 'Holy, holy, holy Lord'.

Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) was a visionary in many fields who was placed in a religious community at the age of eight. Her spirituality grew with her and she became a leading member of her order. Her music, intended in the main for women's voices, is quite remarkable for its fluidity and flexibility: its starting point is the medieval plainsong style of works such as 'Puer natus est', ('A boy is born' – track 12), but it develops a wider melodic range and an even greater intensity of expression.



[www.sospiri.co.uk](http://www.sospiri.co.uk)

**Sospiri** is a small, mixed-voice choir founded by John Duggan and Christopher Watson to celebrate a shared love of plainsong and polyphony. The choir sing regularly in service and in concert and have recorded several CDs which are a mix of sacred and secular music. The CDs often feature new choral works by John Duggan, and have included commissions from distinguished English church musician and composer Richard Lloyd.