

Sing Choirs of Angels

Traditional carols & Christmas music

Choirs and organs combine in a programme of famous carols through the ages, enveloped in the sonorous tones of Johann Sebastian Bach.

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| 1 | The Angel Gabriel
Traditional Basque carol | 14 | See amid the winter's snow John Goss
<i>The Choir of Magdalen College, Oxford</i>
directed by <i>Bill Ives</i> |
| 2 | It came upon a midnight clear
Traditional English carol | 15 | Sleepers, awake! J S Bach <i>Martin Souter</i> |
| 3 | There is no rose of swych vertu
15th century
<i>Singscape</i> directed by <i>Sarah Tenant-Flowers</i> | 16 | We three kings of Orient are
J H Hopkins |
| 4 | Lullay, lullow: I saw a swete semly syght
15th century
<i>The Choir of Queens' College, Cambridge</i>
directed by <i>James Weeks</i> | 17 | What child is this? 16th century English,
arranged J Stainer <i>The Choir of Magdalen</i>
<i>College, Oxford</i> directed by <i>Bill Ives</i> |
| 5 | Cradle Song from Christmas Oratorio
Johann Sebastian Bach <i>Martin Souter</i> | 18 | Nowell, nowell, Tydinge trew
15th century English
<i>Singscape</i> directed by <i>Sarah Tenant-Flowers</i> |
| 6 | Lullaby, my sweet little baby
William Byrd <i>The Choir of Queens' College,</i>
<i>Cambridge</i> directed by <i>James Weeks</i> | 19 | Past three o'clock Traditional English carol
<i>Sara Stowe and Matthew Spring</i> |
| 7-12 | Six Christmas Pieces
Felix Mendelssohn <i>Martin Souter</i> | 20 | The Wassail Song Traditional English carol
<i>The Choir of Magdalen College, Oxford</i>
directed by <i>Bill Ives</i> |
| 13 | The Coventry Carol Arranged J Stainer | 21 | In dulci Jubilo Johann Sebastian Bach
<i>Martin Souter</i> |

CCL CDG1206

Cover Image: *The seven angels with trumpets at the opening of the seventh seal. Altarpiece with scenes of the Apocalypse*
Master Bertram/V&A Images.
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Choirs and organs combine in a programme of famous carols through the ages, enveloped in the sonorous tones of Johann Sebastian Bach.

Medieval carols are one of the great joys of the early church. These centuries old pieces remain justly popular today. 'The Angel Gabriel', for example, is still a stalwart of many a Christmas church service of 'Nine Lessons and Carols'.

In 1871 Sir John Stainer (1840-1901) published a small volume of Christmas carols, 'Carols New & Old'. The contents echoed those of that great nineteenth century hymn book, 'Hymns Ancient and Modern' which had appeared a few years earlier – a collection of new hymns and arrangements specially composed, and mixed in with some of the most ancient music of the Christian church. Stainer's book, both in its elaborately illustrated form, or more often in simple format, became a worldwide best seller, and helped to re-establish the Christmas carol as a traditional musical mainstay of the Christmas season. Christmas had always been important, of course, as a major festival of the Church's year, but, since the seventeenth century, it had not been celebrated in as warm and expansive a way as has developed since Stainer's time.

This collection contains music by Stainer sung by the choir from his old Oxford college, Magdalen, where he worked and studied before moving to even greater prominence in London. Stainer was always inspired by the music of the past. He was a significant scholar of Medieval and Renaissance music and one of the great early musicologists whose initial observations of manuscripts and other, often unpromising, material formed the basis of so much of our current opinions and views on the music of the past, the intervening years of increased scholastic rigour notwithstanding. So it is fitting to combine his surprisingly unsentimental carols with much more ancient music. Felix Mendelssohn, too, was a composer with one ear firmly in the past. Much of his music owes a debt to the great Classical masters, Bach, Mozart and Beethoven. His 'Christmas Pieces' are charming drawing room pieces, composed in the mould of his famous series of 'Songs without Words'.

Bach's impressive organ music punctuates and concludes the programme, played on the 1986 organ in Magdalen's chapel, and benefiting from its famous acoustics.