

Three Musical Fables

John Rutter

The Reluctant Dragon, Brother Heinrich's
Christmas, The Wind in the Willows

Collegium
RECORDS

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THIS RECORDING GATHERS TOGETHER three 'musical fables' that I wrote at different times, with children – and eavesdropping adults – especially in mind. *The Reluctant Dragon* and *The Wind in the Willows*, both adapted by David Grant from Kenneth Grahame stories, were commissioned for Christmas concerts given by the King's Singers and the City of London Sinfonia; *The Reluctant Dragon* was premièred in 1978, *The Wind in the Willows* in 1981. *Brother Heinrich's Christmas* followed in 1982, written for a Christmas TV 'special' from Salisbury Cathedral. The story as well as the music is my own, built around the legend that the lovely carol *In dulci jubilo* was first sung by angels who miraculously appeared to the medieval monk Heinrich Suso one Christmas Eve.

I look back on these three children's projects with particular fondness and pleasure, not least because of the marvellous performers involved in them: two most distinguished narrators, Richard Baker and Brian Kay; the versatile and ever-brilliant King's Singers (friends of mine since they first got together in far-off Cambridge days); another Cambridge friend, Richard Hickox, and his City of London Sinfonia that I have worked with on so many happy occasions; and, of course, the Cambridge Singers, who have sung with me on almost every Collegium recording.

JOHN RUTTER

Three Musical Fables

with music by John Rutter

The Wind in the Willows • Brother Heinrich's Christmas •

The Reluctant Dragon

Total playing time 69' 24'

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS (28' 20")

Words by David Grant, based on a story by Kenneth Grahame

Richard Baker (narrator) • The King's Singers • City of London Sinfonia

Rat: Anthony Holt

Mole: Alastair Hume

Badger: Colin Mason

Toad: Bill Ives

Magistrate: Simon Carrington

Gaoler's daughter: Jeremy Jackman

conducted by Richard Hickox

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Rat and Mole meet: *A life on the river*
- 3 Scene at Badger's house
- 4 Toad's car
- 5 Court scene
- 6 Toad in gaol: *Let me tickle your fancy*
- 7 Toad's song: *I've got style*
- 8 The recapture of Toad Hall: *Let's wallop a weasel*
- 9 The banquet at Toad Hall
- 10 Finale: *Home is a special kind of feeling*

BROTHER HEINRICH'S CHRISTMAS (19' 17")

Story and music by John Rutter

Brian Kay (narrator) • The Cambridge Singers • City of London Sinfonia
conducted by John Rutter

- 11 Introduction
- 12 Sigismund sings in the abbey choir
- 13 Sigismund is dismissed
- 14 Brother Heinrich and the new carol
- 15 The angels appear on Christmas Eve
- 16 Brother Heinrich writes down the Angels' Carol
- 17 Christmas morning
- 18 The Angels' Carol and Christmas dinner

THE RELUCTANT DRAGON (21' 27")

Words by David Grant, based on the book by Kenneth Grahame

Richard Baker (narrator) • The King's Singers • City of London Sinfonia

Boy: Jeremy Jackman

Dragon: Bill Ives

Saint George: Anthony Holt

Master of Ceremonies: Simon Carrington

conducted by Richard Hickox

- 19 Introduction
- 20 The boy visits the dragon's cave
- 21 The villagers and St George arrive
- 22 Trio: *I say, old boy*
- 23 Planning the tournament: *First he waves his spear around*
- 24 The tournament
- 25 Banquet fugue
- 26 Finale: *Let's begin again*

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

1 Introduction

All: Listen to the sound of the wind in the willows
Whispering through the branches and the leaves.
Come away and listen to a story of long ago and far
away;
When the river murmured its magical music to the
scented breeze.
Listen to the echo of soft distant voices calling us away.

Narrator: 'Hang spring cleaning,' said Mole, flinging
down his whitewash brush. 'Bother and blow,' said
Mole, and he bolted out of the house, without even
waiting to put on his coat. Something up above was
calling him into the sunlight and away . . . across the
meadows and alongside the copses . . . trotting along the
river bank where, all of a sudden, he sat down, entranced
and bewitched. As he sat on the grass and looked across
the river, he became aware of a bright little star winking
at him from the opposite bank. The star became an eye,
and then there was another eye . . . then a small brown
face . . . with whiskers.

2 Rat and Mole meet

Rat: Hallo, Mole!

Mole: Hallo, Rat!

Rat: I was just going off for a trip down the river –
would you like to come?

Mole: Well . . . I'm not sure . . .

Rat: Oh come on, old chap – just step into the boat;
Now you really are afloat!
Put the picnic hamper under your seat,
Sit back, relax, there'll be plenty to eat!

Rat and Chorus: A life on the river – me oh my!
Yes, a life on the river – my oh me!
Why, a life on the river – oh my, oh me!
That's the life to set my heart all a-quiver – ooh!
With the splashing of the oars – splish, splosh!
And the buzzing of the bees – bzz, bzz!
Now I ask, did you ever – me oh my!
See a happier fella – my oh me!
Than a fella who's afloat – heigh ho!

In his little wooden boat? Rapture!

All: Cucumber sandwiches, savoury relish,
Paté with truffles and cranberry jelly,
Ham and tongue and beef and gooseberry pie:
Oh my!
Mustard and cress and Russian salad,
Banbury cakes and sugary doughnuts,
Brandy snaps and fudge and bottles of squash:
Oh gosh!
Hard-boiled eggs, peaches and cream,
Apricot flan, lemon meringue,
Venison pasty with walnuts and grapes
Cut up in convenient little wedge shapes –
Just so!

Mole and Chorus: My heart's all a-shiver – pit-a-pat!
It feels all a-shiver – pat-a-pit!
My heart's all a-shiver – ooh!
Just to be in a boat on the river –
Floating down the stream!
With the sighing of the breeze – ooh!
And the birdies in the trees – quack, quack!

Rat, Mole and Chorus: Now I ask, did you ever – in
your life
See two happier fellas – blissful!
Than Rat and Mole afloat – heigh ho!
In their little wooden boat? Heaven!

Narrator: And so the two contented animals made their
way slowly up the river to Rat's house. Rat spent the
summer and the autumn showing Mole the sights of the
River Bank, and introducing him to all his friends –
except for one . . . the rather grumpy Mr Badger, who
lived in the Wild Wood.

'Couldn't you invite him to dinner?' asked Mole.

'He wouldn't come,' said Rat. 'Simply hates society.'

'Well then, why don't we go and call on him?' suggested
Mole.

'It's a long journey,' replied Rat. 'But perhaps we should
pay him a visit, especially as Christmas is coming on.'

So one cold December day they set off together through
the Wild Wood till they reached Badger's house.

3 Scene at Badger's house

(Rat knocks on the door of Badger's house.)

Badger: Go away!

Rat and Mole: But Badger, it's us, Rat and Mole!

Badger: Why, come in, come in! I thought you were
those confounded field mice carol-singing again. . .
Come in, come in, and sit by the fire. *(They enter.)*

(Two field mice knock loudly.)

Field mice (outside): We wish you a merry Christmas,
We wish you a merry Christmas,
We wish you a merry Christmas . . .

Badger: Oh confound you, wretched field mice! I
suppose you'd better come in.

Field mice: Oh thank you, Mr Badger, sir, thank you!

Badger: You may later sing *one* verse of some brief
soothing carol. . . for the moment be silent while I talk
with Mr Rat and Mr Mole. Now tell me, dear Rat: what
is the news of the outside world? And in particular, what
of our reckless young friend Toad?

Rat: There's nothing new about the Toad
Except his latest crazes.

Badger: Alack! A prey to foolish crazes . . .

Rat: There is no end to what he'll find;
His stamina amazes.

Badger: Amazes?

Mole: I blame his parents – such well-intentioned folk –
but then, alas, they spoiled him.

Badger: I feel they must have spoiled him.

Field mice: Our auntie says 'e tried to knock the village
policeman's helmet off, but then they foiled him!

Badger: Be silent!

Rat and Badger: It's a problem, it's a problem,
It's a terrible, terrible problem!

Rat, Mole and Badger: It's a problem, it's a problem,
What a terrible, terrible problem!

We'll have to do something about Mr Toad,
His conduct is truly appalling.
He's foolish and fickle and easily led,

Conceited and boastful and weak in the head,
He'll go to the bad and then soon he'll be dead:
What can we do to prevent him from falling?

Rat: Last month he bought a gipsy caravan
In bright canary yellow.

Badger: Oh no! Not bright canary yellow!

Rat: The colour's surely bad enough,
But worse was still to follow.

Badger: Alack!

Mole: I think that Oxford did for him –
All those aesthetic parties!

Badger: I disapprove of parties.

Field mice: Our Dad says Toad gets drunk
On brandy balls and Smarties.

Badger: Hold your tongue!

Rat and Badger: It's a problem, it's a problem,
It's a terrible, terrible problem!

Rat, Badger and Mole: It's a problem, etc.

Rat: This month, I think you must have heard:
It's motor cars and speeding. . .
At more than twenty miles an hour!
His reckless folly as he drives
To tragedy is leading.

Badger: How true!

Mole: The countryside is now no longer safe;
His motoring's a menace!

Field mice: Our grandma says . . .

Badger: Shush!

Rat, Mole and Badger: We'll have to do something
about Mr Toad,
His conduct is truly appalling.
He's foolish and fickle and easily led,
Conceited and boastful and weak in the head,
He'll go to the bad and then soon he'll be dead;
What shall we do?

Field mice: Good King Wenceslas looked out
On the feast of Stephen;
Brightly shone the moon that night . . .
The first Nowell the angel did say . . .

Rat, Mole and Badger: We'll sort him out, we'll put him right,

We'll set him straight, we'll lecture him,

We'll get him on the rails

And bash him up if all else fails,

Yes, that's what we'll do to prevent him from falling.

Field mice: On the first day of Christmas

My true love sent to me

A partridge in a pear tree . . .

Rat, Mole and Badger: Be off!

Narrator: And that's how things were left. Rat and Mole returned home the next day, determined to save Toad from the dreadful consequences of his new motor car craze.

4 Toad's car

Narrator: The rest of the winter passed quietly, but one morning, quite early in the spring, all three animals happened to be standing in a peaceful lane near the river bank when they heard a most terrible commotion in the distance. Sure enough, it was Toad; he jumped down from his car.

'I say you chaps,' he said, 'what do you think of her? Straight eight, with sleeve valves, of course . . . family crest on the door . . . does nearly fifty downhill!'

Badger interrupted sternly. 'Toad, you unhappy creature!'

'Me unhappy?' exclaimed Toad. 'What a lot of rot you do talk, Badger. Why, I'm the happiest creature alive! The open road . . . the smell of hot oil . . . If you chaps can't recognize the coming thing when you see it, then I'm afraid progress won't wait for you, and no more shall I . . . Must be off! See you all up at my place some time.' And with that, Toad started the car up again and drove off. But that wasn't the end of it, as I'm afraid we shall see . . .

5 Court scene

Usher: Silence! Silence in court!

Magistrate: Never in all my time as a magistrate . . . never in all the long years I've served on this bench . . .

never has been seen a creature more abjectly despicable, a Toad more steeped in the molasses of criminality, more tarred with the glue of felonious turpitude than the hardened criminal we see melting like a fly-blown marshmallow before our averted eyes. Pull yourself together, prisoner! Be a man, and prepare to hear your sentence! You shall be taken from this place and be flung into the deepest, darkest and most vile-smelling dungeon that the resources of the County Gaol can provide. And there you shall languish, on the first count – stealing a motor car – ten years; on the second count – driving in a most reckless and dangerous manner – fifteen years; on the third count – insulting a policeman – twenty years. And in view of the seriousness of the offences and the hardened criminality of the felon, I order that these terms of imprisonment be served both consecutively and concurrently . . . Take him away!

Narrator: Toad, abject and downcast, was led roughly away by two horny-handed gaolers and thrown into the nastiest of dungeons with nothing for company save the occasional spider, and no solace save that provided by a tin mug of brackish water and the stale crusts thrown to him from time to time . . . and, oh, I nearly forgot – the rather comely and kind-hearted daughter of one of the gaolers. Let us eavesdrop as she attempts to rally the starving and disconsolate felon . . .

6 Toad in gaol

Gaoler's daughter: Let me tickle your fancy, Toad:

Nice bowl o' tripe?

Can't you work up an appetite?

How about liver an' lights?

Fish is good for the brain, they say;

Like some bloaters in brine?

Toad: Some other time . . .

Gaoler's daughter: Don't you fancy things salty, then?

Well, Toad-in-the-hole tastes simply divine!

Faggots is nice all swimming in grease –

Don't you fancy a few?

Toad: I don't think I do . . .

Gaoler's daughter: Want to try something new?

Well there's cold jellied eel

With a nice slimy feel.

Pig's trotter and sheep's head brawn

Tastes all juicy and fine;

Toad: I can just imagine . . .

Gaoler's daughter: Wash it down with a glass or two

Of me home-made senna pod wine!

Sweetbreads and kippers with spinach for veg

Takes your appetite over the edge.

Black pudding and dumplings, then,

Just walk up and help yourself again and again!

I bet you I got a few treats you never sampled before . . .

Toad: No thank you!

Gaoler's daughter: And you can always come back for more . . .

Narrator: Nothing the gaoler's daughter had to offer seemed to rouse him. But like all great men of history, his single-mindedness saw him through. He escaped by exchanging clothes with a humble washerwoman.

7 Toad's song

Narrator: Let us join him as he makes his way back to Toad Hall, a sadder and a wiser Toad . . . I'm not sure that's true, actually, but perhaps I'd better let you be the judge; here he is.

Toad: I've got style, I've got chic,

I've got charisma, I've got mystique:

All my friends tell me so,

And after all, they ought to know.

Such an air debonair!

Such sophisticated savoir-faire!

So *dégagé*, so élite,

The people come and cheer me when I walk down the street.

Toad and Chorus: I'm the Toad, I'm the greatest!

I set the style – it's the latest!

So stay awhile and I'll tell you how –

In the strictest confidence –

I get called by Scotland Yard;

They have to bring me in when a case gets too hard.

Einstein took lessons from me;

I showed him that me squared equals e; Eureka!

Mozart and Schubert and Ludwig van B.

Would have had a lot more hits if they had studied with me!

Michelangelo's drawing was absolutely appalling;

If Toad had done the Sistine ceiling

You would find it more appealing.

Toad is the greatest! You said it!

Genius is really the word –

It occurred to us.

A knighthood should be conferred –

At the Palace?

On Toad – well! O.K., make it a peerage.

Toad: So I hope you get the message loud and clear;

If you can't resolve a problem, why, just bring it here.

Pluck up courage, don't be shy;

Galileo made the big time 'cos he gave me a try!

When Newton saw that apple drop from the tree;

Well, he asked me what it meant and I said:

Chorus: That's gravity!

Toad: Science and invention are mostly due to Professor Toad.

Chorus: He's too good to be true!

Toad and Chorus: Toad is the greatest;

Chorus: We know it;

So let's get the show on the road,

And salute the phenomenal.

The fabulous, fantastic,

Toad: Sensational, successful,

Scintillating, superstar Toad!

Chorus: Toad, Yeah!

8 The recapture of Toad Hall

Badger: Unhappy animal! Homeless reprobate! Dispossessed dissolute!

Toad: Steady on, old chap! It's only me, your old friend, Toad! Why hallo, Rat! Hallo Mole! Why don't you all come down to my place for a spot of luncheon?

Badger: Luckless Toad! You no longer have a place! While you were in prison, Toad Hall was invaded by the weasels, the ferrets and the stoats.

Toad: Oh horror! Catastrophe appalling! Oh misery!
Oh injustice! Now I'm ruined! Alack!

Badger: Now listen to me, Toad: all is not lost,
undeserving though you are; I have a plan. We must arm
ourselves with knives, with cudgels, and with pistols of
alarming aspect; gain entry to Toad Hall by a secret
tunnel, then we advance upon the weasels and the ferrets
and the stoats, brandishing our weapons and singing a
ferocious and blood-curdling chorus.

Rat, Mole and Toad: A ferocious and blood-curdling
chorus?

Badger: Indeed; with solos by Toad. The weasels, the
ferrets and the stoats will all flee in abject and mortal
terror! Comrades, advance!

Badger, Rat, Mole and Toad: Let's wallop a weasel,
let's strangle a stoat!

Let's frazzle a ferret or two – have 'em by the throat!
Twist their arms and pull their necks until their eyes go
pop;

Toad Hall is Toad's hall – let's go over the top!

Mole: Tiptoe up the staircase . . .

All: Tiptoe, tipt!

Badger: Potter down to the pantry . . .

All: Pit-pat-pit!

Rat: Back again to the foot of the stairs,

Badger: Catch the villains unawares,

Mole: Lay them neatly out in pairs,

Toad: Listen while they say their prayers,

All: Let's go over the top!

Pin 'em up by the ears, chaps,

Spear 'em down to the floor!

Weaselburger and chips

Is a treat we all adore!

Rat: Shred the stoats in little bits,

Toad: Let's have a ferret chop!

All: It's weasel-whackin' good,

So, let's go over the top!

(Thunk! Thunk! Thunk!)

Mole: Watch it! There goes a weasel!

All: Thunk! Thunk! Splat!

Toad: Strike him! Yes, it's a stoat!

All: Got him! Squashed him flat!

Rat: Ferret by the door there,

He'd look more peaceful dead!

All: Yes, Toad Hall is Toad's hall;

Have we taken care of them all?

Badger: Search behind the garden wall!

Toad: Didn't I hear a weasel call?

Two weasels : Blimey, let's get out of here quick!

Rat, Mole, Badger and Weasels: He's gone over the
top!

Narrator: Every last weasel, ferret and stoat fled in
panic and disorder, and Toad Hall was once more
Toad's. Badger lectured Toad sternly, reminding him
that his folly and boastfulness had nearly cost him his
liberty and his home, and Toad promised to mend his
ways. The next night a celebration banquet was held at
Toad Hall, and everyone made merry. It was nearly
midnight when Badger rose to his feet and addressed the
assembled company.

9 The banquet at Toad Hall

Badger: My friends, this is a happy occasion.

All: Hear, hear!

Badger: Toad Hall, lately fallen into the evil hands of
the weasels, the ferrets and the stoats, has finally been
restored to its rightful owner. I give you the toast: hearth
and home!

All: Hearth and home!

Badger: And now I call upon our good friend, Mr Toad,
to make a brief reply.

All: Hear, hear!

10 Finale

Toad: I could never have come back
if it hadn't been for you, my friends;
A house can seem empty, so you wander,
And you think you've no friends . . .
There are so many things that I never really saw before,

But I think that I can see them clearly now:

The kettle on the hob,

The chestnuts in the fire,

The slippers by the rocking-chair

And woodsmoke drifting through the air . . .

I think that perhaps . . .

It's time that perhaps . . .

I started, perhaps,

To think about settling down.

All: Home is a special kind of feeling;

The feeling of a place where you belong;

A feeling that the world is left behind you

Like a shelter from your care

That seems to want you to be there.

Home is that special kind of feeling:

The feeling that you've made it all your own;

Somewhere which you know is really your place;

A place for living,

Your special place, your home.

Home has a welcome kind of feeling –

The firelight and the warmth of hearth and home;

A welcome that you know will always cheer you

Like a gentle fond 'hello'

That seems to touch you with a glow.

Home has a quiet kind of feeling:

An island when you need to be alone;

A haven for the times you spend together.

There's nowhere better;

No other place like home.

Narrator: Mole caught Rat's eye; Rat's eye caught
Badger's eye. Each knew what home meant to the other.
Nobody managed to catch Toad's eye, but then Toad's
eye was roving and resting lovingly on every detail of his
home: worth a thousand gipsy caravans, worth a million
motor cars, thought Toad.

(Words by David Grant)

BROTHER HEINRICH'S CHRISTMAS

11 Introduction

Narrator: Once upon a time, in an old stone monastery
set in a hillside covered with vines, there lived a monk
called Brother Heinrich. Brother Heinrich wasn't like all
the other monks who lived in the monastery. They used
to spend their time together working in the monastery
vineyards, looking after the vines, picking the grapes, and
making wine. The wine from their monastery was the
finest and juiciest in all the land, and people came from
far and wide to try it. Brother Heinrich had to help make
the wine too, but he worked by himself – except, that is,
for Sigismund. Sigismund was the donkey who worked
the winepress that squeezed the grapes. The winepress
stood in a little cobbled courtyard, and Sigismund had to
walk round and round the courtyard all day, pulling a
long wooden arm that made the winepress work.
Brother Heinrich put the grapes in and waited for the
grape juice to trickle out into a big stone jar. When the
jar filled up, he took it away to the cellars and fetched
back an empty one. It was rather boring work for both of
them, but they didn't mind. Brother Heinrich like to talk
to Sigismund, and Sigismund liked to listen; sometimes
he would answer Brother Heinrich in a friendly sort of
way. Brother Heinrich talked about all sorts of things:
how to eat wine jelly without it falling off your spoon,
how to stop the mice biting your toes when you've got
sandals on . . . but most of all he liked to talk about
music. Brother Heinrich loved music. He knew how to
play lots of different instruments, even difficult ones like
the harp and the sackbut, and he was good at singing too;
in fact he sang so well that the Abbot had put him in
charge of the monastery choir. Every day, when it was
time for work to finish, Brother Heinrich took Sigismund
back to his stable, gave him some hay, wished him
goodnight, and hurried off to choir practice. But he felt
sad that Sigismund was left out, so sometimes he let him
come along to choir practice and sing with the choir.
Sigismund liked that very much. He stood on his hind
legs in the choir stalls and tried hard to follow the music
just like all the others in the choir. Brother Heinrich lent
him an old pair of spectacles so he could read better.

Sigismund felt very important. He joined in all the songs that the choir sang, though sometimes his voice did stick out a bit.

[12] Sigismund sings in the abbey choir

Choir: *Resonemus laudibus
cum jocunditatibus,
ex Maria Virgine . . .*

Narrator: One day, when Brother Heinrich and Sigismund were working as usual at the winepress, one of the other brothers came running up to them.

'Brother Heinrich,' he said, still out of breath, 'the Abbot wants to see you immediately.' Brother Heinrich groaned. The Abbot, who was the head of the monastery, was always complaining and interfering, and when he wanted to see people it usually meant trouble.

'Oh, want does *he* want, Brother Joseph?' asked Brother Heinrich.

'I don't know but you'd better hurry,' answered Brother Joseph. So Brother Heinrich hurried off to the Abbot's room and knocked at the door.

'Come in!' said the Abbot, rather sourly. He was sitting at his desk, reading a long and important-looking letter. He looked up. 'Brother Heinrich,' he began, 'I have just received this letter from the Archbishop. He tells me that he will be travelling through this part of the country on important business at Christmas time, and he'd like to come in person to our Christmas morning service and Christmas dinner afterwards.' The Abbot looked cross. He didn't like the Archbishop's visits very much because they meant lots of cleaning and tidying and telling everyone to be on their best behaviour. The other monks didn't mind, though. The Archbishop was plump and jolly and he never seemed to notice even if things were a bit untidy. He often happened to be travelling through their part of the country on important business at Christmas; the monks always opened their very best wine on Christmas Day, and the Archbishop liked to try it, just to make sure it was as good as last year's.

'The Archbishop himself will be at our Christmas morning service,' continued the Abbot, 'The choir is

your responsibility, Brother Heinrich. You must make sure that they sing better than they have ever sung before.'

'I'll do my best,' promised Brother Heinrich.

'And one thing more,' said the Abbot. 'That ridiculous donkey must be dismissed from the choir. Whatever will the Archbishop think if he sees a donkey singing in our monastery choir? It'll make a laughing stock of us all. Besides, he can only sing two notes, ee and aw.'

'That's not fair, Father Abbot!' protested Brother Heinrich. 'Brother Ignatius has been in the choir for fifty years and he can only sing one note, and it's nearly always the wrong one . . .'

'Not another word,' interrupted the Abbot. 'The donkey must go, and that's final.'

[13] Sigismund is dismissed

Narrator: Brother Heinrich felt very sad as he walked back to the little courtyard where Sigismund was still walking round and round; he didn't want to tell him the bad news. He cleared his throat.

'Sigismund, the Archbishop is coming to our Christmas morning service,' he began. 'But . . . but . . . I'm afraid the Abbot says . . . you can't sing in the choir any more.' Sigismund carried on walking round and round. 'Oh well,' he thought to himself, 'I suppose I never did have much of a voice anyway.'

Brother Heinrich tried to cheer him up. 'I promise I'll tell you how the rehearsals go, and I'll teach you all the new songs we do . . .' But they both knew it wouldn't be the same.

[14] Brother Heinrich and the new carol

Narrator: Rehearsals began for the special Christmas morning service. Brother Heinrich stood in front of the choir beating time with a twig and singing very loudly. They practised hard every day, but somehow nothing seemed to go right. Secretly everyone missed Sigismund. Soon the monks in the choir started to complain.

'We're bored with these stupid songs,' said one of them. 'Nothing but the same old Christmas carols year after

year,' said another.

'It's all your fault, young Heinrich,' grumbled Brother Ignatius, who had been in the choir for fifty years and thought it wasn't like to be used. 'You musicians are all the same: sitting around dreaming about your precious music. If you ask me you don't know the meaning of an honest day's work.'

'You're supposed to be so good at music,' said one of the younger monks; 'well, why don't you write us a new carol so we won't have to do all the same old ones over again?'

'Yes, write us a carol!' cried everyone together, except for Brother Ignatius, who preferred the old carols anyway.

'But I've never written a carol before!' protested Brother Heinrich.

'Well, you'll just have to do your best,' said the others; 'a new carol will make all the difference to the Christmas service.'

So Brother Heinrich cut himself a new quill from an eagle's feather and laid in a supply of fresh parchment. Every night he sat down at the desk in his little room to try and write his new carol. He tried and tried . . . all sorts of ideas came into his head, but somehow none of them was quite right.

Christmas drew nearer and nearer, and Brother Heinrich still hadn't written his carol. 'What am I going to do, Sigismund?' he cried in despair. 'The choir say that they must have the new carol so they can practise it, and the Abbot has got to hear about it and keeps asking if I've written it yet.'

Sigismund looked at him sympathetically.

Brother Heinrich kept on trying but he still couldn't seem to write his new carol. Finally Christmas Eve came. All day he paced up and down his room and scribbled frantically, while Sigismund, whose work was over for the season, sat in a corner watching anxiously. By the evening there was still nothing on the parchment but crossings-out.

'It's no good, Sigismund,' he said sadly. 'I'll have to give up. Looks as if it isn't going to be a very merry

Christmas for either of us: the Abbot doesn't want you in the choir any more, and now the choir isn't going to want me any more because I can't write their new carol. Come on, I'd better put you in your stable for the night.'

[15] The angels appear on Christmas Eve

Narrator: The two of them walked slowly side by side across the courtyard and towards the stables. It was a bright starry night, and the only sound to be heard was the clip-clop of Sigismund's hooves across the cobblestones. At least, Brother Heinrich thought it was the only sound to be heard.

'Stop a minute, Sigismund,' he said. 'Listen . . . can you hear something?' Sigismund stopped and pricked up his ears, then he shook his head and walked on again. 'Sigismund, there is something. Listen, it sounds like singing.'

This time Sigismund heard it too. It was singing, and at first neither of them could see where it was coming from. Then, as the sound of the singing drew nearer, they did see where it was coming from – and they couldn't believe their eyes. A little way in front of them was a big circle of very bright light, so bright that at first their eyes were dazzled and they couldn't see anything else. Then, as they got used to the light, they saw what it really was: angels, more of them than you could ever count, all in shining white robes, dancing round in a ring and singing.

Angels: *In dulci jubilo*

Now sing with hearts aglow!

Our heart's joy reclineth

In praesepio

And like a bright star shineth

Matris in gremio

Alpha es et O,

Alpha es et O!

Narrator: Brother Heinrich and Sigismund stood there amazed. Then one of the angels stretched out its hands towards them, inviting them to join in their dance. Brother Heinrich and Sigismund felt a little shy, but soon they were whirling round holding hands with the angels. Sigismund never thought he'd get excited about going round and round in a circle, but suddenly it was the loveliest feeling he could ever imagine.

Angels: *Alpha es et O,
Alpha es et O!*

Narrator: The bright light faded, the singing stopped, the angels disappeared; and all that was left was Brother Heinrich lying dizzy and breathless on the ground, with Sigismund beside him.

[16] Brother Heinrich writes down the Angels' carol

Narrator: 'Did it really happen, Sigismund?' wondered Brother Heinrich. 'That was such a beautiful song the angels sang. If only I could write a carol just like that we could sing it at the Christmas service tomorrow . . . Sigismund, why don't we sing the angels' carol at the Christmas service? If I go and write it down now we can practise it first thing in the morning and it'll be ready for the service. I'll tell the choir the angels sang it to me!'

Brother Heinrich rushed back to his room with Sigismund clip-clopping close behind him. He sat down excitedly at his desk, dipped his quill in the ink pot and started writing out the angels' carol as fast as he could go, sprinkling sand on the parchment every so often to help the ink dry.

A terrible thing had happened: he couldn't remember how the tune ended. He tried all sorts of different endings but none of them was the same as the angels had sung. 'Oh Sigismund,' wailed Brother Heinrich, 'we're not going to be able to do the angels' carol after all – I can't remember the last bit . . . See, the tune's no use without an ending.'

'What was that, Sigismund?' Brother Heinrich clapped his hands. 'Sigismund, that's it! Now I remember how the tune ends!'

Brother Heinrich quickly wrote down the last bit of the tune in case he forgot it again, then the two of them danced round and round the little room singing the angels' carol till they both fell asleep exhausted.

[17] Christmas morning

Narrator: Early next morning Brother Heinrich ran to find the Abbot and tell him everything that had happened. The Abbot didn't believe a word of the story about the angels, but he was so relieved that they were

going to have the new carol to sing to the Archbishop after all that, as a special concession, he said he would allow Sigismund to sing in the choir again, just this once. Brother Heinrich was overjoyed. He ran off to tell Sigismund, who could hardly believe his good fortune, and the two of them hurried along to choir practice. The choir rehearsed the angels' carol till it was perfect. By now it was almost time for the Christmas service to begin, and they all took their places in the choir stalls just before the Archbishop's solemn procession arrived. The service went beautifully, and everyone was very excited when the moment came for the angels' carol.

[18] The Angels' Carol and Christmas dinner

Choir: *Ubi sunt gaudia
If they be not there?
There are angels singing
Nova cantica,
And there the bells are ringing
In Regis curia;
O that we were there,
O that we were there!*

Narrator: At the Christmas dinner afterwards, the Archbishop declared that it had been the best Christmas service he could ever remember. He told the steward that he thought the wine was also the best he could remember, but he wasn't quite sure so he'd better taste a little more so he could make up his mind. At last the Archbishop rose to his feet, rather unsteadily, to make his customary speech.

'My friends,' he said, 'this has been a very special Christmas for us all. Your Abbot tells me that the fine new carol we heard this morning was sung to Brother Heinrich by the angels. If it be so, it is surely a miracle and we should thank God for it. As for the donkey that sings in the choir, your Abbot fears I might think him a strange sight. Well, my friends, there are times' – the Archbishop looked at his wine glass – 'when I see sights far stranger than a harmless donkey singing in a choir. Long may he continue a member! Though he only sings two notes, there are surely times when those two notes are exactly the right ones.' Brother Heinrich and Sigismund

smiled secretly to each other.

'So, my friends,' concluded the beaming Archbishop, 'God's blessing upon this house, and upon all the good work that is accomplished here' – the Archbishop eyed his wine glass again – 'and a merry Christmas to one and all!'

'Do you think he knew about how you finished the angels' carol for me?' said Brother Heinrich to Sigismund as he led him back to his stable afterwards. But Sigismund only answered the same way he always did. That night the two friends both went to sleep very happy and still thinking about their wonderful experience with the angels. They were sure of one thing: it had been the very best Christmas they had ever had.

(Words by John Rutter)

THE RELUCTANT DRAGON

[19] Introduction

Narrator: This is the story of a boy, a saint, and a dragon. It happened one Christmas-time long ago, when the world was different, and there were more dragons about than there are nowadays; although nothing much has really changed. People are still people, good and bad; boys are still boys; and you can still find the occasional dragon – or can you? Listen, and see for yourself.

All: Once upon a time, a time long ago;
Dream days and dragon days when life was full of magic,

There lived a shepherd and his son all alone.

Each day and every day the shepherd watched his sheep;
Each day and every day the boy sat reading and dreaming:

Reading myths and legends of the wonders of the world.
Knights in shining armour bearing banners all unfurled;
Tales of elves and goblins and the spirits of the woods;
Monsters in the sea and monsters on the land, and dragons!

How he longed to meet a real, fierce, fiery dragon!
A fire-breathing, fearsome, fabulous, fairy-tale,
Scaly, taily, green-bodied, red-eyed dragon.

Narrator: And sooner than expected his chance came. One night the shepherd came home all of a tremble.

'It's all up with me!' he exclaimed. 'Never more can I go up on them there downs! You know that cave up there? Well, I saw this creature sticking halfway out of the cave. As big as four cart horses and all covered with shiny scales!'

The boy yawned. 'It's all right, father . . . don't you worry. It's only a dragon. He won't give us any trouble. I'll go up there and have a talk with him.'

So, after tea, he did.

[20] The boy visits the dragon's cave

All: Out through the cottage door and skip across the yard
Went the boy with his head full of dragons breathing hard.

Up along the village street and down beyond the inn:
At last his chance had come for real adventure to begin.
Up across the hillside all crisp and frosty white:
Down the winding woodland path the boy ran swiftly
through the night
To the secret hiding place, the fearsome fiery dragon's
lair;
What adventure, what excitement, feels like magic in the
air!
Now at last he'll know the answers to a plethora of
puzzles:
Does the dragon say his grace and such before he chews
and guzzles?
Does he use a table napkin or a knife and fork and
spoon?
Does he wash his claws and whiskers carefully when he
dines at noon?
When he tries to eat an ice-cream does his fiery
breathing melt
All the ice and cream and send it trickling down his scaly
pelt?
If he sniffs at plants and flowers does he make the
blossoms droop?
Does he singe his hair and whiskers when he blows upon
his soup?
By the time the boy had reached the highest point among
the hills
He was dreaming all of dragons and their instant damsel
grills:
Do they kill before they grill or do they like to hear the
screams
Of their gently roasting victims spitted right along their
seams?
And in case you all are thinking that this subject's done
to death –
Well, don't worry, we shall stop now 'cos we've all run
out of breath.
Narrator: And sure enough, just outside a small but
comfortable cave in the hillside, a dragon lay stretched
out, purring contentedly.

The boy approached . . . rather nervously . . .

Boy: Good evening, dragon.

Dragon: Good evening, good evening, good evening!
Can you think of a rhyme for 'moon'?

Boy: How about 'June'?

Dragon: Splendid, splendid, splendid! I've tried
'baboon', 'pontoon' and 'macaroon' – but they all lack
something . . . I'm a poet you see. Would you like to
hear one of my early efforts?

Huff, little dragon through your little baby nostrils,
Huff, my little scaly one, and light papa's cigar.

Snort, little fellow, with your little baby dragon snout,
Blowing steamy bubbles through your honey in the jar.

What do you think?

Boy: Well, yes . . .

Dragon: Mind you, I also cultivate a more contemporary
style: here's a passage from my Three Quintets:

Seething pitch and betting slips
Coagulate the battleships . . .

[21] The villagers and St George arrive

Dragon: But hark! What do I hear in the distance?

Villagers: We want the dragon! Scrag 'im, do 'im, chop
'is 'ead off!

We want the dragon! Scrag 'im, spike 'im, cut 'is froat!
We got St. George and 'is 'orse and sword and buckler;
When St. George 'as done wiv 'im, 'e won't be worth a
groat!

We want the dragon! 'E's bin lootin', rape and pillagin!
We want the dragon! 'E's bin scorching all the crops!
St. George'll spike the perisher, the awful scaly ravisher;
St. George'll swoosh 'is great big sword an' thump 'im
round the chops!

Dragon: Oh how uncouth, how vulgar! How
unutterably awful!

And it doesn't even rhyme! But who is this?

St George: Saint George, at your service! The hour of
reckoning has come, sir! Never more shall you wreak
your terror upon these poor simple folk! What weapons
do you choose?

Dragon: Weapons, dear fellow? None, dear boy! Can't
fight, won't fight! Anyway, why must I be defeated?

St George: Because it's in the story!

[22] Trio

St George: I say, old boy, look here, old chap, you've got
to do your stuff,
It's not British, it's not pukka just to sit there in a huff;
So pull yourself together, man, and strike a stoic pose!
I have read the Army manual and I'll show you how it
goes.

Dragon: Army manual! Stoic poses! Stuff and
nonsense! Don't you see?

I'm a literary dragon; not a drop of fight in me.

All my Sturm and Drang is pantomime; I wouldn't hurt
a fly.

If you're going to cut up rough then I'll just sit down here
and cry!

Boy: Stupid dragon! Can't you think of what a noble
sight there'd be:

Nostrils flaring, scales a-flashing, armour glinting,
banners waving, don't you see?

St George: It's a case of King and Country, do or die,
show the flag:

With a gin and t. to brace you it'll soon be in the bag!
Every chap with any feeling feels a quivering of his lips
When the fighting is all over and the foe has had his
chips.

All: But what shall we do?

Dragon: I've no wish to fight you.

St George: And frankly, old chap, I don't want to fight
you either!

All: So what shall we do?

Boy: Why don't you rig the fight?

Dragon and St George: Why don't we rig the fight?

Boy: That's right!

Dragon and St George: Yes, why don't we rig the fight?
What a splendid idea! But how?

Boy: Oh, let me show you!

[23] Planning the tournament

Chorus: With a one and a two and over to you!

Boy: First he waves his spear around,

St George: Yes, I wave my spear around,

Dragon: Ah! He waves his spear around; oh! How
aesthetic!

Boy: Then his charger paws the ground,

St George: Yes, me charger paws the ground,

Dragon: Ah! His charger paws the ground; my! How
athletic!

Boy: Now you let him have a burst –

St George: Right, you let me have a burst,

Dragon: Oh! I'll give him quite a burst; how
pyrotechnic!

Boy: Then you both begin to lunge,

St George: Good! We both begin to lunge.

Dragon: Nice! Let's have a jolly lunge – so stimulating!

Boy: Then he sticks you in the gut –

St George: Wow! I stick him in the gut!

Dragon: What, he sticks me? Tut, tut, you nasty person!

Boy: No, it's just a bag of tricks –

St George: Make it look as though it sticks

Boy: So the crowd'll get their kicks.

Dragon: I hope you're certain!

Chorus: And now, Mr Jackman, take it away!

Boy: (sings scat)

Chorus: Mr Ives!

Dragon: (sings scat)

Chorus: Now Mr Holt!

St George: (sings scat)

Chorus: Second half!

Boy: Now you speed it up from there:

St George: Feint and lunge and claw the air,

Dragon: Wave your sword all debonair – I've got the
feeling.

Boy: Make it nasty, make it mean,

St George: Make it start to sort of seem

Dragon: Like we meant it – what a dream, oh the emotion!

Boy: Then you screw it up to pitch

St George: Till the crowd begins to itch

Dragon: For a killing, for a victory, for curtains!

Boy: Yes, but you're the one they want

St George: Spitted neatly through the front!

Dragon: We must fix it so it looks –
We must be certain!

Boy: Never fear, St George will do it,

St George: Yes there's really nothing to it: where's a bit of you with no sensation in it?

Dragon: You could pin me in the wing; see, it's really only skin,

Boy: That's the place, St G., so take it to the limit!

Chorus: The limit, just about the limit!

All: And now we all know what to do. Oooh!

Narrator: And not a moment too soon. Already it was time for the tournament to begin, and a crowd of villagers had gathered.

[24] The tournament

Villagers: We want the dragon! Scrag 'im, do 'im, chop 'is 'ead off!

We want the dragon! Scrag 'im, spike 'im, cut 'is froat!

Master of Ceremonies: Silence, pray silence, ladies and gentlemen! On my left, the fearsome, fiery dragon! And on my right, the fearless St George! Right now, gentlemen. I'm sure I needn't remind you that we are observing King's Rules. On the word of command – charge!

Round one – no hits; a draw! Round two: take your marks – charge!

St George: Come, fiery fiend, your doom is sealed; Your fell career is at an end, sir!

Dragon: Seal on, you animated scarecrow! Come let me roast you like a capon!

St George: My sword your lips shall soon extinguish!

Dragon: It might if you'd the strength to lift it, putrid puppet!

St George: Mangy monster!

Dragon: Feeble, faint-hearted, feather-brained, frivolous, ferret-faced, flea-bitten, festering fool!

Master of Ceremonies: Round two: Dragon wins on points! Round three, and the last round. Take your marks – charge!

Dragon: Aargh! Alas, I die!

Villagers: Hooray! St George has vanquished the dragon!

Boy: Oh Dragon, are you really hurt?

Dragon: Not a scratch dear boy – didn't I do it well!

Boy: Shush, they'll hear you! Just keep acting . . .

Villagers: Well now, I reckon all this vanquishing deserves a celebration: let's have a banquet! Yes, yes, let's have a banquet!

Narrator: So that night there was a great banquet. I'm not certain if he was actually invited, but the dragon went along too, and even took some of his poetry, just in case anyone asked him to read it. Everyone feasted and drank.

[25] Banquet fugue

All: Guzzle, guzzle, munch, munch, gobble, gobble, chomp, pass the salt and the pepper and the mustard and vinegar and the bread There's a fly in my soup! Well, it won't drink much sir! Fetch the doctor, I'm feeling rather strange. Guzzle, guzzle etc.

[26] Finale

Two villagers: 'Ey! Just a minute – what's the dragon doin' 'ere?

All: I thought St George had slain 'im once and for all. Cut off his 'ead!

St George: Cut off his head? I can't do that! He's a jolly good chap. I'll give him a stern talking to: now that should do the trick instead! Why don't we let bygones be bygones – turn a new leaf – make another start? After

all, dragons aren't so bad if you just get to know them a bit; and besides, it's nearly Christmas . . .

All: So let's begin again; try another way; Let's begin again; there's a better way.

Rule a line and start once more;
Learning from what's gone before.

Let's begin again;

Let's find a way to start again.

So can we get it right this time? Possibly.

Another chance in sight? Take things easily.

Is there time to care again;

Time to hope and share again?

Is it all too late?

Too late to try it out again?

The starlight in the skies and the moonlight;

The firelight in your eyes and the candlelight

Ev'ry creature softly bless,

Touching each with tenderness,

Helping us to see,

To see a better way ahead.

The snow upon the downs wraps things silently;

Nothing mortal shows; let's step carefully.

Make new tracks together,

Walk hand in hand;

And never run and hide;

The paths that we must tread lie side by side.

Narrator: So at length the banquet ended. They set off up the hill arm in arm, the saint, the boy and the dragon. The lights in the little village began to go out; but there were stars, and a late moon, as they climbed the downs together. Soon they reached the top, and it was time for their ways to part. They stood silent for a moment; then wished each other goodnight; and – a merry Christmas.

(Words by David Grant)

The King's Singers:

Jeremy Jackman (countertenor)

Alastair Hume (countertenor)

Bill Ives (tenor)

Anthony Holt (baritone)

Simon Carrington (baritone)

Colin Mason (bass)

The Cambridge Singers:

Sopranos

Caroline Ashton

Ruth Holton

Celia Jackson

Marcelle Mace

Simone Mace

Mary Mure

Nancy-Jane Thompson

Clare Wallace

Altos

Nicola Barber

Phyllida Hancock

Diana Hawker

Mary Hitch

Nicola-Jane Kemp

Melanie Marshall

Caroline Trevor

Tenors

Andrew Gant

Paul Gordon

Jock Graham-Campbell

Philip Sheffield

Angus Smith

Basses

Gerald Finley

Charles Gibbs

Nicholas Jones

James Mure

Charles Pott

Benjamin Thompson

David Watson

Russell Watson

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