A Christmas Carol

Victorian carols with readings from Dickens

Christmas Past and Christmas Present: they just wouldn't be the same without Dickens' enduring tale of hope and cheer! A perfect Yuletide celebration of Victorian carols and readings from the acclaimed choir of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.

1 God rest you merry gentlemen
Traditional arr. Sir John Stainer (1840–1901)
2 A Christmas Carol – *Prologue: Ebenezer Scrooge*
3 Masters in this hall
French traditional arr. Sir David Willcocks (1919–)
4 The first 'Nowell'
Traditional arr. Sir John Stainer (1840–1901)
5 A Christmas Carol – *Marley's Ghost*
6 It came upon a midnight clear
Richard Storrs Willis (1819–1900)
7 Good King Wenceslas looked out
Piae Cantiones (1582) arr. Sir John Stainer (1840–1901)
8 A Christmas Carol – *The First of the Three Spirits*
9 What child is this?
Traditional arr. Sir John Stainer (1840–1901)
10 Sing lullaby *Edgar Pettman (1866–1943)*
11 A Christmas Carol – *The Second of the Three Spirits*
12 Personent hodie
German (1360) arr. Gustav Holst (1874–1934)
13 I saw a maiden *Edgar Pettman (1866–1943)*
14 A Christmas Carol – *The Third of the Three Spirits*
15 Once in royal David's city
Henry John Gauntlett (1805–1876)
16 Hark! the herald angels sing
Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847), organ interludes Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810–1876) played by Ben Atkinson
17 A Christmas Carol – *The End of It*
18 Glory to God on high
Jeremiah Ingalls (1764–1838)
19 Sussex carol *Traditional arr. Sir David Willcocks*

Choir of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge
Directed by David Skinner
Jamal Sutton & Ben Atkinson, organ
Professor Sir Gabriel Horn, reader

Recorded in the chapel of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, June 2009 by kind permission of the Master and Fellows.

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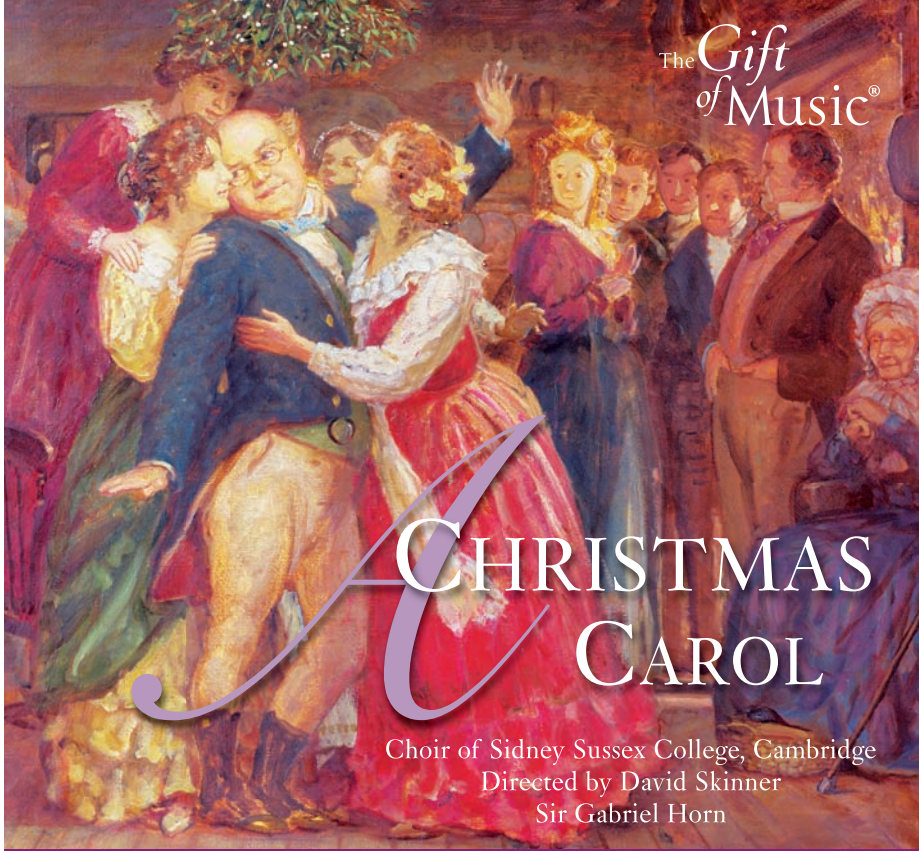

VICTORIAN CAROLS *with* READINGS FROM DICKENS

A Christmas Carol

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Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* has become as much a part of the modern Christmas as turkey and crackers. Told and retold, in music and film, each generation has come to it afresh and found in it something timeless, something deeply right for this season.

At first sight this might seem a little surprising. For Dickens' work is not comfortable: he is a moralist of the sternest order. Scrooge's greed is a matter of life and death, not just for Tiny Tim but for Scrooge himself. Scrooge is on the way to Hell, and he is only saved by being forced to see, with awful clarity, what he has become and where is he going. He is shocked out of himself, shocked into change. But we are not comfortable with stern moralism, especially on issues of money and greed. Perhaps we find it easier to deal with in a nice Christmas ghost story than in reality – and yet Dickens was writing about the reality he saw about him in 1843, about real greed, real poverty, about bodies and souls really in peril. We can only imagine what piercing clarity his Christmas Ghosts might visit upon the reality of contemporary Britain – with rates of child poverty higher than those in nearly every comparable country.

Humankind can only bear so much reality and only so much moralism. Why Dickens' appeal has lasted is that he goes beyond being stern, goes beyond disapproving of Scrooge. *A Christmas Carol* is in the end a tale of joy. Scrooge's greed needs to be smashed open, yes, but what beckons to him as he emerges from its prison is not a life of miserable sacrifice and weary do-gooding. What beckons is joy: sheer, glorious, explosive joy, the joy that comes from lives being shared with each other, when we no longer see each other as surplus to requirements or as competitors for wealth, but simply as people, people to love and be loved by. Scrooge enters into that joy. And the reason we tell his story again and again is because at its heart it says to us, 'Look: no matter how deeply you have imprisoned yourself in yourself – freedom beckons, joy beckons. It wants you: just turn around.'

Joy beckons. That is the heart of the Scrooge story, and it is the heart of the Christmas story. Christmas is all about a God who would not be by Himself, who leapt out of Heaven to share his life with the world. At the heart of all things, Christmas dares to hope, is sheer, irrepressible joy, pouring out of itself in love – and that hope chimes deep within all hearts, whatever our creed, whatever our background. 'The heart of all things is joy, and joy wants you.' That is what we hear in the singing of Sidney Sussex College Chapel Choir on this CD, and that's what we respond to in *A Christmas Carol*. Joy beckons. Like Scrooge, we should rush to meet it.

Rev'd Dr Peter Waddell
Chaplain of Sidney Sussex

Sidney Sussex Choir have established themselves as one of Cambridge's top mixed-voice choirs. They record exclusively for Obsidian Records and The Gift of Music and received Gramophone CD of the Month and an Early Music Award nomination for their recording of music by Thomas Tomkins. The Choir is directed by David Skinner, who is known primarily for his combined role as a researcher and performer of early music, and director of the professional consort Alamire. At Cambridge he is Fellow and Osborn Director of Music at Sidney Sussex and an Affiliated Lecturer in the Faculty of Music.

Sopranos
Harriet Armston-Clarke
Abigail Armstrong
Miri Gellert
Amanda Kay
Eve Ridgeway
Sarah Robbins

Altos
Georgie Baker
Henrietta Bentall
Kathryn Harris
Sarah Latto
Sarah Lewis-Bennion
Elizabeth Nixon

Tenors
Thomas Athorne
Robert Busch
Thomas Hindmarch
Robin Horgan
Paul Kilbey
Charles Ogilvie

Bass
Jolyon Bunker
James Freeman
Duncan Hewitt
Ron Horgan
Henry Scarlett
Guy Willis

'*I used to read the Carol as a bedtime story to my children. The story is set in the depth of a cold harsh winter. Scrooge too is cold and harsh, but like winter, he is not beyond redemption. This is the essence of the Carol that I have tried to capture here.*'

Professor Sir Gabriel Horn, FRS, is a biologist and neuroscientist and was Master of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, from 1992 to 1999.