the RIPIENO choir

Hey for Christmas

3 January 2026 7pm
All Saints Weston

Siglo de Oro

Hannah Ely soprano
Rebekah Jones alto
Chris Fitzgerald-Lombard tenor
Patrick Allies baritone, director
Sam Mitchell bass-baritone

Spinacino Consort

Eric Thomas lute, theorbo, director
Annemarie Klein recorders
Claire Horáček viol
Tom Hollister percussion

Programme

Collected by **John Playford** (c.1623-1686) arr. Spinacino Consort	Granny's Delight (pub. 1702)
Anon/English 16th century	As I Outrode This Enderes Night
Thomas Ravenscroft (c.1588-1635)	Remember, O thou man (pub.1611)
Trad. Irish	The Darkest Midnight in December
Anon arr. Thomas Hamond	Sweet was the song the Virgin sang
Richard Smert (c1400-1479) attrib.	Sir Christesmasse
Collected by **John Playford** arr. Patrick Allies	Drive the Cold Winter Away

Interval

William Byrd	In Winter Cold (pub. 1611)
Collected by **John Playford** arr. Spinacino Consort	The Beggar Boy (pub.1651)
Trad/English	The Truth Sent From Above
William Byrd (c.1540-1623)	O Magnum Mysterium (pub.1607)
Martin Peerson (c.1571-1651)	Upon my lap my Soveraigne sits (pub.1620)
Collected by **John Playford** arr. Spinacino Consort	A Wassail Tune (pub.1651)
Trad/English	Hey for Christmas

With the support of the R C Sherriff Trust

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Diary dates

Sat/Sun 18 /19 April	Salisbury Cathedral Evensong/ Eucharist
Sat 9 May 7:30 pm	Concert Spirituel: The luxuriousness of the French court with the dynamic and elaborate music of Charpentier, Lully and Rameau

Programme Notes

Picture the scene. It's December 24th, at some point in the mid-seventeenth century. You have just arrived at your relatives for Christmas at their house in London. After weeks of restraint during Advent, they have twelve 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 seventeenth century – are already timeless classics: ***As I Outrode this Endere Night***, with its bouncy refrain, has its origins in the mystery plays in medieval Coventry. And ***Sir Christesmasse*** was composed in the fifteenth-century by Richard Smert, a vicar choral at Exeter Cathedral. Smert 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*** 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 twelve 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 Soveraigne 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. Better known is William Byrd's ***O magnum mysterium***, published in 1607 as part of his project to compose music for the major feasts in the liturgical calendar. 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 is one of their contemporaries, who would have been a suitable guest 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 re-telling of the Christmas story.

Alongside these sixteenth and seventeenth-century tunes are two that are harder to date with any confidence. One of these is found in an Irish collection: The Kilmore Carols, the survival of which is credited to the eighteenth-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' birth. The other, ***The Truth 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 folk song 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, and ale and beer,
And to our Christmas feast there comes,
Young men and maids to shake their bums.

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Texts and Translations

As I Outrode This Enderes Night

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.

Remember, O Thou Man
Remember O thou man
Thy time is spent:
Remember, O thou man,
How thou art dead and gone,
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 alway,
O thou man,
with heart joyful,
Give thanks to God alway,
For this our happy day.
Let all men sing and say:
"Holy, Holy!"

The Darkest Midnight in December
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 this piece has finished.

Sweet Was the Song the Virgin Sang
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 fitly on her knee.

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

1. I am here, Sir Christmas
Welcome, my lord Sir Christmas,
Welcome to all both more and less;
Come near Nowel.
2. *Dieu vous gard beausieur*, tidings I you bring,
A maid hath born a child full young,
The which causeth me to sing. Nowel.
3. Christ is now born of a pure maid,
In an ox stall he is laid,
Wherefore sing we all at abraid,
Nowel.
4. *Buvez bien par tutte la companie*,
Make good cheer and be right merry,
And sing with us now joyfully,
Nowel.

Drive the Cold Winter Away
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

In Winter Cold
In Winter cold when tree and bush was bare
And frost had nipt the rootes of tender grasse,
The Ants with joy did feed upon their fare,
Which they had storde while Summer season was:
To whom for food a Grashopper 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 seene,
Inquired what in Summer was her guise.
Quoth shee, I sung and hopt in meadowes greene.
Then quoth the Ant, content thee with thy chance,
For to thy song now art thou like to dance.

The Truth from Above
1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

O magnum mysterium
O magnum mysterium
et admirabile sacramentum
ut animalia viderent
Dominum natum
jacentem in praesepio.
Beata Virgo cujus viscera
meruerunt portare
Dominum Christum.
Ave Maria, gratia plena,
Dominus tecum.

O great mystery
and wonderful sacrament
that even the animals saw
the new-born Lord
lying in a manger.
Blessed Virgin, whose womb
was worthy to bear
our Lord Christ.
Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with you.

Upon My Lap My Soveraigne Sits
1. Upon my lap my Soveraigne 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.

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

Hey for Christmas!

1. 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, and ale and beer,
And to our Christmas feast there comes,
Young men and maids to shake their bums.

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

3. 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:
(Instrumental interlude)

4. 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...

5. 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...

6. 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...

7. 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:
(Instrumental interlude)

8. 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...

9. 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...

10. 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...

11. 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.
(Instrumental interlude)

12. 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...

13. 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...

14. 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...

15. 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...

16. 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...

17. 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...

Tonight's Performers

Patrick Allies is Artistic Director of vocal ensemble Siglo de Oro and Musical Director of Imperial College Chamber Choir. He has been Conductor of the Ripieno Choir since April 2023.

Siglo de Oro is an adventurous vocal ensemble based in London, known for its golden tone, fresh interpretations, innovative programming and award-winning recordings.

The **Spinacino Consort** is a Scottish-based early music ensemble dedicated to reimagining the music of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The Ripieno Choir is a chamber choir of about 35 members and has a wide and varied repertoire. If you are interested in joining or hiring us, please contact Lisa via join@ripienochoir.org The choir is a member of Making Music and a registered charity number 1044336.

Soprano
Amanda Allen
Barbara Collignon
Isobel Cooke
Shirley Davenport
Helen Marsden
Jill Mills
Veronica Middleton
Julie Rousseau
Christina Sage
Lynn Skrzypecka
Elinor Thomas
Claire Yates

Alto
Elizabeth Cohen
Lily Dickie
Mary Egan
Saskia Harris
Lisa Pledger
Delia Steven

Tenor
Jason Fan
Martin Harris
Nick Harris
Richard McGregor-Johnson
Mark Stollery
Claudio Tonini

Bass
Michael Collon
George Engelhardt
Richard Evans
Shinya Ishimatsu
Graham King
Ben Russel
Nyren Scott-Malden