MY LORD HAS COME
Christmas music from Ardingly College
Schola Cantorum | Richard Stafford
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| 1 | I wonder as I wander | 3'10 |
| 2 | A Maiden most gentle | 3'04 |
| 3 | Bogoroditsye Dyevo | 2'24 |
| 4 | The truth from above | 2'59 |
| 5 | Lux aurumque | 3'18 |
| 6 | The holly and the ivy | 3'03 |
| 7 | All bells in Paradise | 4'47 |

**1  I wonder as I wander**  
Music and words collected by John Jacob Niles (1892-1980), arrangement by John Rutter (b. 1945)  
Soloist: Eithne Yates-Kneen

**2  A Maiden most gentle**  
Music anonymous, words and arrangement by Andrew Carter (b. 1939)

**3  Bogoroditsye Dyevo**  
Music by Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943), words from Luke 1:28,42

**4  The truth from above**  
Music by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958), words anonymous  
Soloist: Issie Worssam

**5  Lux aurumque**  
Music by Eric Whitacre (b. 1970), words by Charles Anthony Silvestri (b. 1965)  
after Edward Esch (b. 1970)  
Soloist: Laura Crooks

**6  The holly and the ivy**  
Music and words anonymous, arrangement by June Nixon (b. 1942)

**7  All bells in Paradise**  
Music and words by John Rutter
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sussex carol</td>
<td>1'58</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Music and words anonymous, arrangement by Philip Ledger (1937-2012)</em></td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Bethlehem Down</td>
<td>3'50</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Music by Peter Warlock (1894-1930), words by Bruce Blunt (1899-1957)</em></td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Nativity carol</td>
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<td><em>Music and words by John Rutter</em></td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>My Lord has come</td>
<td>3'13</td>
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<td><em>Music and words by Will Todd (b. 1970)</em></td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>This is the record of John</td>
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<td><em>Music by Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625), words from John 1:19-23</em></td>
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<td><em>Soloist: Abigail Horton</em></td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Lully, lulla, lullay</td>
<td>4'50</td>
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<td><em>Music by Philip Stopford (b. 1977), words anonymous</em></td>
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<td><em>Soloist: Laura Crooks</em></td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Tomorrow shall be my dancing day</td>
<td>2'23</td>
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<td><em>Music by John Gardner (1917-2011), words anonymous</em></td>
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SCHOLA CANTORUM, ARDINGLY COLLEGE
RICHARD STAFFORD *director*
JACK THOMPSON *organ*
The **Schola Cantorum** is the chamber choir of Ardingly College, a vocal ensemble that comprises some 14 to 18 singers. It includes pupils from all years in the Senior School and explores a wide variety of vocal genres from the Renaissance through to *a cappella* arrangements of contemporary popular numbers. Schola Cantorum consists of the strongest and most vocally mature singers in the College and, aside from their duties in the Chapel choir, they rehearse twice a week in preparation for regular concerts both at the College and locally, alongside visits to Oxbridge colleges and prestigious cathedrals for Evensong and other such services. Annually, there is a choir tour to European destinations and in recent years the choir have toured Vienna and Prague, whilst in 2019 they will visit Malta.

Starting life in 1858 as Saint Saviour’s College in Shoreham, **Ardingly College** is one of the original three schools of the Woodard Corporation, a group of schools originally known as the Society of Saint Nicolas, operating in the Anglo-Catholic tradition of the Church of England. Known as a school which places the greatest value on individuals, alumni include former members of parliament, actors, authors, sportsmen, and even an eminent cathedral organist.

**Richard Stafford** began his musical education as a chorister at Jesus College, Cambridge under the direction of Timothy Byram-Wigfield. Following music scholarships to Eton College and the Perse, he studied at Oriel College, Oxford and upon graduation worked at Wanganui Collegiate School where he studied the organ with Nicholas Grigsby. In 2011, he completed a Masters in Musicology at Durham University with specific study of the composer Gerald Finzi, and whilst there he was the Organ Scholar at University and St. John’s Colleges, studying with Francesca Massey. In September 2012, he took up a post as a teacher of music at Brighton College before becoming Head of Academic Music in 2013. He became Director of Music at Ardingly College in April 2016, where he oversees the direction of the Chapel Choir and Schola Cantorum.
MY LORD HAS COME

When consideration of this recording project first began, a number of ideas were mooted including a celebration of the liturgical year at Ardingly. However, the Christmas theme provided both a varied palette of choral repertoire to digest alongside the obvious narrative that accompanies this festive season. With a sizeable period of some seven years since the previous recording, the progression made by the Schola Cantorum over the past couple of years suggested that this ensemble was ready to face the 'red light'. Following a couple of carol services which employed a range of carol settings at the heart of the liturgy, the main body of repertoire was assembled which afforded the singers a diverse array of musical settings, recorded over a period of three days in March 2018. Educationally this was a brilliant experience for the pupils, as they were afforded the opportunity to listen to themselves regularly whilst also facing the challenges adhering to all the minutiae of the music that a CD recording requires. I do hope that this recording serves as a lasting memory of the singers’ commitment to their choral experience at Ardingly College and, certainly for me, it was a project in which the musical challenges were mastered with fantastic results for singers so young.

There is a popular proverb that seems to reverberate around the Christmas season that suggests that Christmas would not be the same without the influence and impact of John Rutter and his huge contribution to the choral canon. It is with his arrangement of the traditional Appalachian song I wonder as I wander that the CD opens, featuring a lilting and evocative solo melodic line that is manipulated through the course of the carol. Following an opening solo verse, the lush harmonies of the supporting voices enter before they soar in the third verse. The carol concludes as it opened, with the solo soprano returning over the top of the hue of humming voices.

Paraphrasing original words from the Venerable Bede, Andrew Carter’s setting of A Maiden most gentle combines wonderful transitions of texture with a highly original and florid organ accompaniment. The melody is taken from a traditional French setting and is, in the strophic manner, adapted several times before a final Ave Maria sees the sopranos ascend to a bright culmination.

Bogoroditsye Dyevo is the sixth movement of Rachmaninoff’s much heralded All-night Vigil composed in 1915. This is one of the most poignant and, indeed, simplest movements in this work. However, the manner in which Rachmaninoff draws melodic material out of only the first three notes of the scale is staggering, creating a work breathtakingly beautiful in its conception. The dynamic level rarely moves beyond pianissimo aside of the great climax in the middle, whilst the music closes in gentle simplicity with the affirmation of the words ‘for you have borne the Saviour of our souls’.
The Herefordshire carol **The truth from above** was one of several folk tunes preserved, and indeed popularised, by Ralph Vaughan Williams. In this setting, the text recalls Adam’s fall from grace and Jesus’ promise of redemption.

Over the past decade or so, the work of Eric Whitacre has been made famous for its kaleidoscopic tendency, with the full range of choral colours effected in his poignant writing. **Lux aurumque** is a setting that epitomises this vocal style drawn from a text by Edward Esch (somewhat unusually translated from English into Latin by the composer’s friend Charles Anthony Sylvestri) which opens with the word ‘Lux’ (light) in a series of dissonant and unresolved cluster chords. This chordal complexity is what makes this work and, as the composer notes, ‘if the tight harmonies are carefully tuned and balanced, they will shimmer and glow’ – of course a result we hope has been created!

**The holly and the ivy** is among the most traditional carols sung at Christmastide; this arrangement by the eminent composer and organist, June Nixon, is a spritely and energetic carol that was made famous through the live broadcast from King’s College, Cambridge in 2010. Based on a French melody, Nixon uses the different capacities of the organ timbre from light and flowing scalic ideas, lower and bare chords, to the organ’s full splendour at the end.

Returning to the lyrical and immediately recognisable melodies of John Rutter, **All bells in Paradise** was written for the 2012 Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at Kings College, Cambridge. Using the 15th-century text of the Corpus Christi Carol, Rutter adds his own words to this setting in which their soft and pensive nature is vocally set with a lyrical and ascending melodic line. The minor mode is experienced in the centre of the carol whilst the final chromatic chords resolve magnificently back to the joy of the D-major tonality.

In 1919, Monk’s Gate near Horsham was the hamlet where Vaughan Williams took down the melodic outline for what would become one of the most prominent Christmas carols, the **Sussex carol**. Based on a 17th-century text, this joyful setting by Philip Ledger enables the full vocal scope of the choir to be shown off whilst an energetic organ accompaniment supports this most popular of melodies.

A memorable tale accompanies the compositional history of Peter Warlock’s **Bethlehem Down**, written as an entry for a carol competition in 1927. Largely focused on his somewhat bohemian and flippant lifestyle, Warlock and his friend, the poet Bruce Blunt decided to enter this competition led by the Daily Telegraph in order to support their Christmas merriment. What resulted is a carol of tenderness, a lilting quality and, above all, a quiet reflection, in which the simplicity of the structure is countered by Warlock’s sublime chromatic language.
Nativity carol is another sublime example of John Rutter’s ability to capture the Christmas spirit and message. In this tranquil setting, the legato line of the sopranos is accompanied by other voices, as the innocent and simple quality of the melody is immediately memorable. Barely moving across the dynamic spectrum, the carol ends as it opened with a richly rewarding descending melody that cadences simply, yet perfectly.

Opening with a drone, My Lord has come was composed in 2012, and features both music and lyrics written by the jazz musician and presenter Will Todd. An expressive melody opens the carol featuring wide, yearning intervals coupled with lush harmonies that include added 6ths and 7ths, typical of Jazz influence. The melody is manipulated in a number of guises before a short coda section rounds off this most poignant and emotive of settings.

Orlando Gibbons wrote exclusively for the Church of England and the verse anthem, This is the record of John is a setting that sees alternation between a solo alto and five part choir. Based on the opening chapter of St John’s Gospel, this anthem describes an exchange between the Jews and Levites and John the Baptist. Cadential flourishes and imitative counterpoint are the hallmark of this style, as Gibbons sets these words in a somewhat declamatory fashion, using the directness of homophony to achieve his aim.

Despite its initial simplicity and lilting nature, Lully, lulla, lullay tells the story of the Massacre of the Innocents, when King Herod ordered all male infants to be killed. Philip Stopford’s setting of this tale from the Coventry Carol is a beautiful lament in which a hauntingly beautiful melodic line is repeated, accompanied with interesting harmonic language. Towards the end, a soaring descant line is sung by a soprano, adding heightened emotion to the harmonies before the simplicity of this innocent lament is brought to a close.

Taken from a 16th-century Cornish folk song, Tomorrow shall be my dancing day is a bright, spirited and energetic carol whose central premise is joining together with Christ. Rhythmically vibrant, and deemed by some as ‘sort of medieval Dave Brubeck’, the carol was written in the 1960s for the girls at St Paul’s Girls’ School when, like Gustav Holst and Herbert Howells before him, Gardner was Director of Music. The constant change of rhythmic emphasis and metrical nuance is the centrepiece of this jovial setting in which a soaring descant over the unison melody brings the carol, and indeed the CD, to a rousing close.

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Schola Cantorum, Ardingly College:

*Soprano* – Issie Childs, Laura Crooks, Effie King, Issie Worssam, Eithne Yates-Kneen;  
*Alto* – Abigail Horton, Rebecca Horton;  
*Tenor* – Anthony Ryan, Paul Ryan;  
*Bass* – Iain Brown, Andrew Johnson, Oliver Pilgrim, Jack Thompson, Luca Williams.

Produced, engineered and edited by Simon Eadon for Abbas Records.  
Recorded 25-27 March 2018 at Ardingly College, Sussex, U.K.

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