

signum
CLASSICS

THE NATIVITY

Patrick Hawes

VOCE

Mark Singleton *Artistic Director*
Stephen Scarlato *Organ*



THE NATIVITY

PATRICK HAWES (b. 1958)

1	What Child Is This?	[3.36]		Four Christmas Motets	
2	In Bethlehem, That Noble Place	[2.42]	13	Virga Jesse	[3.43]
3	This Endernight	[2.59]	14	Puer Natus	[2.00]
	The Nativity		15	Nesciens Mater	[3.32]
4	The Manger	[3.08]	16	Gaudete Omnes	[1.55]
5	The Infant	[2.17]	17	The Heart of Mary	[3.09]
6	The Oxen	[3.55]	18	Minstrels	[2.57]
7	The Shepherds	[2.56]	19	Lullay My Liking	[3.02]
8	The Star	[3.22]	20	The Colours of Christmas	[2.50]
9	The Magi	[3.26]			
10	Joseph's Carol	[3.25]		Total timings:	[63.22]
11	Still, Still the Night	[3.40]			
12	Behold The King	[4.37]			

VOCE
MARK SINGLETON ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
STEPHEN SCARLATO ORGAN
PATRICK HAWES PIANO

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THE NATIVITY

Introduction

I have always loved Christmas. Up until the age of eleven or twelve, I shared the wonder and excitement of Christmas Eve with children across the world, and the frosty mornings, open fires and family gatherings are as vivid in my memory now as they've always been. I particularly remember driving with my father to pick up my mother and brother from Midnight Mass in the mid 1960's and, as they came out of the picturesque, rural church, it began to snow. The next day there was a power cut but, somehow, we managed to have a Christmas lunch by candlelight and the whole festive season was nothing short of perfect in my eyes. I was always sufficiently blessed to know that the perfection was not just about material things but also part of a great and mighty wonder emanating from the the lowly stable which contained the Infant Jesus and his spotless mother. This meant that, for me at least, when Father Christmas lost his credibility, the heart and soul of both Advent and Christmas became more fully encapsulated in the story of the nativity. Small wonder, then, that my first ever composition at the age of sixteen was a setting of words by my brother Andrew entitled *Winter Is Here*. He found a tape recording of its one and only performance

in his attic only a few months ago - just before I travelled to Hartford, Connecticut to record this album with VOCE. That particular piece does not appear here but the two carols for which Andrew provided texts during the 1990's - *Joseph's Carol* and *Behold the King* - have been recorded for the first time.

The album begins with the question *What Child is This?* and each of the carols and motets which follow offer their own particular response. It is a question stated simply and honestly, and the words of the chorus of the hymn itself humbly suggest that the answer is to do with kingship - a kingship which inspires 'haste to bring him laud'. Two fifteenth-century carols follow, the first set for a *cappella* voices in a traditional, strophic style and the second incorporating bright, detached organ figurations. Both are full of joyous expectation with *In Bethlehem, That Noble Place* repeatedly celebrating the birth of 'the saviour of the world' and *This Endernight* relaying an intimate dialogue between Mary and Joseph as they reveal their parental devotion and deep protectiveness towards the new-born child. *The Nativity* is a collection of six carols with brand-new texts by my brother. Three of these, which are more upbeat in nature, follow the structure of verse and chorus and intersperse themselves with

the more reflective poetry of *The Manger, The Oxen* and *The Star*, thereby providing a sense of both overall momentum and contrast. The manger, the oxen and the star are all relatively static elements of the nativity story, demanding a more meditative approach to tempo, atmosphere and structure whereas *The Infant, The Shepherds* and *The Magi* are each about human protagonists, full of the Holy Spirit and the wonder and excitement which accompanies new life. As a whole, they make an effective collection for concert performance but are also designed for individual use within the context of a Christmas service.

Joseph's Carol resorts to purely male voices and touches of plainsong in its evocation of the total submission to God of this extraordinarily selfless man. Before we hear *Behold the King* - Andrew's other older text - the gentle waltz rhythms of *Still, Still the Night* are the result of a more recent collaboration, this time a commission from 'Choir of the Earth' and their musical director Ben England which had its online premiere during the first Christmas of the COVID pandemic. The organ reappears for *Behold the King*, enhancing the unbridled sense of majesty and victory through its colourful registrations and insistent rhythmic patterns. There could not be more of a contrast between this vibrant carol and *Virga*

Jesse which is the first of the *Four Christmas Motets*. The devotional atmosphere and Latin text create a sound world of timelessness and deep prayer, made all the more meditative by the hushed *alleluias*. *Puer Natus in Bethlehem* is an unabashed announcement to the world of the life-changing news of Christ's birth, with the rhythmic propulsion and more explosive *alleluias* painting a scene of unrestrained celebration. *Nesciens Mater* essentially pays homage to those great Renaissance polyphonists who paved the way of the major and minor key system. It was the expressive and uniquely characterful nature of the individual voice parts which not only gave their music life but also a profound spirituality, and it is hoped that something of this same spirituality is in evidence here. The collection ends with the dance-like *Gaudete Omnes*. After the opening unison 'fanfare', the syncopated rhythms and agile melodic elements of the motet pass freely between the voices, creating a sense of dialogue and, ultimately, elation.

The text of *The Heart of Mary* first appeared on a Christmas card from my brother and his wife, and I was instantly moved to set it to music. More than any other track on this album, due devotion is paid to the Mother of Our Lord. The scene quickly changes to that of travelling

Minstrels wooing their audiences with catchy, lilting melodies and haunting poetry. The tenors and basses depict the strumming of a guitar while sopranos and altos relay Wordsworth's beautiful description of this rural Christmas scene. In keeping with the fifteenth-century text, *Lullay my Liking* reverts to a more medieval style in what is effectively a lullaby for the Child in the manger. The sopranos are omitted here in order to create a richer and denser choral texture. *The Colours of Christmas* immediately brings us back to our present age, as flowing piano patterns underpin the significance of the bright colours of the festive season through which 'all darkness turns to light.'

Patrick Hawes, 2023.

1 What Child Is This?

Words by William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898)

What Child is this who, laid to rest
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?

Refrain:

*This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste, to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.*

Why lies He in such mean estate,
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christians, fear: for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading. *Refrain*

So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh,
Come, peasant, king to own Him.
The King of kings salvation brings;
Let loving hearts enthrone Him. *Refrain*

2 In Bethlehem, That Noble Place

Words by James Ryman (c. 15th Century)

In Bethlehem, that noble place,
As by prophecy said it was,

Of the Virgin Mary full of grace,
Salvator mundi natus est.

Refrain:
Be we merry in this fest,
In quo Salvator natus est.

On Christmas night, an Angel it told
To the shepherds keeping their fold,
That into Bethlehem with beastës would,
Salvator mundi natus est. Refrain

The shepherds were encompassed right,
About them was a great light;
“Dread ye naught,” said the angel bright,
Salvator mundi natus est.” Refrain

“Behold, to you we bring great joy.
For why? Jesus is born this day;
To us, of Mary, that mild may,
Salvator mundi natus est.” Refrain

And thus in faith find it ye shall,
Lying poorly in an ox-stall.
The shepherds then lauded God all,
Quia Salvator mundi natus est. Refrain

3 This Endernight
Words Trad. 15th century

This endernight I saw a sight,
All in my sleep:
Mary, that may, she sang lullay
And sore did weep;
To keep she sought full fast about
Her Son from cold.
Joseph said, “Wife, my joy, my life,
Say what ye would.”
“Nothing, my spouse, is in this house
Unto my pay;
My Son a king, that made all thing,
Lieth in hay.
“*Ah, my dear Son,” said Mary, “ah, my dear,*
Kiss Thy mother, Jesu, with a laughing cheer.”

“My mother dear, amend your cheer
And now be still;
Thus for to lie it is soothly
My Father’s will;
Derision, great passion,
Infinitely,
As it is found, many a wound
Suffer shall I;
On Calvary that is so high
There shall I be,
Man to restore, nailëd full sore

Upon a tree.”
“*Ah, my dear Son,” said Mary, “ah, my dear,*
Kiss Thy mother, Jesu, with a laughing cheer.”

The Nativity
Words by Andrew Hawes (b. 1954)

4 The Manger

Come in. Stoop down through
This low door.
Come: kneel upon this
Earthen floor.

Come in, with humble mind.
Be still.
Consider here
Our Father’s will.

For here He empties
All His life;
Relinquishing
All power and might.

To dwell
In such an awful place:
To feel the weight
Of our disgrace.

Partaking
In the pain of those

Whose birthing
Finds them far from home,

Displaying
For the world to see
His love
Embracing poverty.

Come in. Stoop down through
This low door.
Come: kneel upon this
Earthen floor.

Come in. Stoop down
Kneel and be still;
Consider here
Our Father’s will.

5 The Infant

This Infant is enthroned in straw,
His palace is this stable floor;
His head is crowned in lantern light,
This cowshed is his heart’s delight.

Refrain:
The heavenly dance has now begun!
This Infant makes all sorrow song!

Rejoice! The Infant now he shares
The cold dark night that all shall bear;

Dance with the angels, keep in step,
This Infant's love removes regret. *Refrain*

So long expected and desired
This Infant lights a burning fire:
A fire of light and life and love,
The flames will leap to heaven above! *Refrain*

Rejoice! Rejoice! Rise up and dance!
For all there is another chance
To know the hope of sweetest love
This Infant brings from God above! *Refrain*

6 The Oxen

Our yoke hangs upon the stable wall,
And winter's cold has laid our burden down.
We slumber, eat, ignored by all;
Hidden here, the world goes by in sound.

Into our haven at this darkest time,
A young girl with an old man found their way:
Upon the straw the girl in trust lay down;
The old man for the Lord's mercy prayed.

The stillness shattered in her shouts and moans,
The night wore on, we watched, still, standing by.
The man with patient kindness nursed alone.
We were the first to hear the New Born Baby's cry.

Tenderly on our sweet hay she laid Him,
The man hung high the lantern on our yoke.
We dare not pull the hay, afraid to wake Him;
All was still until the maiden spoke:

"Dear Oxen, with your brown and shining eyes,
So quiet, calm, so strong and yet so kind,
Before all creatures you are the first to see
The One who will bear our yoke eternally!"

7 The Shepherds

Another night upon that hill.
Nothing stirs the world is still.
Shepherds a tedious vigil keep:
Somnolent men guard sleeping sheep.

Refrain:
Gloria! Gloria!
*Veritas de terra orta est. **

Light splits the sky and opens wide
The hidden mystery beyond all sight.
The shepherds shocked and tearful shake,
The fearful flock about them wake. *Refrain*

Descending from eternal heights
A choir bedecked in golden light
Surround the flock, the men, the hill.
Heaven lies open. Time stands still. *Refrain*

Out of silence song is born:
'Wake up! Wake up! A day is dawned!
Glory to God, Father of Light!'
The Prince of Peace is born this night!' *Refrain*

'Stand up! Stand up! Make your way!
This is the dawn of endless day!
God's Son true Light from Light is born
Soon death's darkness shall be torn!' *Refrain*

Down in the town below the hill
Nothing stirs the world is still;
Joseph his loving vigil keeps
Mother and the child are sound asleep. *Refrain*

** Epistle of James 1:17 'Truth shall flourish out of the earth'*

8 The Star

Did the starlight find thee?
Did deep dark surround thee?
Babe now hid from my sight,
Come, shine thy purest light.
Light of Life; Hope thou art.
Revealed by The Star.

Thou Morning Star of life,
Come be my way and life.
When the dark shades my days
Will your truth light my way?

By This Star we find thee;
With thy Love surround me.

Not that distant star thou art
Held close to Her warm heart.
Deep within starlight shines:
Love to heal, wounds to bind.
God from God, Light from Light
New born on Christmas Night.

9 The Magi

O joy at that discovery!
A new star rising westerly!
All our wakeful watching
Had answered our hearts' longing!

Refrain:
Veni Redemptor gentium!

The heart and mind imagining
All now that is beginning:
The thrill of that long journey,
Encountering such mystery. *Refrain*

Each night in faith we journey,
Moonlight and stars for company;
Sounds of silence soothe us,
The star compels and pulls us. *Refrain*

And day by day we're closer,
In hope still near and nearer;
Our pace and hearts soon quicken
As we near Jerusalem. *Refrain*

With honour we are welcomed
And for directions beckoned;
Dreadful dreams forewarn us,
Betrayal goes before us. *Refrain*

The end was unexpected,
The place poor and neglected.
There was a child, as promised,
A presence pure and hallowed. *Refrain*

Now homeward bound and praising,
Our hearts and voices raising
To God who in His kindness
Revealed to us His purpose. *Refrain*

10 Joseph's Carol

Words by Andrew Hawes

O child that lies soft-sleeping in my arms,
I shall keep you safe from all that harms.
I know that your life did not spring from mine;
and yet I know that all I am is thine.

My craft is hewing, joining, making good;
and now my end is shaped and made by God.
A simple carpenter my chosen trade;
and now my life is fixed by powers that all things made.

Your being fulfils a promise born of dreams;
both innocence and fear shall make my destiny.
By starlight your midwife I have been;
your blood on my hands the off'ring seals.

O child that lies soft-sleeping in my arms,
I shall keep you safe from all that harms.
I know that your life did not spring from mine;
and yet I know that all I am is thine.

11 Still, Still the Night

Words by Andrew Hawes

Still, still the night.
Black, black the sky.
A star is rising bright and sheds a healing light:
O lux aeterna natus est.

Slow, slow it dawns;
Soft, soft the sound.
The star is singing high and clear this melody:
O lux aeterna natus est.

Light, light as fire,
Falls, falls like sparks,

This melody and harmony is burning hearts:
O lux aeterna natus est.

Shine! Shine! O Light!
Sing! Sing! O star!
Humility and tenderness is in your gift –
O lux aeterna natus est.

Lift! Lift your voice!
Seek! Seek this light!
Nativity in simplicity transfigures all –
O lux aeterna natus est.

12 Behold The King

Words by Andrew Hawes

Behold The King!
Bidden by a king,
borne on an ass by a young virgin.
Born a King, His Kingdom to bring.

Four Christmas Motets

13 Virga Jesse

Virga Jesse floruit:
Virgo Deum et hominem genuit:
pacem Deus reddidit,
in se reconcilians ima summis.
Alleluia!

Behold The King!
His court a stable in an inn
wakeful animals His praises sing.
Born a King, His peace to bring.

Behold The King!
Enthroned in straw
who frightened shepherds first adored.
Born a King, new hope to bring.

Behold The King!
His mother a Queen
robed in grace – full poverty.
Born a King, Love to bring.

Behold our King
and God and sing,
of His majestic emptying!
Born with nothing His kingdom to bring.

*The rod of Jesse hath blossomed:
a Virgin hath brought forth God and man:
God hath restored peace,
reconciling in Himself the lowest with the highest.
Alleluia!*

14 Puer Natus

Puer natus in Bethlehem,
alleluia!
Unde gaudet Jerusalem,
alleluia!

Refrain:
In cordis jubilo,
Christum natum adoremus
Cum novo cantico.
Puer Natus in Bethlemem!

Assumpsit carnem Filius,
alleluia!
Dei Patris altissimus,
alleluia! Refrain

Per Gabrielem nuntium,
alleluia!
Virgo concepit Filium,
alleluia! Refrain

In hoc natali gaudio,
alleluia!
Benedicamus Domino,
Alleluia! Refrain

*A child is born in Bethlehem,
alleluia!
Exult for joy, Jerusalem,
alleluia!*

*Refrain:
With an exultant heart,
Let us adore the new-born Christ,
With a new song.
A child is born in Bethlehem!*

*The Son of God the Father,
alleluia!
In the highest has taken flesh,
alleluia! Refrain*

*By angel Gabriel announced,
alleluia!
The virgin has conceived the Son,
alleluia! Refrain*

*Come then, and on his natal day,
alleluia!
Rejoice before the Lord and pray,
alleluia! Refrain*

15 Nesciens Mater

Nesciens mater virgo virum
peperit sine dolore
salvatorem saeculorum.
Ipsam regem angelorum
sola virgo lactabat,
ubere de caelo pleno.

*Knowing no man, the Virgin mother
bore, without pain,
the Saviour of the world.
Him, the king of angels,
only the Virgin suckled,
breasts filled by heaven.*

16 Gaudete Omnes

Gaudete omnes et laetamini,
quia ecce desideratus advenit.
Introite in conspectu eius in exultatione.
Scitote quoniam ipse est expectatio nostra.
Alleluia!

*Rejoice and be glad all of you,
for behold he for whom you longed comes.
Enter into his presence with singing.
Know that he is our hope.
Alleluia!*

17 The Heart of Mary

Words by Andrew Hawes

Ponder the treasure, in your heart:
Gabriel's message; the glorious dark;
the dangerous road and Joseph's care;
the magi's star; the shepherds' prayer.

Ponder the treasure in your heart:
Simeon's promise at the start of
what will prove your wounded way
by a piercing sword of a noon dark day.

Ponder the treasure in your heart:
the empty tomb; the Pentecost spark;
the spiritual fire that catches light
in all baptized by your Son's life.

Ponder the treasure in your heart:
still full of grace you take your part,
as heavenly Mother, source of prayer
for all who seek God's tender care.

18 Minstrels

Words by William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

The minstrels played their Christmas tune
To-night beneath my cottage-eaves;
While, smitten by a lofty moon,
The encircling laurels, thick with leaves,
Gave back a rich and dazzling sheen,
That overpowered their natural green.

Through hill and valley every breeze
Had sunk to rest with folded wings:
Keen was the air, but could not freeze,
Nor check, the music of the strings;
So stout and hardy were the band
That scraped the chords with strenuous hand.

And who but listened?-till was paid
Respect to every inmate's claim,
The greeting given, the music played
In honour of each household name,
Duly pronounced with lusty call,
And 'Merry Christmas' wished to all.

19 Lullay My Liking

Words adapted from Lullay My Liking,
Trad. 15th century.

I saw a maiden
sitten and sing:
She lulled a child,
A sweete Lording

Refrain:
Lullay my liking,
my dear Son, my Sweeting;
Lullay my dear Heart,
mine own dear Darling.

Eternal Lord is He
That made alle thing;
Of Lordes He is Lord,
Of every King He's King. *Refrain*

Angels sang that night
And saiden to that Child
"Blest be Thou and she
That is so meek and mild." *Refrain*

Pray we now to that child,
As to His mother dear,
God grant His blessing now
To all maken good cheer. *Refrain*

20 The Colours of Christmas

Words by Andrew Hawes

Take gold for the angel wings
and green for the tree
more gold for the star
that all wise men seek.

Take a rainbow of colours –
take red, green and gold:
in the colours of Christmas
a story is told.

Take silver for the moonlight
silent and still,
and red for the firelight
of shepherds on the hill.

Take a rainbow of colours –
take silver, red and blue:
in the colours of Christmas
the story is made true.

Take blue for the Virgin
so loving and pure,
and gold for the straw
on the dark stable floor.

Take white for the bands
that clothe the new king –
the sweet prince of peace
for whom angels sing.

Take gold for the angel wings
and green for the tree
more gold for the star
that all wise men seek.

Take a rainbow of colours –
take red, gold and white,
in the colours of Christmas
all darkness turns to light.

VOCE

Mark Singleton, *Artistic Director*
Stephen Scarlato, *Organist*

Soprano

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Liz Bologna
Jennifer McCann
Jennifer Ferrand-Kelly
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Jack Anthony Pott *
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Dylan Armstrong
Brian Jones
Patrick Nay
Andrey Stolyarov
Jermaine Woodard

* principal

Founded in 2006 by Mark Singleton, Artistic Director, and Tom Cooke, President, Voce has grown to become New England's premier chamber choral ensemble. With a mission of providing a joyful, healing experience for all, Voce is best known for its unique sound which reflects the spirit of the ensemble. Voce serves harmony by creating transcendent music with and for others, bringing new musical works to life, and championing the choral community.

www.voceinc.org

MARK SINGLETON

Stephen Mark Singleton is a renowned conductor, composer, writer and guest speaker, whose energetic and magnetic leadership has made him one of the most sought-after conductors in New England. In addition to founding Voce in 2006, Mark serves as Director of Music at Immanuel Congregational Church in Hartford, CT. He has served on the faculty of the University of Connecticut, Central Connecticut State University and the Hartt School of Music. Mark has also



assisted numerous orchestras around the world, and directed the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Chorus for 18 years. Mark made his New York City debut in May 2017, performing at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and in March 2019, he was appointed as the Conductor-in-Residence at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland.

PATRICK HAWES

Patrick Hawes is a leading English composer who has made his mark as a torchbearer of the English musical tradition.

Born in Grimsby, the son of publican parents, Patrick grew up in pubs along the Lincolnshire coast in the East of England. He went on to read Music at Durham University, before becoming a teacher of Music and English at Pangbourne and Charterhouse.

Since leaving teaching in 1997 to pursue his career as a composer, he has produced a vast and varied catalogue encompassing everything from small-scale piano and chamber works to full-scale symphonies and large choral works.

He is best known for writing the *Highgrove Suite* for HRH The Prince of Wales (now HM King



Charles III), for being Composer in Residence at the U.K.'s largest classical music station, Classic FM, and for the Number One albums *Angel* and *The Great War Symphony*. Among others, he has written for The King's Singers, Voces8, the Choir of New College Oxford, Julian Lloyd Webber, and orchestras including the Philharmonia and the Royal Philharmonic.

In 2018, he wrote and recorded *The Great War Symphony* as part of the official commemorations to mark the centenary of the First World War.

Upon its release, the recording immediately entered the classical charts at Number One where it remained for several weeks. It received its World Premiere performance in October 2018 at London's Royal Albert Hall, followed a month later by the U.S. Premiere at New York's Carnegie Hall.

The Nativity is Patrick's eleventh album and he is currently working on an oratorio as well as writing an opera.

www.patrickhawes.com

ANDREW HAWES

Apart from studies in Medieval and Modern History at Sheffield University, and Theology at Cambridge, poet and librettist Andrew Hawes has spent all his life in Lincolnshire, in the east of England and is thoroughly rooted in rural communities. Since 1980, he has ministered as a Priest in the Anglican church and for thirty years ran a thriving Retreat House.

A published poet, he also works as a librettist – principally with his composer brother Patrick – on songs, choral works and operas.

Andy is married to Siân and they have five children and fifteen grandchildren. He is a passionate gardener, keeps bees, sails a small yacht and supports Grimsby Town Football Club.

Recorded at Immanuel Congregational Church, Hartford, CT, USA from 20th to 22nd January 2023

Producer – Patrick Hawes
Recording Engineer – Scott Metcalfe, Mind's Ear

Nesciens Mater was recorded live on December 18, 2022 and engineered by Justin Kurtz

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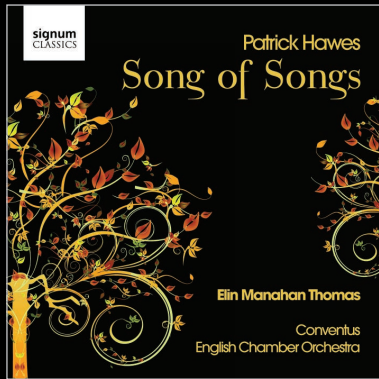
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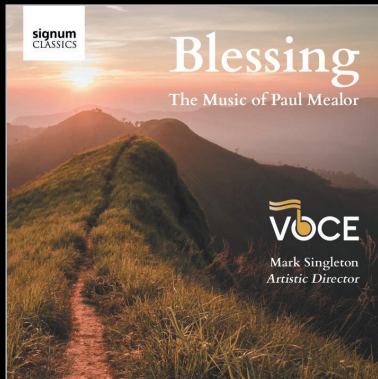
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