



A Tafelmusik Christmas

Online premiere: December 16, 2021

Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra & Chamber Choir
Program curated & directed by Ivars Taurins

Johann Sebastian Bach
1685–1750

Sanctus in D Major, BWV 238
Kyrie & Gloria, from Lutheran Mass in G Major, BWV 236
Chorus “Christum wir sollen Loben schon,” from Cantata 121
Cum sancto spiritu, from Lutheran Mass in G Major

Alessandro Stradella
1643–1682

Sinfonia from *Cantata per il Santissimo Natale*

Marc-Antoine Charpentier
1643–1704

Agnus Dei, from *Messe de minuit*

Hector Berlioz
1803–1869

L'adieu des bergers (The farewell of the shepherds), from *L'enfance du Christ*

Francis Poulenc
1899–1963

Videntes stellam, from *Quatre motets pour le temps de Noël*

Bernardo Pasquini
1637–1710

Introduzione & Pastorale (arranged by Lucas Harris)

George Frideric Handel
1685–1759

Choruses from *Messiah*
And the glory of the Lord
O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion
For unto us a child is born
Lift up your heads
O death, where is thy sting | But thanks be to God

Traditional Carols

The Coventry Carol (Lully, lulla)
16th-century English carol

Les anges dans nos campagnes
(Angels we have heard on high)
18th-century French carol, arranged by Ton Koopman

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht
(Silent night, holy night)
Austrian carol, composed & arranged by Franz Gruber, 1818/1845

In dulci jubilo
13th-century German carol, in settings by J.S. Bach (BWV 368) & M. Praetorius (1609)

Tafelmusik Chamber Choir

Ivars Taurins, Director

Soprano Katy Clark, Francine Labelle, Roseline Lambert*, Carrie Loring, Meghan Moore,
Susan Suchard, Sinéad White*
Alto Kate Helsen, Simon Honeyman*, Peter Mahon, Jessica Wright*
Tenor Paul Jeffrey, Will Johnson, Robert Kinar, Cory Knight*, Kevin Myers
Bass Alexander Bowie, Parker Clements, Nicholas Higgs*, Alan Macdonald, David Yung

*Soloists in carols

Soloists in Handel *Messiah* duet: Simon Honeyman (countertenor), Kevin Myers (tenor)

Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra

Led by Christopher Verrette

Violin I Christopher Verrette, Geneviève Gilardeau, Cristina Zacharias
Violin II Julia Wedman, Patricia Ahern
Viola Brandon Chui, Patrick G. Jordan
Violoncello Keiran Campbell, Allen Whear
Double bass Pippa Macmillan
Oboe/Oboe d'amore John Abberger, Marco Cera
Bassoon Dominic Teresi
Harpichord/Organ Charlotte Nediger

Text & Translations

J.S. Bach

Sanctus in D Major, BWV 238

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,	Holy, holy, holy
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.	Lord God of Hosts.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria eius.	Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Kyrie & Gloria, from Lutheran Mass in G Major, BWV 236

Kyrie eleison.	Lord have mercy.
Christe eleison.	Christ have mercy.
Kyrie eleison.	Lord have mercy.

Gloria in excelsis Deo	Glory be to God in the highest
Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.	and on earth peace to men of good will.
Laudamus te,	We praise thee,
benedicimus te,	we bless thee,
adoramus te,	we worship thee,
glorificamus te.	we glorify thee.

Chorus "Christum wir sollen Loben schon," from Cantata 121

Christum wir sollen loben schon,	We should now praise Christ,
Der reinen Magd Marien Sohn,	the son of the virgin maid Mary,
So weit die liebe Sonne leucht	as far as the dear sun shines
Und an aller Welt Ende reicht.	and reaches to the ends of the world.

[German text by Martin Luther, 1524,
from Latin original]

Cum sancto spiritu, from Lutheran Mass in G Major

Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

With the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Charpentier *Messe de minuit*

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.

Berlioz *L'Enfance du Christ: L'adieu des bergers à la sainte famille*
(The farewell of the shepherds to the holy family)

Il s'en va loin de la terre
Où dans l'étable il vit le jour.
De son père et de sa mère
Qu'il reste le constant amour,
Qu'il grandisse, qu'il prospère
Et qu'il soit bon père à son tour.

He goes forth far from the land
where in the stable he first saw the light of day.
May the love of his father and mother
remain ever constant.
May he grow, may he prosper,
and may he be a good father in his turn.

Oncques si, chez l'idolâtre,
Il vient à sentir le malheur,
Fuyant la terre marâtre,
Chez nous qu'il revienne au bonheur.
Que la pauvreté du pâtre
Reste toujours chère à son cœur.

Should he ever, in the land of the idolater,
come to meet with misfortune,
fleeing the foster land,
may he return home to happiness.
May the poor lot of the shepherd
remain ever dear to his heart.

Cher enfant, Dieu te bénisse !
Dieu vous bénisse, heureux époux !
Que jamais de l'injustice
Vous ne puissiez sentir les coups.
Qu'un bon ange vous avertisse
Des dangers planant sur vous.

Dear child, may God bless you!
May God bless you, the happy couple!
May you never suffer
the blows of injustice.
May a guardian angel keep you
from the dangers looming over you.

[Text by H. Berlioz]

Poulenc *Videntes stellam*

Videntes stellam Magi gavisus sunt gaudio magno :
et intrantes domum obtulerunt Domino aurum,
thus et myrrham.

The wise men, when they saw the star, rejoiced with
exceeding great joy: and when they were come into the
house, they presented unto the Lord gold,
frankincense, and myrrh.

[Magnificat antiphon]

Handel *Messiah Choruses*

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. [Isaiah 40:5]

O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain. O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, behold your God! Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. [Isaiah 40:9/60:1]

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. [Isaiah 9:6]

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. [Psalm 24:7-10]

(Recitative) Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory.

(Duet) O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

(Chorus) But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[I Corinthians 15: 54–57]

Traditional Carols

Coventry Carol

Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child,
by by, lully, lullay.
Thou little tiny child,
By by, lully, lullay.

O sisters too, how may we do
For to preserve this day?
This poor youngling,
For whom we do sing,
By, by lully, lullay.

Herod the king, in his raging,
Chargèd he hath this day
His men of might
In his own sight
All young children to slay.

That woe is me,
Poor child, for thee!
And ever morn and day,
For thy parting
Neither say nor sing,
By by, lully, lullay.

Les anges dans nos campagnes

*Les anges dans nos campagnes
Ont entonné l'hymne des cieux,
Et l'écho de nos montagnes
Redit ce chant mélodieux.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo.*

*Cherchons tous l'heureux village
Qui l'a vu naître sous ses toits,
Offrons-lui le tendre hommage
Et de nos cœurs et nos voix !
Gloria, in excelsis Deo.*

The angels o'er our vales
sang the hymn of the heavens,
and the echo of our mountains
repeats this melodious song
Gloria, in excelsis Deo.

Let us look for the happy village
which saw him born under its roofs,
let us offer him a tender homage
from our hearts and our voices!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo.

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht

*Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!
Alles schläft, einsam wacht
Nur das traute hochheilige Paar
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
Schlafe in himmlischer Ruh!*

Silent night, holy night!
All are sleeping, only the faithful,
most holy couple is awake.
Dear boy with curly hair,
sleep in heavenly peace!

*Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!
Gottes Sohn! O wie lacht
Lieb´ aus deinem göttlichen Mund,
Da schlägt uns die rettende Stund´.
Jesus in deiner Geburt!*

Silent night, holy night!
God's son! O how love smiles
from thy holy mouth.
The hour of salvation strikes,
Jesus, in thy birth!

*Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht,
Hirten erst kundgemacht
Durch der Engel Halleluja,
Tönt es laut von fern und nah:
Christ, der Retter ist da!*

Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds are the first to hear
the angel's Hallelujah,
which rings loud from far and near:
Christ the Saviour is here!

In dulci jubilo

*In dulci jubilo,
Nun singet und seid froh!
Unsers Herzens Wonne
Leit in praesepeio;
Und leuchtet wie die Sonne
Matris in gremio.
Alpha es et O!*

In sweet rejoicing,
now sing and be glad!
Our hearts' joy
lies in the manger;
And he shines like the sun
in the lap of his mother.
You are the Alpha and Omega!

*Ubi sunt gaudia
Nirgend mehr denn da!
Da die Engel singen
Nova cantica,
Und die Schellen klingen
In regis curia.
Eia, wären wir da!*

Where are joys
more numerous than in heaven!
There the angels are singing
new songs.
There the bells are ringing
in the court of the king.
O that we were there!

Program Notes

By Charlotte Nediger

Music is a vital part of celebrations and rituals in cultures around the world. This is particularly true for Christmas celebrations, both sacred and secular. Churches resound with Christmas hymns, and Christmas carols provide the aural backdrop for radio stations, shopping centres, and city streets in the month of December, and feature prominently in many family holiday gatherings. We so enjoyed filming a Christmas program last season that we thought we would revisit the format, blending choral and instrumental music from Germany, France, England, and Italy with a selection of carol settings. The music is joyous and affirming, all the more so as this year we will be welcoming both an audience and a film crew into our concert hall!

Music played a heightened role in Leipzig church services on the important festivals of Christmas and Easter. It was on these occasions that the choir was permitted to sing in Latin, allowing **Johann Sebastian Bach** to turn to the text of the Mass (though avoiding the Catholic Credo). The **Sanctus** setting that opens our concert was

written for Bach's first Christmas in Leipzig, in 1723. The orchestration is a little unusual: a group of violins play a brilliant "concertino" part, whereas the other instrumentalists play along with the choir, all accompanied by continuo. The result is a piece in six parts, thought to be inspired by the book of Isaiah, which describes seraphim with six wings singing the Sanctus to one another. One can easily imagine the wings in Bach's ebullient setting.

Bach also composed four settings of the Kyrie and Gloria portions of the Mass (often referred to as the "**Lutheran Mass**"), all based on reworkings of earlier works. It is not known when these works were written or for what occasions, but the choruses that frame the glorious G-Major Mass seem particularly fitting for Christmas celebrations.

Completing our Bach set is the opening chorus from **Cantata 121**, written for the service on the Second Day of Christmas in 1724, Bach's second year in Leipzig. The sopranos intone the beautiful Lutheran Christmas hymn "Christum wir sollen loben schon" over a lively interplay amongst the other voices and the continuo.

The 17th-century Roman composer **Alessandro Stradella** is famous both for his turbulent personal life (dramatic enough that it became the basis of a three-act opera written in Hamburg in 1844 by Friedrich Flotow), and for his early experiments with the forms of the concerto grosso and the cantata. The concerto grosso features dialogues between a small group of solo "concertino" instruments and a larger "ripieno" group. The **sinfonia** that opens his Christmas cantata "per il Santissimo Natale" is an example of this, including an unusual passage for solo harpsichord.

We move to Christmas in France, and music spanning three centuries. It had become customary in the 17th century to sing folk carols at Midnight Mass. **Marc-Antoine Charpentier** worked as music director of the Jesuit Church of Saint-Louis in Paris, a church with a particularly rich musical tradition. As he had a splendid choir and orchestra to employ, he quite ingeniously incorporated traditional carols in a mass setting for the midnight service at Saint-Louis. The final **Agnus Dei** is a setting of the carol "A minuit fut fait un réveil" (At midnight they were wakened): Charpentier simply sets the Agnus Dei text to the traditional tune, resulting in an unusually dance-like setting of a text that usually inspires quiet contemplation.

The genesis of **Hector Berlioz's** oratorio *L'enfance du Christ* is unusual. In 1850 Berlioz was at a party and was bored by the card-playing company. His friend, the architect Joseph-Louis Duc, handed him a notebook to distract him, and Berlioz jotted down a piece for solo organ. He later described what followed: "It seemed to have a rustic character and to suggest a naïve mystical feeling. So I at once thought of writing appropriate words for it. The organ piece disappeared and became a chorus of shepherds in Bethlehem bidding farewell to the child Jesus as the Holy Family leaves for Egypt (***L'adieu des bergers***)." Shortly thereafter Berlioz had the chorus performed in Paris under the name of a fictional 17th-century composer Pierre Ducre (a pun on his friend's name Duc), going so far as to claim that Ducre was music director at the Sainte-Chapelle in 1679, and describing his difficulty in deciphering the old notation written on parchment. He was amused to discover that those who had rejected his previous works as too ostentatious were enamoured of this chorus. One woman was heard to say, "Berlioz would never be able to write a tune as simple and charming as this little piece by old Ducre." To pair this work with a simple piece by the real 17th-century composer Charpentier is unexpectedly fitting. Ultimately Berlioz went on to extend his work, first into a one-act piece, and finally into the full oratorio *L'enfance du Christ*.

Francis Poulenc turned to the composition of sacred choral music midway through his life: the unexpected death of a close friend let Poulenc to re-examine his own Catholicism and spirituality. He considered his choral and religious music to be foremost in his output: "I think, in fact, that I've put the best and most genuine part of myself into it ... I have a feeling that in that sphere I've really produced something new, and I'm not far off in thinking that if people are still interested in my music 50 years from now it will be more in the *Stabat Mater* than the *Mouvements perpétuels*." The *Quatre motets pour le temps de Noël* were composed in 1951/52, partly in Paris and partly in his beloved Provence. It has often been said that one can "hear" the sights and smells of Provence in these works. The text of the third motet, ***Videntes stellem***, is taken from the Magnificat antiphon for the octave of the Epiphany.

The zampogna is a bagpipe that was traditionally played by Italian shepherds during the *novena*, the nine days leading up to Christmas day. Baroque composers were enamoured of the lilting Christmas *pastorale* played by the shepherds, and wrote pieces in imitation—made famous in Corelli's *Christmas Concerto*, and in the Pifa movement that introduces the nativity scene in Handel's *Messiah*. We introduce our selection of choruses from Handel's *Messiah*, not with Handel's Pifa, but with a more extended **Introduzione e Pastorale** by the 17th-century Roman composer and keyboardist **Bernardo Pasquini**. Pasquini's piece is written for solo organ, but Tafelmusik lutenist Lucas Harris has created a wonderful arrangement for oboes, bassoon, strings, and continuo which offers all the colours of the pipes of a baroque organ.

Handel's *Messiah* needs little introduction. The entire oratorio has been presented by Tafelmusik annually since 1980, and we have dearly missed it during the course of the pandemic. We look forward to returning to the work in its entirety as soon as we are able, but in the meantime hope your spirits are buoyed by this selection of choruses chosen by director Ivars Taurins.

From the familiarity of *Messiah*, we move to the familiarity of carols, in particular those that were as well known in the baroque era as they are now.

The English carol "Lully, lulla" was written to be sung at one of the mystery plays performed in Coventry (The Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors), and hence has come to be known as the **Coventry Carol**. The plays are first mentioned in 1392, but the earliest extant copy of the text dates from 1534. Two songs were added to this manuscript in 1591, the only vernacular songs from the Mystery plays to have survived with both music and text. This precious early manuscript was unfortunately destroyed by a fire at the Birmingham Free Reference Library in 1879, but by that time copies of the songs had circulated. "Lully, lulla" comes near the end of the play, sung by the women to lull their children to sleep lest their crying should be heard by Herod's soldiers.

Les anges dans nos campagnes is an old French carol from Languedoc, known to English carollers as "Angels we have heard on high," with its famous Latin refrain "Gloria in excelsis Deo." The arrangement by Ton Koopman offers a delightful depiction of the rejoicing of the angels and villagers in the exuberant solo violins.

The story of the creation of ***Stille Nacht*** (Silent Night) is familiar to many. The organ in the village of Oberndorf broke down before Christmas Eve in 1818, and the parish priest, Joseph Mohr, hastily wrote a text for the organist Franz Gruber to set to music. Gruber wrote for the available sources: two solo voices, choir, and guitar. He went on to make several arrangements as his carol grew in popularity, among them those you will hear us perform.

We end with settings of *In dulci jubilo*, the tune of which is commonly sung in England to the text “Good Christian men, rejoice.” The carol is said to have been taught to the 14th-century German mystic Heinrich Suso by the angels, as recounted in his autobiography (referring to himself in the third person as “the Servant”): “[The angels bid him to] cast off all his sorrows from his mind and bear them company. Then they drew the Servant by the hand into the dance, and the youth began a joyous song about the infant Jesus, which runs thus: ‘In dulci jubilo,’ etc. When the Servant heard the beloved name of Jesus sounding thus so sweetly, he became so joyful in his heart and feeling that the very memory of his sufferings vanished. It was a joy to him to see how exceedingly loftily and freely they bounded in the dance. The leader of the song knew right well how to guide them, and he sang first, and they sang after him in the jubilee of their hearts.” We turn to a rich chorale setting of the joyous text in its original mix of German and Latin by Johann Sebastian Bach, and end with one of several settings by Michael Praetorius, this one for two choirs. We have elected to have the orchestra play the role of the second choir, invited by the singers in the first choir to rejoice after them in the “heavenly dance.”

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Tafelmusik is deeply grateful to our generous donors who have continued to support us through this challenging time. Your support has inspired us to remain strong and to deliver joy to our community through our music. Thank you for believing in Tafelmusik and in the power and beauty of music.

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