



HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING

Famous Christmas Carols

01	Es ist ein Ros entsprungen · Lo! How a Rose E'er Blooming Michael Praetorius	2:26
02	Machet die Tore weit · Throw Wide the Gates Albert Becker	2:21
03	Maria durch ein Dornwald ging · Mary Walked Through the Forest of Thornes Arr.: Heinrich Kaminski	2:08
04	Adeste fideles Arr.: Friedrich Silcher	2:20
05	O du fröhliche · O sanctissima (Christmas carol) Arr.: Georg Ratzinger	2:01
06	Corrente from Partita in A minor, BWV 1013 Johann Sebastian Bach	2:55
07	Stille Nacht · Silent Night Franz Gruber, Arr.: Hanns Mießner	3:14
08	Ich steh an deiner Krippen hier · I Stand Before Your Manger Here Johann Sebastian Bach: Choral from the Christmas Oratorio, BWV 248	1:15
09	„Still, still, still“ for mixed choir Arr.: Jürgen Golle	4:11
10	Es wird scho glei dumpa · It Soon Will Be Dark Arr.: Friedemann Winkelhofer	2:55
11	Fantasia No. 3 in B minor, TWV 40/4 Georg Philipp Telemann	4:24
12	Hark! The Herald Angels Sing Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy	2:22

13	O Little Town of Bethlehem Arr.: Grayston Ives	3:07
14	Bimbo, bimbo, fai la nanna · Baby, Baby, Go to Sleep Anonymus	2:45
15	Les anges dans nos campagnes · Angels we have Heard on High Arr.: François-Auguste Gevaert	2:06
16	Sarabande from Partita in A minor, BWV 1013 Johann Sebastian Bach	3:23
17	Tochter Zion, freue dich · Rejoice Greatly, o Daughter of Zion George Frideric Handel	2:22
18	A Hymn to the Virgin Benjamin Britten	3:19
19	O Freude über Freude! · O, Joy Beyond Joy! Arr.: Wolfram Buchenberg	7:36
20	Fantasia No. 11 in G major, TWV 40/12 Georg Philipp Telemann	3:54
21	Ave maris stella Edvard Grieg	3:12
22	Lux aurumque Eric Whitacre	3:50
23	Es ist ein Ros entsprungen · Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming Arr.: Jan Sandström	4:37
24	Bell Ringing	0:44

Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks

Florian Helgath conductor

François Leleux oboe

Total time: 73:29

HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING

Anyone not eager to spend the Christmas season in his or her own living room, but rather go on a journey to other countries or even continents is sure to run across the same phenomena even at faraway places: a holiday dinner in pleasant company, the exchange of gifts, festive music in the background or perhaps even a community sing. But certainly the guest will also experience a few surprises, because the Christmas customs are just as colourful as are the vast array of people who celebrate this holiday around the globe. The ox and the ass who watch over the Christ Child in the manger worldwide, join forces with elephants and giraffes in Tanzania, and in the Andean highlands, they share the crèche with a llama – against the background of the Gospels, all these animals are equally exotic. And depending on the region, there may be a turkey on the holiday table, or a goose, or, as in Ecuador, a guinea pig, unless the people just take a picnic basket and head for the beach, as they do in Australia. Wherever Christmas falls in midsummer, the Christmas candles face the danger of melting before anybody has a chance to light them. When it gets really hot, then an open-air fireworks display is a good alternative. The triumphal march of Santa Claus, who delivers the presents on his sleigh, carries all the way down to the southern hemisphere. The Christ Child or the Three Holy Kings, who traditionally handle the gift giving chores in many places, have a hard time in this age of commercialization and globalization competing with the white-whiskered guarantor of maximum earnings.

Just as varied as the selection of crèche figures or the Christmas menu is the music for this “festival of peace”. Here, too, lively local traditions stand side by side with titles that have moved up to positions as international classics. Sung for the first time in 1818 in the little Austrian town of Oberndorf near Salzburg, *Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht (Silent Night, Holy Night)* rapidly rose to become the ultimate Christmas carol and has even acquired the status of part of the “Immaterial UNESCO Heritage”. More than the words, which have been translated into over three hundred languages and dialects, it is certainly the heartwarming melody that is accountable for the unprecedented popularity of the song. It conveys throughout the world a touch of that tender mood Central Europeans so love at Christmastime. Sometimes it is not just a tune but a complete polyphonic setting that has become a seasonal hit. *Ich steh an deiner Krippe hier (I Stand Before Your Manger here)* from the famous *Christmas-Oratorio* by Johann Sebastian Bach is an example that ranks as a must in any collection. The prayerful stillness of the manger scene sets the mood for many lullabies that pay homage to the Christ child with great piety, often considerable originality or even folkloristic. *Es wird scho glei dumpa (It Soon Will Be Dark)* not only reveals its alpine origins in its regional patois lyrics but also in the melodic twists and turns in broken thirds. The Italian *Bimbo, bimbo, fai la nanna (Baby, Baby, Go to Sleep)* opens in gentle bell tones in triple meter to rock the Son of God to sleep. With the “Gloria” of the angels, however, totally different tones resound above the stable in Bethlehem: *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing!* hails the new born child as Prince of Peace and the sun of righteousness. Today, the beloved English Christmas carol is generally performed in a

choral setting that Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy composed in 1840 for a festive choral performance commemorating the Gutenberg Festival. The clear structuring, an affirmative quadruple meter, and powerful note repetitions give the piece the character of a festive royal hymn. The singing of French angels, by contrast, sounds sprightly and joyful, as we can hear in *Les anges dans nos campagnes (Angels, We Have Heard on High)* with its bright sound and light gloria garlands. Wolfgang Buchenberg proves that merriment suits the Christmas mood as much as idyll and candlelight with his arrangement of *O Freude über Freude! (O, Joy Beyond Joy!)*, especially written for this CD. The high-spirited testimony of the shepherd about his experiences in Bethlehem is contrasted with old and new tunes and texts, the traditional art of song accompaniment combines with contemporary techniques of choral setting to form a magnificently colourful and lively composition.

The new Christmas CD by the Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks under the direction of Florian Helgath presents the varicoloured spectrum of Christmas song with an abundance of diverse titles. François Leleux supplies some short breaks between the vocal selections with the chorus and its soloists. With his oboe, he enriches this recording with instrumental points of tranquility and virtuosic accents. Like handsome bookends, the vastly ranging program is bordered on both sides by the song *Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen (Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming)*. Its text is rooted in the Old Testament Book of the Prophet Isaiah, the melody goes back to the 16th century. The well-known four-part chorale by Michael Praetorius, first published in 1609, opens the recording, which then closes with the version by Jan Sandström from the

year 1990, which cloaks the (unaltered) setting by Praetorius is cloaked in a hummed, gently refreshing cloud of sound. A magical interplay of light and colour appears before the listener's inner eye. Did the Lapland-born Sandström perhaps draw his inspiration from the Northern Lights glowing colourfully in the night sky, lights that are easiest to observe in his northern European homeland "in the middle of the cold winter"?

The musicians we can hear on this CD came into the studio sometimes in the Carnival season, and sometimes even in the hot midsummer to produce this recording. Even though lack of appropriate prerequisites may have triggered many a wise crack, the magic of the music held the 44 singers in its thrall, and even without a Christmas tree or holiday cookies, it provided just the right mood for an enthusiastic interpretation.

Wherever and however you may be spending your Christmas season: all of us involved in the creation of this CD wish you great joy with the music and a very happy holiday!

Judith Kaufmann

English translation by Donald Arthur

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Recording Producer: Michael Kempff (tracks 01, 02, 10, 12, 13, 14, 22, 23), Torsten Schreier

Balance Engineer: Klemens Kamp · Producer: Susanne Vongries

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FLORIAN HELGATH

It was at the workshop of the second choral conducting forum in 2007 that Florian Helgath first conducted the Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks. Since then he has worked time and again with this ensemble. Florian Helgath's musical career, however, began much earlier, namely as a singer of the Regensburger Domspatzen in his home town. Later he initially studied music education, then choral conducting at the Academy of Music and Theatre in Munich. Florian Helgath received significant motivation from Michael Gläser and Simon Halsey, among others. He came to the fore as a finalist and prize winner at such conducting competitions as the 2006 Eric Ericson Award in Sweden and the 2007 Competition for Young Choral Conductors in Budapest.

Since 2008 Florian Helgath serves as Artistic Director of the via nova chorus in Munich. Here, he devotes his attentions to contemporary music and has led a large number of new works in their world premières. In addition he took over the direction of the Danish Radio Chorus in 2010, and in 2011 he was appointed Artistic Director of the ChorWerk Ruhr. Beyond this he is a regular guest artist with the RIAS Chamber Chorus, the Radio Chorus of Berlin, the Netherlands Radio Chorus and the SWR Vocal Ensemble in Stuttgart.

CHOR DES BAYERISCHEN RUNDFUNKS

The Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks was founded in 1946 as the first of Bavarian Broadcasting's musical ensembles. Starting in 1949, its artistic upswing ran parallel to the development of the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, the Chief Conductor of which has been Mariss Jansons since 2003. From the beginning then both ensembles are linked in intensive concert activities.

In 2005 Peter Dijkstra was appointed the Artistic Director. An avowed "anti-specialist" he has presented a wide variety of programs. These included a cappella productions as well as collaborations with the two Bavarian Broadcasting orchestras as well as such period ensembles as the Concerto Köln and the Akademie für Alte Musik in Berlin. Because of its special sound quality and stylistic versatility, which ranges through every aspect of choral singing from the mediæval motet to contemporary works, from oratorio to grand opera, the ensemble enjoys the highest reputation throughout the world.

This has brought the chorus regularly to such eminent festivals as the Lucerne Festival, the Salzburg Festival and the Beethoven Festival in Bonn, as well as to collaborations with top European orchestras like the Berlin Philharmonic, the Lucerne Festival Orchestra and the Concertgebouworkest in Amsterdam. In the recent past, the chorus has concertized with such distinguished conductors as Claudio Abbado, Riccardo Chailly, Bernard Haitink, Daniel Harding, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Christian Thielemann, Giovanni Antonini, Andris Nelsons, Riccardo Muti, Sir Simon Rattle, Herbert Blomstedt and Robin Ticciati.

In the *musica viva* and *Paradisi gloria* series as well as in their own subscription series, the choir regularly shines in world premières. The choir has received a number of major prizes for its CD recordings, among them the 2012 ECHO Klassik award for the recording of Fauré's Requiem as well as a Diapason d'or for the a cappella CD *Strauss – Wagner – Mahler* on the BR-KLASSIK label.

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Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks
Florian Helgath
François Leleux · oboe



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- 24 Bell Ringing

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François Leleux oboe (T 06, 11, 16, 20)

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