A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

Broadcast at 18h00 on Christmas Eve 2017
The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols tells the story of the fall of humanity, the promise of the Messiah and the birth of Jesus. It is told through nine short Bible readings, interspersed with the singing of Christmas hymns and carols. The format was based on an order of service drawn up in 1880 which has since been adapted by churches all over the world. The most famous version is broadcast annually on Christmas Eve by the BBC from King’s College, Cambridge.

Each December, VOX Cape Town presents its own locally-flavoured adaptation of the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. The service takes place at St Andrew’s Church in Kildare Road, Newlands, and again at St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Somerset Road, Cape Town, continuing the tradition led for many years by the St George’s Singers. For the second year running, VOX Cape Town’s Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols will broadcast on Fine Music Radio on Christmas Eve, bringing this unique musical celebration to a much wider audience.

About this year’s music

The music for this year’s Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols has been selected to reflect a diversity of musical traditions and styles. The service begins with plainchant from the 9th century – an invocation of the Holy Spirit (Veni, Creator Spiritus). After the First Lesson, which describes the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, the composer of Pula, Pula! (“Rain, Rain!”) reminds us that: “Water is more than an essential resource for survival; it is a symbol of cleansing and purification that moves beyond the physical.”

As the coming of the Saviour is revealed in the subsequent readings, a lively Spanish “villancico” (carol) describes how “God protected the precious Ewe [the Virgin Mary] from the Wolf [the Devil]”. This is followed by a gentle hymn, Bethlehem Down, composed by Peter Warlock who won the Daily Telegraph’s annual carol competition 90 years ago for this work. A sprightly setting of Bogoróditse Djévo by Arvo Pärt (1990) contrasts the well-known version by Rachmaninoff presented in last year’s Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols.
The popular hymn *Away in a Manger* and the traditional Polish carol *Infant holy, Infant lowly* provide a few moments of quiet reflection after the Sixth Lesson. The news of the birth of Jesus spreads rapidly, as portrayed in a sweepingly dramatic piece by Francis Poulenc from his “Quatre Motets pour le temps de Noël” (“Four Christmas Motets”) and the close-harmony depiction of the Wise Men who **Follow That Star** to Bethlehem.

This year’s Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols concludes with the première of a new South African carol especially commissioned by VOX Cape Town to expand the local choral repertoire. Entitled *Christmas in Africa*, the text is written by South African poet Margaret Kollmer and has been set to music by Cape Town-based composer Maike Watson. Watson’s score evokes “twinkling stars, story-time and prayers in the veld”, thereby setting the scene for a unique and locally-relevant celebration of Christmas “under a Southern sky”.

Finally, we are delighted that Erik Dippenaar has joined VOX Cape Town for this broadcast on Fine Music Radio. Erik’s vast experience as an organist and accompanist brings a special flair to this year’s recording.

**John Woodland**

**Organ Prelude**

*In dulci jubilo* (“In sweet rejoicing”) BuxWV 197

*Dieterich Buxtehude* (1637-1707)

**Opening Hymn**

**Solo**

Once in royal David’s city,
Stood a lowly cattle shed
Where a mother laid her baby
    In a manger for his bed:
Mary was that Mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little child.
Choir

He came down to earth from heaven
   Who is God and Lord of all,
And his shelter was a stable,
   And his cradle was a stall;
With the poor and mean and lowly,
   Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

All

And through all his wondrous childhood
   He would honour and obey,
Love and watch the lowly maiden,
   In whose gentle arms he lay;
Christian children all must be
   Mild, obedient, good as he.

For he is our childhood's pattern,
   Day by day like us he grew,
He was little, weak and helpless,
   Tears and smiles like us he knew:
And he feeleth for our sadness,
   And he shareth in our gladness.

And our eyes at last shall see him,
   Through his own redeeming love,
For that Child so dear and gentle
   Is our Lord in heaven above;
And he leads his children on
   To the place where he is gone.

Not in that poor lowly stable,
   With the oxen standing by,
We shall see him; but in heaven,
   Set at God's right hand on high;
When like stars his children crowned
   All in white shall wait around.

First verse sung by Jenni van Doesburgh

Words by C. F. Alexander
Music by H. J. Gauntlett
Harmonised by A. H. Mann
Descant by David Willcocks
The Bidding Prayer

Read by Reverend Natalie van Rooyen

Beloved in Christ, be it this Christmas Eve our care and delight to prepare ourselves to hear again the message of the angels; in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, and with the shepherds and the Wise Men adore the Child lying in his Mother’s arms.

Let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our disobedience unto the glorious Redemption brought us by this Holy Child; and in company with the whole Church let us make this Church glad with our carols of praise:

But let us first pray for the needs of his whole world; for peace and goodwill over all the earth; for unity and fellowship within the Church he came to build.

And let us at this time remember in his name the poor and the helpless, the cold, the hungry and the oppressed; the sick in body and mind and them that mourn; the lonely and the unloved; the aged and the little children; and all who know not the loving kindness of the Lord.

Let us also remember before God all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore and in a greater light, that multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom, in this Lord Jesus, we for evermore are one.

These prayers and praises let us humbly offer to the throne of heaven, in the words which Christ himself hath taught us:

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. Amen.

The Almighty God bless us with his grace: Christ give us the joys of everlasting life: and unto the fellowship of the citizens above may the King of Angels bring us all. Amen.
Choral Prelude

Veni, Creator Spiritus ("Come, Creator Spirit")

Come, Holy Spirit, Creator blest, and in our souls take up
Thy rest; come with Thy grace and heavenly aid to fill the
hearts which Thou hast made.

O comforter, to Thee we cry, O heavenly gift of God Most
High, O fount of life and fire of love, and sweet anointing
from above.

Oh, may Thy grace on us bestow the Father and the Son to
know; and Thee, through endless times confessed, of both
the eternal Spirit blest.

Now to the Father and the Son, Who rose from death, be
glory given, with Thou, O Holy Comforter, henceforth by
all in earth and heaven. Amen.

Plainchant from the 9th century

First Lesson

God tells sinful Adam that he has lost the life of Paradise
and that his seed will bruise the serpent’s head.

Genesis 3:8-15 (Read by Aaron Juritz)

Carol

Pula, Pula! ("Rain, Rain!")

Let it rain,
Let the river flow,
Let the river clean our hearts,
And heal the barren earth.

Composed in 2016 by Franco Prinsloo (b. 1987, South Africa)
Second Lesson

God promises to faithful Abraham that in his seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 22:15-18 (Read by Jenni van Doesburgh)

Carol

Ríu, Ríu, Chíu

Ríu, ríu, chíu, the guard [shepherd] by the river: God protected our Ewe from the Wolf.

The furious wolf tried to bite her, but almighty God protected her well; he made her in such a way that she could know no sin, a virgin unstained by our first father’s [Adam’s] fault.

This new-born Child is a mighty monarch, the patriarchal Christ clothed in flesh; he redeemed us by making himself tiny: he who was infinite became finite.

Look to it! It concerns you all: God made her [Mary] a mere mother; he who was her father was born of her today; and he who created her calls himself her son.

Solo verses sung by Chris Arnold and Nicholas Gorven

Traditional Spanish carol sometimes attributed to Mateo Flecha the Elder (1481-1553)

Third Lesson

God the prophet foretells the coming of the Saviour.

Isaiah 9:2,4-7 (Read by Anthea van Wieringen)
Hymn

All
Lo! He comes with clouds descending,
   Once for favoured sinners slain;
Thousand thousand saints attending
   Swell the triumph of his train:
Alleluia! (three times)
   God appears, on earth to reign.

Every eye shall now behold him
   Robed in dreadful majesty;
Those who set at naught and sold him,
   Pierced and nailed him to the tree,
      Deeply wailing, (three times)
   Shall the true Messiah see.

Those dear tokens of his passion.
   Still his dazzling body bears,
Cause of endless exultation
   To his ransomed worshippers:
      With what rapture, (three times)
   Gaze we on those glorious scars!

Yea, amen! Let all adore thee,
   High, on thine eternal throne;
Saviour, take the power and glory:
   Claim the kingdom for thine own:
      O come quickly! (three times)
   Alleluia! Come, Lord, come!

Words by C. Wesley and J. Cennick
18th-century French melody arranged by David Willcocks

Fourth Lesson

The prophet Micah foretells the glory of little Bethlehem.

Micah 5:1-3 (Read by David Patrick)
Carol

Bethlehem Down

“When He is King we will give Him the Kings’ gifts, Myrrh for its sweetness, and gold for a crown, Beautiful robes,” said the young girl to Joseph, Fair with her first-born on Bethlehem Down.

Bethlehem Down is full of the starlight, Winds for the spices, and stars for the gold, Mary for sleep, and for lullaby music Songs of a shepherd by Bethlehem fold.

When He is King they will clothe Him in grave-sheets, Myrrh for embalming, and wood for a crown, He that lies now in the white arms of Mary Sleeping so lightly on Bethlehem Down.

Here He has peace and a short while for dreaming, Close-huddled oxen to keep Him from cold, Mary for love, and for lullaby music Songs of a shepherd by Bethlehem fold.

*Peter Warlock (1894-1930) with words by Bruce Blunt*

Fifth Lesson

*The angel Gabriel salutes the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

St Luke 1:26-38 (Read by Dr Barry Smith)
Carol

Bogoróditse Djévo

Rejoice, O mother of God.
Virgin Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee;
Blessed art thou among women,
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb,
For thou hast borne the Saviour of our souls.

Composed in 1990 by Arvo Pärt (b. 1935, Estonia) for the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at King's College, Cambridge

Hymn

All

O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.

O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King,
And peace to men on earth;
For Christ is born of Mary;
And, gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wond'ring love.
**Choir**

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heav'n.
No ear may hear his coming;
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him, still
The dear Christ enters in.

**All**

O holy Child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in,
Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell:
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel.

*Words by Bishop Phillips Brooks*
*English traditional tune arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams*
*Descant by Thomas Armstrong*

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**Sixth Lesson**

*St Matthew tells of the birth of Jesus.*

St Matthew 1:18-23 (Read by Lesley Jennings)

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**Hymn**

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
And stay by my side until morning is nigh.
Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
And fit us for heaven, to live with thee there.

Words anonymous
Tune by W. J. Kirkpatrick arranged by David Willcocks

Carol

Infant holy, Infant lowly

Polish carol arranged by Sir David Willcocks (1919-2015)

Seventh Lesson

The shepherds go to the manger.

St Luke 2:8-16 (Read by Kyle Paulssen)

Hymn

All While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
     All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
     And glory shone around.

Men ‘Fear not,’ said he (for mighty dread
    Had seized their troubled mind);
‘Glad tidings of great joy I bring
    To you and all mankind.’

All ‘To you in David’s town this day
    Is born of David’s line
A Saviour, who is Christ the Lord,
    And this shall be the sign:’
Ladies  ‘The heav'nly babe you there shall find
   To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
   And in a manger laid.’

All  Thus spake the seraph; and forthwith
   Appeared a shining throng
Of angels praising God, who thus
   Addressed their joyful song:

‘All glory be to God on high,
   And to the earth be peace;
Goodwill henceforth from heav’n to men
   Begin and never cease.’

Words by Nahum Tate
Music from Este’s Psalter
Descant by Bob Chilcott

Carol

Quem vidistis pastores dicite

Tell us, shepherds, whom have you seen?
Relate to us, who has appeared on earth?
We have seen a new-born babe,
   and choirs of angels praising God together.
Proclaim what you have seen,
   and announce the birth of Christ.

Composed in 1952 by Francis Poulenc (1899-1963, France)

Eighth Lesson

The wise men are led by the star to Jesus.

St Matthew 2:1-11 (Read by Michael Marchant)
Carol

Follow That Star

*Composed by Peter Gritton (b. 1963, England)*

Ninth Lesson

*St John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation.*

St John 1:1-14 (Read by Reverend Douglas Bax)

Hymn

All

O come, all ye faithful
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him
Born the King of Angels:

*O come, let us adore him,*
*O come, let us adore him,*
*O come, let us adore him,*
*Christ the Lord!*

God of God,
Light of Light,
Lo! He abhors not the Virgin’s womb;
Very God,
Begotten, not created:

*Refrain*

Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heav’n above;
Glory to God in the highest:

*Refrain*
Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
Born this happy morning,
Jesu, to thee be glory giv’n;
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing:

\begin{verbatim}
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord!
\end{verbatim}

Words translated by F. Oakeley and W. T. Brooke
Composer unknown
Music arranged by David Willcocks

Carol

Christmas in Africa (2017)

Christmas in Africa
under a Southern sky
On an evening warm
we all recall
A tiny infant’s sigh.

Christmas in Africa
under a Southern sky
Where people rejoice
with heart and voice
In a wondrous lullaby.

\textit{Woza moya oyingcwelo} (Come Holy Spirit)
\textit{Al-le-lui-ui-ia}.

Christmas in Africa
under a Southern sky
Where mountain mist
meets the seaside kissed
And a penguin waddles by.
Christmas in Africa
under a Southern sky
Where the bush pig roams
far away from home
And a sunbird sings on high.

Solo lines sung by Jenni van Doesburgh and Michael Marchant

Music by Maike Watson with words by Margaret Kollmer

This carol was especially commissioned for VOX Cape Town for this year’s Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. VOX supports the genesis of new music to expand and invigorate the local choral repertoire.

The Collect for Christmas Eve

Read by Reverend Natalie van Rooyen

O God, who makest us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of thy only son, Jesus Christ: Grant that as we joyfully receive him for our redeemer, so we may with sure confidence behold him, when he shall come to be our judge; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

The Blessing

Read by Reverend Natalie van Rooyen

May he who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, grant you the fullness of inward peace and goodwill; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.
Final Hymn

All  
Hark! The herald-angels sing  
Glory to the new-born King;  
Peace on earth and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled:  
Joyful all ye nations rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies,  
With the angelic host proclaim,  
Christ is born in Bethlehem.  

Hark! The herald-angels sing  
Glory to the new-born King.

Christ, by highest heav’n adored,  
Christ, the everlasting Lord,  
Late in time behold him come  
Offspring of a virgin’s womb:  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,  
Hail th’incarnate Deity!  
Pleased as man with man to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel.  

Hark! The herald-angels sing  
Glory to the new-born King.

Hail the heav’n-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings,  
Risen with healing in his wings;  
Mild he lays his glory by,  
Born that man no more may die,  
Born to raise the sons of earth,  
Born to give them second birth.  

Hark! The herald-angels sing  
Glory to the new-born King.

Words by C. Wesley, T. Whitefield, M. Madan and others  
Music by Mendelssohn  
Descant by David Willcocks
Organ Voluntary

In dulci jubilo ("In sweet rejoicing") BWV 729

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

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Music recorded in St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Cape Town, on 9 December 2017 by Paul Petersen and Sergio Trout

Readings recorded in St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Cape Town, on 12 December 2016 by Nolan Chiat

Executive Producers: Patric van Blerk, John Woodland, Kyle Paulssen and Paul Petersen

Mastered at Cape Town Sound

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Artwork by Casey Driver

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VOX is grateful to Mark Jennings, Rodney Trudgeon and the team at FMR for making this broadcast possible

FMR broadcasts on 101.3 FM in Cape Town, 107.9 FM in Fish Hoek and Noordhoek, 94.7 FM in Hout Bay and Llandudno, 97.1 FM on the Atlantic Seaboard and worldwide on www.fmr.co.za
To continue the choral legacy of the St George’s Singers, led for over fifty years by Dr Barry Smith, a new singing group formed under the direction of John Woodland in 2015. VOX Cape Town will span musical history in its focus on a cappella works, oratorios and local compositions to enrich the musical life of Cape Town. VOX intends to invigorate local choral music through imaginative programming and staging to create intimate, immersive sensory experiences.

In pursuit of this aim, VOX has recently embarked on a series of “New Soundscapes” – concerts designed to expose Cape Town’s audiences to fresh choral sounds. The most popular of these, “Trust the Silences”, comprised choral music written within the last three decades representing a diversity of genres from Eric Whitacre to Radiohead. More recently, “Northern Lights: A Baltic Voyage”, treated listeners to a smorgasbord of contemporary composers from the North.

Besides performing in traditional choral spaces, VOX has participated in the “In the Dark” series in the Youngblood Art Gallery and also presented a unique pairing of wine and choral music at Groot Constantia. Outreach and community involvement are important aspects of VOX’s musical and social vision and this includes fruitful collaborations with Fine Music Radio and local ensembles such as Camerata Tinta Barocca.
VOX Cape Town 2017

**Soprano:** Suzanne Buchanan, Elise de Kock, Christina Goodall, Chloe Joustra, Maryanne McLachlan, Stephanie Pulker, Nyambura Shawa, Jenni van Doesburgh, Anthea van Wieringen

**Alto:** Helene Cooke, Elinor Driver, Karen Hahne, Lesley Jennings, Jennifer Matlock, Jean Westwood

**Tenor:** Peter Borchers, Trevor Cloete, Roger Hunter, Michael Marchant, Owen Rogers, Christiaan van Woerden, Stefan Zwiegers

**Bass:** Chris Arnold, Casey Driver, Shaun February, Nick Gorven, Brent Johnson, Aaron Juritz, Kyle Paulssen, John Rennie, Johan van der Walt

**Organ:** Erik Dippenaar

**Director:** John Woodland

**What did you think about this year’s broadcast of the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols?** Let us know by emailing us at hello@voxcapetown.com or by connecting with us on social media @VOXCapeTown.

**About St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church**

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Cape Town, is the mother church of Presbyterianism in South Africa. It was built with the assistance of the British Government as a Scottish Presbyterian Church and opened in 1828 for the Scottish community including the Scottish garrison in Cape Town which was well represented in the church. As a result of the latter, St Andrew’s is still the regimental church of the Cape Town Highlanders. Their roll of honour is kept there and their flags are laid up in the church.

St Andrew’s has a beautiful organ that is over a century old and is used in two services every Sunday. These are an Afrikaans service at 09h00 and an English service at 10h30. A service is also held at 09h30 on Christmas Day. The church may be contacted on 021 419 1059.