



A Festival of Poetry and Carols



FINE MUSIC RADIO

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About our Festival of Poetry and Carols

Welcome to VOX Cape Town's annual Christmas Eve presentation of carols and readings on Fine Music Radio. Whether you are joining us for the first time, or whether you have been with us for one of these broadcasts before, we are delighted to welcome you to this special musical celebration of Advent and Christmas.

The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols is a cherished order of service that traces the story of the fall of humanity, the promise of redemption and the birth of Jesus through a sequence of readings interwoven with hymns and carols. First devised at Truro Cathedral in 1880, the format has since been adopted by churches worldwide—most famously in the annual broadcast from King's College in Cambridge.

Each December, VOX presents its own local adaptation of the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Cape Town, our 'musical home', continuing a tradition led for many years by Barry Smith. This year marks VOX's tenth anniversary and the tenth edition of this broadcast, and so we thought that we would do something differently to offer a fresh perspective on this timeless story of renewal and hope. We have thus selected, from the writings of William Blake, Maya Angelou, Ingrid Jonker, Nelson Mandela and others, a new selection of readings to be placed within the usual musical framework. These new texts echo the spirit of the original biblical lessons while inviting reflection through a contemporary and inclusive lens. Rodney Trudgeon joins us to offer some context to these readings and their connection to the established Nine Lessons.

A further highlight of this broadcast is the contribution of the early folk ensemble Here be Dragons, whose earthy sound brings new colour to many familiar tunes. Live recordings from our two recent concerts at St Andrew's are included in tonight's programme, alongside traditional congregational hymns such as *O Come, All Ye Faithful* and *Hark! The Herald-Angels Sing*. We invite you to follow the proceedings with us as the music unfolds—beginning, as tradition dictates, with *Once In Royal David's City*.

Instrumental Prelude

Ma Bregado

Traditional carol from Provence arranged by Jan Hendrik-Harley



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;
 Where 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, A. H. Mann and Sir David Willcocks

Organ (for all hymns) played by Erik Dippenaar

Carol

Nova! Nova!

News! News! 'Ave' is made from 'Eva'.

Traditional English carol arranged by Jan-Hendrik Harley

First Reading

Traditional First Lesson: The Fall of Humanity.

"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, 17–19)

The first reading in this evening's Festival of Poetry and Carols explores themes of repressed anger and its consequences, which parallel the story of disobedience and the fall from grace described in Genesis. The contemplative carol that follows reflects humanity's search for meaning and hope.

A Poison Tree

by William Blake (1757–1827, England)

I was angry with my friend;
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe;
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I water'd it in fears,
Night and morning with my tears:
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night.
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine.

And into my garden stole,
When the night had veil'd the pole;
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

Read by Aaron Juritz

Carol

I Wonder As I Wander

I wonder as I wander out under the sky,
How Jesus, the Saviour, did come for to die.
For poor ornery people like you and like I:
I wonder as I wander, out under the sky.

When Mary birthed Jesus, 'twas in a cows' stall
With wise men and farmers and shepherds and all.
But high from God's heaven a star's light did fall,
And the promise of ages it did then recall.

If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing:
A star in the sky, or a bird on the wing;
Or all of God's angels in heav'n to sing,
He surely could have had it, 'cause he was the King!

I wonder as I wander out under the sky,
How Jesus, the Saviour, did come for to die.
For poor ornery people like you and like I:
I wonder as I wander, out under the sky.

*Traditional Appalachian carol collected by John Jacob Niles
Arranged by Sir John Rutter (b. 1945, England)*

Second Reading

Traditional Second Lesson: The Promise to Abraham.

"God promises to faithful Abraham that in his seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 22:15–18)

The assertion of strength and resolve in this poem by William Ernest Henley, despite the harshness of fate, echoes the belief expressed in the original lesson of the promise of a brighter future.

Invictus

by William Ernest Henley (1849–1903, Britain)

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

Read by Samantha Ash

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 sung by Aaron Juritz
Old Catalan carol attributed to Mateo Flecha the Elder (1481–1553)*

Third Reading

Traditional Third Lesson: The Prophecy of the Messiah.

"The prophet foretells the coming of the Saviour." (Isaiah 9:2,6-7)

In this next reading, Tennyson's call for the old, worn and unjust to be replaced by new hope, justice and love captures the spirit of prophetic promise for a better world through the coming of the Saviour.

Ring Out, Wild Bells

by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892, England)

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light;
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

Read by Anthea van Wieringen

Carols: A German Triptych

Es Ist Ein Ros Entsprungen (Lo, how a rose e'er blooming)

Lo, how a rose e'er blooming,
From tender stem hath sprung.
Of Jesse's lineage coming,
As men of old have sung;
It came, a flower bright,
Amid the cold of winter
When half spent was the night.

Traditional 15th-century German carol

Maria Durch Ein Dornwald Ging (Mary walks amid the thorn)

Maria walks amid the thorn,
Lord have mercy!
Which for seven years no leaf hath born,
She walks amid the wood of thorn.
Jesus and Mary.

What 'neath her heart does Mary bear?
Lord have mercy!
A little child doth Mary bear,
Beneath her heart he nestles there.
Jesus and Mary.

*Words from 15th-century Germany
Traditional German carol arranged by Stefan Claas*

Lasst Uns Froh Und Munter Sein (Let us be happy and cheerful)

Traditional German carol

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 Sir David Willcocks*

Fourth Reading

Traditional Fourth Lesson: The Peaceable Kingdom.

"The peace that Christ will bring is foreshown." (Isaiah 11:1–4,6–9)

Like Isaiah's prophecy in the original lesson, this excerpt from Mandela's famous autobiography addresses the ongoing work of building a just society, in which all people should live in harmony.

**Extract from *Long Walk to Freedom*
by Nelson Mandela (1918–2013, South Africa)**

It was during those long and lonely years that my hunger for the freedom of my own people became a hunger for the freedom of all people. I knew as well as I knew anything that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. A man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred, he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity.

When I walked out of prison, that was my mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor both. Some say that has now been achieved. But I know that that is not the case. The truth is that we are not yet free; we have merely achieved the freedom to be free, the right not to be oppressed. We have not taken the final step of our journey, but the first step on a longer and even more difficult road. For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others. The true test of our devotion to freedom is just beginning.

I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not yet ended.

Read by Renugan Raidoo

Carol

In Dulci Jubilo

<i>In dulci jubilo,</i>	(In sweet rejoicing)
Now sing with hearts aglow!	
Our delight and pleasure	
<i>Lies in praesepio</i>	(In a manger)
Like sunshine is our treasure.	
<i>Matris in gremio.</i>	(In the mother's lap)
<i>Alpha es et O!</i>	(Thou art Alpha and Omega)
<i>O Jesu parvule,</i>	(O tiny Jesus)
For thee I long alway;	
Comfort my heart's blindness,	
<i>O puer optime,</i>	(O best of boys)
With all thy loving kindness,	
<i>O princeps gloriae.</i>	(O prince of glory)
<i>Trahe me poste!</i>	(Draw me unto thee)
<i>O patris caritas!</i>	(O father's caring)
<i>O nati lenitas!</i>	(O newborn's mildness)
Deeply were we stained	
<i>Per nostra crimina;</i>	(By our crimes)
But thou for us hast gained	
<i>Coelorum gaudia.</i>	(Heavenly joy)
O that we were there!	
<i>Ubi sunt gaudia</i>	(Where be joys)
In any place but there?	
There are angels singing	
<i>Nova cantica</i>	(New songs)
And there the bells are ringing	
<i>In regis curia.</i>	(At the king's court)
O that we were there!	

German traditional carol arranged by Johann Sebastian Bach

Fifth Reading

Traditional Fifth Lesson: The Birth of Jesus Foretold.

"The angel Gabriel salutes the Blessed Virgin Mary." (St Luke 1:26–35,38)

A powerful call for hope, unity and renewal, and the possibility of shaping a new world—much like the announcement of the coming of Christ's birth symbolises a new beginning.

**Extract from *On the Pulse of Morning*
by Maya Angelou (1928–2014, United States)**

Lift up your eyes upon
This day breaking for you.
Give birth again
To the dream.

Women, children, men,
Take it into the palms of your hands,
Mold it into the shape of your most
Private need. Sculpt it into
The image of your most public self.

Lift up your hearts
Each new hour holds new chances
For a new beginning.

Do not be wedded forever
To fear, yoked eternally
To brutishness.
The horizon leans forward,
Offering you space to place new steps of change.

Here, on the pulse of this fine day
You may have the courage
To look up and out and upon me, the
Rock, the River, the Tree.

Here, on the pulse of this new day
You may have the grace to look up and out
And into your sister's eyes, and into
Your brother's face,
And say simply

Very simply
With hope—
Good morning.

Read by Anna Telford

Carol

Gabriel's Message

The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame:
"All hail," said he, "Thou lowly maiden Mary,
Most highly favour'd lady." Gloria!

"For know a blessed Mother thou shalt be,
All generations laud and honour thee,
Thy Son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold.
Most highly favour'd lady." Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,
"To me be as it pleaseth God," she said,
"My soul shall laud and magnify His holy Name."
Most highly favour'd lady. Gloria!

Of her, Emmanuel the Christ was born
In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say,
"Most highly favour'd lady." Gloria!

Old Basque carol arranged by Edgar Pettman

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

Sixth Reading

Traditional Sixth Lesson: The Birth of Jesus.

"St Matthew tells of the birth of Jesus." (St Matthew 1:18–25)

Ingrid Jonker's poem about a child's experience during apartheid is powerfully juxtaposed with the innocence and purity of Christ's birth—exemplified, musically, by the gentle lullaby and meditation which follow.

Die kind

**wat doodgeskiet is deur soldate in Nyanga
deur Ingrid Jonker (1933–1965, South Africa)**

Die kind is nie dood nie
die kind lig sy vuiste teen sy moeder
wat Afrika skreeu; skreeu die geur
van vryheid en heide
in die lokasies van die omsingelde hart

Die kind lig sy vuiste teen sy vader
in die optog van die generasies
wat Afrika skreeu; skreeu die geur
van geregtigheid en bloed
in die strate van sy gewapende trots

Die kind is nie dood nie
nòg by Langa nòg by Nyanga
nòg by Sharpeville nòg by Orlando
nòg by die polisiestatie in Phillipi
waar hy lê met 'n koeël deur sy kop

Die kind is die skaduwee van die soldate
op wag met gewere saraseens en knuppels
die kind is teenwoordig by alle vergaderings en wetgewings
die kind loer deur die vensters van huise en in die harte van
moeders
die kind wat net wou speel in die son by Nyanga, is orals
die kind wat 'n man geword het trek deur die ganse Afrika
die kind wat 'n reus geword het reis deur die hele wêreld

sonder 'n pas

Read by Dirk Binneman

Carol

Thula! Nunu, zola ulale

Thula! Nunu, zola ulale
lingelosi zinawe!
Ubabalo olungako
Lufefeziwe kuwe.
*Lala baba, lala baba,
Thula, baba, ulale.*

Lala, sana; ukutya nempahla
Nekhaya, zikho zonke
Azihlawulelwanga nguwe:
Zonke zibonelelwe.

Ibhedi yakh' intofontofo
EyeMvan' iqinile,
Xa wayezalw' estalini
Eyakhe ilifula.

Bon' usana lunxibile;
Mamathse, olo Ncumo!
Xa Elila, unina wakhe
Wayithuthuzel' imvana.

Translation:

Hush! My dear, lie still and slumber,
Holy angels guard thy bed!
Heavenly blessings without number
Gently falling on thy head.

*Lullaby, lullaby,
Hush, my baby, lullaby.*

Sleep, my babe; thy food and raiment,
House and home, thy friends provide;
All without thy care or payment:
All thy wants are well supplied.

Soft and easy is thy cradle:
Coarse and hard thy Saviour lay,
When His birthplace was a stable
And His softest bed was hay.

See the lovely babe a-dressing;
Lovely infant, how He smiled!
When He wept, the mother's blessing
Soothed and hush'd the holy child.

*Words by Isaac Watts (1674–1748, England)
Translated into isiXhosa by Folio Translation Consultants (2019)
Music by Malcolm Archer (b. 1952, England)*

Meditation

Coetzer-McConnachie Carol

Composed by Jan-Hendrik Harley

Carol

Torches

Torches, torches, run with torches
All the way to Bethlehem!
Christ is born and now lies sleeping;
Come and sing your song to him!

Ah, Roro, Roro, my baby,
Ah Roro, my love, Roro;
Sleep you well, my heart's own darling,
While we sing you our Roro.

Sing, my friends and make you merry,
Joy and mirth and joy again;
Lo, he lives, the King of heaven,
Now and evermore. Amen.

*Words from the Galician translated by J. B. Trend
Music by John Joubert (1927–2019, South Africa/UK)*

Seventh Reading

Traditional Seventh Lesson: The Shepherds and the Angels.

"The shepherds go to the manger." (St Luke 2:8–16)

This reading, which highlights the vastness of the universe, humanity's shared existence and the fragility of life on Earth, resonates with the awe, reverence and humility associated with the Seventh Lesson, in which the shepherds behold the angels.

Extract from *Pale Blue Dot*

by Carl Sagan (1934–1996, United States)

Look again at that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you've ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilisation, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar", every "supreme leader", every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there—on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.

The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena. Think of the rivers of blood spilled by those generals and emperors so that, in glory and triumph, they could become momentary masters of a fraction of a dot. Think of the endless cruelties visited by the inhabitants of one corner of this pixel against the scarcely distinguishable inhabitants of some other corner, how frequent their misunderstandings, how eager they are to kill one another, how fervent their hatred.

Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.

The Earth is the only world known so far to harbour life. There is nowhere else. Like it or not, for the moment the Earth is where we make our stand.

There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. It underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known.

Read by Bevan Timm

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 (1652–1715, Ireland/England)

Music from Este's Psalter

Descant by Bob Chilcott (b. 1955, Britain)

Carol

Carol of the Bells

Hark! How the bells, sweet silver bells,
All seem to say, "Throw cares away."

Christmas is here bringing good cheer,
To young and old, meek and the bold.

Ding-dong, ding-dong, that is their song,
With joyful ring, all carolling.

One seems to hear words of good cheer
From ev'rywhere, filling the air.

Oh, how they pound, raising the sound,
O'er hill and dale, telling their tale.

Gaily they ring, while people sing,
Songs of good cheer, Christmas is here!

On, on they send, on without end,
Their joyful tone to every home.

Traditional Ukrainian song arranged by Mykola Leontovich (1877–1921, Ukraine)

Words by Peter J. Wilhousky (1902–1978, United States)

Eighth Reading

Traditional Eighth Lesson: The Visit of the Wise Men.

"The wise men are led by the star to Jesus." (St Matthew 2:1–12)

TS Eliot's poem reflects on the journey of the Wise Men and contemplates the difficulties and transformations of such a pilgrimage—mirrored in the subsequent carol that also describes the journey to Bethlehem.

Journey of the Magi

by TS Eliot (1888–1965, Britain)

"A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter."
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melted snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

Read by John Woodland

Carol

Follow That Star

One dark and stormy evening,
Through the wind and rain,
There came a sight worth seeing,
'Cause it wasn't gonna happen again.

They'd seen a bright light in the sky,
Without knowing who, what, when, why,
They grabbed their gifts and off they went,
Three Kings!

They had to find the little town,
It was not easy to be found!
They don't know what they do,
They just follow that star!

Words and music by Peter Gritton (b. 1963, England)

Ninth Reading

St John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation.

John 1:1–14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Thanks be to God.

Read by the Reverend Natalie Gordon

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 on Christmas morning,
Jesu, to thee be glory giv'n;
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing:
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord!

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

Carol: Rejoice!

Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day:
I would my true love did so chance
To see the legend of my play,
To call my true love to my dance:
Sing, O my love, O my love, my love, my love;
This have I done for my true love.

Then was I born of a virgin pure,
Of her I took fleshly substance;
Thus was I knit to man's nature,
To call my true love to my dance:
Sing, O my love, O my love, my love, my love;
This have I done for my true love.

In a manger laid and wrapped I was,
So very poor, this was my chance,
Betwixt an ox and a silly poor ass,
To call my true love to my dance:
 Sing, O my love, O my love, my love, my love;
 This have I done for my true love.

Then afterwards baptised I was;
The Holy Ghost on me did glance,
My Father's voice heard from above,
To call my true love to my dance:
 Sing, O my love, O my love, my love, my love;
 This have I done for my true love.

Music by John Gardner (1917–2011, England)
Words from Christmas Carols Ancient and Modern (1833)

What Child Is This?

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?
This, this is Christ the King
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste, to bring Him praise
The Babe, the son of Mary.

Why lies He in such mean estate
Where ox and lamb are feeding?
Come have no fear, God's Son is here,
His loves all loves exceeding.
Nails, spear, shall pierce Him through,
The cross be borne for me, for you:
Hail, hail, the Saviour comes,
The Babe, the son of Mary.

So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh,
All tongues and peoples own him.
The King of kings salvation brings
Let ev'ry heart enthrone Him.
Raise, raise your song on high,
While Mary sings a lullaby;
Joy, joy, for Christ is born,
The Babe, the son of Mary.

English traditional melody arranged by David Willcocks
Words by William C. Dix (1865)

Gaudete

Rejoice! Rejoice! Christ is born of the Virgin Mary.

Tune from Piaae Cantiones (1582)

This festive medley was especially arranged by Jan-Hendrik Harley in late 2020 as our fifth and final "Virtual VOX" project.

The Blessing

Read by the Reverend Natalie Gordon

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 Sir David Willcocks*

Finale

I Saw Three Ships

Traditional English carol arranged by Jan-Hendrik Harley



VOX CAPE TOWN 2025: Chris Arnold, Samantha Ash, Matt Beck, Dane Bezuidenhout, Dirk Binneman, Peter Borchers, Suzanne Buchanan, Jan Buys, Suzie Cameron, Erin Cederlind, Casey Driver, Tessa Gawith, Christina Goodall, Wim Greyvenstein, Lia Hall, Amy Hoffenberg, Sally Hofmeyr, Aaron Juritz, Carelize Klopper, Fran Laenen, Jennifer Matlock, Sarah McArthur, Maryanne McLachlan, Kyle Paulssen, Renugan Raidoo, Kirsten Rowe, Evan Strauss, Louis Swart, Anna Telford, Bevan Timm, Stefan van der Westhuizen, Anthea van Wieringen, Jean Westwood, Karin-Marie Wilson, John Woodland (founder and artistic director)

HERE BE DRAGONS: Lente Louw (mezzo-soprano), Jessica Daniels (recorder), Annien Shaw and Odile Burden (violins), Emile de Roubaix (viola, nyckelharpa), Graham du Plessis (cello), John Pringle (percussion), Uwe Grosser (theorbo), Jan-Hendrik Harley (viola, mandolin, arrangements, direction)

The Gqeberha Musical Advent Calendar

Adding to the local flavour of tonight's broadcast, our programme concludes with a stunning smorgasbord of carols from around the world played by the Gqeberha-based Red Ochre Ensemble, comprising Lynne Gouws (recorders), Heidri Faber (clarinet), Rudi Bower (classical guitar), Simon Cameron (percussion), Jan-Hendrik Harley (mandolin, viola, baroque guitar and arrangements), David Bester (violin) and Mariechen Meyer (double bass).

1. The Boar's Head Carol (Carroll of Bryngyng in the Bore's Head)

Language: Macaronic (English and Latin)

Source: Wynkyn de Worde, *Christmasse Carolles*, London, 1521

The Boar's Head Carol, often titled "Carroll of Bryngyng in the Bore's Head", is a festive macaronic carol that blends English verses with a Latin refrain. It celebrates the medieval custom of presenting a boar's head at Christmas feasts, a symbol of triumph and abundance. The carol first appeared in Wynkyn de Worde's 1521 collection, making it one of the earliest printed Christmas carols. The Latin chorus, *Caput apri defero / Reddens laudes Domino*, reinforces the celebratory spirit of offering thanks. The carol remains a hallmark of Tudor festivities, with modern performances often incorporating processions and reenactments.

IPA Pronunciation: / ˈkæpʊt ˈɑːpri ˈdeːfɛro/

2. A kis Jézus aranyalma (Baby Jesus Is a Golden Apple)

Language: Hungarian

Source: Traditional Hungarian folk song

This carol, *A kis Jézus aranyalma* ("Baby Jesus Is a Golden Apple"), is a Hungarian folk carol steeped in rural traditions and vivid imagery. The "golden apple" metaphor symbolises purity and divine gift, drawing from ancient agricultural and spiritual motifs. This song is a reflection of the deep Marian devotion in Hungarian culture, often sung during Christmas Eve and nativity celebrations. Its simple yet haunting melody is typical of Hungarian folk traditions, preserving the nation's oral heritage.

IPA Pronunciation: [ˈɒ kif ˈjeːzʊʃ ˈɒrɒɲ ɒlma]

3. Es kommt ein Schiff, geladen (A Ship Is Coming, Laden)

Language: German

Source: Attributed to Johannes Tauler; manuscript from Strasbourg Dominican convent of St Nikolaus

This German hymn, *Es kommt ein Schiff, geladen* ("A Ship Is Coming, Laden"), is a medieval piece rich with allegory. Attributed to 14th-century mystic Johannes Tauler, the hymn uses the image of a ship carrying divine grace, a powerful metaphor for the Virgin Mary bearing Christ. The hymn likely originated in the Strasbourg convent, where Dominican nuns preserved it in manuscript form. Its soaring melody and theological depth make it a favourite for Advent and Christmas worship in German-speaking communities.

IPA Pronunciation: [ɛs ˈkɔmt aɪn ʃɪf gəˈlaːdɐn]

4. Καλώς τα τα Χριστούγεννα (Happy Christmas)

Language: Greek

Source: Traditional; field recording by Domna Samiou

Καλώς τα τα Χριστούγεννα ("Happy Christmas") is a traditional carol from the Greek island of Fourni, preserved through the efforts of ethnomusicologist Domna Samiou. This lively song captures the communal joy and hospitality of Greek Christmas customs, characterised by rhythmic simplicity and call-and-response singing.

Performed with traditional Greek instruments like the bouzouki or lyra, it reflects the island's cultural vibrancy.

IPA Pronunciation: [ka'los ta ta xri'stu:ɟena]

5. Oh bento airoso (O Blessed and Graceful Mystery)

Language: Portuguese

Source: Collected by Michel Giacometti in Paradela, 1960

This Portuguese carol, Oh bento airoso ("O Blessed and Graceful Mystery"), emanates from the northern regions of Portugal, reflecting a rustic, devotional charm. Collected by ethnographer Michel Giacometti, the song is emblematic of oral tradition, characterised by lyrical simplicity and profound reverence. Its meditative melody mirrors the pastoral landscapes and quiet faith of the Portuguese countryside.

IPA Pronunciation: [u bẽtu aj' rozu]

6. 欢乐佳音歌 (Song of Good Tidings)

Language: Chinese

Source: Chinese New Hymnal, No. 83

欢乐佳音歌 (Huānlè Jiāyīn Gē, "Song of Good Tidings") is a Chinese Christian hymn celebrating the joy of Christmas. Found in the Chinese New Hymnal, this carol incorporates pentatonic melodies, resonating with traditional Chinese musical aesthetics while conveying a universal message of peace and goodwill. It exemplifies the blend of Western liturgical influences with native musical traditions.

IPA Pronunciation: [xuán.lɿ tɕjá.in kɿ]

7. Mit hjerte altid vanker (My Heart Always Wanders)

Language: Danish

Source: Written by Hans Adolph Brorson, 1732

Mit hjerte altid vanker ("My Heart Always Wanders") is a Danish hymn by bishop and poet Hans Adolph Brorson, first published in his 1732 hymn collection. This tender piece reflects on the nativity with deep reverence, blending introspection with imagery of the humble manger. Its melody, often paired with a simple yet poignant tune, has become a hallmark of Danish Christmas traditions, encapsulating a quiet, heartfelt spirituality.

IPA Pronunciation: [mit 'jæɐ̯tə 'el.tið 'van̥kə]

8. Замъчи се божа майка (The Mother of God Became Silent)

Language: Bulgarian

Source: Traditional; aural transcription

This contemplative Bulgarian carol, Замъчи се божа майка (Zamŭchi se bozha māika, "The Mother of God Became Silent"), depicts the Virgin Mary's introspective sorrow as she prepares for the birth of Christ. A product of Bulgaria's rich liturgical and folk traditions, the melody combines Eastern Orthodox chant influences with regional tonalities, creating a meditative and deeply spiritual experience.

IPA Pronunciation: [zə'mɐʃɨ se 'boʒe 'majkə]

9. Laylat Al-Milad (Christmas Eve)

Language: Lebanese Arabic

Source: Composed by Father Mansour Labaki, 1980

Laylat Al-Milad ("Christmas Eve") is a modern Lebanese carol composed by Father Mansour Labaki in the Maronite Christian tradition. Its melody combines traditional Arabic musical modes with Christian liturgical themes, celebrating the joy of the nativity with heartfelt warmth. Widely sung in Lebanese churches and homes, this carol is a testament to the enduring synthesis of cultural and spiritual expression in the Middle East.

IPA Pronunciation: [ˈlax.lat al.miˈlæːd]

10. A Betlem me'n vull anar (I Want to Go to Bethlehem)

Language: Catalan

Source: Traditional Catalan folk music

A Betlem me'n vull anar ("I Want to Go to Bethlehem") is a lively Catalan carol that captures the joy of shepherds heading to the nativity. With rhythmic vitality and playful lyrics, this folk song reflects the region's vibrant musical heritage. Traditionally accompanied by tambourine and flabiol (a type of fife), it is a staple in Catalonia's Christmas celebrations.

IPA Pronunciation: [ə βet'lem mən 'βuʎ ə'na]

11. Tonttu (Gnome)

Language: Finnish

Source: Based on Viktor Rydberg's 1881 poem; set to music by Lyyli Wartiovaara-Kallioniemi, 1945

The Finnish carol Tonttu ("Gnome") captures the quiet, mysterious presence of the Christmas gnome, a figure rooted in Scandinavian folklore. Inspired by Viktor Rydberg's 1881 Swedish poem, the song reflects on the gnome's watchful care over the household during the long winter nights. The music, composed by Lyyli Wartiovaara-Kallioniemi, blends wistful melodies with a sense of magical realism, making it a cherished seasonal favourite in Finland.

IPA Pronunciation: ['ton.tu]

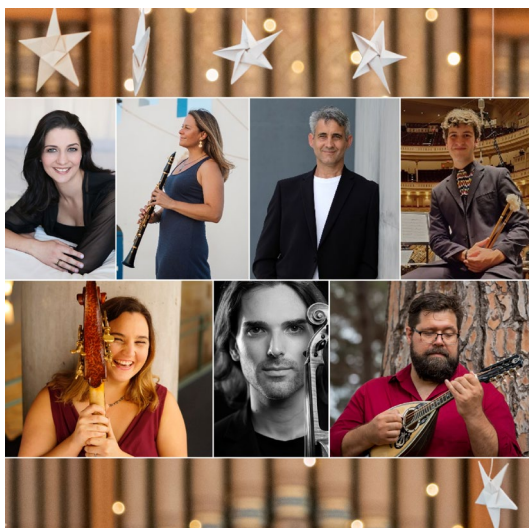
12. Un flambeau, Jeannette, Isabelle (A Torch, Jeannette, Isabelle)

Language: French

Source: Micoulau Saboly, *Recueil des Noël's composés en langue Provençale*, 1856

This Provençal carol, Un flambeau, Jeannette, Isabelle ("A Torch, Jeannette, Isabelle"), invites listeners to a rustic nativity scene illuminated by torchlight. The carol dates back to the 17th century and features lyrics encouraging quiet reverence as the Christ child sleeps. Its lilting melody and charming imagery evoke the warmth and simplicity of Christmas in southern France.

IPA Pronunciation: [œ flā.bo ʒa.nɛt i.za.bɛl]



Organ Voluntary

In dulci jubilo (“In sweet rejoicing”) BWV 729

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750, Germany)

Organ: Erik Dippenaar



What did you think of this evening’s Festival of Poetry and Carols? Did you enjoy the selection of music?

We’d love to hear from you! Email us at hello@voxcapetown.com or connect with us on social media @VOXCapeTown.



Music mostly recorded at St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Cape Town, in December 2025 by Nolan Chiat

Readings recorded in November 2025 by Nolan Chiat

Executive Producers: John Woodland and Kyle Paulssen

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Artwork by Casey Driver



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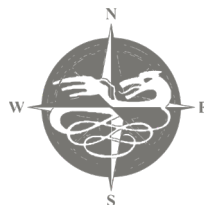
About VOX Cape Town

VOX Cape Town was founded in 2015 with a vision to create fresh, mesmerising choral experiences to enrich the musical life of the Mother City, and to continue the legacy of Barry Smith and the St George's Singers. Over the past ten years, VOX has become one of South Africa's most exhilarating musical forces, renowned for its imaginative presentations of seldom-heard and new choral music in unconventional performance spaces. For more, visit www.voxcapetown.com.



About Here be Dragons

Here be Dragons is an early music ensemble inspired by the golden age of exploration. In that time, maps would often be marked with sea monsters to indicate treacherous waters or uncharted territory—a warning not to venture into the unknown. For them, the name has quite a different meaning; they see it as a reminder never to stop exploring the endless possibilities hidden in a piece of music.



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. Every Sunday, there is an Afrikaans service at 9 AM and an English service at 10:30 AM. A service is also held at 9:30 AM on Christmas Day.

