



BRIAN KNOWLES

Christmas Tidings

DAVID OGDEN *directs* CELESTIA SINGERS & BRASS

Tracklist

Christmas Tidings

1	Dancing In My Heart	4.18	9	I Sing Of A Maiden	3.20
2	Love Came Down At Christmas	2.40	10	Twelfth Night	4.21
3	More Precious Than Gold	3.31	11	A Boy So Rare	6.14
4	Skydiving	4.23	12	Night Mail	3.09
5	The Promise	4.16	13	He Who Made The Starry Skies	4.07
6	Welcome To The King	3.36	14	We Three Kings	2.56
7	Sweet Was The Song	4.11	15	Midnight	6.54
8	Rejoice And Be Merry	2.38	16	Come Again	4.22
	Running Time	65.00			

Programme Note

By Brian Knowles

The music of Christmas Tidings consists of new settings of some familiar words and other entirely original tracks that I have written over many years.

The setting of 'We Three Kings' was composed in 1968 and was enthusiastically received at the school where I taught. 'The Promise' was written a few years later when my band Saffron was recording at Abbey Road Studios and also appealed to audiences. My main thrust for composing Christmas music came when I retired from working for Roger Whittaker, the international singer, and took up teaching once again in 1988. 'We Three Kings' was performed at The Royal School, Haslemere, by demand for the next 30 years and each year I produced at least one new Christmas composition. Sometimes I would use

existing words but usually would write both words and music. I was careful to vary tempo and style and sometimes to introduce humour as in 'Skydiving' where the angels of Bethlehem are displaying their flying skills. School pupils are very critical and know exactly what they like! Hence there are the traditional style tracks such as 'Love Came Down At Christmas' and 'He Who Made The Starry Skies' juxtaposed with swing numbers such as 'Skydiving' and 'Rejoice And Be Merry'.

Occasionally I have included words that are not entirely Christmas related as in 'Night Mail' but contain a flavour of the season of giving. It has given me great joy in writing these pieces which I hope is transferred to you the listeners and thereby enriches your celebration of Christmas.

Lyrics

1 Dancing In My Heart

Brian R. Knowles

And now we've got here,
We finally made it;
The sun is golden low.
We've been here waiting
For Christmas to come,
The hours were ticking slow.
And now the morning is breaking,
Creation is waking to our song.
The music sets our pulse racing
As we all embrace,
To celebrate our Jesus here,
To celebrate our Saviour dear,
He's dancing in my heart.

So count me in as one of the family;
It's great when you belong.
I'm right up there in the clouds so high,
Could touch the sky,
With wings to fly as far as the angels;
Spreading the message bound for all the earth

So come right here and join in the party,
The birthday of all time!
He gives a present to you and me:
How life could be
With eyes to see the goodness in others,
Spreading the message bound for all the earth.

2 Love Came Down At Christmas

Christina Georgina Rossetti

Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely,
Love Divine;
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,
Love incarnate,
Love Divine;
Worship we our Jesus:
But wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,
Love be yours
And love be mine.
Love to God and all men,
Love for plea and gift and sign.

3 More Precious Than Gold

Brian R. Knowles

Asleep in a manger, my Lord;
Away in a stable so cold.
He's born as a stranger,
But never in danger, for angels untold
Watch Jesus more precious than gold.

So lowly His coming to man,
The promise of ages receive!
With rev'rence and wonder
His father and mother watch Jesus asleep,
So peaceful, the first-born is He.

How they love Him,
Those above Him,
Now the angel host is drawing near.
Light surrounding,
Music sounding
Through the hills and valleys
So wondrous to hear.
Joy releasing from the Father's glory,
Shepherds running as they tell the story,
How the Saviour of the world is born!

For Jesus has come down to earth,
The joy of the Father above;
He sends us His dearest,
Most precious and nearest,
The one that He loves.
We thank Him, adore Him,
We love Him our Lord.



4 Skydiving

Brian R. Knowles

Skydiving, over the hills of Bethlehem;
Skydiving, feel all the thrill of rushing air.
We'll loop the loop, fly upside down;
We'll take the route right over town -
So keep it quiet, not a sound.

And now we're high flying, over the moonlit countryside;
High flying, singing the song we long to share-
It's 'Peace on earth, goodwill to men'.
We'll tell all the shepherds near Bethlehem
That Christ, the Saviour, He is come.

And so we'll fill the sky with light
When we find the shepherds tonight.
We'll tell them all the good news,
There's not a moment to lose
For Christ is born, He's in a stable,
Come to save all, all of mankind!

And now we're flying, the moonlight is glowing;
And now we're flying, a cold wind is blowing
Against the shepherds, against the sheep,
We sing our song to wake them in case they sleep:
It's 'Peace on earth, Good will to men'.
We tell the news, we tell them:
'Christ the Saviour, He is come'.

They'll be something special tonight
When the shepherds quake with fright,
But soon we'll make it alright,
We'll turn their awe to delight.
For Christ is born, He's in a stable,
Come to save all, all of mankind!

We're flying high, up in the sky.
We're flying high, air rushing, fearing nothing;
Flying, gliding, flying, diving down.

But now it's time to go.
And there's no denying,
Spreading good news has been such fun,
But we're tired and returning
Back to the heav'nly King;
That's right!

5 The Promise

Brian R. Knowles

Hush, my child, don't you cry,
I will sing a lullaby.
You change my whole world;
The promise I heard
Is now a babe within my arms.

Oh, little one won't you sleep?
Join the slumber of the sheep.
The day that seemed long
Is now drawing on,
And soon the morning will appear.

The shepherds heard it on the mountains,
The wise men saw it in the sky;
The Son of God is born this moment,
And tears of joy now fill my eyes.

Oh, soon your love will fill the world;
Darkness vanish with each word.
The sun will be strong,
And right from the wrong
Will shine for ev'ry one to see.

The shepherds heard it on the mountains,
The wise men saw it in the sky;
The Son of God is born this moment,

And tears of joy now fill my eyes.

Oh, soon your love will fill the world;
Darkness vanish with each word.
The sun will be strong,
And right from the wrong
Will shine for ev'ry one to see.
Hush now, and sleep.

6 Welcome To The King

Brian R. Knowles

Long and dreary was our journey
Magi we, from distant land.
Our hearts were lifted by one star
As it led us onward, beaming far.
Feel the joy and gone the pain,
For a moment we were young again!
La la la la la la la,
For a moment we were young again!
Days went by as that star
Led to Bethlehem,
And there it finally stopped!

See the sun rise in the skies of Bethlehem,
See the dawn break, as we shake away our fear.
Jesus Christ is born, to destroy sin, our enemy;
In a manger crib he lies.

Come, let us bring presents to him;
Give our hearts as a welcome to the King!

Herod's wrath was vile and bitter,
He despised a rival king.
The meaning of that star perceived
But he pretended he was pleased.
Bethlehem, it led us there,
And we offered Jesus gifts most rare.
La la la la la la la,
And we offered Jesus gifts most rare.
We were wise to his lies,
So would never return:
The star had finally stopped!

Now, with thankful hearts we journey
Back to home another way.
We bring good news to all we meet
And hope to strangers that we greet.
Feel the joy and gone the pain,
For a moment we are young again!
La la la la la la la,
For a moment we are young again!
Days pass by, still that star
Leads us on our way:
Our doubt has finally stopped

7 Sweet Was The Song

Anon. c.1600

Sweet was the song the virgin sang
When she to Bethlehem Judah came,
And was delivered of a son,
That blessed Jesus hath to name.
'Lula, lula, lula, lullaby,
Sweet babe' sang she,
'My son, and eke a saviour born,
Who hast vouchsafed from on high
To visit us that were forlorn.
Lula, lula, lula, lullaby,
Sweet babe' sang she,
And rocked him gently on her knee.



8 Rejoice And Be Merry

From an old Dorset Church-Gallery Book

Discovered by L J T Darwall

Rejoice and be merry in songs and in mirth!
O praise our redeemer, all mortals on earth!
For this is the birthday of Jesus our King,
Who brought us salvation – His praises we'll sing!

A heavenly vision appeared in the sky;
Vast numbers of angels the shepherds did spy,
Proclaiming the birthday of Jesus our King,
Who brought us salvation – His praises we'll sing!

Likewise a bright star in the sky did appear,
Which led the wise men from the east to draw near;
They found the Messiah, sweet Jesus our King,
Who brought us salvation – His praises we'll sing!

And when they were come, they their treasures unfold,
And unto Him offered myrrh, incense and gold.
So blessed for ever be Jesus our King,
Who brought us salvation – His praises we'll sing!

9 I Sing Of A Maiden

Anon. 15th Century

I sing of a maiden
That is matchless:
King of all kings
For her son she ches*.

He came all so stille
Where his mother was,
As dew in Aprille
That falls on the grass.

He came all so stille
To his mother's bower,
As dew in Aprille
That falls on the flower.

He came all so stille
Where his mother lay,
As dew in Aprille
That falls on the spray.

I sing of a maiden
That is matchless:
King of all kings
For her son she ches*.

Mother and maiden
Was never none but she
Well may such a lady
God's mother be.

* Chose

10 Twelfth Night

Laurie Lee

Lyrics available online



11 A Boy So Rare

Brian R. Knowles

A boy so rare, a gift to share
Now in her arms he is resting;
A treasure far beyond compare,
So gently in her arms is nestling.

A promise made, from distant age,
Has come to pass in a moment;
A star now shines to herald all that must be,
The heavens sparkle out their welcome.
And when the sun begins to rise
A whole new day is now breaking;
And Mary's heart is overcome
By such a child she holds so dear.

And as a man, he'll understand
The very heart of his people;
He sleeps upon his mother's breast,
The noises of the world around him.

But time will come when Joseph's son
Will startle all of the nations;
His words will tear away the hardness of years
And clear a path for light to enter,
His eyes will burn with love so strong
And melt the coldness of ages;
That searching gaze, then peace is made,



Celestia Brass during recording at
Real World Studios 9/10 July 2022

And in our world there's hope again.

A child is born and a flower begins to open,
A child is born and we walk on air;
A child is born and our stony hearts soften,
A treasure so precious is there before our very eyes,
We're lost in wonder.

How can it be, deep mystery,
A child in time, yet he's near us?
I'd travel all the world to find
A friend who stays so true and faithful.

How can it be? He comes to me
And fills my soul with a longing
To stretch my arms, embrace this glorious world,
Its joy, and in its pain to comfort;
And though a shadow of that flame,
I'll live my life in a new way.
O take my heart, and make me part of you;
A captive spirit, yet still free
To be that child of long ago.
A child is born.

12 Night Mail

W. H. Auden

Lyrics available online

13 He Who Made The Starry Skies

Trad. Latin Words

Trans. Denis Stevens & John A. Parkinson

Lyrics available online

14 We Three Kings

John H. Hopkins Junior

We three kings of Orient are;
Bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
Following yonder star.

Born a king on Bethlehem plain,
Gold I bring to crown him again-
King for ever, ceasing never,
Over us all to reign:

Frankincense to offer have I;
Incense owns a deity nigh:
Prayer and praising, all men raising,
Worship him, God most high:

O Star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light.



Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume
Breathes a life of gathering gloom;
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb.

Glorious now, behold him arise,
King, and God, and sacrifice!
Heav'n sings alleluia,
Alleluia the earth replies:

15 Midnight

Brian R. Knowles

Midnight, a clear sky,
With moonlight, the wind sighs,
And all of the world is sleeping peacefully.

Journey so weary,
Has ended for Mary
And Joseph in a stable far from home;
And their one thought
Is to find warmth and comfort.

As the frost and cold surround Him,
He is born confounding
Thoughts of wealth and kingly majesty.
Lowly, she holds Him.

First breath now taken,
He cries as they welcome
The hope of the world. then he sleeps peacefully.

New sounds soon echo
Through wild hills, where shepherds
Fall down in dazzling light and hear the song
Of all ages
From a myriad of angels

Singing 'Glory in the highest,

Peace on earth to all men,
He is nigh, the Saviour promised long'
He comes, God's own Son.

All around in the fields and in the forests,
All around in the towns and ev'ry village,
Hope is born, hate is torn,
From heav'n above pure light is come,
Hope is born pure light is come.

Time flows forever,
Through seasons, but never
Has man known a gift, so precious, offered free.

Darkness is stealing,
Yet warm hands are reaching
To earth, tiny babe of Bethlehem
Melt our sorrow
Come the day when we follow

In your way: forgiving others,
Judging not our brothers,
Looking to the one who gave His life,
So costly, He calls softly.

Midnight, a clear sky,
In wonder we gaze up,
O why?

16 Come Again

Brian R. Knowles

Come again,
Descending as a Holy Dove,
And resting on the ones you love,
So filling us with peace and joy to overflowing.

Come with your power as before,
And shower us once more,
And let our hearts be yours forever, ceasing never.

Like a mighty king
You rule everything,
Giving us a new song to sing.

Glory to you,
As we give our hearts anew,
Lives that cling to you:
Never let us go Holy Spirit.



Biographies

Brian Knowles

Brian Knowles was born in 1946 and educated at the Liverpool Blue Coat School. He went on to study composition at the RAM under John Gardner after which he formed the band Saffron who were duly signed to EMI and recorded at Abbey Road Studios.

He later became touring musical director to the internationally acclaimed singer/songwriter Roger Whittaker. After 18 years on the road he was appointed Composer in Residence at the Royal School, Haslemere where he composed two musicals 'Jane Eyre' and 'The Government Inspector'. He also set famous poems to music entitled 'Poetry Serenade' together with numerous Christmas pieces. Recently he has composed a Guitar Concerto as recorded by Craig Ogden together with many other compositions.



brianknowlesmusic.co.uk





David Ogden

David is a professional conductor and composer with 35 years' experience of directing concerts, recordings, radio and television projects.

He conducts Celestia, Exultate Singers, City of Bristol Choir and Bristol Youth Choirs. David also regularly leads choral workshops and writes music for choirs, churches, charities and businesses around the world.

 davidogden.co.uk

  [@mrdauidogden](https://www.facebook.com/mrdauidogden)

Image by Louise Broom



Celestia Singers

Celestia is a new vocal consort of some of the finest singers in the South West of England, all of whom have a wealth of experience in live performance, broadcasts, and recordings for film and television.

Since giving its inaugural concert for Music on the Quantocks in Taunton in May 2022, Celestia has undertaken concert and recording projects often in collaboration with its own instrumental ensemble.

 celestiasingers.co.uk   [@celestiasingers](https://www.facebook.com/celestiasingers)

Rebecca Taylor

Rebecca was organ scholar and read music at Lincoln College, Oxford, later continuing her studies at the Royal Academy of Music. She has broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 & 4 and BBC Cardiff Singer of the Year.

Rebecca regularly performs and coaches across the UK, Europe and Middle East. She is passionate about education and, in addition to teaching at Rugby school, has worked in partnership with the British Benevolent Fund since 2012, hosted by the British Embassy, in leading and creating vocal outreach programmes in Spain.

She has also developed a series of programmes for young French singers in Provence as part of the Musique Cordiale Festival.

 rebeccataylorpiano.co.uk



Artists

Conductor

David Ogden

Piano

Rebecca Taylor

Celestia Brass

Trumpet

Chris Avison
Ross Brown

Horn

Neil Shewan

Trombone

Robb Tooley

Tuba

Michael Levis

Celestia Singers

Soprano

Caroline Halls
Lucy Hughes*
Chloe Martindale
Frannie Millar
Eleanor Little

Alto

Jenna Brown
Jess Haig
Julia Loveless
Judith Ogden

Tenor

Edmund Hastings
Matthew Hale

Bass

Richard Bacon
Christopher Gray
Martin Le Poidevin
Alexander Learmonth
Tim Reader

*Solo on *The Promise*

Credits

**Recorded at Real World Studios, Bath,
on the 9 & 10 July 2022.**

ENGINEER

Katie May

ENGINEER ASSISTANT

Bob Mackenzie

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PRODUCER

Adrian Green



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