



A Candlelit Christmas Evening

Tuesday 17th December 2024

with

Juliet Stevenson and Dominic West

and

**The Choir of Magdalen College,
conducted by Mark Williams**

at Dorchester Abbey

This event is organised by Autism at Kingwood and volunteers. Autism at Kingwood supports autistic people to live successfully in their own homes. All proceeds from this evening will support the charity's vital work.

Registered charity number 1041924



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DAME STEPHANIE SHIRLEY CH



Welcome to this Christmas evening in aid of Autism at Kingwood, a charity I established 30 years ago this year, just 15 miles from here at Kingwood Common.

I set it up to support my beloved late son Giles, and I am immensely proud of its growth and direction. The charity now supports over 100 autistic adults in Oxfordshire and Berkshire.

I am so grateful to Dominic, Juliet, and the exceptional Magdalen College Choir for giving up their precious time at such a busy time of year.

For more than a millennium, people have come to Dorchester Abbey to reflect and rejoice, to wonder and to worship. This magical candlelit evening, full of fine words and music evokes such emotion, and reminds me of what it is to be human.

Thank you for supporting this important fundraising event tonight. I can assure you that Autism at Kingwood is a very special charity that has enabled hundreds of autistic people to thrive over the last 30 years.

Wishing you a very happy Christmas.

Dame Stephanie Shirley CH
Founder, Autism at Kingwood



JULIET STEVENSON



Juliet Stevenson, CBE, is one of the UK's finest actresses. Her RSC and NT stage work is legendary – most famously including Olivier Award-nominated roles in *Measure for Measure*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Yerma* and *Death and the Maiden* which won her an Olivier.

More recently she has performed the title role in *The Doctor* (Almeida, West End and Off Broadway), for which she was nominated for an Olivier; *Mary Stuart*, *Duet for One* (also Olivier nominated) and *Hamlet*, all of which ran at the Almeida and in the West End. Others include *Wings* and *Happy Days*, both at the Young Vic.

She was BAFTA nominated for her role in the film *Truly, Madly, Deeply* and other film appearances include *Emma*, *Bend It Like Beckham*, *Mona Lisa Smile*, *Being Julia* and *Infamous*.

She also received three nominations for TV BAFTAs for *A Doll's House*, *The Politician's Wife* and *Accused* and most recently has worked on *Professor T* (ITV), *Wolf* (BBC1) and *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (CBS).

She can most recently be seen in her new film, *Reawakening*.

DOMINIC WEST



Dominic West trained at Trinity College, Dublin and Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

His theatre career began at the Almeida in *The Silver Tassle* followed by a year in Peter Hall's company at the Old Vic in *Waste*, *Cloud Nine* and *The Seagull* for which he won the Ian Charleston award. He was in *The Voysey Inheritance* at the National Theatre and in *De La Guarda* at the Roundhouse.

At the Sheffield Crucible he starred in *The Country Wife*, *My Fair Lady* and *Othello*. In the West End he was in *Rock'n'Roll* at Duke of York's, *As you Like It* at The Wyndham's opposite Helen McCrory and in *Butley* at The Duchess, his first collaboration with Lindsay Posner.

At the Donmar Warehouse he was in Calderon's *Life is a Dream* with Kate Fleetwood, and Christopher Hampton's revival of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*. His most

recent, acclaimed performance was as Eddie in Arthur Miller's *A View From the Bridge* at Theatre Royal Haymarket, directed by Lindsay Posner.

Film credits include: *The Square*, *Pride*, *300*, *Downton Abbey*, *Colette*, *Tomb Raider*, *Testament of Youth*, *Mona Lisa Smile*, *The Awakening*, *The Forgotten*, *Johnny English Reborn*, *John Carter*, *Centurion*, *Chicago*, *Rock Star*, *28 Days*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Surviving Picasso*, *Richard III* and *3 Joes*.

On television, Dominic has won a BAFTA award for *Appropriate Adult* and was BAFTA nominated for *Burton and Taylor* and *The Crown*. He was nominated for Golden Globes in *The Crown*, *The Affair* and *The Hour*. He starred in *The Wire* (HBO); *Les Misérables*, *SAS Rogue Heroes*, *The Pursuit of Love*, *Call my Agent!* and *Stateless* (BBC). He has played Dr Chris Cox in all six seasons of Joe Gilgun's hit comedy *Brassic*.

The Choir of Magdalen College, Oxford



The Choir of Magdalen College, Oxford, was founded in 1480 as one of the largest choral foundations in late-medieval England, and this historic legacy has been preserved and maintained over five centuries. The Choir, which now enjoys an international reputation as one of the finest ensembles in the UK, exists primarily to sing the daily church services in Magdalen College Chapel. They also sing at a number of special occasions throughout the year, including the famous May Day celebrations, an ancient tradition dating back to the 16th century. The boy choristers are educated at Magdalen College School, and the Academical Clerks are ordinarily undergraduate members of the College, studying a range of subjects. Famous directors of the Choir who have held the ancient title, *Informator Choristarum* still in use today, include John Sheppard, Daniel Purcell, Sir John Stainer, Sir William McKie and Dr Bernard Rose.

Magdalen College Choir has toured Spain, Poland, the USA, Belgium, France and the Netherlands in the last few years; concert appearances have included the BBC Proms and Cadogan Hall. The Choir has worked with a number of leading orchestras including Britten Sinfonia, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. Recordings have included the music of John Ward and Thomas Tomkins with the celebrated viol group, Phantasm, and the work of the renowned composer of sacred music, former organ scholar of the College, Matthew Martin. They have won a Gramophone award, and, under former Informator, Bill Ives, collaborated with the film composer George Fenton, most notably in Richard Attenborough's movie, *Shadowlands*, with the Beatles member Sir Paul McCartney, and on the award-winning soundtrack for the BBC TV series, *Blue Planet*. Having previously appeared on Harmonia Mundi and Opus Arte, in 2024 the Choir released its first album on CORO, the recording label of The Sixteen, one of the world's leading choirs, founded and directed by former Academical Clerk and Honorary Fellow of Magdalen College, Harry Christophers CBE.

Choristers

Aryan Arora
Vova Brundukov
Nikolai Brundukov
Raymond Chen
Ayan Chowdhury
Harry Colman Stewart *Robertshaw Chorister*
Philippos Dimitriou
Etienne Durodie
Toussaint Durodie *Rose Chorister*
Enqi Fang
Matthew Liu
Raphael Onobhayedo *Waynflete Chorister*
Ethan Pant
Atharv Shanmugaraj
Anthony Vinall
Joe Xing

Academical Clerks & Organists

Altos

Sadie Boshier
Kavin Ravishankar
Nyla Thomas
Beth Stenlake

Tenors

Jack Bowley
Matthew Daly
Elliott Gregg
Aidan MacLean *Fuller-Maitland Head Clerk*

Basses

Dmitri Montanari
Cornelius Nowicki
Ioan O'Reilly
Joseph Wragg

Organ Scholars

Edward Byrne & Henry Morris

Assistant Organist

Drew Sellis

MARK WILLIAMS



Mark Williams has been Informator Choristarum, Organist and Tutorial Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford since January 2017, where he directs the internationally-renowned choir in daily services, continuing a tradition established in the fifteenth century. He was responsible for introducing to the Choir the first female Academical Clerks in the College's history and, for five years, he oversaw a project to replace the Chapel's organ with a new four-manual instrument by Hermann Eule Orgelbau of Bautzen, Germany, which was unveiled to wide acclaim in January 2023.

Mark studied at Trinity College, Cambridge, and was for six years Assistant Organist of St Paul's Cathedral and Director of Music at St Paul's Cathedral School. Between 2009 and 2016, he held the post of Director of Music, College Lecturer and Fellow at Jesus College, Cambridge. He has appeared as organist, harpsichordist and conductor internationally and on disc with many of the UK's leading ensembles, including Britten Sinfonia, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the English Chamber Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Cambridge Singers, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, The King's Consort, The Sixteen, Arcangelo, and the Gabrieli Consort and Players. He appears on over 40 albums and a number of soundtracks, and has appeared as a broadcaster on the BBC and as a recitalist, conductor, visiting speaker and lecturer in the UK, USA, India, China, South Africa, Zambia and several European countries. He is the Artistic Director of the William Byrd Festival which takes place annually in Portland, Oregon, USA, and a trustee of a number of charities focused on musical education both in the UK and abroad. He has worked with pop groups, crossover artists and appeared on major Hollywood film scores, and he has acted as musical consultant for various television programmes, including the ITV crime drama, *Endeavour*.

Further information about the Choir can be obtained from Griselda Sherlaw-Johnson, PA to the *Informator Choristarum*, at Magdalen College:

email: choir@magd.ox.ac.uk

Tel: **01865 286701**

www.magd.ox.ac.uk

www.magdalencollegechoir.com



About Autism at Kingwood

In 1994, Dame Stephanie Shirley CH founded Autism at Kingwood to support her autistic son Giles, removing him from a psychiatric hospital where he had lived for 11 years, and into a regular home. Giles was supported by caring support workers who, for the first time in his life, enabled him to make his own choices about his life.

This person-centred ethos was the blueprint for the way we provide supported living, and now we support over 100 autistic people to live successfully in their own homes, and in their community.

This year, to mark 30 years, we embark on a new and dynamic three-year strategy, to ensure our beneficiaries get the best possible support, and to ensure we can grow and support more autistic adults that need our specialist care in the area.

Money raised from this evening, will help us achieve this.

By attending the event, you are already supporting us, but if you are able to support us further with a donation towards our target, please use this QR code, or go to www.justgiving.com/campaign/kingwood30



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30 YEARS**



**AUTISM AT
KINGWOOD**

www.kingwood.org.uk

A Candlelit Evening of Christmas Music and Readings

The Choir of Magdalen College Oxford, conductor Mark Williams, Organists Edward Byrne, Henry Morris, and Drew Sellis. With Juliet Stevenson CBE and Dominic West.

Once in Royal David's City

Trad arr. David Willcocks

v.1 Solo, v.2 Choir, vv.3&4 All

Words on page 11

Readings

St John – 1:1-14

The Christmas Life *Wendy Cope*

Choir

Jesus Christ the Apple Tree

Elizabeth Poston

Little Drummer Boy

Katherine Kennicott Davis

Readings

Christmas Carol *Paul Laurence Dunbar*

Refugee *Malcolm Guite*

Choir

The Shepherd's Carol *Bob Chilcott*

Bell Carol *Mykola Leontovich*

Readings

From: Love's Labour's Lost

William Shakespeare

The Donkey *G K Chesterton*

Choir

Hymn to the Virgin *Benjamin Britten*

Reading

The Innkeeper's Wife *Clive Sansom*

Choir

Bethlehem Down *Peter Warlock*

Resonate in Laudibus *Jacob Handl*

Reading

Reginald's Christmas Revel *Saki*

Audience Carol

Good King Wenceslas

Trad, arr. Reginald Jacques

Words on page 20

Reading

Adapted from Christmas in NW1

Alan Bennett

Choir

The Magdalen Clerks' Christmas Medley

Reading with Choir

The Twelve Days of Christmas

John Julius Norwich, arr. Edward Watson

Choir

Winter Wonderland

Felix Bernard, arr. Robert Rice

Reading

A Carol for Children *Ogden Nash*

Choir

In the Stillness *Sally Beamish*

Reading

In Memoriam *Alfred Lord Tennyson*

Choir

Ding Dong Merrily on High

Charles Wood, arr. Mack Wilberg

Jingle Bells *Pierpont, arr. Allwood*

The Blessing

Audience Carol

O Come All Ye Faithful

Trad, arr. David Willcocks

Words on page 25

Organ

In Dulci Jubilo BWV 729

Johann Sebastian Bach

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GROUP

Once in Royal David's City

1 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

2 Choir only

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

3 All

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

4 All

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.

Words: C. F. Alexander (1818-95)

Music: H. J. Gauntlett (1805-76)

arr. David Willcocks (1919-2015)



Treading on butterflies

In the fictional story 'A Sound of Thunder' by Ray Bradbury, people travel back in time to hunt down a dinosaur.

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Having bagged a specially selected T-Rex, the hunting party travel back to the future, only to find that their world has completely changed.

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Right now, we are treading on butterflies.

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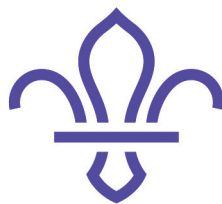


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Scouts

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For further details about scouting at Clifton Hampden and Burcot,
please contact Ian by email: chab@thameschilternscouts.org.uk

St John – 1:1-14

- 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- 2 The same was in the beginning with God.
- 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.
- 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.
- 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.
- 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
- 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.
- 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.
- 9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.
- 10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
- 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
- 12 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:
- 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
- 14 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.

The Christmas Life

Bring in a tree, a young Norwegian spruce,
Bring hyacinths that rooted in the cold.
Bring winter jasmine as its buds unfold –
Bring the Christmas life into this house.
Bring red and green and gold, bring things
that shine,
Bring candlesticks and music, food and wine.
Bring in your memories of Christmas past.
Bring in your tears for all that you have lost.
Bring in the shepherd boy, the ox and ass,
Bring in the stillness of an icy night,
Bring in the birth, of hope and love and light.
Bring the Christmas life into this house.

Wendy Cope

From *If I Don't Know* (Faber and Faber, 2001),
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author.



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EAT The Farmhouse Kitchen serves a seasonal menu of delicious home-cooked meals using our own produce and other local ingredients. Or enjoy a lighter lunch or relaxing drink in the Café within the Garden Centre.

PLAY To find out more about our huge choice of activities and events; from indoor play, farmyard golf and falconry centre to PYO Pumpkins, artisan markets and Christmas Grotto please visit our website or scan the QR code.



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Christmas Carol

Ring out, ye bells!
All Nature swells
With gladness at the wondrous story, –
The world was at lorn,
But Christ is born
To change our sadness into glory.

Sing, earthlings, sing!
To-night a King
Hath come from heaven's high throne to
 bless us.
The outstretched hand
O'er all the land
Is raised in pity to caress us.

Come at His call;
Be joyful all;
Away with mourning and with sadness!
The heavenly choir
With holy fire
Their voices raise in songs of gladness.

The darkness breaks
And Dawn awakes,
Her cheeks suffused with youthful blushes.
The rocks and stones
In holy tones
Are singing sweeter than the thrushes.

Then why should we
In silence be,
When Nature lends her voice to praises;
When heaven and earth
Proclaim the truth
Of Him for whom that lone star blazes?

No, be not still,
But with a will
Strike all your harps and set them ringing;
On hill and heath
Let every breath
Throw all its power into singing!

Paul Laurence Dunbar

(June 27, 1872 – February 9, 1906) a black American poet, novelist, and short story writer of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Born in Dayton, Ohio, to parents who had been enslaved in Kentucky before the American Civil War; died at 33 from tuberculosis.

Refugee

~~~~~

We think of him as safe beneath the steeple,  
Or cosy in a crib beside the font,  
But he is with a million displaced people  
On the long road of weariness and want.  
For even as we sing our final carol  
His family is up and on that road,  
Fleeing the wrath of someone else's quarrel,  
Glancing behind and shouldering their load.  
Whilst Herod rages still from his dark tower  
Christ clings to Mary, fingers tightly curled,  
The lambs are slaughtered by the men of  
power,  
And death squads spread their curse across  
the world.  
But every Herod dies, and comes alone  
To stand before the Lamb upon the throne.

### Malcom Guite

From *Sounding the Seasons*, Canterbury Press, used  
with the author's permission.

## The Donkey

~~~~~

When fishes flew and forests walked
And figs grew upon thorn,
Some moment when the moon was blood
Then surely I was born.

With monstrous head and sickening cry
And ears like errant wings,
The devil's walking parody
On all four-footed things.

The tattered outlaw of the earth,
Of ancient crooked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,
I keep my secret still.

Fools! For I also had my hour;
One far fierce hour and sweet:
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms before my feet.

G K Chesterton

From: Love's Labour's Lost



When icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen hot in pail,
When blood is nipp'd and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
Tu-whit;
Tu-who, a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw,
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
Tu-whit;
Tu-who, a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

William Shakespeare

The Innkeeper's Wife

I love this byre. Shadows are kindly here.
The light is flecked with travelling stars of dust.
So quiet it seems after the inn-clamour,
Scraping of fiddles and the stamping feet.
Only the cows, each in her patient box,
Turn their slow eyes, as we and the sunlight
enter.
Their slowly rhythmic mouths.
"That is the stall, Carpenter. You see it's too
far gone
For patching or repatching. My husband made it,
And he's been gone these dozen years and
more..."
Strange how this lifeless thing, degraded wood
Split from the tree and nailed and crucified
To make a wall, outlives the mastering hand
That struck it down, the warm firm hand
That touched my body with its wandering love.
"No, let the fire take them. Strip every board
And make a new beginning. Too many memories
lurk
Like worms in this old wood. That piece you're
holding –
That patch of grain with the giant's
thumbprint –
I stared at it a full hour when he died:
Its grooves are down my mind. And that board
there
Baring its knot-hole like a missing jig-saw –
I remember another hand along its rim.
No, not my husband's, and why I should
remember
I cannot say. It was a night in winter.
Our house was full, tight-packed as salted
herrings –
So full, they said, we had to hold our breaths
To close the door and shut the night-air out!
And the two travellers came. They stood
outside

Across the threshold, half in the ring of light
And half beyond it. I would have let them in
Despite the crowding – the woman was past
her time –
But I'd no mind to argue with my husband.
The flagon in my hand and half the inn
Still clamouring for wine. But when trade
slackened,
And all our guests had sung themselves to bed
Or told the floor their troubles, I came out here
Where he had lodged them. The man was
standing
As you are now, his hand smoothing that
board –
He was a carpenter, I heard them say.
She rested on the straw, and on her arm
A child was lying. None of your creased-faced
brats
Squalling their lungs out. Just lying there
As calm as a new-dropped calf – his eyes wide
open,
And gazing round as if the world he saw
In the chaff-strewn light of the stable lanterns
Was something beautiful and new and strange.
Ah well, he'll have learnt different now, I reckon,
Wherever he is. And why I should recall
A scene like that, when times I would
remember
Have passed beyond reliving, I cannot think.
It's a trick you're served by old possessions:
They have their memories too – too many
memories.
Well, I must go in. There are meals to serve.
Join us there, Carpenter, when you've had
enough
Of cattle-company. The world is a sad place,
But wine and music blunt the truth of it."

Clive Sansom

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Dedicated to the memory of Ron Colbert.

From Reginald's Christmas Revel

They say (said Reginald) that there's nothing sadder than victory except defeat. If you've ever stayed with dull people during what is alleged to be the festive season, you can probably revise that saying. I shall never forget putting in a Christmas at the Babwolds'. Mrs. Babwold is some relation of my father's... and that was considered sufficient reason for my having to accept her invitation at about the sixth time of asking; though why the sins of the father should be visited by the children... Mrs. Babwold wears a rather solemn personality... She takes her pleasures sadly. Her husband gardens in all weathers. When a man goes out in the pouring rain to brush caterpillars off rose-trees, I generally imagine his life indoors leaves something to be desired; anyway, it must be very unsettling for the caterpillars. Of course there were other people there. There was a Major Somebody who had shot things in Lapland, or somewhere of that sort; I forget what they were, but it wasn't for want of reminding. We had them cold with every meal almost, and he was continually giving us details of what they measured from tip to tip, as though he thought we were going to make them warm under-things for the winter. I used to listen to him with a rapt attention that I thought rather suited me, and then one day I quite modestly gave the dimensions of an okapi I had shot in the Lincolnshire fens. The Major turned a beautiful Tyrian scarlet (I remember thinking at the time that I should like my bathroom hung in that colour), and I think that at that moment he almost found it in his heart to dislike me. Mrs. Babwold put on a 'first-aid-to-the-injured' expression, and asked him why he didn't publish a book of his sporting reminiscences; it would be so interesting. She didn't remember till afterwards that he had given her two fat volumes on the subject, with his portrait and autograph as a frontispiece and an appendix on the habits of the Arctic mussel. It was in the evening that we cast aside the cares and distractions of the day and really lived. Cards were thought to be too frivolous and empty a way of passing the time, so most of them played what they called a book game... Of course

these games are very educational, but, personally, I prefer bridge. On Christmas evening we were supposed to be specially festive in the Old English fashion. A young lady with a confidential voice favoured us with a long recitation about a little girl who died or did something equally hackneyed, and then the Major gave us a graphic account of a struggle he had with a wounded bear... Before we had time to recover our spirits, we were indulged with some thought-reading by a young man whom one knew instinctively had a good mother and an indifferent tailor... As a crowning dissipation, they all sat down to play progressive halma, with milk-chocolate for prizes. I've been carefully brought up, and I don't like to play games of skill for milk-chocolate, so I invented a headache and retired from the scene. I had been preceded a few minutes earlier by Miss Langshan-Smith, a rather formidable lady, who always got up at some uncomfortable hour in the morning, and gave you the impression that she had been in communication with most of the European Governments before breakfast. There was a paper pinned on her door with a signed request that she might be called particularly early on the morrow. Such an opportunity does not come twice in a lifetime. I covered up everything except the signature with another notice, to the effect that before these words should meet the eye she would have ended a misspent life, was sorry for the trouble she was giving, and would like a military funeral. A few minutes later I violently exploded an air-filled paper bag on the landing, and gave a stage moan that could have been heard in the cellars. Then I pursued my original intention and went to bed. The noise those people made in forcing open the good lady's door was positively indecorous; she resisted gallantly, but I believe they searched her for bullets for about a quarter of an hour, as if she had been an historic battlefield. I hate travelling on Boxing Day, but one must occasionally do things that one dislikes.

Saki (H.H. Munro)

Good King Wenceslas

Audience carol

I All

Good King Wenceslas looked out
On the feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about,
Deep and crisp and even.
Brightly shone the moon that night,
Though the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight
Gath'ring winter fuel.

2 Lower voices

"Hither, page, and stand by me
If thou know'st it, telling,
Yonder peasant, who is he?
Where and what his dwelling?"

Upper voices

"Sire, he lives a good league hence
Underneath the mountain,
Right against the forest fence,
By Saint Agnes' fountain."

3 Lower voices

"Bring me flesh and bring me wine,
Bring me pine logs hither.
Thou and I will see him dine,
When we bear him thither."

Choir only

Page and monarch forth they went,
Forth they went together,
Through the rude wind's wild lament,
And the bitter weather.

4 Upper voices

"Sire, the night is darker now,
And the wind blows stronger.
Fails my heart, I know not how,
I can go no longer."

Lower voices

"Mark my footsteps, good my page,
Tread thou in them boldly.
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly."

5 All

In his master's steps he trod
Where the snow lay dinted.
Heat was in the very sod
Which the Saint had printed.
Therefore, Christian men, be sure,
Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor
Shall yourselves find blessing.

Words: J. M. Neale (1818-1866)

Adapted from 'Christmas in NW1' by Alan Bennett

Scene: *The home of Simon and Joanna Stringalong. Simon is on the telephone. Joanna is on the gin. Neither is very happy.*

Simon: She must be out.

Joanna: A schoolteacher? Where? ... Let it ring.

Simon: ... she could be anywhere – oh hello. Is that Jessica's teacher? This is Simon, Jessica's father. I'm sorry if I'm ringing at an impossibly late hour. ...

Joanna: It's only half past eight!

Simon: ... I just hope I'm not interrupting a candlelit dinner a deux. But what I'm ringing about, Miss... Pru. (To Joanna) She says I've to call her Pru.

Joanna: Pru!

Simon: What I'm ringing about, Pru, is that we've just put little Jessica to bed in what quite honestly was a very distressed condition. She came home from school with this letter. ...

Joanna: Letter!

Simon: ... about the nativity play. All pretty straightforward. I probably wouldn't even have read it. ...

Joanna: No.

Simon: ... only, Joanna, my wife, gave it to me so I glanced through it to see what part Jessica was playing. But I couldn't find her. I couldn't find her at all. It was only when I got right to the very end, the bottom of the bill as it were, that I came across her name; 'Pauline Greenwood, Kevin Strutt, Charlotte Hindle and Jessica Stringalong – Icicles'. Now Joanna, my wife, and I may be getting hold of the wrong end of the stick, Pru, and it may be these icicles have a sizeable part to play in the action, but judging from the billing it doesn't look like it.

Joanna: What do these icicles do?

Simon: Sorry, that was my wife. The icicles do what? They drip. I see. (To Joanna) They drip.

Joanna: Oh!

Simon: Do they drip verbally? No? Ah. What is worrying Mrs Stringalong and myself, Pru, is that in last year's show Jessica had quite an interesting part as. ...

Joanna: A Bethlehem housewife.

Simon: A Bethlehem housewife. We hear a lot about falling educational standards and ... now we find that last year Jessica played a housewife and this year she just drips. What kind of progress is that?

Joanna: Jessica had a long speech last year.

Simon: Last year she had quite a bit to say. What was it, Joanna?

Joanna: "You can't move in the middle of Bethlehem. I understand there's not a bed to be had."

Simon: "You can't move in the middle of Bethlehem. I understand there's not a bed to be had." And there was a bit more (and I'm not sure this didn't come off the top of Jessica's little head): "Next thing you know they'll be sleeping in the stables." That was about the gist of it. ... Quite an interesting part, with a significant piece of plot-laying. Which Jessica did superbly. Very clear. Very sharp. "You can't move in the middle of Bethlehem. I understand there's not a bed to be had. Next thing you know they'll be sleeping in the stables." And this year she just drips. It's so disappointing. ... We ... were looking forward to this Yuletide to see what she made of a more taxing role. I'm sure she'll throw herself heart and soul into the part.

Joanna: But why isn't there more of a part for her to throw herself heart and soul into? Pru.

Simon: My wife again, I'm afraid. She's a bit upset, yes. I imagine from the cast list you are filling out the gospel story a little. Icicles hanging on the wall, Dick the Shepherd blowing his nail and so on? ... Now who else is in the gospel story?

Joanna: Who is playing Mary?

Simon: Who is playing Mary as a matter of interest? ... Tracey Broadbent!

Joanna: Tracey Broadbent!

Simon: Yes we do know Tracey as a matter of fact. ... I have a very vivid memory of Tracey as Herod in last year's offering. ... Let's get back to the icicle, the part for which you've got her pencilled in. What is it hanging from? I see. ... I'm not sure that we are totally in agreement with that, Pru. Mrs Stringalong's father is quite prominent in wholesale floor coverings and I think we would feel that if Jessica was going to be involved in making a direct political statement, even if it's only by dripping in silence, then we might have to keep her at home. No, Pru. We are not just talking about a nativity play. We are talking about the most precious thing in the world, a child's mind.

Joanna: Forget it.

Simon: No, I'm sorry. That is final. Pickets? What sort of pickets? (To Joanna) There's a part as a picket. ...

Alan Bennett

From 'Writing Home' and reproduced by kind permission of Faber.

The Twelve Days of Christmas

With musical arrangement by Edward Watson.

25th December

My dearest darling,
That partridge, in that lovely little pear tree! What an enchanting, romantic, poetic present! Bless you and thank you.
Your deeply loving Emily.

26th December

My dearest darling Edward,
The two turtle doves arrived this morning and are cooing away in the pear tree as I write. I'm so touched and grateful.
With undying love, as always, Emily.

27th December

My darling Edward,
You do think of the most original presents: whoever thought of sending anybody three French hens? Do they really come all the way from France? It's a pity that we have no chicken coops, but I expect we'll find some. Thank you, anyway, they're lovely.
Your loving Emily.

28th December

Dearest Edward,
What a surprise – four calling birds arrived this morning. They are very sweet, even if they do call rather loudly – they make telephoning impossible. But I expect they'll calm down when they get used to their new home. Anyway, I'm very grateful – of course I am.
Love from Emily.

29th December

Dearest Edward,
The postman has just delivered five most beautiful gold rings, one for each finger, and all fitting perfectly. A really lovely present – lovelier in a way than birds, which do take rather a lot of looking after. The four that arrived yesterday are still making a terrible row, and I'm afraid none of us got much sleep last night. Mummy says she wants us to use the rings to 'wring' their necks – she's only joking, I think; though I know what she means. But I love the rings. Bless you.
Love, Emily.

30th December

Dear Edward,
Whatever I expected to find when I opened the front door this morning, it certainly wasn't six socking great geese laying eggs all over the doorstep. Frankly, I rather hoped you had stopped sending me birds – we have no room for them and they have already ruined the croquet lawn. I know you meant well, but – let's call a halt, shall we?
Love, Emily.

31st December

Edward,
I thought I said no more birds; but this morning I woke up to find no less than seven swans all trying to get into our tiny goldfish pond. I'd rather not think what happened to the goldfish. The whole house seems to be full of birds – to say nothing of what they leave behind them. Please, please STOP.
Your Emily.

1st January

Frankly, I think I prefer the birds. What am I to do with eight milkmaids – AND their cows? Is this some kind of a joke? If so, I'm afraid I don't find it very amusing.
Emily.

2nd January

Look here Edward, this has gone far enough. You say you're sending me nine ladies dancing; all I can say is that judging from the way they dance, they're certainly not ladies. The village just isn't accustomed to seeing a regiment of shameless hussies with nothing on but their lipstick cavorting round the green – and it's Mummy and I who get blamed. If you value our friendship – which I do less and less – kindly stop this ridiculous behaviour at once.
Emily.

3rd January

As I write this letter, ten disgusting old men are prancing about all over what used to be the garden – before the geese and the swans and the cows got at it; and several of them, I notice, are taking inexcusable liberties with the milkmaids. Meanwhile the neighbours are trying to have us evicted. I shall never speak to you again.
Emily.

A Carol for Children

4th January

This is the last straw. You know I detest bagpipes.
The place has now become something between a
menagerie and a madhouse and a man from the
Council has just declared it unfit for habitation. At
least Mummy has been spared this last outrage; they
took her away yesterday afternoon in an ambulance.
I hope you're satisfied.

5th January

Sir,
Our client, Miss Emily Wilbraham, instructs me to
inform you that with the arrival on her premises a
half-past seven this morning of the entire percussion
section of the Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra and
several of their friends she has no course left open
to her but to seek an injunction to prevent your
importuning her further. I am making arrangements
for the return of much assorted livestock.

I am, Sir, Yours faithfully,
G. CREEP
Solicitor-at-law

**John Julius Norwich, arranged by
Edward Watson**

God rest you, merry Innocents,
Let nothing you dismay,
Let nothing wound an eager heart
Upon this Christmas day.

Yours be the genial holly wreaths,
The stockings and the tree;
An aged world to you bequeaths
Its own forgotten glee.

Soon, soon enough come crueler gifts,
The anger and the tears;
Between you now there sparsely drifts
A handful yet of years.

Oh, dimly, dimly glows the star
Through the electric throng;
The bidding in temple and bazaar
Drowns out the silver song.

The ancient altars smoke afresh,
The ancient idols stir;
Faint in the reek of burning flesh
Sink frankincense and myrrh.

Gaspar, Balthazar, Melchior!
Where are your offerings now?
What greetings to the Prince of War,
His darkly branded brow?

Two ultimate laws alone we know,
The ledger and the sword –
So far away, so long ago,
We lost the infant Lord.

Only the children clasp his hand;
His voice speaks low to them,
And still for them the shining band
Wings over Bethlehem.

God rest you, merry Innocents,
While innocence endures.
A sweeter Christmas than we to ours
May you bequeath to yours.

Ogden Nash

From: In Memoriam

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.

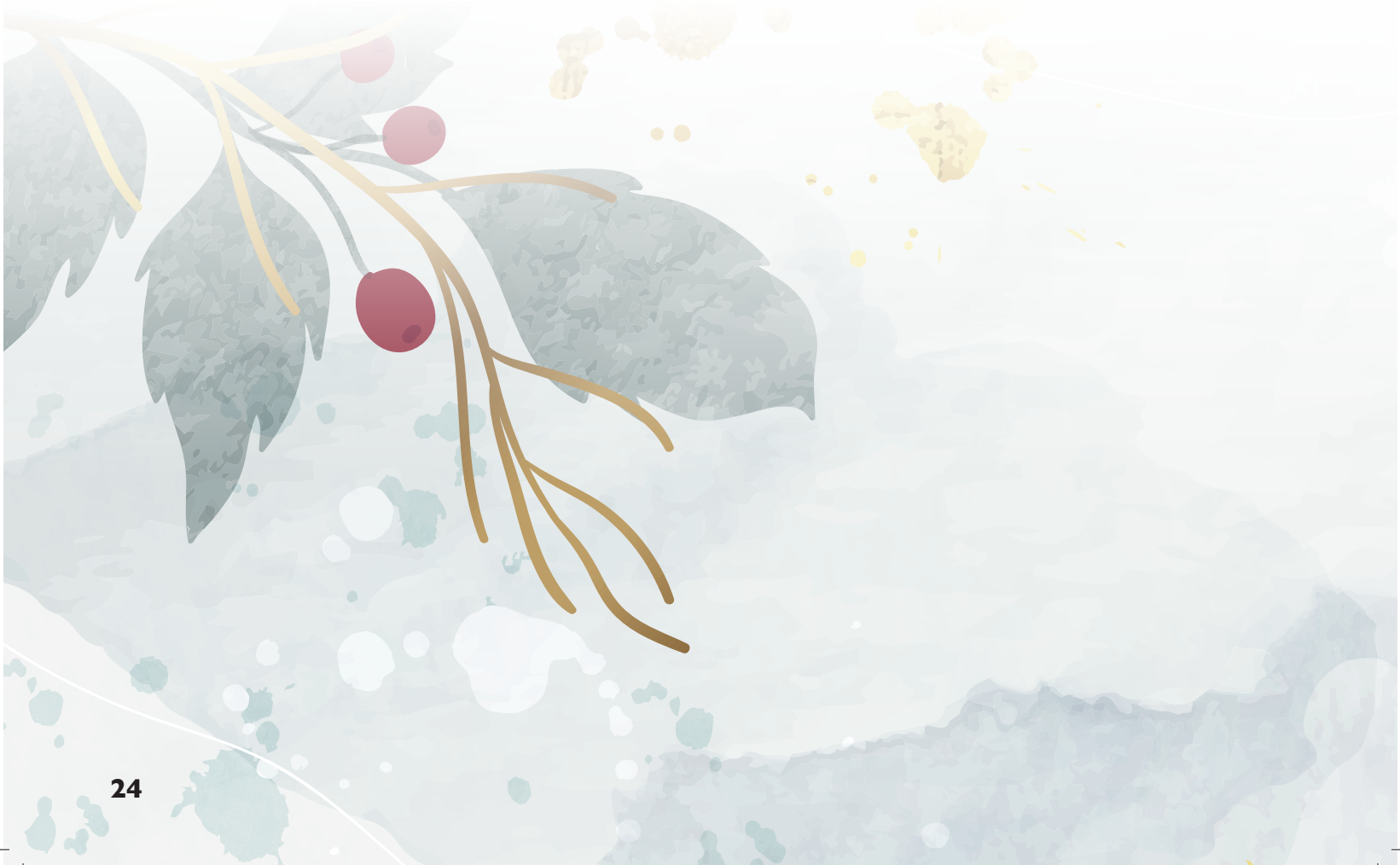
Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

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.

Alfred Lord Tennyson



O Come All Ye Faithful

1 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!

2 God of God,
Light of Light,
Lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Very God,
Begotten not created:

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

3 See how the Shepherds,
Summoned to his cradle,
Leaving their flocks,
draw nigh with lowly fear;
We too will thither
Bend our joyful footsteps:

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

4 Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing all ye citizens of heaven above;
Glory to God
In the Highest:

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

(Attributed to): John Francis Wade

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The Revd Jane Willis

for blessing our evening.

And lastly, thank **you** for supporting our event.

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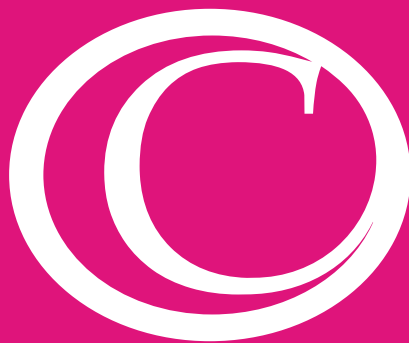
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