We have been threatening to put together a Christmas album for a ridiculous number of years, but when we were moved to write "The Gifts of Midwinter" the project became real. A further ridiculous number of years have passed, but quality takes time. (That's our story, and we're sticking to it.)

Since then we have set out to find songs you don't hear on EVERY Christmas album, though we couldn't resist putting our stamp on a couple of personal favorites. So here they are, from the sacred to the secular, from medieval to modern. Good Yule and Merry Christmas.

Note: all italicized editor's notes are by me, Lisa Theriot. All translations are my own (I have trust issues!).

**Gaudete**

\textit{Words and Music (chorus, 4 parts): Piae Cantiones, 1562 (Music), Poehlman's Cantional (Melody), 1998 (Melody)}

I once heard a fighter say that he had been really inspired before a battle because the army was singing together in Latin. Horribly, they were singing this song, the chorus of which translates as "Rejoice, for Christ is born of the Virgin Mary!" I'm a little alarmed that they headed off to shed metaphorical blood singing this song, but I suppose it's quite the medieval attitude. There is no music for the verses in the Piae Cantiones; the verse melody is usually given off as the Bohemian collection referenced above; however, since I have seen at least three different verse melodies all claim the same source, I remain in doubt until the Czech National Library sees fit to web the collection.

Chorus: Gaudete! Gaudete! Christus est natus

\textit{Ex Maria Virginis, Gaudete! (repeat)}

Tempus adest gratia, Hoc quod opatamum; Carmina laetificia Devote reddamus.

Deus homo factus est, Natura mirante; Mundus renovatus est, A Christo regnante.

Ezechielis porta Clausa pertransitur; Unde lux est orta; Salus inventur.

Ergo nostra concio Paillat iam in lustro; Benedictus Domino; Salus Regi nostro.

Arranged by Ken and Lisa Theriot ©2010 Raven Boy Music

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**Marmion's Christmas Song**

\textit{Adapted from "Marmion," 1808, by Sir Walter Scott}

"Marmion" is an epic poem by Sir Walter Scott set around the time of the Battle of Flodden Field (1513). In the middle, there is a totally unrelated description of a jolly Christmas party. I moved a few bits around and decided that it goes well with the melody from "The Sussex Carol," which begins, "On Christmas Night all Christians sing..."

On Christmas Eve the bells are rung
On Christmas Eve the mass is sung
The damsel dons her kirtle sheen;
The hall is dress'd with holly green;
Forth to the wood the merry-men go,
All to gather the mistletoe.

Then opens wide the Baron's hall
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all;
Power lays his rod aside,
And Ceremony doffs his pride.  And to the cottage, as the crown,
Comes good news of salvation down.

Minuit, Chrétiens, c'est l'heure solennelle,
O l'Homme-Dieu descendit jusqu'à nous,
Pour effacer la tache originelle,
Et de Son Père arrêter le courroux.
Le monde entier tressaille d'espérance;
En cette nuit qui lui donne un Sauveur.

Peuple à genoux, attend ta délivrance,
Noël, Noël, voici le Rédempteur,
Noël, Noël, voici le Rédempteur!

Le Rédempteur a bâti toute entrave.
La terre est libre, le ciel est ouvert,
Il voit un frère où n'était qu'un esclave,
L'amour unit ceux qu'enchaînait le fer.
Qui Lui dira notre reconnaissance,
C'est pour nous tous qu'il naît, qu'il souffre et meurt.

Peuple debout! Chante ta délivrance,
Noël, Noël, chantons le Rédempteur,
Noël, Noël, chantons le Rédempteur!

Words by Placide Cappeau (1808-1877) Music by Adolphe Adam (1803-1856)

Arranged by Lisa Theriot © 2010, Raven Boy Music

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**Do You Hear What I Hear?**

\textit{Adapted from "Marmion," 1808, by Sir Walter Scott}

Do You Hear What I Hear? (Minuit, Chrétiens) is an epic poem by Sir Walter Scott set around the time of the Battle of Flodden Field (1513). In the middle, there is a totally unrelated description of a jolly Christmas party. I moved a few bits around and decided that it goes well with the melody from "The Sussex Carol," which begins, "On Christmas Night all Christians sing..."

And so to merry England then
Old Christmas brings his sport again.
At Christmas broach the mightiest ale;
At Christmas tell the merriest tale;
Let chill winds whistle as they will,
We'll keep our Christmas merry still.

Words by Sir Walter Scott

From the introduction to Canto VI of "Marmion,"
Dedicated to Richard Heber, Esquire,
and set at "Merton House, Christmas."
Music traditional, to "The Sussex Carol," melody collected from tradition in 1919 by R.V. Williams

(Adapted and arranged by Lisa Theriot © 2010 Raven Boy Music, ASCAP)

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**Peuple debout! Chante ta délivrance,**

\textit{Noël, Noël, chantons le Rédempteur,
Noël, Noël, chantons le Rédempteur!}

And if your French isn't what it should be...

Midnight, Christians, it is the solemn hour
That God-made-man descended among us
To erase original sin
And of His Father end the wrath

The whole world trembles with hope
In this night which gives us a savior

People on your knees, await your deliverance
Noël, Noël, here is your Redeemer
Noël, Noël, here is your Redeemer

The Redeemer has broken our bonds
The earth is free, and Heaven is open
One now sees a brother where there was a slave
Love unites those once bound in chains of iron
Who will tell us of our gratitude?
It is for all that he was born, that he suffered and died

People, arias! Sing of your deliverance!
Noël, Noël, sing of your Redeemer
Noël, Noël, sing of your Redeemer

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**Do You Hear What I Hear?**

This is a favorite of mine and of several close friends, so as much as we tried to avoid modern Christmas songs, we had to make an exception for this one. Ken was happy about it when I told him what I wanted for the drums...

Said the night wind to the little lamb
Do you see what I see? Way up in the sky, little lamb
Do you see what I see? A Star, a Star

Do you hear what I hear? Ringing through the sky, shepherd boy
Do you hear what I hear? A song, a song, high above the tree
With a voice as big as the sea
With a voice as big as the sea.

Said the shepherd boy to the mighty King
Do you know what I know? In your palace warm, mighty King
Do you know what I know? Let a child, a child, shiver in the cold
Let us bring him silver and gold

Said the King to the people everywhere
Listen to what I say! Pray for peace, people everywhere
Listen to what I say! The child, the child, sleeping in the night
He will bring us goodness and light
He will bring us goodness and light.


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How Far to Bethlehem?

I learned this song for a Christmas pageant when I was in the 4th grade, which doesn’t quite make it traditional. Do the words by Frances Chesterton, wife of author G.K. Chesterton, but are most often sung to a traditional tune known as “Stowey,” not this, the tune I was taught. I have combed books and the web looking for the provenance of this lovely minor melody, to no avail. If you know it, please tell me!

How far to Bethlehem? Not very far.
Shall we find the stable room lit by a star?
Can we see the little child? Is he within?
If we lift the wooden latch, may we go in?

May we stroke the creatures there,
Oxen and sheep?
May we watch them like see Jesus asleep?
If we touch his tiny hand, will he awake?

Will he know we’ve come so far just for his sake?
Great kings have precious gifts,
And we have nought,
Little smiles and little tears are all we’ve brought.
For all weary little children Mary must weep.
Here, upon his bed of straw,
Sleep, children, sleep.

Words by Frances Chesterton (1875-1938)
Music, provenance unknown
Arranged by Lisa Theriot © 2010 Raven Boy Music

Drink to the Holly Berry

I wanted a wassailing song on the album, and when we looked at all the ones we knew, Ken said, “Why don’t we write one?” So we did. Hey, we’re musicians—we know how to beg for booze.

Chorus: Drink to the holly berry,
With a hey down, hey down derry!
Just bring us ale, and good wassail,
And we shall all be merry.

Good Master, good mistresses, and all of your kin,
We come bringing good Christmas cheer;
We’ll sing you a song
And it won’t be too long.

The least you can spare is some mead.

Arranged by Lisa Theriot © 2010 Raven Boy Music

This Endris Night

The book in which I found this song dates it as “1483 (?)”. Isn’t that like saying it’s approximately 2:37? How can you be that specific and unsure at the same time? Oddly, modern editions of this song use the opening line as the refrain, which is just dumb, because the third lines all end in <-et>, which rhymes with “nouvelet” but not with “ici.”

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Noël Nouvelet

The Oxford Book of Carols notes, “Was not new when it was written out in the Bodleian MS, Eng. Poet., e. 1, which is dated between 1480 and 1490.” “This endris night” is roughly “the other night.” Even divine babies want to be rocked by their mother.

This endris night I saw a sight
A star as bright as day;
And there among a maiden sung,
“Lullay, by by, lullay.”
This lovely lady sat and sung,
And to her child did say,
"My Son, my Brother, I love thee dear,
Why liest thou thus in hay?"

Words and music traditional. Arranged by Lisa Theriot © 2010 Raven Boy Music, ASCAP

The Boar’s Head Carol
Words: T. J. Dibdin’s Typographical antiquities
Music: traditional, Queen’s College, Oxford

This carol always reminds me of a certain Drachenwald feast where a boar’s head was served to the Prince and the herald loudly declared “His Highness has the head of a pig!”

The Boar’s Head in hand bear I,
Bedecked with bays and rosemary; And I pray you, my masters, be merry,
Quot estis in convivio:  Chorus: Caput apri defero;               Reddens laudes Domino.

Arranged by Ken and Lisa Theriot © 2010 Raven Boy Music, ASCAP

Personent hodie
Words: Flor Cambra “1582
Music: Mondal, Manuscript 1560

This song is an unusual sacred-Latin-to-sacred-Latin “filk” or contrafactum. The underlying song is a 12th century hymn to Saint Nicholas (beginning, “Intonet hodie, voces ecclesiae…” which was at some point converted to this far more popular song traditionally associated with the Feast of the Holy Innocents.

In case you’re interested, the Occitan lyrics begin:
De matin ai rescountra lou trin
De tres grand rei qu’anavon en viagi.

Arranged by Lisa Theriot © 2010 Raven Boy Music

The Child then spake in his talking,
And his mother said,
"Yes, I am known as Heaven-King,
In crib though I be laid.
For angels bright down to Me light:
That all is at Thy will,
I pray Thee grant to me a boon,
If it be right and skill,
To bliss Thou bring—and I shall sing,
To dwell with God in amity,
Now bless the Lord all ye on Earth,
Our steward hath provided this
In Regimen atrio:
To sing, By by, lullay.

"Mary mother, I am thy Child,
That liest thou thus in hay?
And for that sight thou mayst delight
To sing, By by, lullay.

"Now, sweet Son, since Thou art a king,
Why art Thou laid in a stall?
Why dost not order thy bedding
In some great kings hall?
"Metinhis’s right that king or knight
Should lie in good array;
And then among, it were no wrong
To sing, By by, lullay.

"My dear mother, thou hold Me warm,
And keep Me night and day,
And if I weep, and may not sleep,
Thou art my Love and Dear—
How should I keep Thee to Thy pay,
And make Thee glad of cheer?

"That child or man, who will or can
Be merry on my day,
To dwell with God in amity,
In joy for such a blessed birth,
Now bless the Lord all ye on Earth,
Envoi:

Words: in Latin
Music: traditional
Arranged by Lisa Theriot
© 2010 Raven Boy Music

This is an unusual sacred-Latin-to-sacred-Latin “filk” or contrafactum. The underlying song is a 12th century hymn to Saint Nicholas (beginning, “Intonet hodie, voces ecclesiae…” which was at some point converted to this far more popular song traditionally associated with the Feast of the Holy Innocents.

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The Gifts of Midwinter

I wrote this one snowy evening after an afternoon of snowman-building with my husband and son. Some occasions just put everything into perspective...

Imagine the grief at the dawn of mankind
As they watched the sun die by the last of its rays
With none to declare as they soldiered on, blind
That the night did not herald the ending of days
But faith is our gift as we watch the light fade
And the year ends in darkness as each was begun
We'll not mourn the light and we'll not be afraid
And candles will serve till the spring brings the sun.

Faith...

CHORUS: ...is a gift that the Midwinter brings
In the stillness it stirs, in the silence it sings
It burns in the hearts of the young and the old
Like a flame in the darkness, a light in the cold.

In the turn of the year there is joy in the new
That makes us look forward and not to the past
To pleasures uncounted, afflictions but few
Our troubles will end, and our promises last
And hope is our gift as our thoughts fly ahead
To happier times than the time gone before
We'll not leave our hearts in the year that is dead
But rather sing welcome to what lies in store.

Hope...

Arms to enfold you and gather you tight
Are less often missed when the weather is mild
But fast we will hold in the midwinter's night
To the arms of a lover, or the hand of a child
And love is the gift that binds all gifts to one
The faith that we pledge with the giving of rings
The hope that we see in a daughter or son
And the greatest, that raises our state above kings.

Love...

words and music by Lisa Theriot
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3. Cantique de Noël (O Holy Night)
4. Do You Hear What I Hear?
5. How Far to Bethlehem?
6. Riu, Riu
7. Lully, Lully (The Corpus Christi Carol)
8. Drink to the Holly Berry
9. Noël Nouvel
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12. Puer Natus (A Child is Born)
13. The Boar’s Head Carol
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15. The Gifts of Midwinter