

CMC CHORAL CATALOGUE:

CHRISTMAS REPERTOIRE

the
contemporary
music centre
Ireland

Christmas Choral Music from Ireland

The Contemporary Music Centre documents, develops and promotes contemporary music from Ireland, throughout the island and abroad. CMC represents almost two hundred composers born or based in Ireland, with the total number of scores housed in the Centre running into the thousands. CMC's priority is to ensure that the music of living composers from this island is easy to obtain and access. Scores are accessed daily for performance or research, both through the physical collection and online through sample pages on our website www.cmc.ie.

Each year the Christmas season is welcomed in with singing the well known, well loved carols, sacred and secular, from this island and from further afield. But there is often a moment during the Christmas season when we are surprised by a new Christmas work by a creative artist taking a fresh musical look at the season. In recent years we have experienced an increased engagement by choral conductors (of all forces) with our catalogue of choral works and a growing engagement in the programming and commissioning of new music for Christmas.

This Christmas catalogue, curated by Dr Desmond Earley, Artistic Director of the UCD Choral Scholars is a small but representative selection from a wealth of original Christmas choral music in the CMC collection. We hope it will offer guidance to choral directors, teachers and singers in search of new repertoire, and increase the performance of choral works written by composers born or based in Ireland.

All of the works listed are supplied by the Contemporary Music Centre and can be ordered through www.cmc.ie, except where other publisher details are outlined. Start the search and enjoy the singing!

Evonne Ferguson, Director of CMC

Since the age of plainsong, the liturgical seasons of Advent and Christmas have enjoyed a disproportionate level of creative attention from composers compared to the many other ordinary (and extra-ordinary) dates of the Christian liturgical calendar. From the simple but powerful settings of plainsong by Saint Ambrose of Milan in the early Christian Church, through the age of the Renaissance motets, beyond the polychoral works of Gabrieli and Schütz, to the cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach and so on to composers of our age, Advent and Christmas texts continue to inspire composers to this day.

Each December, choral directors seek to programme new and engaging festive music to entertain audiences or to stimulate congregations. This catalogue is intended to support the choral director in programming new seasonal music by composers born or based in Ireland, perhaps even to encourage conductors to consider their first foray into the world of new music.

This catalogue includes an array of pieces from unison to eight parts, ranging in level from the accessible to the challenging. An important consideration in curating this catalogue for the Contemporary Music Centre was to encourage the performance of choral works by composers born or based in Ireland through the sharing of relevant information about the works selected. The other main consideration was the inclusion of repertoire for choirs of differing levels. As well as providing facts and figures relating to range, tempo, and the distribution of forces, a short paragraph on each piece is included with some programme/performance notes and suggestions. It is my hope that conductors will take the opportunity to explore some of this new and exciting repertoire from the Contemporary Music Centre.

Grading as follows:

A: Easily Accessible

B: Moderately Difficult

C: Difficult

D: Works more suitable for professional or semi-professional choirs

Dr Desmond Earley, University College Dublin Choral Scholars, Curator

Desmond Earley is Lecturer in Choral Conducting at University College Dublin, Artistic Director of UCD Choral Scholars and Director of the UCD Ad Astra Music Programme. He holds a DMus Performance degree in early music (harpsichord) from the Royal Irish Academy of Music, having studied previously at the Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst, Wien, at University College Dublin and the DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama. He is a member of the [American] National Collegiate Choral Organisation and the Society of Musicology in Ireland. Desmond is a published arranger and composer of choral works with Hal Leonard (USA) and Novello (UK) and regularly works as a choral conductor/clinician in the areas of early music and Irish choral music.

Level A

Elaine Agnew - Curoo Curoo (2008)

Instrumentation:	sa, pf	
Range:	Soprano:	C4 – E5
	Alto:	C4 – C5
Language:	English	
Text:	Elaine Agnew	
Metre:	4/4	
Tempo:	Crotchet = 64-72 Expressively; Crotchet = 88-96 With excitement!	
Duration:	3'	
Length:	47 bars	
Publisher:	Score supplied by CMC	

Curoo Curoo was commissioned for RTÉ lyric fm's Carols for Christmas competition in December 2008 and was premiered by New Dublin Voices (NDV). The *con moto* left-hand of the piano part creates a plaintive pulse over which the composer stretches unison choral phrases in the opening section. The choir divides briefly on the text 'Curoo' emulating the birdsong. The tempo gains momentum with restless staccato writing as the text announces the presence of an owl. Agnew's opening material returns to close the piece. This setting is suitable for children or adult upper voices. There is also a version for SA choir with chamber orchestra.

Seóirse Bodley - An Teicheadh go hÉigipt (1960)

Instrumentation:	ssa	
Range:	Soprano 1:	B-flat3 – E-flat5
	Soprano 2:	B-flat3 – C5
	Alto:	G3 – B-flat4
Language:	Irish	
Text:	Traditional	
Metre:	3/4	
Tempo:	<i>Andante</i>	
Duration:	3'	
Length:	16 bars [strophic]	
Publisher:	Score supplied by CMC	

Seóirse Bodley's attractive arrangement of this traditional text will flatter the concert programme of any children's choir or female chorus. The lower parts support the traditional melody. Bodley's choice of dissonance for the final chords paints the text '*nach trua sin!*'. The music serves three verses of text.

Linda Buckley - Stars of Wonder (2012)

Instrumentation: ssa, pf perc [opt.]
Range: Soprano 1: A3 – D5
Soprano 2: A3 – C5
Alto: A3 – A4
Language: English
Text: Gabriel Fitzmaurice
Metre: 2/4
Tempo: Crotchet = 80
Duration: 3'
Length: 83 bars
Publisher: Score supplied by CMC

Commissioned by RTÉ lyric fm, the choir and orchestra version of this piece was premiered in 2012 by the RTÉ Concert Orchestra and RTÉ Cór na nÓg at the National Concert Hall in Dublin. This version is for choir, piano and optional vibraphone. A drone in Alto/Soprano 2 supports the opening melodic statement. The evanescent fusion of vibraphone and piano timbres creates an ethereal bed over which the composer lays the melody. Tailored for children's choir, the opening melody may sound a little gravelly if performed by an adult choir as it sits outside the customary tessitura of the soprano voice (A3).

Joseph Grocock - A Hymne on the Nativitie of my Saviour (1984)

Instrumentation: satb
Range: Soprano: E4 – G5
Alto: C4 – C5
Tenor: E3 – F4
Bass: A2 – D4
Language: English
Text: Ben Jonson (1573-1687)
Metre: 4/4, 5/4, 3/4, 6/4
Tempo: At a flowing, moderate pace
Duration: 2'
Length: 30 bars
Publisher: Drummartin Music / Score supplied by CMC

This strophic setting of Ben Jonson's text 'I sing the birth, was borne tonight/The Author both of Life, and light:/ The Angels so did sound it' is within reach of most four-part amateur choirs. The writing lies comfortably within the range of each part. Grocock had a keen understanding of the developing voice, fostered during his time as a choral scholar at Saint Michael's Church, Tenbury (England) and developed when he lectured in Music at Trinity College, Dublin and was Director of Music at Saint Columba's College, Rathfarnham. His writing here is elegant and uncomplicated.

Sarah O'Halloran - Advent (2011 rev. 2014)

Instrumentation:	satb pf	
Range:	Soprano:	D4 – A5
	Alto:	A3 – D5
	Tenor:	C3 – F4
	Bass:	G2 – D4
Language:	English	
Text:	Anthony Dunn	
Metre:	4/4	
Tempo:	Crotchet = 70, with <i>rubato</i>	
Duration:	5'	
Length:	62 bars	
Published:	Score supplied by CMC	

Opening with piano chords, the lyrics 'Come, come, come child' are introduced in a dialogue between Tenor and Bass, and soon followed by a dialogue between Alto and Soprano on the text 'O little child'. A four-part passage of homophonic vocal-writing follows. This soft opening invitation then gives way to a more robust dynamic with all parts singing ('Strike dumb the voices of our worldly gloom'). This opening material re-appears later. A short coda stretches the upper voice to an A5 for a closing four-part chord, designed to create impact. This is a short, accompanied setting of the text, attainable by most SATB choirs. The keyboard writing is comfortable to play and imaginative throughout. This work is also available in a setting for SA and piano. At the date of publication of this catalogue, this work has not as yet been performed. Permission from the composer to have this unique opportunity should be sought.

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Level B

Derek Ball - 'Season Turning' from *A Choral Christmas Compilation* (2014)

Instrumentation:	satb pf	
Range:	Soprano:	C-sharp4 – E5
	Alto:	A-sharp3 – D5
	Tenor:	B-flat2 – D4
	Bass:	E2 – C-flat4
Language:	English	
Text:	Derek Ball	
Metre:	3/4, 2/4	
Tempo:	Crotchet = 80	
Duration:	3'	
Length:	78 bars	
Publisher:	Score supplied by CMC	

This pagan carol is set for SATB choir and piano (with occasional division in the Tenor and Alto parts). The piano part establishes a hypnotic pattern. Key words are retained in Alto and Bass against the Soprano/Tenor melody. As befitting such a verse, the composer forsakes this vocal texture at the end of each phrase on the words 'sun', 'moon', 'earth' and 'air', opening into a melisma comprising a six-part texture. The piece closes at the conductor's whim following the instruction of the composer to "keep repeating the marked passage, completely out of sync, maybe half a dozen times, until the conductor gives the 'cut-off' signal."

David Byers - *I Follow a Star* (1993)

Instrumentation:	satb [div.]	
Range:	Soprano:	C4 – G5
	Alto:	A3 – C-sharp5
	Tenor:	E3 – E-sharp4
	Bass:	F-sharp2 – C-sharp4
Language:	English	
Text:	Joseph Campbell (1879-1944)	
Metre:	2/4 and free	
Tempo:	<i>Comodo, Flessibile</i>	
Duration:	2'	
Length:	59 bars	
Publisher:	Score supplied by CMC	

Soprano and Alto initiate this work in octaves, shortly parting company to dissonance on the word 'star' to temporarily divide into a three-part texture (SSA). Tenor and Bass answer the opening phrase. Soon the choir divides into a thick eight-part texture at 'Moon-Red'. A chant-like phrase, marked *Flessibile* interrupts the course of the piece. This opening material is re-used to set the text 'Follow the gilly beyond to the west', albeit somewhat modified. This is a short, unaccompanied setting of the text, attainable by most SATB choirs. At the date of publication of this catalogue, this work has not as yet been performed. Permission from the composer to have this unique opportunity should be sought.

Rhona Clarke - 'Make We Merry' from Make we Merry - Three Carols on Medieval Texts (2014)

Instrumentation:	satb	
Range:	Soprano:	D4 – F-sharp5
	Alto:	G3 – F5
	Tenor:	F3 – D4'
	Bass:	G2 – B-flat3
Language:	English	
Text:	Medieval	
Metre:	C, 6/8, 7/8	
Tempo:	Crotchet = c.112	
Duration:	2'	
Length:	59 bars	
Publisher:	Score supplied by CMC	

Set for standard SATB chorus, *Make we Merry* is forged using a combination of rhythmic homophonic writing and contrasting two-part textures. The voices dance through the invigorating metre of the text, shaped by Clarke's effective use of time signatures (C, 6/8, 7/8). The dynamic range is both comfortable and expressive. Choirs comprising Tenors of limited range will treasure this piece (F3 – D4). Be aware that the Alto writing demands voices capable of nearly two full octaves (G3 – F5). A jaunty addition to any programme.

Séamas de Barra - Íosagán: Suantraí Nollaig (Jesu Lullay: A Christmas Cradle Song) (2012)

Instrumentation:	ssa	
Range:	Soprano 1:	C-sharp4 – A5
	Soprano 2:	C-sharp4 – F-sharp5
	Alto:	A3 – A4
Language:	Irish / English	
Text:	Mícheál Ó Murchú, trans. de Barra	
Metre:	6/4, 9/4	
Tempo:	<i>Con tenerezza</i> ; Dotted Minim = ca. 40	
Duration:	3'	
Length:	46 bars	
Publisher:	Score supplied by CMC	

This work can be sung in Irish or in English; the introductory note reads that "Although it seeks to capture the spirit of the original, the composer's English singing translation is at times necessarily more approximate than exact; the word 'lully', however, conveys well the sense of '*huiseo*', the prominent treatment of which makes this a particularly happy equivalent." The setting comprises a solo-like line in the top Soprano part accompanied by Soprano 2 and Alto lines with some *divisi*. This work requires quite a large choir, at least four per part, and ideally more on the top Soprano part. It was premiered by the Choir of Laurel Hill College, Limerick with conductor Orla Colgan Ahern at the Sixtieth Cork International Choral Festival in May 2014.

Seán Doherty - *Blessed be that Maid Marie* (2012)

Instrumentation:	satb	
Range:	Soprano:	G-sharp4 – A5
	Alto:	C4 – B4
	Tenor:	G-sharp3 – G4
	Bass:	A2 – D4
Language:	Latin and English	
Text:	Anon. (15 th Century)	
Metre:	6/8	
Tempo:	Dance-like; Dotted Crotchet = 60	
Duration:	3'	
Length:	91 bars	
Published:	Score supplied by CMC	

According to the composer, inspiration for this work issued from the most unlikely of quarters: the refrain of the 2003 Grammy award-winning track *Hey Ya* performed by Urban/Alternative act Outkast. Seán Doherty shapes the refrain 'Hey Ya' into a faux-plainsong *cantus firmus* in the Tenor voice that soon reverts to a homophonic presentation of the text 'Eya! Ihesus hodie natus est de Virgine'. This setting is replete with the requisite hemiola on the text 'hodie', giving the effect of a shift between triple and duple metre. Bass and Alto accompany the interplay of the *Kopfmotiv* between Soprano and Tenor on the text 'In a manger of an ass'. Melodic interest jumps to the Alto line and then from another three-part texture (TBB) to a declamatory closing section. This piece won the Choir and Organ Magazine Composition Competition in 2012.

Paul Flynn - *A Light shall Shine upon this Day* (2003)

Instrumentation:	satb, org	
Note on instrumentation:	div. T and B, S Dec. and Can. antiphonal writing, min. div. A, T-solo	
Range:	Soprano:	D4 – G5
	Alto:	G3 – E-flat5
	Tenor:	C3 – G4
	T-solo:	F3 – F4
	Bass:	G2 – E-flat4
Language:	English and Latin	
Text:	Dennis Devlin (ed. Gerard Dineen)	
Metre:	♩, 3/4	
Tempo:	Minim = 30 <i>Misterioso</i>	
Duration:	6'	
Length:	123 bars	
Publisher:	Score supplied by CMC	

This piece was composed for the cathedral choir of Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, for the Christmas Eve service of Nine Lessons and Carols in 2003. As Saint Patrick's Cathedral Choir consists of boys and men, this work takes the strength and experience of the adult Tenor and Bass sections of the choir into account, dividing *decani* and *cantor* Tenor and Bass throughout. The writing for upper voices is fluent and elegant, making it accessible to the younger choristers. Unison passages anchor the piece. The divided Tenor and Bass parts might render this inaccessible to a choir with a meagre supply of lower voices.

John Gibson - Today a Saviour has been born to us (2009)

Instrumentation:	ssatb	
Range:	Soprano:	E4 – A-flat5
	Alto:	C4 – E5
	Tenor:	F3 – G-sharp4
	Bass:	F-sharp2 – B-flat3
Language:	English	
Text:	Psalm 95 - Luke 2:11	
Metre:	6/8	
Tempo:	Dotted Crotchet = 80 Joyful; <i>Molto vivo</i>	
Duration:	6'	
Length:	191 bars	
Publisher:	Score supplied by CMC	

Unison and duet writing constitute the opening section of this setting, with a full four-part texture aligning at 'the Lord' under a strong dynamic (*ff*), and again at 'Alleluia'. Canonic technique is put to use between Soprano and Tenor. There is a brief Tenor solo. The Soprano line divides in the *Molto vivo* section and the piece then remains in five parts until it finishes. Dynamic markings lean towards *forte* and *fortissimo* throughout this piece so stamina might be a consideration when programming. There is also a version for SSATB with organ.

Eric Sweeney - There is no rose (1981)

Instrumentation:	satb	
Range:	Soprano:	D4 – G5
	Alto:	B3 – C5
	Tenor:	D3 – F4
	Bass:	G2 – D4
Language:	English and Latin	
Text:	Anon. (English medieval)	
Metre:	7/8, 3/4, 4/4	
Tempo:	<i>Lento, Maestoso, Meno mosso</i>	
Duration:	3'	
Length:	42 bars	
Publisher:	Oecumuse / Contemporary Music Centre Editions	

This work brings the English medieval text to life with sensitivity, painting the delicate beauty of the verse 'There is no rose of such virtue/As is the rose that bare Jesu' in homophonic movement over a descending bass. The coupling of voices, Soprano and Alto against Tenor and Bass, marks the text 'Alleluia' and 'Res miranda'. Contrapuntal entries portray 'the angels sungen shepherds to'. Rich harmonic writing, a *Maestoso* tempo marking and a *diminuendo* from *forte* to *piano* gracefully characterise the choir at 'gaudeamus'. With some use of dissonance, contrasting textures and dynamic variety, yet accessible to the amateur choir, Sweeney's *There is no rose* is sure to be favoured by all choristers. This piece appears in the collection *Choirland: An Anthology of Irish Choral Music*, published by the Contemporary Music Centre.

Gerard Victory - *This is the Month* (1993)

Instrumentation:	satb, org	
Note on Instrumentation:	The addition of a brass quintet is optional.	
Range:	Soprano:	F4 – A5
	Alto:	C4 – C5
	Tenor:	C3 – F4
	Bass:	F2 – D4
Language:	English	
Text:	John Milton	
Metre:	4/4	
Tempo:	<i>Vigoroso</i>	
Duration:	2'	
Length:	60 bars	
Publisher:	Vanderbeek & Imrie	

Gerard Victory's brisk setting of John Milton's *This is the Month* for SATB choir, organ and optional brass quintet. Homophonic writing characterises the text 'This is the Month, and this the happy morn/ Wherein the Son of Heav'ns eternal King/of wedded Maid, and Virgin Mother born' in the chorus, juxtaposing rhythmic part-writing in the organ. Brass lines interject throughout the piece. Upper voices are set against a humming lower line at the text 'Say, heav'nly Muse'. Brass fanfares accompany the chorus as it grows in energy and strength towards the last, widely-spaced chord. The organ part is quite technically demanding.



Level C

Colin Mawby - *Hodie Christus natus est* (1982)

Instrumentation:	satb [div.]	
Range:	Soprano:	E4 – B5 [B5 sits in Soprano 1 in the final chord, but the composer provides an alternative note]
	Alto:	A3 – F5
	Tenor:	F3 – A4
	Bass:	D2 – C4
Language:	Latin	
Text:	Antiphon upon Magnificat at Vespers of Christmas Day	
Metre:	6/8, 3/8, 7/8, 5/8	
Tempo:	Joyful but not too fast	
Duration:	3'	
Length:	86 bars	
Publisher:	Score supplied by CMC	

Colin Mawby invigorates the glorious Christmas text *Hodie, Christus natus est* with vitality through his manipulation of harmonic palette, rhythmic subtlety and dynamic contrast. A cretic rhythm in the first gesture 'Hodie' opens with a fanfare, developing into a whirling dance (characterised by the 6/8 metre) against which the composer surprises the listener by displacing, shortening or extending the motivic pattern. The Tenor takes the melody early in the piece, after which a gentle dynamic provides a calming relief allowing the Alto line to accept the melodic material. From this point the chorus is in eight parts. Chromatic movement characterises the text at 'exultans' where the Tenor doubles the Soprano. An expansive ending crowns the piece at 'Alleluia'. Suitable for accomplished college choirs or chamber choirs (note the range in Soprano and Bass).

Jane O'Leary - *Ding Dong* (2010)

Instrumentation:	ssaa	
Range:	Soprano 1:	F4 – G5
	Soprano 2:	D4 – F5
	Alto 1:	A3 – D5
	Alto 2:	A-flat3 – C5
Language:	English	
Text:	Traditional	
Metre:	2/4, 3/8, 3/4, 4/4	
Tempo:	Crotchet = 102	
Duration:	3'	
Length:	144 bars	
Publisher:	Score supplied by CMC	

From the outset of this piece a distinct impression of church bells overlapping is created by O'Leary's clever manipulation of entries. A close dissonance engendered by adjoining pitches opens out with rhythmic energy to an exciting *charivari*. Here the composer instructs: "each singer [should] continue to repeat these notes, in your own time (not together with others)." Clarity returns thereafter, as the voices portion out snippets of the English carol *Ding Dong, Merrily on High* - text by George Ratcliffe Woodward (1848-1934). O'Leary's piece sits comfortably on each voice, but it might be useful for the singers to verify pitch against a tuning fork throughout.

Level D

Michael Alcorn - *In dulci jubilo* (1985)

Instrumentation:	ssaatb, org (or pf)	
Range:	Soprano 1:	E4 – G5 [S-solo bb.114-127]
	Soprano 2:	E4 – F5
	Alto 1:	C4 – C-sharp5 [div. b.94 and b.165]
	Alto 2:	G3 – C-sharp5 [div. b.76 and b.167]
	Tenor:	C3 – G-sharp4
	Bass:	G2 – C-sharp4
Language:	Latin and German	
Text:	Traditional	
Metre:	5/8, 2/8, 3/8, 3/4, 2/4, 6/8, 4/8, 10/8, 8/8, 9/8	
Tempo:	Crotchet = 138; Crotchet = 56; Crotchet = 66; <i>Molto Legato</i> ; Crotchet = 138	
Duration:	7'	
Length:	234 bars	
Publisher:	Score supplied by CMC	

Michael Alcorn's setting of this famous macaronic medieval Christmas text is rhythmic and exciting. The composer relies primarily on contrapuntal imitation in the upper voices. A homophonic statement of 'leit in praesepio' is trailed by a piano/organ *Zwischenspiel* that takes the listener into a second contrapuntal section. Alcorn alters the mood by introducing a tempo change, and a short Soprano solo accompanied by a humming chorus. The accompaniment returns to herald a challenging section, replete with canonic imitation. A reprise of the opening material concludes with long, wide chords. The organ part is quite technically demanding.

Anne-Marie O'Farrell - *A Winter's Prayer* (2010)

Instrumentation:	ssaa	
Range:	Soprano 1:	D4 – A5
	Soprano 2:	C4 – F-sharp5
	Alto 1:	A3 – B4
	Alto 2:	F-sharp3 – G4
Language:	English	
Text:	Samuel Longfellow (1819-1892)	
Metre:	2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 5/4	
Tempo:	Crotchet = 60	
Duration:	3'	
Length:	47 bars	
Publisher:	Score supplied by CMC	

Set for SSAA, this part-song opens with a homophonic texture in three voices (unison Soprano). Melodic interest then shifts to Soprano 2 and accompaniment is provided by the other voices (on an 'Ah' vowel). The opening material returns later, unfolding to a grounded E-Minor chord (*fff*). However, the piece closes on a gentle dynamic. *A Winter's Prayer* is most appropriate for an adult SSAA choir.