

Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713)

Christmas Concerto

Concerto grosso in G minor op 6 no 8 (circa 1690)

Arcangelo Corelli was an Italian violinist and composer of Baroque music. Little is known about his early life. Born into a wealthy family in Fusignano (now the province of Ravenna) in 1653, he was educated as a musician and, from an early age, was famed for his skill as a violinist. His style of playing and writing was very influential both on his contemporaries and his successors. J. S. Bach was among those who studied his works. As a young man he travelled throughout Europe, staying in Paris and Germany where his reputation developed. However, it was in Rome where he enjoyed his greatest success and patronage, and where his greatest works were written. *Christmas Concerto* was commissioned by Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, one of his influential patrons, and was completed around 1690. The manuscript bears the words "*Fatto per la notte di Natale*" (written for Christmas night). A portion of the concerto is in the soundtrack of the film *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*. Corelli is also referred to frequently in the novel *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*. *Christmas Concerto* was published posthumously in 1714 when it appeared as one of a set of twelve concerti. Corelli died in 1713 and is buried in the Pantheon in Rome.

Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

Christmas Day

Gustav Holst, who was born in 1874 in Cheltenham, not only became one of England's most important composers but was also a professional trombonist and a teacher of organ and composition. Included in his compositions are operas, ballets, symphonies and songs. His orchestral work *The Planets* is arguably one of the most popular of all concert works. *Christmas Day* is a choral fantasy which includes sections of the well-known carols *Good Christian Men Rejoice*, *God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen* and *The First Nowell*. Also included in this piece is the text of *Come Ye Lofty*, *Come Ye Lowly*, which is set to a beautiful old Breton melody. All the joy and hope of Christmas is captured in Holst's *Christmas Day*.

Joy to the world!

Audience - all verses

1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King,
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room,
And heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.
2. Joy to the world! the Saviour reigns;
Let men their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.
3. He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness
And wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love,
And wonders, wonders of his love.