

Carols of Birds, Bells, and Peace from Ukraine

Ensemble Cherubim, Marika Kuzma, conductor

Carols arranged by Kyrylo Stetsenko (1882–1922): *Koliadky*

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|--|------|
| 1 Dnes poyushche (Today, let's sing) | 2:23 |
| 2 Nebo i zemlia (Heaven and Earth) | 2:26 |
| 3 Po vsiomu svitu (Around the whole world) | 2:32 |

Soloists: Angelique Zuluaga, Yumi Tomsha

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|----------------------------------|------|
| 4 Oy dyvneye (Oh, how wondrous)* | 3:07 |
|----------------------------------|------|

Soloists: Kyle Picha, Miriam Anderson, Celeste Winant

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|--|------|
| 5 Na Yordanski richtsi (On the Jordan River) | 2:23 |
| 6 Dobry vechir tobi! (Good evening to you!) | 1:51 |

Lullabies: The Wonder of Mary

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------|
| 7 Volodymyr Yakymets (b. 1974) | |
| Prechystaya Diva (A virgin most pure) | 3:43 |

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|--|------|
| 8 Vasyl Barvinsky (1888–1963) | |
| Shcho to za predyvo (How wondrous this is) | 3:13 |

Soloist: Katherine Howell Sadler

- | | |
|--|------|
| 9 Yosyp Kyshakevych (1872–1953), arr. Marika Kuzma | |
| Spy, Isuse, spy (Sleep, Jesus, sleep)* | 3:02 |

Carols of Good Cheer: Shchedrivky

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|--|------|
| 10 Yakiv Yatsynevych (1869–1945) | |
| Yerusalynski dzvony (The bells of Jerusalem) | 2:29 |

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|----------------------------------|------|
| 11 Mykola Leontovych (1877–1921) | |
| Shchedryk (Carol of good cheer) | 1:45 |

Soloists: Caitlin Tabancay Austin, Phoebe Rosquist

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| 12 Alexander Jacobchuk (b. 1952) | |
| Shchedrivka (Carol of good cheer) | 2:19 |

Reflections

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------|
| 13 Yuriy Alzhnyev (b. 1949) | |
| Shchedrivka (Carol of good cheer)* | 5:51 |

Soloists: Phoebe Rosquist, Caitlin Tabancay Austin,
Rita Barakat, Felicia Chen, Mike Azavedo, Joseph Hammer

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------|
| 14 Alexander Koshetz (1875–1944) | |
| Boh predvichny (God eternal) | 2:10 |

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| 15 Stetsenko | |
| Nova radist stala (New joy has come) | 2:45 |

Soloist: Brian Thorsett

Song of Peace

- | | |
|---|------|
| 16 Svyatoslav Lunyov (b. 1964) | |
| Silent Night*(part of the cycle Noël Consort) | 4:48 |

Soloists: Miriam Anderson, Emily Ryan Kusnadi, Angelique Zuluaga

Total Time: 46:47

*World premiere recordings. (Lunyov: first recording of this version of his “Silent Night”).

Recorded June 11 and 12, 2024 at Hertz Concert Hall at the University of California, Berkeley.

Producer and balance engineer: Martha de Francisco. Recording engineer: Zach Miley

Editing, mixing, and mastering engineer: Santiago Garcia Cuevas.

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Carols of Birds, Bells, and Peace from Ukraine

Ensemble
Cherubim

Marika Kuzma,
conductor

CAROLS OF BIRDS, BELLS, AND PEACE FROM UKRAINE

A small group of singers gathered in June 2024, and we sang Ukrainian carols together.

In the middle of a heat wave, Ensemble Cherubim and I made this recording in Berkeley, California: hardly the season for Christmas and New Years caroling and a great distance from the Carpathian mountains of western Ukraine and the banks of the Dnipro River in Kyiv. It was during the height of Russia's war on Ukraine, which had started in 2014 and escalated ferociously in 2022. The eyes and ears of the world were attuned to the plight of Ukraine, and we wanted to respond in the way that we could—with song.

I had just submitted a manuscript for a book: *Carols of Birds, Bells, and Sacred Hymns from Ukraine: An Anthology and Cultural Companion* (published a few months later). Many of the carols in the anthology I knew since childhood. Some were new to me. The histories behind each of them that I gleaned from archival research and conversations with composers were gripping and revelatory.

Inspired by the vibrant carols and their stories, I wanted to share them not only in the book—in printed words and scores—but also in sound. The generosity of the librarians and composers in Ukraine, the Music Department at the University of California, Berkeley, and our singers made this recording possible.

There are thousands of Ukrainian winter carols. Our album presents a small sample of sixteen: it spans traditional miniatures to contemporary choral fantasies, all stemming from an ancient culture that is nevertheless new to world audiences. Some of the pieces have never been recorded, and many have never been released by a record label outside of Ukraine. Most of the carols in this album began as indigenous songs and were later painstakingly transcribed and creatively arranged for chorus by leading Ukrainian composers.

Given an appropriate place of honor in our album, Kyrylo Stetsenko (1882–1922) was the first composer-arranger to recognize that Ukrainian carols were worthy of sharing not just in village homes and town squares but also in formal concert halls and elevated choir lofts. He published fifty arrangements of

to good people for the whole night.

14. God Eternal

God Eternal is born to us.
He came this day from heaven.
to save all of His people,
and He was gladdened.

Let us sing “Glory to God!”
In honor of the Son of God
and our Savior,
let us bow in praise.

15. New joy has come

New joy has come,
praised in the heavens:
Above the manger, a bright star
has illumined the whole world.

Shepherds with their lambs
before this child
fall upon their knees
and praise their God and King.

Oh Thou King, King,
celestial Creator!
Bestow happy years
to the master of this house!

Grant freedom, fortune, good fate
to our mother, Ukraine.

16. Silent Night (sung in English)

Acknowledgements and Dedication

Ensemble Cherubim is grateful to Chris Barber, Christina and George Gamota, George Lencyk, Frank and Virginia Lew, and the Ukrainian National Women's League of America for their generous support of this recording.

This album is dedicated to Nadia Haftkowycz and Joan Lam in memory of their life-long devotion and passion for choral music.

Cover art: “Messengers of Joy” (Вісники свята) by Natalia and Roman Yusypchuk

Walked about an orchard, gave birth to a son.
(Refrain)

Gave birth to a son, carried him in her arms.
(Refrain)

11. Carol of good cheer

Carol, carol, little carol,
a little swallow has flown in.
She perched herself to chirp,
and to call out the farmer:
“Come out, come out, farmer,
take a look at your barn,
there ewes have rolled over,
and little lambs have been born.
You have goods aplenty,
you’ll have lots of money.
And if not money, then chaff:
you have a dark-eyed wife.”
Carol, carol, little carol,
a swallow flew in.

12. Carol of good cheer

Carol, carol, sweet carol,
a sweet swallow has flown in.
She perched herself to chirp,
and to call out the farmer:
“Come out, come out, sweet master,
take a look at your little barn:
there cows have all given birth,

and each has brought forth a calf.”

Bountiful evening! Good evening!!
There yews have rolled over
And lambs have been born.
You have goods aplenty,
you’ll have lots of money.
And if not money, then chaff:
you have a dark-eyed wife. Hey!

13. Carol of Good Cheer

A falcon flew onto the windowsill:
Evening of plenty, evening of goodness.
He peers into the parlor:
Evening of plenty, evening of goodness,
to good people for the whole night.
Oh early in the morning! Early!

Oh early in the morn, chickens crowed,
Holy evening.
And earlier still, Vasichka awoke.
Vasichka woke up, twanged his bow.
Twanged his bow, roused his brothers.
Wake up brothers, saddle up the horses!
Saddle up the horses, ride into the fields!
Holy evening.
Early! Oh, early.

A falcon flew onto the windowsill:
Evening of plenty, evening of goodness,

native carols in the 1900s and arranged up to fifty more. Their sheer number, variety, and craftsmanship are noteworthy.

The seven Stetsenko carols in our recording are all *koliadky*, carols related to the Nativity Story: the birth of Jesus, the *zvizda* (Star in the East), angels and humans making music together. Some are celebratory, others more meditative. Some are adventurous in their counterpoint (“Nebo i zemlia”), and some calmly homophonic (“Na Yordanski richtsi”).

Of course, our album includes the ear-catching carol by Mykola Leontovych known globally as “Carol of the Bells” and to Ukrainians as “Shchedryk.” In its original, the carol is neither about bells nor Christmas. It belongs to a genre of winter carols unique to Ukraine called *shchedrivky* and linked to the Ukrainian holiday *Shchedry vechir* (Evening of generosity) celebrated in some regions on Theophany Eve and in others on New Year’s Eve. *Shchedrivky* express good cheer, generosity, and gratitude, and they often include imagery of birds. In “Shchedryk,” a *lastivochka* (swallow) flies into a farmer’s yard to remind him of his riches: sheep, grain, a beautiful wife. Like

the carol’s four-note melodic motive, she is insistent. At the end of the carol, the music disappears into thin air—as if the bird, having chirped her piece, suddenly flies away.

In the 1970s, some sixty years after the premiere of “Shchedryk” in 1916, Alexander Jacobchuk composed a new carol to almost identical lyrics. Although his “Shchedrivka” does not feature the driving folk motive of Leontovych’s carol, it too is propulsive. Unlike his predecessor’s carol, Jacobchuk’s piece ends in a dazzling chordal climax.

Why sing about a swallow in the middle of winter? In earlier centuries, Ukrainians celebrated New Year’s in March. Hence the appearance of the *lastivochka*—a harbinger of spring and good luck—in this carol. Many *shchedrivky* feature birds of one feather or another. In Yuriy Alzhnyev’s contemporary “Shchedrivka,” a falcon appears: a symbol of virility as well as good fortune. Our recording also includes the carol that Ukrainians recognize as their bell carol: “Yerusalynski dzvony” (The bells of Jerusalem) by Yakiv Yatsynevych. Its playful choral tintinnabulation has made this carol a favorite among Ukrainian choirs and audiences.

All pieces in this recording are *a cappella*, and most of them quite short. Their lack of accompaniment and relative brevity come from tradition as well as ecclesiastical, financial, and political constraints. Sacred music for the Orthodox (and Eastern Rite Catholic) church are *a cappella* by definition: instruments are not allowed in worship services. During the Russian Empire, when wealth was concentrated in St. Petersburg and Moscow, Ukrainian composers were economically restricted. Edicts by the Romanoff tsars prohibited the publication of any works with Ukrainian words, including songs. In the Soviet era, religion was suppressed; *koliadky* were forced underground.

Ukrainian composers met each obstacle with determination and ingenuity. The textural variety and contrapuntal inventiveness within their carols, no matter how short or modest in scoring, are often stunning. Contemporary Ukrainian composers continue to explore and expand techniques of *a cappella* writing in their carols. Yuriy Alzhnyev's "Shchedrivka," flexibly interweaves solo and full chorus writing. Sviatoslav Lunyov's "Silent Night" blends and blurs choral textures to create a magical atmosphere.

Ukrainian carols have not only been central

to holiday celebrations, they have also helped Ukrainians to maintain their sense of identity and strengthened their resilience for centuries. At the turn of the twentieth century, Stetsenko, together with his colleagues Koshetz and Leontovych, responded to the oppression of Ukraine's culture by the Russian tsars with a campaign of musical resistance. They transcribed village songs, arranged them for chorus, assembled choirs to sing them, and organized concert tours. Their transcriptions preserved not just indigenous melodies but also the Ukrainian language. Their arrangements and concert tours mirrored back to Ukrainians who they were as a people. In a landmark tour of cultural diplomacy in 1919–24, "Shchedryk" proclaimed Ukrainian identity not just within its borders but internationally and to thunderous applause.¹

As expressed in their *shchedrivky*, Ukrainians feel a reverence for their fertile land and gratitude for the overarching cycle of the seasons. Ukraine's very flag reflects a bond between heaven and earth, the sacred and secular: fields of golden grain beneath a cerulean sky.

¹For more information on this tour and each carol in this album, see *Carols of Birds, Bells, and Sacred Hymns from Ukraine: An Anthology and Cultural Companion* (Cambridge Scholars Printing, 2024)

And in Bethlehem
peace appeared,
so very early.
Oh early, so very early,
rejoice, Oh sweet earth:
God himself was born.

And let us together today,
before Jesus the Child
all bow down.
Let us all bow down
and praise Him with
a sincere and clean heart.

A virgin most pure
birthed a Son
so very early.
Oh early, so very early,
rejoice, O sweet earth:
Christ was born.

8. How wondrous this is

What a wonder is this news in the world
that Mary the Virgin birthed a Son.

And when she gave birth,
she then exclaimed:
"Jesus, Son of mine!"

Joseph the old man stands at the manger
and makes diapers for Jesus Christ.

And Mary swaddles Him,
embraces Him to her heart:
Most pure Virgin.

9. Sleep, Jesus, sleep

Sleep, Jesus, sleep.
Close your little eyes.

I will cradle you,
lull you with little songs.
Sleep Jesus, sleep little one,
sleep my dear heart, sleep.
(Oh sleep.)

Sleep, little lily, sleep.
Bow your little head.

Here in the arms of Mary,
see how she caresses you.
Sleep Jesus, sleep little one,
sleep my dear heart, sleep.
(Oh sleep.)

10. The Bells of Jerusalem

Oh, in Jerusalem bells rang out early.
(Refrain) Eve of plenty, eve of goodness!
To good people good health!

Oh, the Virgin Mary walked about an
orchard.
(Refrain)

4. Oh, how wondrous

Oh, how wondrous is the birth of God's Son
to whom today the Virgin Mary gave birth.

The archangel Gabriel witnessed that
upon the birth of Christ, orchards bloomed.

Gardens blossom and all sorts of flowers.
The whole christened world rejoiced,
even small children.

5. On the Jordan River

On the Jordan River, the water stood still.
Oh, there the Mother of God bathed Jesus
Christ.

And having bathed Him, wrapped Him in silk,
and having wrapped him placed him in
a manger.

And above that manger, gray oxen stood,
Over the holy little child, breathed with
their spirit.

They carried Jesus and placed him on an
altar.
And beside that altar, three angels were
gliding.

6. Good evening to you

Good evening to you, master of the house!
(Refrain) Rejoice! Oh, rejoice, earth,
The son of God is born!

Spread the table and everything with kilims.
(Refrain) Rejoice!

And place breads of spring wheat.
(Refrain) Rejoice!

Good evening to you, master of the house!
(Refrain) Rejoice! Oh, rejoice, earth,
The son of God is born!

7. A virgin most pure

A virgin most pure
gave birth to a Son,
oh very early.
Oh early, so very early,
rejoice, O sweet earth:
Christ I was born.

And after the flash of a star,
there walk humbly
three famous kings!
Three famous kings:
and they bring gifts
to Christ in offering.

In their cultural imagination, birds, nature, and
caroling connect them to a mystical realm.
Every year, they are inspired by the story of
angels and shepherds singing together.

Our album celebrates the carols of Ukraine's
vibrant culture as mini-miracles in our midst.

The final piece of our recording is Sviatoslav
Lunyov's reimagining of Franz Gruber's
classic carol "Silent Night." Lunyov's
piece—in English—seems to express how
Ukraine and its choral artists desire dialogue
across cultural divides. Within our album,
this carol conveys Ensemble Cherubim's
message of solidarity. Alongside Ukrainians,
we wish for nights of heavenly peace and
bright days for years to come.

A small group of singers with open hearts
gathered in June 2024, and we sang.
Marika Kuzma

Biographies

Ukrainian-American music director **Marika Kuzma** has enjoyed a multifaceted career as a conductor, choral music scholar, and actor. She has led choirs and orchestras in repertoire from medieval chant to premieres of international works and taught at the University of California, Berkeley, for twenty-five years. As a chorus master, she has collaborated with Gustavo Dudamel with the Simon Bolivar Orchestra, Nicholas McGegan with Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Kent Nagano with the Montreal Symphony, Keri-Lynn Wilson with the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra, among others. Her specialization in Ukrainian choral music is informed by her heritage—Ukrainian was her first language—and careful archival research. Her printed publications include articles in international journals, a critical edition of D. Bortniansky choral concertos (2016), and her recent book on Ukrainian carols (2024). Recordings include music by Bortniansky, Brahms, Dufay, Dychko, Liderman, and Thow. During Russia's full invasion of Ukraine, she has focused primarily on raising awareness of Ukrainian culture in her creative and scholarly work.
marikakuzmamusician.com

Ensemble Cherubim is a chamber chorus that creates bridges between Ukrainian culture and global audiences with compelling concerts and recordings. It first assembled briefly in the 2010s to make a recording of Bortniansky choral concertos that garnered critical acclaim internationally. In 2022, the singers gathered again in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Ensemble Cherubim has since performed in major festivals and venues, including a concert of these very carols in 2025 for Cal Performances at Zellerbach Hall in Berkeley, California. The ensemble is unique in that its members come from varied ethnicities and artistic backgrounds. Many are alumni of the University of California Berkeley Chamber Chorus. All have embraced Ukrainian culture with their voices, hearts, and spirits as their own. ensemblecherubim.org

Sopranos

Felicia Chen
Katherine Howell Sadler
Phoebe Rosquist
Angelique Zuluaga
Angela Arnold*
Caitlin Tabancay Austin*
Alison Zelles Lloyd*
Bridget O'Keefe*

Altos

Miriam Anderson
Rita Barakat
Yumi Tomsha
Celeste Winant
Emily Ryan Kusnadi*
Kim Rankin*

Tenors

Mike Azevedo
Kyle Picha
Brian Thorsett
Jason Zahorchak
Edward Betts*
David Martinez*
Charles Olson*

Basses

Andrew Chung
Sepp Hammer
Daniel Pickens-Jones
Tim Roth
Ariel Anderson*
Glenn Miller*

*Singers added to the core ensemble of sixteen for several pieces.

1. Today, let's sing

Today, let's sing, make music together!
Let's all praise the Newborn King,
singing, praising:
"Glory in the Highest" exclaiming.

When Joseph was betrothed to the Maiden,
one night from an angel, he received an order:
"Take the Babe and His Mother,
flee to Egypt away from the accursed one!"

Let's praise, O brothers, the All-blessed one!
Let's sing to the wisdom of his enterprise,—
that Christ was born immortal,
today made incarnate of the Virgin Mary.

2. Heaven and earth

Heaven and earth celebrate today.
Angels and people make merry.
(Refrain)
"Christ is born, God incarnate!"
Angels sing, kings greet,
they bow down, shepherds play music,
all proclaim the miracle, the miracle!

In Bethlehem glad tidings:
A pure Virgin gave birth to a Son.
(Refrain)

"Christ is born, God incarnate!"
Angels sing, kings greet,
they bow down, shepherds play music,
all proclaim the miracle, the miracle!

3. Around the whole world

Around the whole world there is news
that the Virgin Mary gave birth to a Son.
With hay she covered him,
placed Him in a manger,
the Son of the Lord.

The Virgin Mary asked God:
"With what shall I swaddle my Son?
You, Heavenly King,
send me gifts
to this home of the Lord."

Angels came from heaven to earth,
bringing gifts to the Virgin Mary:
Three wax candles,
and also silk robes
for Jesus Christ.

A star shone down from heaven to earth
angels came to the Virgin Mary.
They sing God's songs
to the Lord's bride,
and bring joy.