

In The Bleak Midwinter

Christina Rossetti, Lyrics, 1872; Gustav T. Holst, Music, 1906

"In the Bleak Midwinter" was a Christmas poem written by Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-1894), and was first published in the magazine *"Scribner's Monthly"* in 1872. It also appeared in a collection of her poems published posthumously in 1904. Her father was well known in Italian literary circles, but was forced into political exile, and became a professor at King's College in London. She published three books of religious poetry. Other poems she wrote that have since become hymns include *"Love Came Down at Christmas"*, *"A Burdened Heart That Bleeds"*, and *"None Other Lamb"*.



Composer Gustav Holst is perhaps best known for his orchestral masterpiece entitled *"The*



Planets". Much of his music was influenced by English folk song (to which he was introduced by his lifelong friend, Ralph Vaughan Williams). In 1906, he was commissioned to write a melody as a setting for Rossetti's poem to be published in *"The English Hymnal"*, and came up with a tune he called *"Cranham"*, named after the town where he was staying while writing it. The beauty and simplicity of this melody was inspired by several other English folk songs, and has become one of his best-known and best-loved works.

The arrangement presented here is a 2-part arrangement, and the harmony part is actually based on choral setting of the tune written by Harold Darke in 1911 for, ironically, the choir of King's College.

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