

# Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

*Traditional Polish Christmas Carol*

arranged for SATB Choir and Chamber Orchestra  
by Douglas Mears

## Instrumentation

Flutes 1 and 2  
Oboe  
English Horn  
Clarinets in B<sup>b</sup> 1 and 2  
Bassoon  
Horn in F  
Timpani  
Percussion I  
*Triangle, Suspended Cymbal*  
Percussion II  
*Glockenspiel*  
Percussion III  
*Chimes*  
Celesta  
Harp  
SATB Choir  
Violin I  
Violin II  
Viola  
Cello  
Contrabass

## Program Notes

The traditional Polish carol “W Żłobie Leży” (“In the Manger He Lies”) portrays the simple circumstances surrounding the birth of Christ. It describes the presence of animals at the manger side and the visit of humble shepherds, who were among the first to greet the newborn Savior. In 1920, this beloved carol was translated into English as “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly” by Edith Margaret Gellibrand Reed (1885-1933), a British musician and playwright. Reed found the original Polish text in the hymnal “*Piesni Koscielne*,” published in 1908, although the carol itself may date back to the sixteenth century. The text is attributed to the Jesuit and famous patriotic preacher, Piotr Skarga, while the melody resembles the coronation polonaise of Polish King Wladyslaw IV Waza.

## Text

Infant holy, infant lowly,  
for his bed a cattle stall;  
oxen lowing, little knowing  
Christ, the babe, is Lord of all.  
Swift are winging angels singing,  
noels ringing, tidings bringing:  
Christ, the babe, is Lord of all.

Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping  
vigil till the morning new  
saw the glory, heard the story,  
tidings of a gospel true.  
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,  
praises voicing greet the morrow:  
Christ, the babe, was born for you.