

Nowel, nowel. Owt of 3or slepe

Edited by Jason Smart

Anon. (c.1420)

Performance order: burden I, burden II, verse, burden II, verse, burden II . . . burden II

[Burden I]

[Solo]

8 No - - wel, no - wel, no - wel, no - wel.

[Verse]

[3 soloists]

8 I [Owt of 3or slepe a - ryse and wake, For
8 II [Owt of 3or slepe a - ryse and wake, For
8 III Owt of 3or slepe a - ryse and wake, For
13 god man - kynd nowe hath y - take Al of a
8 god man - kynd nowe hath y - take Al of a
8 god man - kynd nowe hath y - take Al of a

18 I maide with - out e - ny make; Of al wo - men she
18 II maide with - out e - ny make; Of al wo - men she
18 III maide with - out e - ny make; Of al wo - men she

[Burden II]
[Chorus]

23 3 vt supra

bereth the belle: No - wel. No - wel, no -

bereth the belle: No - wel. No - wel, no -

bereth the belle: No - wel, [No - wel, no -

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- wel, no - wel, no - wel, no - wel, no - wel.]

- wel, no - wel, no - wel, no - wel, no - wel.]

- wel, no - wel, no - wel, no - wel, no - wel.]

And þorwe a maidē fair and wys
Now man is made of ful grete pris;
Now angelys knelen to mannys seruys,
And at þis tyme al þis byfel.
Nowel.

Now man is brizter þan þe sonne;
Now man in heuen an hye shal won;
Blessyd be God þis game ys begonne;
And his moder emperess of helle.
Nowel.

That euer was thralle, now ys he fre;
Þat euer was smalle, now grete is she;
Now shal god deme bothe the and me
Vnto hys blysse yf we do wel.
Nowel.

Now man may to heuen wende;
Now heuen and erthe to hym they bende;
He þat was foo now is oure frende;
This is no nay þat y 3owe telle.
Nowel.

Now blessyd brother graunt us grace
A Domēsday to se thy face
And in thy courte to haue a place,
Þat we mow therē synge nowel.
Nowel.

Transliteration

Out of your sleep arise and wake, for God mankind now hath y-take, all of a maid without any make [i.e. spouse]; of all women she beareth the bell [i.e. is the most excellent]. Nowell.

And through a maid fair and wise now man is made of full great prize; now angels kneel to man's service, and at this time all this befell. Nowell.

Now man is brighter than the sun; now man in heaven on high shall won; blessed be God this game is begun; and his mother Empress of Hell. Nowell.

That ever was thrall, now is he free; that ever was small, now great is she; now God deem [i.e. judge] both thee and me unto his bliss if we do well. Nowell.

Now man may to heaven wend; now heaven and earth to him they bend; he that was foe now is our friend; this is no nay that I you tell. Nowell.

Now, blessed brother, grant us grace at Domesday to see thy face and in thy court to have a place, that we mow there sing nowell. Nowell.

Editorial Commentary

Source

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Arch. Selden. B. 26 (1435–40), f. 14^v.

Editorial Method

The original clef and first note are shown on the prefatory staff at the start of the piece. There are no staff signatures or mensuration symbols in any of the parts.

Editorial accidentals are placed above the notes concerned and remain operative throughout the bar.

Ligatures are indicated by the sign .

Material in square brackets and small notes are editorial.

The edition follows the original in underlaying only the first verse and giving the remaining verses separately at the end. The original spelling has been retained, but modern punctuation has been added and the diaeresis used to signal a voiced 'e' that might otherwise be overlooked.

Notes on the Readings of the Source

The manuscript gives no indication of which voice or voices sang burden I.

In bar 13 the G in voice I is a crotchet.

The *signa* in bars 24 and 25 obviously signal a repeat of the Burden, but the source is corrupt at this point, so precisely who sang what, and when, is unclear. The possibilities are:

1. As in the edition, the cue in voice III being treated as an indication to sing the burden in canon, starting with the second phrase. That the two parts fit together may be fortuitous, but it seems the only logical way of treating the *signum* above the D in voice III.
2. The burden is sung in canon by voices I and III only, starting on the last beat of bar 24 (voice II stopping at the G in 25, its following cue being no more than a reminder to wait for the burden before singing the next verse).
3. Burden I is sung again by voice I only, beginning on the last beat 24, followed by burden II, at which point the other two voices join in, as indicated by their cues.

The first burden alternates red and black ink cosmetically for each word. Red ink is also used for the refrain 'Nowell' in each verse except the first and for the *signa* and *ut supra* directions in bars 24–25.