

CHRISTMAS

CONCERT



I. HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING (1739)

Lyrics

Hark! The herald-angels sing
"Glory to the newborn king;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled"
Joyful all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"
Hark! The herald-angels sing
"Glory to the new-born king"

Christ, by highest heaven
adored
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come
Offspring of a Virgin's womb:
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail the incarnate Deity

Pleased as man with man to
dwell

Jesus, our Emmanuel
Hark! The herald-angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King"

Hail the Heaven-born Prince of
Peace!

Hail the Sun of Righteousness!^[a]
Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings;
Mild He lays His glory by
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth
Hark! The herald-angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King"

About the Song:

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing is a classic English Christmas Carol with lyrics based on Luke 2:14 and with a melody adapted from Felix Mendelssohn's secular work, *Festgesang*.

About the Arrangement

The arrangement we will be performing features three voices: Bass, Baritone (Mid), Tenor (High – Melody) with organ accompaniment.

2. DOMINUS DIXIT AD ME (BEFORE 12TH CENTURY)

Latin Text:

Dominus dixit ad me: Filius meus es tu, ego hodie genui te. *Ps.*
Quare fremuerunt gentes: et populi meditati sunt inania? Gloria
Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto: Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et
semper, et in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

Translation:

The Lord hath said to me:
Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.
Ps. Why have the Gentiles raged,
and the people devised vain things?

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world
without end. Amen.

On Gregorian Chant:

This particular piece of chant is taken from the Midnight Mass of Christmas. Gregorian Chant is the traditional music used by the Catholic Church for centuries. Gregorian Chant as one of the oldest forms of Western Music and serves as the foundation for much of Western music. Musical notation, the Solfege scale (Do, Re, Mi, etc.) all have roots in Gregorian chant. It is unique in the world of music for its use of “free rhythm”, meaning it has no set meter. Practically speaking, this makes it very difficult to “find the beat” in chant or tap your feet along to the music and almost impossible to dance to. The modern ear accustomed to genres of music such as rock, pop or rap which rely heavily on a strong rhythm may find chant rather foreign or strange, but hopefully through this piece you may begin to appreciate the timeless beauty of this ancient form of music.

3. O MAGNUM MYSTERIUM – VICTORIA (1572)

Latin Text:

*O magnum mysterium,
et admirabile sacramentum,
ut animalia viderent
Dominum natum,
iacentem in praesepe!
O beata virgo, cuius viscera
meruerunt portare
Dominum Iesum Christum.*

Alleluia!

English Text:

O great mystery,
and wonderful sacrament,
that animals should see the
newborn Lord,
lying in a manger!
O blessed virgin, whose womb
was worthy to bear
the Lord Jesus Christ.

Alleluia!

About the Text:

The Latin text for this motet is taken from Christmas Matins (one of the sung hours of prayers in the Catholic Church.) The text calls to mind the nativity of Christ and wonders at the Incarnation, by which the invisible God took the form of visible man, through the Blessed Virgin Mary.

About the Arrangement & Composer:

This arrangement of *O Magnum Mysterium* is in a style popularized during the Renaissance period (15th -16th Century) called polyphony (literally “many voices”). This style of music is characterized by “multiple, independent melodic lines, performed simultaneously.” Singers each sing independent melodies which weave together to form intricate harmonies and interesting musical textures.

This particular arrangement was composed by Tomas Luis de Victoria, one of the eminent composers of this time period and is arranged for 4 voices.

4. RIU RIU CHIU (~1556)

Text:

Riu, riu, chiu
La guarda ribera
Dios guarde el lobo
De nuestra cordera.

Riu, riu, chiu
The river bank is protected
God has kept the wolf
From our ewe lamb

El lobo rabioso la quiso morder,
Mas Dios poderoso la supo
defender;
Quisole hazer que no pudiese
pecar,
Ni aun original esta Virgen no
tuviera.
Riu, riu, chiu, etc.

The rabid wolf wanted to bite her
But Almighty God knew how to
defend her
He willed to make her unable to
sin
Even original sin this virgin did
not have
Riu, riu, chiu...

Este qu'es nascido es el gran
monarca,
Cristo patriarca de carne vestido;
Hanos redimido con se hazer
chiquito,
Aunqu'era infinito, finito se
hiciera.
Riu, riu, chiu, etc.

The one who is born is the Great
Monarch
Christ the Patriarch clothed in
flesh
He has redeemed us by making
himself small
Though He was infinite He
became finite
Riu, riu, chiu

About the Text:

This piece is a Spanish Villancico (carol), a type of popular song derived from Medieval dance forms that was popular from the 15th to 18th centuries. Villancico are often associated with rustic themes. This particular one, however, has as its main themes the Nativity of Christ and the Immaculate Conception. The refrain Riu, Riu, Chiu is often taken to represent the song of a nightingale or perhaps the kingfisher sitting by the river bank. This particular arrangement was made by Michael McGlynn.

5. COMFORT YE & EV'RY VALLEY SHALL BE EXALTED (~1741)

English Text:

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low, the crooked straight, and the rough places plain.

About Handel's Messiah

Written in 1741, Handel's Messiah is one of if not the most famous Oratorio. An Oratorio can be thought of as a "religious opera" of sorts. With music and structure very reminiscent of opera, an oratorio distinguishes itself from its secular cousin in its limited staging and with text and themes usually taken from the Scriptures. Handel's Messiah is known especially for melodies such as the Hallelujah Chorus. This excerpt from the Messiah uses text from the Prophet Isaiah. (Ch.40 v. 1-5)

6. BACH'S CHRISTMAS CHORALE (1724)

About the Piece:

This short piece called *Das neugeborne Kindelein* (or This Newborn Babe in English) is a small excerpt from Bach's Chorale Cantata which he composed in Leipzig for the Sunday following Christmas. It was first performed almost three hundred years ago to the day on 31 December 1724.

7. VIVALDI'S WINTER – LARGO (~1718)

About the Piece:

This piece is taken from Antonio Vivaldi's famous group of violin concertos seeking to portray the 4 seasons in music. A concerto is a form of classical music which features a soloist and an orchestra. The dynamic interplay between the two is what gives this form of music its particular charm. The arrangement we will be playing today, is a stripped down version of the original arranged for a string quartet (2 violins, a viola, and a cello).

The four seasons are each split into three movements, two fast movements with a slower (Largo) movement in between. This excerpt is the second movement of the Winter Concerto.

Accompanying the publication of these concertos, Vivaldi also published a series of sonnets which were supposed to be evocative of what the music is intended to portray. Here is the sonnet for this movement:

*Passar al foco i di quieti e contenti
Mentre la pioggia fuor bagna ben cento*

Before the fire to pass peaceful,
Contented days while the rain outside pours down.

8. DANCE OF THE SUGAR PLUM FAIRY (1892)

About the Piece:

Despite the lack of critical acclaim of its premier in Saint Petersburg, *The Nutcracker* composed by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky has since become one of the world's most famous ballets. Some of Tchaikovsky's most recognisable melodies such as *Trepak*, *Waltz of the Flowers* and *The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy* are parts of this larger work,

The ballet is based upon E. T. A. Hoffman's short story "The Nutcracker and the Mouse King", in which on Christmas Eve, a girl named Clara receives a wooden nutcracker carved in the shape of a man. When the clock strikes midnight, the Nutcracker come to life along with other toys and a great battle ensues between the gingerbread soldiers and mice. With the help of reinforcements from tin soldiers, the soldiers led by the Nutcracker beat back the mice. The mouse king having been distracted by Clara's slipper (which she had thrown at him) is slain by the Nutcracker who transforms into a prince and takes Clara to the beautiful land of sweets. After a night of festivities the evening concludes with a *Dance* performed by the *Sugar Plum Fairy*, who had been ruling the Land of Sweets in the prince's stead while he was away.

The original song was performed on a celesta, a keyboard instrument similar to a piano that utilises metal bars (like a xylophone) instead of strings. The arrangement we will be performing today is for two violins, a viola, two cellos and a piano.

9. CARILLON (1932)

About the Piece:

This piece was composed in 1932 by Garth Edmundson for solo organ. As its title suggests, the piece is reminiscent of a carillon, a type of keyboard instrument which is connected to a tower of brass bells.

About the Organ:

Called the King of Instruments by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart himself, the organ is the only instrument which has seen consistent use in the Catholic Liturgy. It has been in use at least since the 9th Century and by the 13th century use of the organ was standard throughout the Latin Church. "In the history of Western civilisation it was the only single instrument capable of providing an adequate level and diversity of sound in large and sometimes acoustically intractable churches"¹ leading to its development within the context of Church architecture and liturgical functions.

The organ like the piano is a keyboard instrument. Unlike the piano however it has several keyboards layered on top of each other (called manuals) and even a pedal board which is played with the feet. A traditional pipe organ creates sound, not by striking strings like a piano, but rather by releasing air through a variety of different pipes each offering a unique pitch and timbre (tone colour). Pipe organs come in a variety of sized with some having a staggering 10,000 pipes. These wide varieties of pipes each with their own sound are layered on top of each other to create the rich, full sound that the organ is known for.

¹ *Organ music and the liturgy* published online by Cambridge University Press

10. JOY TO THE WORLD (1848)

Lyrics:

Joy to the world, the Lord is
come
Let Earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him
room
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven, and Heaven, and
nature sing

Joy to the Earth, the Savior
reigns
Let all their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks,
hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat, repeat, the sounding
joy

*(No more let sins and sorrows
grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings
flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is
found.)*

He rules the world with Truth
and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His
Righteousness,
and wonders of His live,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His
love.

About the Piece:

"Joy to the World was written by English minister and hymnist Isaac Watts, based a Christian interpretation of Psalm 98." The tune used today first appeared in Lowell Mason's *The National Psalms* in 1848, in which the melody was attributed to Handel. Despite certain similarities in melodies to parts of Handel's *Messiah*, especially to the arioso, "Comfort Ye" (which you heard earlier this afternoon), scholars today have dismissed this resemblance to chance.

Fun Fact: "Since the 20th century, "Joy to the World" has been the most-published Christmas hymn in North America." (Wikipedia)

II. ES IST EIN / FLOS DE RADICE (1599)

German Text:

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen aus einer Wurzel zart,
wie uns die Alten sungen, vos Jesse kam die Art.

*Lo, how a rose e'er blooming, from tender stem hath sprung.
Of Jesse's lineage coming, as men of old have sung;*

English Text:

The flower from the root of Jesse is born today,
Whom for us is here now, we especially rejoice
That flower is Jesus, the root of the Virgin Mary,
From whom the flower has sprung.

The prophet Isaias sang of this flower.
He draws us to the love of Him that is born.
The flower is above the branch.
It renews all who dwell in heaven and on earth.

This flower draws the faithful with its perfume.
Having drawn them fills them with Divine Love.
O flower, O Grace,
for you, for you I long, fill me with Thyself.

About the Piece:

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen is a Christmas carol of German origin (whose melody was composed by Michael Praetorius) which was later translated into the Latin *Flos de Radice Jesse*.

About the Arrangement:

Our arrangement today begins first with the original German text of the song sung in the style of a round before transitioning to the traditional melody sung with the Latin text. A round is a style of music in which at least three voices sing the same melody but begin at different times, and they fit together. Famous rounds include Pachelbel's *Canon in D* and the popular nursery tunes *Row, Row, Row Your Boat* and *Three Blind Mice*.

12. LES ANGES DANS NOS CAMPAGNES (1842)

French Text:

Les anges dans nos campagnes
Ont entonné le chant des cieux;
Et l'écho de nos montagnes
reprend cet air mélodieux:

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Bergers, pour qui cette fête?
Quel est l'objet de tous ces chants?
Quel vainqueur, quelle conquête
Mérite ces cris triomphants?

Gloria...

Cherchons tous l'heureux village
Qui l'a vu naître sous ses toits,
Offrons-lui le tendre homage
Et de nos cœurs et de nos voix!

Gloria...

Translation:

The angels in our countryside
Have burst into the Heavenly hymn
And the echo of our mountains
Repeats this melodious song;

Gloria in excelsis Deo

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, who is this feast for?
What is the purpose of all these songs?
Which victor, which conquest
Deserves these triumphant cries?

Gloria ...

Let's all look for the blessed village
That saw him be born under its roofs,
Let's offer him the tender homage
From our hearts and from our voices.

Gloria...

About the Piece:

Les Anges dans nos Campagnes (translated literally, "The Angels in our Countryside") is a traditional French Christmas Carol of unknown origin. It has since been translated into multiple languages including the English version, *Angels We Have Heard on High*. It is known especially for its chorus in which the "Glo-" of Gloria is sustained for 16 consecutive notes.

13. WHAT CHILD IS THIS? (1871)

Lyrics:

What Child is this, who laid to rest on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom Angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are
keeping?

This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and Angels sing.
Haste, haste, to bring Him laud, the Babe, the Son of Mary.

Why lies He in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christians, fear, for sinners, here the silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce Him through, The cross be borne for me, for
you.

Hail, hail the Word made flesh, The Babe, the Son of Mary.

So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh. Come peasant, King to own
him;

The King of Kings salvation brings. Let loving hearts enthrone Him.
Raise, raise a song on high, The virgin sings her lullaby.
Joy, joy for Christ is born, The Babe, the Son of Mary.

About the Piece:

This piece was written by William Chatterton Dix, a manager of an insurance company in the 1800s, who after a near-death experience had a spiritual renewal and began writing poems and hymns. Some claim the text to be derived from a longer poem entitled *The Manger Throne*, but this is disputed; others arguing that *What Child is This?* was written as an independent carol. The melody from this piece is taken from the traditional English folk song *Greensleeves*.

14. IT CAME UPON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR / SILENT NIGHT

Lyrics:

It came upon a midnight clear, that glorious song of old.
From angels benging near the Earth, to touch their harps of gold.
Peace on the Earth good will to men, from Heav'ns all gracious King.
The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.

Silent night, Holy Night. All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child. Holy infant so tender and mild.
Sleep in Heavenly peace. Sleep in Heavenly peace.

Silent night, Holy night Son of God loves pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face. With the dawn of redeeming
grace.

Jesus Lord at thy birth, Jesus Lord at Thy birth.

Silent night, holy night, Wondrous star lend thy light
With the angels let us sing. Alleluia to the King
Christ the Saviour is born! Christ the Saviour is born!

About the Arrangement:

This arrangement done by Jim Clancy is a medley of these two classic Christmas Carols in the Barbershop style. This style of music became popular in the late 1800s and early 1900s, before falling out of popularity until the 1940s with the start of the so-called "Barbershop revival era". Barbershop is a form of vocal music featuring 4 voices: Lead, Tenor, Baritone, and Bass, and characterized by its use of close harmony. While the Lead sings the melody, the other three parts, while singing (for the most part) in time with him, harmonize to create interesting chords. The singers remain within a narrow range of each other compared to other vocal genres such as polyphony giving Barbershop its characteristic tight harmonies.

15. E JE KA JO YO (1988)

Lyrics:

È jẹ ká jọ yọ Ká fi jó si ò
A bí olúgbàlà kan fún ọ
Èyin onígàbò ẹ hó ẹ yọ
Abí Jésù Olùgbàlà

Let us rejoice together and also dance
A savior has been born for us
Believers, shout for joy
Jesus our Savior is born

Àwa kí ọ, Ọba mímọ
A wá júbà rẹ ọba ògò
Èyin onígàbò ẹ hó ẹ yọ
Abí Jésù Olùgbàlà

*We hail you, Holy King
We have come to worship you King of
glory. Believers, shout for joy
Jesus our Savior is born*

Ìjọba yó wà ní èjìkà rẹ
Òun ni ọba àwọn ọba
Òun ni yó jọba tí tí ayé o
Aládé àlàáfíà

The kingdom will be on his shoulders
He is the King of kings
He will reign forever
Prince of Peace

Àwa kí ọ, Ọba mímọ...

We hail you, Holy King...

Àwọn amòye mэта ìgbà nì
Wọn rí ìràwò kan dídán
Ìràwò yí ni wọn tàn lẹyìn
Látí júbà fun ọba titun
Wọn wí pé

The three wise men of that time
They saw a shining star
This star is what they followed
to worship the new King.
They said:

Àwa kí ọ, Ọba mímọ...

We hail you, Holy King...

About the Piece:

E Jẹ Ká Jọ Yọ or “Let us all Rejoice” is a modern Nigerian Christmas carol composed by David Oludaisi Aina. The carol is written in Yoruba, one of the many languages used in Nigeria. It belongs to a genre of music known as “highlife” a genre which arose in present day Ghana in the 19th Century before gaining popularity in Nigeria.

17. O MAGNUM MYSTERIUM – LAURIDSEN (1994)

Latin Text:

O magnum mysterium, et admirabile sacramentum,
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum, iacentem in praesepio!
O beata virgo, cuius viscera meruerunt portare Dominum Iesum
Christum. Alleluia! (*Translation is the same as our third piece*)

About the Arrangement:

The Composer Morten Lauridsen described the piece as a "a quiet song of profound inner joy". The composition was heavily influenced by a painting by Zurbarán's, titled *Still Life with Lemons, Oranges and a Rose*, which in Lauridsen's words was just "a table with some fruit on it and other things" and yet caused him to weep for some inexplicable reason. After doing research, he found that this still life painting was rich with Baroque symbolism detailing the purity of the Blessed Virgin. Taking this as an inspiration, he began work on a piece for the LA Master Chorale's Christmas Concert.

Lauridsen with this composition wished to relate "my setting [*of this well-known text*] to history and bring in religiosity without complicating the message [*God's Grace to the meek and the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary*] with complicated musical language". To achieve this, he would be influenced by many Renaissance composing techniques and composers such as Palestrina while keeping a simple, direct style. Reflecting on the mystery of the joy of the birth of the Son of God inextricably tied to the fact that men would not receive him and would one day put him to death, he would spend six months trying to answer this question: "How can I in a very direct setting of a piece reflect the Blessed Virgin's sorrow, her profound sorrow at seeing her Son murdered?" His elegant solution can be heard on the word *Virgo* towards the end of the piece, in which the only note outside of the piece's key is used shedding a somber mood on the Christmas Mystery for just a second. After which the piece draws to a triumphant close with the resounding Alleluias.