



Rhodes College Singers

Christmas Concert 1991

Tony Lee Garner, Conductor
David Ramsey, Associate Conductor and Accompanist

O Magnum Mysterium

Sunday, December 8
Hardie Auditorium, Rhodes College
6:00 P.M.

Monday, December 9
St. Mary's Episcopal Cathedral
8:00 P.M.

O Magnum Mysterium

O magnum mysterium, et admirabile sacramentum,
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum jacentem in praesepio.

O beata virgo, cujus viscera meruerunt
portare Dominum Jesum Christum. Alleluia.

*O great mystery and wondrous sacrament
that animals should behold the Lord lying in a manger.
O blessed is the Virgin Mary, whose womb was deemed worthy
to bear the Lord Jesus Christ. Alleluia.*

Program

O Magnum Mysterium - Thomas Luis Victoria

For this program, the first of the three settings of this wonderful text comes from the Renaissance. This Spanish composer gives us a special musical setting for each of the three parts of the text. The narrative opening is set polyphonically. When the mysteries of the Incarnation are addressed, Victoria claims our attention with six beats of a single homophonic chord. The third section of the text is the human response to this wondrous story. Victoria sets the first "alleluia" in a very down to earth dance in triple meter before regaining composure for the more stately and becoming setting of the final "alleluia".

There is No Rose (English) - Shirley McRae

The text of this medieval carol, like the well known German carol "Es ist ein' Ros' entsprungen," has Isaiah XI as its source: "There shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse." The figure of "the rose" is found often in the imagery of medieval literature when the subject is Jesus and Mary. The medieval period was a time, according to Erik Routley, when the "metaphysics of doctrine came to the common man through images rather than through concepts." The juxtaposition of English and Latin text classifies this carol as "macaronic." This new musical setting is by Shirley McRae, a Memphis composer and Orff music specialist.

The Angels and the Shepherds (Bohemian) - arr. C.H. Trevor

The majority of carols, which were created during an approximate period of two hundred years, are from England with Germany making the second largest contribution. This beautiful carol, however, is from Bohemia.

O Leave Your Sheep (French) - arr. Kenneth Leighton

The original text and the tune of this carol are French. The English translation is by Alice Raleigh. The late Kenneth Leighton was an English composer. His church music is a significant part of the musical literature of this century.

Zither Carol (Czech) - arr. Malcolm Sargent

Sir Malcolm Sargent is best known as a conductor and champion of English music. Here he has set a text to a charming traditional Czech folk melody. The accompaniment to the verses uses the voices to imitate the strumming of the zither strings.

In Dulci Jubilo (German) - arr. R.L. Pearsall, ed. Reginald Jacques

This is one of the most popular “macaronic” carols, though the translator John Mason Neale declined to leave any of the Latin text for us in our hymnals. The original text, we learn from a fourteenth-century writer, was to have been sung by angels to Henry Suso (ca.1366), the mystic, who was drawn in to dance with his celestial visitors. The melody and several versions of the text are found in the *Piae Cantiones*, 1582.

Blessed Be That Maid Mary (English) - arr. David Willcocks

This is a traditional English tune with words by G.R. Woodward. It, too, is a macaronic carol. Willcocks, former Choirmaster at King’s College, Cambridge, uses a variety of choral textures to underscore the images of the text.

Thou Whom Shepherds Worshipped (German) -

arr. Desmond Ratcliffe

Both text and tune were first observed in the Hohenfurth Abbey ms 20. The tune is described by Erik Routley in “English Carol” as a “late medieval German carol tune, dance-like and gracious, like so many.”

O Magnum Mysterium - Francis Poulenc

The second setting of this beautiful text comes from the middle of our own century. This is one of six Christmas motets by Poulenc. These motets, as well as most of his other sacred choral music, were written after a spiritual awakening. Poulenc was profoundly affected by a visit to the ancient pilgrimage site of Rocamadour in southern France. His setting of the text differs from the other two in that he did not set that portion of the text which is the human response, the “alleluia”. He chooses, rather, to draw our attention to the profound mystery of the text.

Ding Dong Merrily On High (French) - arr. David Willcocks

This famous “Gloria” tune is to be found in a “book of dances” published in 1588 and edited by a canon of Langres, Johan Tabourot. It was originally a *branle*, a round dance of rustic origin, which made its way into aristocratic circles in the seventeenth century.

Away In A Manger (Normandy) - arr. Reginald Jacques

The text of this carol is American, published in Philadelphia in 1885 with a tune written by W.J. Kirkpatrick. The popular text has been set to many different tunes (one scholar estimates as many as forty-one).

Lully, Lulla, Thou Little Tiny Child (English) -

arr. Kenneth Leighton

Soprano: Victoria Holland

This piece comes from the Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors, 15th century. The song is sung by the women of Bethlehem in the play, just before Herod’s soldiers come in to slaughter their children. The text is by Robert Croo, 1534, reprinted by E. Rhys, “Everyman and other Plays.” The Coventry plays were witnessed by Margaret, Queen of Henry VI, in 1456, by Richard III in 1484, by Henry VII in 1492. The tune appears in print in 1584.

Of The Father's Heart Begotten - arr. David Willcocks

The melody of this popular hymn, *Divinum Mysterium*, is from the "Piae Cantiones Theoderick Petri Nylandensis", 1582. Its original form is undoubtedly a dance although it is found in most hymnals in plainsong style. The text is by Prudentius, b. 348 and translated by R.F. Davis.

Here We Come a-Wassailing (English) - arr. John Rutter

This is probably the best known of the "wassail" songs. The word means "Good health to you". (Within the word is the root of "hail" which we have in "health", "hale", and "Hallo"). The practice of the tenants being granted the right at Christmas to beg in a good humoured way for alms and food (which were surely to be provided anyway) from the Lords and Ladies in the Great House dates from feudal times. Note especially the verse:

We have got a little purse, Of stretching leather skin;
We want a little (of your) money To line it well within.

A Merry Christmas (English West Country) - arr. Arthur Warrell

The relationship of the text and spirit of this carol to the "wassail" carols is obvious. In the midst of wishing for a merry Christmas we hear the imperative:

"We all like figgy pudding so bring some out here."
"We won't go until we get some, so bring some out here."

O Magnum Mysterium - Hayes Biggs

Hayes Biggs is a graduate of Rhodes College and is currently residing in New York City. His compositions are performed often throughout the United States. His setting of this text bears a spiritual similarity to that of Victoria's. He calls our attention to the same wonder of the Incarnation by setting a portion of that text for only two voices. The setting of the "alleluia" section, like that of Victoria's, is both passionate and ethereal. This piece ends on the same pitch as begins the opening setting by Victoria. Thus, we close a mystical circle.

Translations

There is No Rose

Res miranda - a wonderful thing

Pares Forma - of like form

Gaudeamus - let us rejoice

Transeamus - let us pass over (from this world to the next)

In Dulci Jubilo

The fourteenth century melody, with the words, occurs in a MS at Leipzig University library. The developed form of the melody is in Michael Vehe's *Gesangbuch*, Leipzig, 1537, and in Witzel's *Psalmes Ecclesiasticus*, Cologne, 1550. In Babst's *Gesangbuch*, Leipzig, 1545, the last hymnbook produced for Luther, the third stanza, doubtless by Luther himself, is substituted for an earlier one. The melody and versions of the text are found in the *Piae Cantiones*, 1582. It was from this source that subsequent translations were made into English. It was first translated into English by John Wedderburn in his *Gude and godly ballates* about 1540. The version known best (other than Neale's) is by Percy Dearmer.

In dulci jubilo

(In sweet shouting, or jubilation)

Now sing with hearts aglow!

Our delight and pleasure

lies *in praesepio*,

(in a manger)

Like sunshine is our treasure

Matris in gremio

Alpha es et O!

(In his mother's lap thou art Alpha and Omega)

O Jesu, parvule,

(O tiny Jesus)

For thee I long always;

Comfort my heart's blindness,

O puer optime

(O best of boys)

With all thy loving-kindness

O princeps gloriae

trabe me post te!

(O prince of glory, draw me after thee.)

Written by Luther most probably.

O Patris caritas!

O Nati lenitas!

(O love of the Father, O gentleness of the son)

Deeply were we stained (ed)

Per nostra crimina:

(through our crimes)

But thou for us hast gained (ed)

Translations (continued)

Coelorum gaudia.
(the joys of the heavens)
O that we were there!

Ubi sunt gaudia
(Where are joys?)
In any place but there?
There are angels singing
Nova cantica,
(new songs)
And there the bells are ringing
In regis curia.
(in the court of the King)
O that we were there!

Blessed Be That Maid Mary

Eya! Jesus hodie Natus est de virgine
Jesus is born today of a virgin.
Pro peccante homine
On behalf of sinful man.
In excelsis gloria.
Glory in the highest.
Stelle ducti lumine.
Led by the light of the star.
In quo Christus natus est.
In which Christ was born.

The word "Eya" is translated, according to Rhodes Professor Dr. Tom Jolly, as something like "whoopie."

Thou Whom Shepherds Worshipped

The following translation is from "Hymns Ancient and Modern" and by C.S. Phillips.

He whom joyous shepherds praised,
When the angel's song was raised
Bidding them be not amazed,
Heaven's all-glorious King is born.

He whom sages, westward faring,
Myrrh and gold and incense bearing,
Worshipped, bowing low before him,
Reigns as King this happy morn.

Sing to Christ, the King who reigneth,
Yet of Mary manhood gaineth,
Born our God; let us adore him:
Glory be to God on high.