



Rhodes College Singers  
 Christmas Concert 1989 

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

Sunday, December 3  
Hardie Auditorium, Rhodes College  
6:00 p.m.

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Tuesday, December 5  
St. Mary's Episcopal Cathedral  
8:00 p.m.

## PROGRAM

### **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.

### **There Is No Rose** (English) - Shirley McRae

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 our Lord or our Lady. 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 a "macaronic" carol. Shirley McRae is a Memphis composer.

### **Away in a Manger** (Traditional Normandy) - Arr. Reginald Jacques

The text of this carol is American, published in Philadelphia in 1885 with a tune written by Gospel-song composer, W.J. Kirkpatrick. The popular text has been set to many different tunes (one scholar estimates as many as forty-one). We have chosen to sing the text set to a tune from Normandy.

### **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.

### **Blessed Be That Maid** (English) - Arr. David Willcocks

It is a traditional English tune with words by G.R. Woodward. It, too, is a macaronic carol and the Latin words are:

*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 Dr. Tom Jolly as something like "whoopie".

**Gloria** - (From "Mass" In G Minor) - Ralph Vaughan Williams

This is not a carol at all and is included in the program because its text "Gloria in excelsis Deo" is so apropos of the spirit of Christmas.

**In Dulci Jubilo** (Old German) - Arr. R.L. Pearsall, Ed. Reginald Jacques

Probably the most famous carol on our program is this carol. It 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 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 thereby to dance with his celestial visitors.

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 alway;

Comfort my heart's blindness,

O *puer optime*

(O best of boys)

With all thy loving-kindness

O *princeps gloriae*

*trahe 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)

*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!

**God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen** (tune: 'London') - Arr. John Joubert

It is difficult for us to believe that there could be another tune for this text. But there is one which precedes "London" and which was as popular as this tune in England. The version we are singing was reprinted from a "broadside" printed by J.&C. Evans, Long-lane, London, in about 1795.

**Mary Had a Baby (American) - William L. Dawson**

America contributed very little to the carol repertoire. The music and words were composed in the twentieth century by Mr. Dawson. This outstanding black composer has made enormous contributions to another body of folk musical literature, the spiritual. It seems fitting to include it with the expressions of the faith as heard in the carol. Both the carol and the spiritual utilize simple yet rich languages.

**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. Kenneth Leighton was an English composer, primarily of church music.

**Zither Carol (Czech) - Arr. Malcolm Sargent**

Sir Malcolm Sargent is best known as a conductor and champion of English music. He has set a text which he wrote to a charming traditional Czech folk melody.

**A Merry Christmas (Trad. 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:

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

*Erik Routley on the Difference Between the Carol and the Hymn.*

"The reader may feel that to pass from the story of the carol into the story of the hymnology is rather like an abrupt transition from rustic paths to urban streets....But that is how it is with hymns. They are written by identifiable people, patched up by others, set to music (usually) by others again, and set to different music by different people who did not care for what the first person wrote."

(Information gleaned from "The English Carol" by Erik Routley and "The Oxford Book of Carols", edited by Percy Dearmer, R. Vaughan Williams and Martin Shaw.)