



OF A ROSE: A Chorale Christmas

Notes, Texts and Translations – PhoCho1001

1. *Welcome, Yule!* – Douglas E. Wagner

It would be an unusual musician who has not performed at least one work by Douglas Wagner, the prolific American composer whose music encompasses pieces for choir, concert band, orchestra, handbell choirs, organ, piano, and vocal and instrumental solos. Wagner spent many years as a music educator and administrator in secondary education, but now devotes himself to composition full time. An ASCAP award-winning composer, his music has been performed or broadcast in more than twenty-six countries, while sales of his music number in the millions.

Welcome, Yule! is first found in a manuscript dating to the reign of Henry VI, now preserved in the British Library, but is presumably of even greater antiquity. (Another version was recorded by John Audlay, the “blind monk-poet of Haughmond,” who was writing in the 1420s.) Although the original text encompasses more than Christmas, making references to Stephen, John, Thomas, the Holy Innocents, Twelfth Day, Candlemas (the feast marking Jesus’s presentation at the Temple and Mary’s purification), and the saints, Wagner has set only the first and fifth verses of the poem.

2. *Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day* – arr. David Willcocks

This carol was first published in 1833 but it is far older than that. Scholars believe it dates back to the medieval Cornish mystery plays presented during the Christmas season. The tune is lovely – but it is the imagery of man as the true eternally wooed love of Christ that makes this a carol.

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day;
I would my true love did so chance
To see the legend of my play,
To call my true love to my dance;

Chorus

Sing, oh! my love, oh! my love, my love, my love,
This have I done for my true love.

Then was I born of a virgin pure,
Of her I took fleshly substance
Thus was I knit to man's nature
To call my true love to my dance.
Chorus

In a manger laid, and wrapped I was
So very poor, this was my chance
Betwixt an ox and a silly poor ass
To call my true love to my dance.
Chorus

3. *Lo, How a Rose* – arr. Daniel Gawthrop

Daniel Gawthrop is quickly becoming a staple composer in the modern choral repertoire, as his rich harmonic language and limpid melodies are universally appealing. A native of Indiana, he spent his youth in choirs and also studied trombone, piano, and organ, finally focusing on organ studies for his university degrees. His career has included three years as Composer-in-Residence to the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra (VA); grants from The Barlow Endowment for Musical Composition; premieres from numerous choral groups and the American Choral Directors Association; and premieres from among such prominent ensembles as The Singing Sergeants of the United States Air Force, The Gregg Smith Singers, and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming* is truly one of the venerable hymns of the ancient church, probably dating back to the 15th century. Its text is a reference to the famous prophecy in Isaiah of Jesus’s lineage, “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse . . .” The tree of Jesse is often depicted as a rose in medieval icons.

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming, as seers of old have sung.
It came, a blossom bright,
amid the cold of winter,
When half spent was the night.

Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the Rose I have in mind;
With Mary we behold it, the Virgin Mother kind.

To show God's love aright,
she bore to us a Savior,
When half spent was the night.

O Flower, whose fragrance tender with sweetness fills the air,
Dispels with glorious splendor the darkness everywhere;
True Man, yet very God,
from sin and death now save us,
And share our every load

4. *Now May We Singen* – Cecilia McDowall

Cecilia McDowall, a native of London, read music at the universities of Edinburgh and London, receiving further training at the renowned Trinity College of Music in London. Her work has met with warm notices in all genres, and she is particularly recognized for her sensitive text setting. Her music is becoming increasingly prominent, and in addition to other awards, she has been short-listed more than once for the British Composer Awards. She is composer in residence at Dulwich College, and has been signed by the prestigious Oxford University Press. She frequently collaborates with author, poet, librettist, dancer, and director Christa Dickason, most recently in a project sponsored by the Soil Association (a charity based in the United Kingdom and devoted to organic land husbandry), resulting in *Five Seasons*, a celebration of nature as experienced on five very different organic farms throughout Britain. The medieval poem *Now May We Singen* dates at least to the 15th century, while the text for *Of a Rose* (*Listen, lordynges, old and yonge*) can be traced back to the 14th.

This Babe to us that now is born,
Wonderful works He hath ywrought
He would not loss what was forlorn,
But boldly again it bought;

Chorus

And thus it is
For sooth ywis
He asketh nought but that it is.
Now may we singen as it is.
Quod puer natus est nobis.

This bargain lovèd He right well,
The price was high and bought full dear.
Who would suffer and for us feel
As did that Prince withouten peer?

Chorus

His ransom for us hath ypaid;
Good reason have we to be His,
Be mercy asked and He be prayed,
Who may deserve the heavenly bliss.

Chorus

To some purpose God made man;
I trust well to salvation,
What was His blood that from Him ran
But fence against damnation?

Chorus

Almighty God in Trinity,
Thy mercy we pray with whole heart,
Thy mercy may all woe make fell
And dangerous dread from us to start.

Chorus

5. *Joys Seven* – arr. James Ludwig

James Ludwig, a Kentucky native who was early transplanted to Long Island, is an accomplished jazz guitarist who studied at the prestigious Berklee College of Music. He now plays in a number of jazz ensembles in the New York area, and also sings as a member of the Choir of Men and Boys of the Cathedral of the Incarnation. The basic thumbprint for the text of *Joys Seven* (also frequently known as *The Seven Joys of Mary*, *The Seven Rejoices of Mary*, or *The Blessings of Mary*) has been with us since the cult of Mary grew strong in the medieval church (although the number of blessings varies from five to seven to fifteen). Mary's joys follow Christ's achievements from his infancy through his martyrdom and ultimate glory. Ludwig's setting is filled with asymmetrical/metrical shifts and subtle cross-rhythms that salute his jazz roots.

The very first joy that Mary had, It was the joy of one
To see the blessed Jesus Christ
When He was first her Son

Chorus:

When He was Her first Son, Good man
And blessed may He be,
both Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
To all eternity.

The next good joy that Mary had, It was the joy of two
To see her own son Jesus Christ, To make the lame to go.

Chorus

The next good joy that Mary had, It was the joy of three
To see her own son Jesus Christ, To make the blind to see.

Chorus

The next good joy that Mary had, It was the joy of four
To see her own son Jesus Christ
To read the Bible o'er.

Chorus

The next good joy that Mary had, It was the joy of five
To see her own son Jesus Christ, To bring the dead alive.

Chorus

The next good joy that Mary had, It was the joy of six
To see her own son Jesus Christ, Upon the Crucifix.

Chorus

The next good joy that Mary had, It was the joy of seven
To see her own son Jesus Christ,
To wear the crown of Heaven.

Chorus

6. *Hacia Belén va un Borrico* – arr. Alice Parker & Robert Shaw

Recorded in 1951 by the Robert Shaw Chorale for RCA, this arrangement is part of a series of carols from around the world where "secular meet those which we call religious." In Shaw's liner notes from the LP he describes these carols: "...in Spain, gypsies are in attendance at the manger, a little donkey laden with chocolate trots toward Bethlehem, and kings bring a tower as gift for the Christ-child."

*Hacia Belén va un Borrico, rin, rin
Yo me remendaba, yo me remendé,
Cargado de chocolate.
Lleva su chocolatera, rin, rin,
Yo me remendaba, yo me remendé,
Yo m'eché un remiendo, yo me lo quité,
Su molinillo y su anatre.
Maria, Maria, ven acá corriendo,
Que el chocolatillo se lo están comiendo.*

Towards Bethlehem goes a donkey
I remember, I remember,
Laden with chocolate.
It carries its chocolate-pot,
I remember, I remember,
I remember, yet I forget,
Its chocolate mill and its stove
Mary, Mary, come here running,
because they are eating up all the chocolate.

*En el Portal de Belén, rin, rin,
Yo me remendaba, yo me remendé,
Gitanillos han entrado;
Y al Niño que ésta en la cuna, rin, rin,
Los pañales le han quitado.
Maria, Maria ven acá volando,
Que los pañalitos los están llevando.*

Inside the gate of Bethlehem,
I remember, I remember,
gypsies have entered;
and from the child which is in the cradle
The swaddling clothes have they taken.
Mary, Mary, come here flying,
because they are carrying off the swaddling clothes.

*Con un sombrero de paja, rin, rin,
Al Portal llega un gallego;
Mientras adoraba al Niño, rin, rin,
El buey se comió le sombrero.
Maria, Maria, ven acá corriendo,
Que el sombrero el buey se lo está comiendo.
Maria, Maria, venacá volando,
Consuela al gallego, que está a quí llorando.*

With a hat of straw
at the gate arrives a Galician;
while he was worshipping the Child
A calf ate his sombrero.
Mary, Mary, come here running,
because the calf is eating the hat.
Mary, Mary, come here flying,
To comfort the Galician who is here crying

7. Estampie Natalis – Vaclav Nelhybel

Czechoslovakian composer Vaclav Nelhybel began his studies in Prague, where by the age of 18 he was already serving as assistant conductor to the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra. He then moved to Switzerland to study, finding positions at Swiss Radio and the University of Fribourg, before moving to Radio Free Europe in Munich. He immigrated to the United States in 1957, becoming a citizen in 1962, and served at several universities, ending his career at the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania.

Although his music embraces all genres and is written for a wide spectrum of performers, he delighted in composing for young musicians, in his ability to “make them excited.” So absorbed was he by his work that he often composed up to 18 hours a day, or even around the clock when in the throes of a particular idea (“To make music is the best way to manifest my existence as a human being,” he once remarked), and the *Estampie Natalis* is one of his best-loved choral pieces.

The medieval estampie was both a dance and a musical form, although there are no extant treatises that describe the way it was danced, and – depending on who is interpreting the etymology – it may have been performed either with at least one stationary (or perhaps sliding) foot, or, just to muddy the waters, with vigorous stamping and hopping. When they were texted, the subject was generally reverence for a loved one, which is of course the case with the *Estampie Natalis*, albeit a sacred, not a secular, love. Nelhybel captures the medieval flavor with modal melodies and driving, shifting rhythmic accents that are utterly engrossing in their earthy rusticity.

*Puer natus in Bethlehem, alleluia,
Unde gaudet Jerusalem, alleluia.
In cordis jubilo*

The boy born in Bethlehem, alleluia,
Rejoice Jerusalem, alleluia.
In joy of heart

*Christum natum adoremus sum novo cantico.
Assumpsit carnem Filius, alleluia.
Dei Patris altissimus, alleluia.
In cordis jubilo*

Let us adore the newborn Christ with a new song.
The Son has assumed flesh, alleluia.
The Father most high, alleluia.
In joy of heart

*Christum natum adoremus sum novo cantico.
Per Gabrielem nuntium, alleluia.
Virgo concepit Filium, alleluia.
In cordis jubilo
Christum natum adoremus sum novo cantico.
Hic jacet in praesepe, alleluia.
Qui regnat sine termino, alleluia.
In cordis jubilo*

Let us adore the newborn Christ with a new song.
Per Gabriel's greeting, alleluia.
The virgin conceived a Son, alleluia.
In joy of heart
Let us adore the newborn Christ with a new song.
He lies in the manger, alleluia.
He who rules without end, alleluia.
In joy of heart

Christum natum adoremus sum novo cantico.
In hoc natali gaudio, alleluia.
Benedicamus Domino, alleluia.
Laudetur Sancta Trinitas, alleluia.
Deo dicamus gracias, alleluia!

Let us adore the newborn Christ with a new song.
In joy of this birth, alleluia.
Let us bless the Lord, alleluia.
The Holy Spirit be praised, alleluia.
Give thanks unto God, alleluia

8. *Cantate, Astra* – Cecilia McDowall

Cantate, astra (Sing, stars), a setting of Dickason's poem *Messengers* (to be sung in the dark turn of the year), was also inspired by her stay at Woodland Farms. Musically, *Cantate, Astra* evokes the sparseness of medieval texture, responding to the elegant clarity of the lyric with its Latin refrain and the word 'hope' repeated in seven different languages from around the world.

Cantate, astra.
Drop your distant music
Through the harsh rule of night.
Send us melodies
Of hopeful light.
Cantate, astra.

Through fearful space and time
Your songs of light
Cry, 'Hope is born from darkness.
Hope is born.'
Cantate, astra.

Sing, messengers!
In every human tongue
Known since the dark forever

Still was young.
Cry, 'Jubilate!'

Hope, *hoffnung, speranza,*
nadyej, kibo-oh, speranza,
spes, espoir
Cantate, astra.

From darkness
Hope is born!
Cantate, angeli! Jubilate!
Sing, all you messengers!
Cantate!
Hope is born.
Cantate, astra.

9-11. *Anniversary Carols* – arr. Jackson Berkey

Jackson Berkey has forged a very versatile career. Juilliard trained, he is an award-winning composer, an acclaimed pianist (both as a solo classical recording artist and as a collaborator with Mannheim Steamroller), a founder of the professional choir *Soli Deo Gloria Cantorum* (in partnership with his wife, Almeda, herself a highly skilled singer, conductor, pianist, and lyricist), and founder of the Soli Deo Gloria Press. His twelve *Anniversary Carols*, accompanied by solo harp, have been so named because each was presented to his wife as an anniversary present. After a deceptively lyrical opening, Berkey sets *God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen* with some unexpected harmonic and rhythmic twists (and, in one portion, a "Mannheim backbeat"), giving considerable spice to this new reading of an old favorite. *Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus* sets Charles Wesley's text to the tune *Hyfrydol*, the most common tune used for this hymn in this country. At the coda, however, the harp introduces *Away in a Manger*, using, however, the tune more commonly used in England for that hymn.

A Day in a Manger is a setting of *Away in a Manger*, but now using the hymn tune most familiar to Americans. *Away in a Manger*, incidentally, has often been erroneously attributed to Martin Luther, but he wrote neither the words, nor any of the forty-one (!) tunes to which it has been sung across the years. The first two verses are anonymous, having first been published in the *Little Children's Book for Schools and Families* in Philadelphia in 1885; the third verse first appeared in print in 1892 in Gabriel's *Vineyard Songs*. Both of these melodies, the one used in England and the one more popular here, were written by Americans. The American version was written by James R. Murray, who sincerely believed that he was setting one of Luther's poems, and, in fact, titled it *Luther's Cradle Hymn*. The English version (heard here represented by the harp only) was composed by William J. Kirkpatrick, a Union soldier whose many other hymns, although none are now so popular as his little lullaby, include 'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, In the twinkling of an eye, Jesus understands! and He is all in all to me.

9. *God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*

God rest ye merry, gentlemen let nothing you dismay
for Jesus Christ, our Savior was born upon this day
to save us all from Satan's power when we were gone astray,
O, tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy!

From God our heavenly Father the blessed angels came,
And unto certain shepherds brought tidings of the same,
That there was born in Bethlehem the Son of God by name,
It's tidings of comfort and joy!

"Go, fear not!" said God's angels, let nothing you afright,
this day is born in Bethlehem of a pure Virgin bright,
One able to advance you and throw down Satan quite,
great comfort and joy!

God rest ye merry, gentlemen; let nothing you dismay.
Remember: Christ, our Savior was born on Christmas day
to save us all from Satan's power when we were gone astray.

O, tidings of comfort and joy!

10. Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus

Come, Thou long-expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in Thee.
[Yisroel!] Israel's Strength and Consolation, Hope of all the earth Thou art:
Dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver, born a child, and yet a king,
born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By Thine own eternal Spirit Rule in all our hearts alone;
by Thine all-sufficient merit, Raise us to thy glorious throne.

11. A Day in a Manger

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,
the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the Baby wakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes;
I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle to watch lullaby.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay
Close by me forever, And love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
And fit us for heaven To live with Thee there

12. How Far Is It To Bethlehem? – arr. James McCullough

James McCullough, a practical man, spent much of his career as Head of the Curriculum Materials Research and Resource Center at Boston State College, while composing and performing on the side. Later, he was fortunate enough to be able to earn his living as a musician, with appointments to the New England Conservatory of Music and as Arts Administrator of the Music Literature, and Folk Life programs at the Massachusetts Council for the Arts, Humanities, and Sciences. *How Far Is It To Bethlehem?* is dedicated to the Harvard University Choir and sets a text by Frances Chesterton, wife of the great Victorian author and fervent Catholic apologist, G.K. Chesterton. Indeed, the religious portion of his career owes her a great debt of thanks, as she coaxed him from Unitarianism to Anglicanism, and his joy was complete when she finally joined him in his ultimate conversion to Catholicism.

How far is it to Bethlehem?
Not very far.
Shall we find the stableroom
Lit by a star?

Can we see the little child,
Is he within?
If we lift the wooden latch,
May we go in?

May we stroke the sheep?
May we peep like them and see Jesus asleep?
If we touch his tiny hand
Will he awake?
Will he know we've come so far
Just for his sake?

Great Kings have precious gifts,
And we have naught,
Smiles and little tears
Are all we have brought.

For all weary children
Mary must weep
Here, on his bed of straw
Sleep, children, sleep.

God in his mother's arms,
Babes in the Byre,
Sleep, as they sleep who finds their heart's desire.

13. *Of A Rose* – Cecilia McDowall

Listen, lordynges, old and yonge,
How this rose began to sprynge;
Such a rose to mine lykyng
In all this world ne knowe I non.
Alleluia.

The aungel came fro hevене tour*
To greet Marye with gret honour,
Seyde she should bere the flour
That should breke the fiendEs bond.
Alleluia.

The flower sprong in heye* Bethlem,
That is both bryht and schen:*.
The rose is Marye, hevене qwene,
Out of here bosom the blosme sprong.
Alleluia.

- *tour = tower
- *schen = shining
- *bote = salvation
- *pryestes hond = in priest's hand
- *heye = high
- *swote = sweet
- *schewit = is shown

The ferste braunche is ful of myht,
That sprong on Chrystemesse nyht,
The sterre schon over Bethlem bryht
That is bothe brod and long.
Alleluia.

The secunde braunche sprong to helle,
The fiendEs power down to felle:
Therein myht non soule dwelle;
Blyss'd be the time the rose sprong!
Alleluia.

The thredde braunch is good and swote*,
It sprang to hevene, crop and rote,
there to dwell and ben our bote;*.
Ev'ry day it schewit* in pryestes hond*.
Alleluia.

ABOUT THESE NOTES: *These liner notes were written by a great friend of Charles Bruffy and the Phoenix Chorale, Kathryn Parke. A soprano who specializes in early music, she taught for many years at Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas. In addition to performance and research, her musical interests include composition and arranging, and her pieces have been performed by the PSU Choirs, the Early Music Consort of Kansas City, and several District Honor Choirs. She has written the liner notes for the majority of the Chorale's recent recordings.*

PHOENIX CHORALE *Singers between 2005 - 2010*

SOPRANO

Dana Bender
Alison Chaney
Jill LeSeur-Chipman
Cassandra Ewer
Laura Inman
Carol Platt Jennings
Kira Z. Rugen
Danya Tiller
Riki Wamsley

ALTO

Jennifer Berner Hooten
Cora Blouch
Lyndsay Ermeling
Karen Knudsen
Rita Litchfield-Good
Caroline Markham
Amy Perciballi
Kathleen Ruhleder
Holly Sheppard
Stephanie Stickford
Kay Wiley

TENOR

Robert Comeaux
Andrew DeValk
Erik Gustafson
Daryl Hansmeier
Stephen Hickman
Ryan C. Keller
Kevin Kriegel
Timothy E. Leffler
Kenny Miller
Joel M. Rinsema
W. Bryan Slade

BASS

Sha Appenzeller
Sean Carter Campbell
Jeff Dolan
Ryan D. Garrison
Joshua Hillmann
Jeff Jones
Matthew Scott
David Topping
David Wimett
Robert Wright
Phil Yutzky