



Renaissance Voices

Derek Morphy, conductor

*Joy
& shall be
Yours*



Renaissance Voices

of Winnipeg, Manitoba, was formed in 1995 to perform music of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. While this period is still a primary focus, the ensemble has extended its repertoire into many other choral genres.

Each Advent, it has been our custom to present a program which explores a particular aspect of the season. Selections on this CD have been taken from recordings of live performances of these concerts over the years. Consequently, the listener will hear the occasional cough, or sound of a chair shuffling, but we believe that live performances provide a better sense of the energy and emotional involvement created when singing for an audience. In addition, the listener will notice a significant difference in the acoustics of the performance venues in which we have performed, from the very live Millennium Centre to the less resonant but equally inviting sanctuary of Young United Church.

We chose the title ***Joy shall be yours*** to reflect the spirit of the season. The piece that inspired the title is ***Joy shall be yours in the morning***, a setting by an American, Z. Randall Stroope, of a text from *Wind in the*

Willows by Scottish author, Kenneth Grahame. Field-mice carollers sing the words to Mole and Rat as they attempt to clean up Mole's recently rediscovered home. The field-mice singers beg Ratty and Mole to allow them to come in out of the cold and miserable weather to the warmth of the newly occupied and cozy home, just as Mary and Joseph sought the warmth provided by the animals in the Bethlehem stable.

Allon, gay bergeres is typical of a genre of sixteenth-century French repertoire. The poet and composer, Guillaume Costeley, an organist and teacher at the court of Charles IX, retells a portion of a biblical story in a simple, refreshing, even childlike, mode.

Several of the texts are hundreds of years old, a characteristic reflection of the traditions and even legends that have grown up over the centuries. Many twentieth-century composers have adopted an ancient text to create a modern composition. Best-known perhaps is Benjamin Britten, who in his *Ceremony of Carols* captures the mysterious wonder and joy of the season. We perform, to harp accompaniment, the mixed-voice adaptation of the work, among which is ***There is no Rose***, a

carol in praise of the Virgin Mary, in which “contained was Heaven and Earth in litel space.” Each aspect of the remarkable virgin birth is punctuated by short Latin statements: “Res Miranda” (*wonderful thing*), “Pares forma” (*equal in form*), “Gaudeamus” (*let us rejoice*) and “Transeamus” (*let us follow*). The words of the sturdy 1970 motet by English composer William Walton, **All this time this song is best: Verbum caro factum est** (The Word was made flesh) come from the sixteenth century. **Quem pastores laudavere** is originally a fourteenth-century Latin hymn from Germany, which has been performed over many centuries in both the Catholic and Lutheran traditions. The arrangement by English composer and conductor, John Rutter, features three verses of the original hymn. The **Himno a la Virgen** (Hymn to the Virgin) of Basque composer Javier Busto uses the well known “Ave Maris Stella” (“Hail, star of the sea”) text in praise of Mary.

Choral composers have also used more modern texts and poetry for their Christmas compositions. There is perhaps no better-loved seasonal text than Christina Rossetti’s **In the bleak mid-winter**. We have chosen a

lesser-known 1973 setting by English composer Robert Walker. The poet contrasts the glory of the angelic host and the image of a possible future glorious Kingdom, with the rude simplicity of the stable where the animals and his mother adore and sustain the infant. Bob Chilcott’s **The Shepherd’s Carol** is a wonderfully evocative carol, written in 2001, and is in stark contrast to many pieces about the shepherds, which has them dashing off to Bethlehem. This text is calm and reflective, as if a shepherd, in the quiet of the stable, was trying to articulate to Mary, “Lady,” what the experience had been like when the star — “larger than Venus it was” — had appeared, followed by a voice in the sky bidding them to go to see “God being born.” The anonymous poet then has the shepherds, far from rushing to Bethlehem, slowly and in wonder making their way to find the miracle. **The Three Kings**, set to a text by Dorothy Sayers, by Jonathan Dove, was commissioned by King’s College, Cambridge, for the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols in December 2000. It delineates the personalities of the three kings, and then, with a dramatic outburst, their brilliant gifts are displayed, before Mary

restores calm and reflection through the final poignant measures.

The chorus of ***Past three a clock*** has its origins in a call of the London waits, originally town watchmen, who in the Middle Ages patrolled the streets at night, but by the 17th century had become a band of civic musicians. The verse parts of the text, written in 1924 by G. R. Woodward, a prolific early-twentieth-century hymn-writer, have the visitors bringing a fanciful list of items for Mary and the Baby.

The carol ***Down in yon forest*** is also known as the Corpus Christi carol, and its modern revival owes much to its collection in Derbyshire by English composer, Ralph Vaughan Williams. The text of the verses is sombre and austere, and the setting by Andrew Carter, which features repeated bell cluster chords underlying the melody, reinforces this mood. The Derbyshire version has a direct reference to Christmas in the last verse only, which seems to have been tacked on to end on a more cheerful note. The reference to the “blossoming thorn” in the Derbyshire version, and to the “shrub tree” in the North Carolina version collected by John Jacob Niles, seems to suggest that the carol derives from the legend of the Holy Thorn of Glastonbury.

It is appropriate that Canadian composers are well represented in this collection. Although Healey Willan was born and brought up in England, he was for many years a pillar of the Toronto music community, and an inspiration for a generation of Canadian musicians and composers. The words of ***Make We Merry***, taken from the late fifteenth-century *Commonplace Book* of Roland Hill, make celebration a requirement! — and its refusal just cause for being put in the stocks!

The Huron Carol could be said to be the first Canadian Christmas carol. The words, in French, were written by Father Jean de Brébeuf, who worked as a Jesuit missionary among the Hurons in the early years of French settlement in North America. He wrote *The Huron Carol*, originally known as *Jesous Ahatonhia* (Jesus is born), in the Huron language in 1643. The English words familiar to us are significantly different from the Huron and early French versions, and were written by the Ontario poet, J. Edgar Middleton. The tune used by Father Brébeuf was a sixteenth-century French folk song, *La jeune pucelle*. This appropriately uncomplicated but attractive arrangement is by Allan Bevan.

In the wonderfully inventive ***Jing-a-lye-ya*** by Vancouver composer Bruce Sled, the voices create a web of bell-like sounds and interweave melodic lines in and out of the texture. The setting of the lively Galician carol ***Torches, Torches*** by James Schell evokes the light carried by the shepherds running to Bethlehem to see the Christ child. Diane Loomer is a much loved and admired choral conductor and composer living in Vancouver. Her ***Yule-tide fires*** evokes warm generous feelings, but a close examination of the anonymous text reveals that the gift is for the hungry and the poor.

Esther Beresford is a founding member of Renaissance Voices, currently residing in England. The Jazzy version of ***We Three Kings*** comes from her *Christmas Songs without Words*, which we first performed in 1997. Like the other seven carols in the set, her intent was to present familiar carols in a new light, deliberately taking our attention away from the texts (hence the “Songs without words” — with apologies to Mendelssohn!).

Finally, we include arrangements of two well-known popular Christmas pieces by American composers. Leroy Anderson wrote the Christmas classic ***Sleigh Ride*** during a

July heat wave in Connecticut. The words were added by Mitchell Parrish two years later. ***The Christmas Song*** (*Chestnuts roasting on an open fire*) is claimed to be the most-performed Christmas song of all time. It was written by jazz-singer Mel Torme and Robert Wells, also in the blistering heat of summer, in 1944, “to stay cool by thinking cool.” The song was a signature piece for American pop and jazz artist Nat King Cole. He recorded it first in 1946, and later in orchestral versions conducted by Nelson Riddle in 1953, and by Ralph Carmichael in 1961.

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I'd like to thank all the members of the choir since its inception who have contributed to these performances. Many thanks to current choir members who have assisted in the compilation of songs listed here. Most of all, thanks to our audiences over the past 15 years with whom we share our passion for choral singing at every concert.

Derek Morphy,
November 2010

Himno a la virgin

Ave maris stella, *Hail, star of the sea,*
Dei Mater alma, *bountiful mother of God*
Atque semper Virgo, *and ever Virgin,*
Felix coeli porta. *happy gate of heaven.*

Sumens illud Ave *Taking that Ave*
Gabrielis ore, *from the mouth of Gabriel,*
Funda nos in pace, *preserve us in peace,*
Mutans Hevae nomen. *giving Eve a new name.*

Solve vincla reis, *Loose the chains of the bound,*
Profer lumen caecis, *bring light to the blind,*
Mala nostra pelle, *drive out our ills,*
Bona cuncta posce. *invoke all things good.*

Monstra te esse matrem, *Show thyself to be a mother,*
Sumat per te preces, *May he accept prayers through you,*
Qui pro nobis natus, *he who, born for us,*
Tulit esse tuus. *chose to be yours.*

Virgo singularis, *Singular virgin,*
Inter omnes mitis, *more gentle than all,*
Nos culpis solutos, *absolve us from sin*
Mites fac et castos. *and make us gentle and pure.*

Vitam praesta puram, *Grant us a pure life,*
Iter para tutum, *prepare a safe way,*
Ut videntes Jesum *that in seeing Jesus*
Semper collaeemur. *we may rejoice for ever.*

Sit laus Deo Patri, *Praise be to God the Father,*
Summo Christo decus, *glory to Christ on high,*
Spiritui Sancto, *and with the Holy Spirit*
Tribus honor unus. *honour to the three in one.*
Amen. *Amen.*

Costeley: Allon, gay bergeres

Allon gay, gay, gay, Bergeres *Let us go gaily, Shepherdesses,*
Allon, gay, soyez legeres *Let us go gaily, be gentle,*
Suyvez moy. *Follow me.*

Allon, allon voir le Roy *Let us go see the King,*
Qui du ciel en terre est nay, *Who from heave is born on earth.*

Un beau present luy feray, De quoy? *I'll make him a fine present, What?*
De ce flagollet que j'ay tant gay. *This tin whistle I have, so gay.*

Ho, ho! pai-la! je le voy; *Ah, hush! I see him*
Il tette bien sans le doigt, *He's sucking well, not on his thumb,*
le petit Roy! *the little King!*
Allon gay, gay, gay, Bergeres *Let us go gaily, Shepherdesses,*
Allon, gay, soyez legeres *Let us go gaily, be gentle,*
Le Roy boit! *The King is drinking!*

Quem pastores laudevare

Quem pastores laudavere *Unto him whom the shepherds*
Quibus angeli dixere: *praised, told by the angels:*
Absit vobis iam timere, *"Be not afraid:*
Natus est rex gloriae. *the King of Glory is born."*

Ad quem magi ambulabant, *Unto him to whom the magi journeyed*
Aurum, thus, myrrham portabant, *to whom they brought gold, frankincense and myrrh,*
Immolabant haec sincere *to whom they offered these sincere*
Nato regi gloriae. *gifts to him born the King of Glory.*

Christo Regi, Deo nato, *Christ the King, born of God,*
Per Mariam nobis dato, *Given to us through Mary,*
Merito resonet vere *Let truly resound:*
"Laus, honor et gloria." *"Praise, honour and glory"*

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Joy shall be Yours

1. **Joy shall be yours**Randall Stroope
2. **All this time**William Walton
3. **Himno a la Virgin**Javier Busto
4. **Allons gay**Guillaume Costeley
5. **The Shepherds' Carol**Bob Chilcott
6. **The three kings**^aJonathan Dove
7. **Quem pastores**John Rutter
8. **Huron Carol**Allan Bevan
9. **There is no rose**^bBenjamin Britten
10. **Resonet in laudibus**Hans Leo Hassler
11. **Down in yon forest**arr. Andrew Carter
12. **Jing-a-lye-ya**Bruce Sled
13. **In the bleak midwinter** ..Robert Walker
14. **Torches, torches**^bJames Schell
15. **Yuletide fires**Diane Loomer
16. **Past three a'clock**arr. Charles Wood
17. **We three kings**^dEsther Beresford
18. **Sleigh ride**^dLeroy Anderson
19. **The Christmas song**^{c,e,f}arr. Kirby Shaw
20. **Make we merry**Healey Willan

a) soloists: Jennifer Engbrecht, soprano; Karen Tole-Henderson, mezzo soprano **b)** soloist: Maureen Ferley, soprano; Mary-Lynn Berti and Karen Tole-Henderson, percussion **c)** soloist: Maureen Ferley, soprano **d)** with Ann Germani, harp **e)** with Lee Houghton Stewart, piano **f)** with Chris Berti, string bass; Rob Balacko, drums

For additional details on these recordings, please visit www.renaissancevoices.com