



**The  
Shenandoah Valley  
Choral Society**

**2008-2009 Season**

# The Shenandoah Valley Choral Society

Presents

## Ceremony of Carols

including

*Ceremony of Carols* by Benjamin Britten

*Star in the East* by Malcolm Dalglish

*Various Traditional and Contemporary Carols*

with Soloists and 135-voice chorus

Jessica Frost, Harp

David Landes, Hammer Dulcimer

John Barr, Organ

Curtis Nolley, Conductor

Amy Robertson, Accompanist

Friday December 19, 2008 - 7:30 p.m.

Bridgewater Church of the Brethren

Bridgewater, Virginia

## Program

### *Ceremony of Carols*

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Annie Barnes, soprano

Emily Foster, soprano

Jessica Frost, harp

*A Ceremony of Carols* (op. 28) was written by Benjamin Britten in March of 1942, while at sea aboard the M.S. Axel Johnson. Originally written for Treble Choir and harp, the piece in its final form was first performed by the Morriston Boys Chorus, at the direction of the composer. Because of the immense popularity of the piece, this mixed chorus setting was arranged by Julius Harrison at the request of the publishing house of Boosey and Hawkes.

The majority of the text is taken from *The English Galaxy of Shorter Poems*, and is in old English. Because of this, a translation is provided, as well as introductory notes for each movement.

#### **1. Processional**

Taken from the vespers of the nativity, this unison plain-chant antiphon is used as a processional and recessional.

Today Christ is born;

Today the Savior has appeared;

Today the angels sing,

The archangels rejoice;

Today the righteous rejoice, saying,

Glory to God in the highest, Alleluia!

#### **2. Wolcum Yole. (Welcome Yule)**

This movement is a miniature of the liturgical calendar of the Christmas season. The heavenly child is welcomed, as important feast days of the season are referenced. Steven, John and Thomas each have a feast day in this season. December 28 is known as Holy Innocents Day, in remembrance of the Massacre of the Innocents by Herod. The new year and epiphany (twelfth day) are mentioned, as well as saints who have left and were dear to us. Candelmesse refers to Feb. 2, which remembers Mary's purification at the temple, and Jesus' presentation to Simeon. He is remembered for saying "Let thy servant now depart...". In some countries the creche is left out until Candelmesse signifies the end of the season.

Welcome, Welcome,

Welcome to You, our heavenly King.

Welcome, you who was born one morning,

Welcome, for You, shall we sing!

Welcome, to you, Steven and John,  
Welcome all innocent children,  
Welcome, Thomas, the martyred one,  
Welcome, good new year,  
Welcome Twelfth Day, both in fear . . .  
Welcome Saints left and dear.

Candle Mass, Queen of bliss,  
Welcome both to more and less.  
Welcome you that are here,  
Welcome all and make good cheer.  
Welcome all another year.

### 3. There is no rose

The message here is that Mary was unparalleled. For the first time, heaven and earth were in the same space: within her womb. Because of her, we learn the mystery of the Trinity.

There is no rose of such virtue  
As is the rose that bore Jesus.  
Alleluia.

For inside the Rose (called Mary)  
Were heaven and earth in a single, little space.  
Miraculous thing.

By that rose, we now may see,  
There be one God in persons three.  
In each form equal to the other. (of equal form)

The angels sang to the shepherds,  
Glory to God in the highest!  
We rejoice.

Leave we all this worldly mirth,  
And follow we this joyful birth.  
We cross over to Christ's world.

### 4. That yonge child (That young child)

When the baby Jesus began to cry, Mary sang a lullaby. The nightingale sang also, but Mary's song was superior.

When that young child began to weep  
With song, she lulled him to sleep

It was such a sweet melody,  
It was so very merry.

The nightingale sang, also,  
But her song was hoarse, it was not the same:  
Whoever listens to the nightingale's song  
Instead of Mary's, does wrong.

### 4b. Balulalow (Lullaby)

Showing great humility, Mary sings a good and proper Lullaby to the young Jesus.

O love of my heart, young Jesus sweet,  
Prepare your place in my heart,  
And I shall rock thee with great love,  
And I shall never leave your side.

I shall praise you forever,  
With sweet songs of your glory  
The knees of my heart shall I bow  
And sing the right Lullaby.

### 5. As dew in Aprile (As dew in April)

By using many metaphors, we are reminded of a traditional tale that Mary's labor was painless. The thought is punctuated at the end by saying that this gift to Mary was only fitting for such a blessed lady.

I sing of a maiden that is mateless,  
Her son was the King of all Kings.

From his mother he came to us quietly  
As dew in April that falls on the grass.

His mother's labor was painless and quiet,  
As dew in April that falls on the grass.

As His mother lay there, he came quietly,  
As dew in April that falls on the flower branches.

Never has there been such a mother and maiden;  
How fitting it is that this be Christ's mother.

### 6. This little Babe

Traditional practice is to capitalize any word that refers to God, including

possessives such as "His". It is interesting that in this movement this is not followed, but rather that any word that refers to the Baby in any way, is capitalized. A list of metaphors dramatically depicts Christ's battle with Satan.

This little Babe so few days old  
Has come to rifle Satan's fold.  
All hell quakes at his presence,  
Though he himself shivers.  
For in this weak, unarmed guise  
He will surprise the very gates of Hell!

With tears he fights and wins the field,  
His naked breast stands for a shield;  
His shots are his cries,  
His arrows, the looks of his weeping eyes.  
His martial ensigns are cold and need,  
And his feeble flesh, his warrior's steed.

His camp is pitched in a stall,  
His bulwark is a broken wall;  
The crib his trench, hay stalks are his stakes,  
Of shepherds, he enlists the troops.  
And sure of wounding the foe,  
The angels sound the trumpets alarm.

My soul joins Christ in the fight,  
Stay by the tents that he has pitched;  
Within his crib is sure protection  
The little babe will be your guard;  
If Christ can foil your foes with joy,  
Stay near the heavenly boy.

#### 7. Interlude (Harp Solo)

This harp solo is among the classic literature for the instrument. The melody of the movement is an elaboration of the triumphal chant "Hodie Christus natus est" that begins and ends *A Ceremony of Carols*. By setting this movement here, Britten accomplished a mixture of victory and serenity that seems central to his view of the Christian faith..

#### 8. In Freezing Winter Night

This incredibly intense movement depicts the irony of the King being born in such a humble setting. The meter is 5/4 and the harmonic language is daring,

making use of blatant dissonances to highlight the juxtaposition of royal court and the meekness of the stable.

Behold, a silly tender babe,  
In freezing winter night,  
In homely manger trembling lies—  
Alas, a piteous sight!

The inns are full; no man will yield  
This little pilgrim bed.  
But forced he is with silly beasts  
In crib to shroud his head.

This stable is a Prince's court,  
This crib his chair of State;  
The beasts are parcel of his pomp, —  
The wooded dish his plate.

The persons in that poor attire  
His royal liveries wear;  
The Prince himself is come from heaven;  
This pomp is prized there.

With joy approach, O Christian wight,  
Do homage to thy King,  
And highly praise his humble pomp,  
Which he from Heav'n doth bring.

#### 9. Spring carol

A duet to thank God after winter. One could interpret that Spring (the birth of Christ) comes after winter (four thousand years of sin since Adam).

It is always a pleasure to hear the birds sing,  
To see the deer in the dale, the sheep in the vale, the corn springing  
from the earth.

God supplies sustenance  
For us all.

Then we should always give him praise  
And give him thanks.

#### 11. Deo Gracias (Give Thanks to God)

This medieval text gives thanks for Adam's Fall, because that was the ultimate

cause of the coming of Christ. Humanity was bound by sin for four thousand winters (years) until Christ was born. We are also to be glad because without Adam's sin, Mary would have never been Queen of Heaven.

Give thanks to God!

Adam was bound in sin for four thousand years, although he thought this not too long.

It was all for an apple that he took,  
As clerics find written in their books.

Had the apple never been taken,  
Then our Lady would have  
Never been a heavenly queen.

Blessed be the time  
The apple was taken.  
Therefore we must sing  
Thanks be to God!

#### **12. Recessional**

Today Christ is born;  
Today the Savior has appeared;  
Today the angels sing,  
The archangels rejoice;  
Today the righteous rejoice, saying,  
Glory to God in the highest, Alleluia!

#### ***Star In the East***

**Malcolm Dalglish**

A suite of Appalachian Christmas carols

Emily Foster, soprano      David Landes, hammer dulcimer

*Intermission*

#### ***My Song In the Night***

**Paul Christiansen**

#### ***There Shall A Star Come Out of Jacob***

**Felix Mendelssohn**

John Barr, organ

#### ***Cradle Carol***

**Ralph Vaughan Williams**

#### ***Bring a Torch, Jeannette, Isabella***

**Joseph Lieber, Joseph Mein.**

**Arr. David Landes**

David Landes, hammer dulcimer

#### ***Sweet Was the Song***

**Gregory Pysh**

Carol Warner, flute

#### ***Shepherd's Pipe Carol***

**John Rutter**

#### ***Infant Holy, Infant Lowly***

**Arr. K. Lee Scott**

#### ***What Child Is This?***

**Arr. S. McDonald/L. Wood**

Jessica Frost, harp

#### ***Pat-A-Pan***

**Arr. Robert Batastini**

Carol Warner, Jared Wagner, snare drum

#### ***Candlelight Carol***

**John Rutter**

#### ***Carol of the Bells***

**Arr. Peter J. Wilhousky**