

PROGRAM NOTES

Quincy Symphony Chorus

December 2, 2023

Compiled by David Moore

A Ceremony of Carols, Op. 28 - The composition of the work we now know as "A Ceremony of Carols" began while Benjamin Britten was returning to England by ship after a trip to the United States. The ship had called at Halifax, Nova Scotia, and while there, in preparation for the long crossing of the Atlantic, Britten had purchased an anthology of poems, "The English Galaxy of Shorter Poems" which proved to be the inspiration for his composition of the work we now know as "A Ceremony of Carols." Britten used five poems from that book in this composition. After his return to England, Britten made a few additions to the work. The first performance, conducted by the composer, was in London on December 4, 1943.

In Silent Night - A piece composed by the late African-American composer Mitchell B. Southall. It is subtitled "A Christmas Vignette in Pastel." Although set in C major it features rich harmonic progressions.

A Boy Was Born - This music is the theme from Benjamin Britten's opus 3; the lyrics are an English translation of a sixteenth century German hymn.

What Shall We Sing for the Child? - This traditional Catalan Carol melody is arranged by Howard Helvey for the tenors and basses of the chorus accompanied by piano, four hands.

Heaven Rejoices Tonight - David Lantz III is a pianist and composer who is credited with helping to forge the "New Age" movement. His piano composition "Cristofori's Dream" has sold over a million copies.

Glory to God in the highest - An a cappella setting composed by Randall Thompson of the biblical text (Luke 2:14). The distinctive feature of this piece is the employment of very frequent changes in meter.

Gloria! Alleluia! - The Gloria from a Mass setting by Noel Goemanne composed to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary (1989) of the St. Cecilia choir of the Church of Our Lady, Poperinge, Belgium.

Pat-a-pan - A Burgundian carol with lyrics by Bernard de la Monnoye, its distinctive poetic feature is the use of onomatopoeia to imitate the drum (pat-a-pan) and fife (tu-re-lu-re-lu).

Fum, Fum, Fum - This is a Catalan (Spanish) carol. There are various interpretations as to the meaning of "fum." Given the context, the most likely is that it was intended to be an imitation of an instrument, although the literal meaning of the word in Catalan dialect is smoke.

A Day for Dancing - Lloyd Pfautsch, a native of Washington, Missouri, had roots in the Midwest having earned his BA and MSM from Elmhurst College and his MusD from Illinois Wesleyan University. He served on the music faculty of Southern Methodist University for more than thirty

years. This work includes nine carols of Medieval heritage which tell the Christmas story, and as the composer writes in his foreword, are intended to be accompanied with dancing.

Mary Sat A-Rockin' is an original a cappella Christmas spiritual composed by Greg Gilpin who is Director of Educational Choral Publications for the Shawnee Press and a respected choral conductor.

Huron Carol - This well-known melody is Canada's oldest Christmas carol. It was written in 1643 by Jean de Brebeuf, a Jesuit missionary to the Huron people. The choral arrangement is by Dale Warland.

Alleluia, Alleluia! - This work by Amy F. Bernon features the women of the chorus, accompanied solely by percussion instruments including tambourine, wood block, and drum. The composer is the founding director of the Alamanda Women's Choir.

Merry Christmas, Darling - The lyrics, written by Frank Pooler date to 1946 when he was twenty years old. Twenty years later Pooler was choral director at California State University. Two of his students (Karen and Richard Carpenter) asked him for ideas on a holiday song. He gave them the lyrics he had written years before. Richard wrote a tune in fifteen minutes, and four years later (1970) the Carpenters recorded this song.

How Far Is It To Bethlehem? - A traditional English carol tune (Stowey) arranged by Stephen Paulus for Frances Chesterton's beloved poem. This setting includes chorus, oboe and harp. (Incidentally, the literal answer to the question is 6,420 miles.)

Birthday Carol - David Willcocks began his musical career as a chorister in Westminster Abbey. He was elected a Fellow of King's College and during his long musical career had served as organist of Salisbury and Worcester Cathedrals. He also was Director of Music at King's College, Cambridge for seventeen years. Sir David was knighted in 1977.

Glorious Christmas Refrains - This work is a medley of eleven familiar Christmas carols arranged by Tom Fettke. The addition of brass and percussion makes this an inspiring and majestic finale.