

# Cycles

All of Earth's creation exists within a framework of cycles. Organisms live their lives and have their being against the background of the four changing seasons of the year and their inevitable recurrence. Weather patterns, historical eras, and geological epochs run in cycles, some short, some long. Cycles are part of all of us and everything around us.

The cycle of the seasons is from time to time represented in music, most notably in Vivaldi's *Le quattro stagione* (*The Four Seasons*) and Franz Joseph Haydn's *Die Jahreszeiten* (*The Seasons*). Musical references to particular seasons, if not to all four, occur in works such as Franz Schubert's *Die Winterreise* (*The Winter's Journey*), Johannes Brahms' choral song *Im Herbst* (*In the Fall*), Igor Stravinsky's *Le sacre du printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*), Benjamin Britten's *Spring Symphony*, and Frederick Delius' *A Song of Summer*.

Dominick Argento's *Seasons*, an *a cappella* cantata of four movements, lies within that tradition. This work apparently has not been much performed since its premiere in 2014, but perhaps Oriana will move that needle, if only a tiny bit, with these three concerts.

When in the seasonal cycle the days grow shorter (in the Northern Hemisphere, at least), perhaps it is not coincidental that there are festivals for that time in all three of the world's major monotheistic religions: in Christianity, the Nativity; in Judaism, Hanukkah; in Islam, Mawlid el-Nabi, the celebration of the birth of Muhammad. In true cyclical fashion, when the temperature and darkness both descend, we return to celebrate once again. And, as Oriana does for the end of every year, we have chosen music to celebrate that time.

In these concerts we are also thinking of the concept of "cycles" in another sense: Much of the music associated with the Nativity has a way of being re-cycled over the course of centuries, though each time in a new way that reflects musical trends of its era. The tune *In dulci jubilo*, for example, which is said to have been composed during the fourteenth century, appeared in various song collections of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, always in a new arrangement, and most notably in Georg Rhau's *Neue Deudsche Gesänge* of 1544. Composers in succeeding centuries continued to re-use and re-harmonize this tune, including Michael Praetorius in the seventeenth century, J. S. Bach in the eighteenth, Robert Pearsall and John Mason Neale in the nineteenth, and, finally, the Midwestern choral conductor and composer Matthew Culloton in the twenty-first century, with whose jazz choir version (!) of *In dulci jubilo* we'll conclude this concert.

We'll also present original and re-cycled versions of *Gaudete*, *There is no rose*, *Angelus ad virginem*, and the chant text *O magnum mysterium*, all of which are associated with the Nativity. We hope you'll enjoy!

# I Gifts for the Child of Winter

## Bob Chilcott

2012

Solo: William Budding

Bob Chilcott (born Robert Chilcott in Plymouth, UK, in 1955 — he has always seemed to prefer “Bob” over “Robert”) — became a chorister in the Choir of King’s College, Cambridge, at age eight. This venerable group, in which boys sing the treble part and men sing the lower voices, has since its founding in 1441 always been at the center of the great tradition of British choral music.

At the King’s College choir school, being daily immersed in choral music of British composers such as William Byrd, Thomas Tallis, Edward Elgar, Herbert Howells, and Sir Charles Stanford, young Bob soon experienced what he later called “a real musical epiphany” when the boys of the Choir sang the treble part in Benjamin Britten’s *Spring Symphony*, under the composer’s direction. At that moment, as he later said, “I realized that whatever this music thing was, I could not live without it.”

In 1967, at age twelve, the boy was chosen to sing the exquisite *Pie Jesu* solo in Gabriel Faure’s *Requiem* when that work was recorded under the direction of the legendary Sir David Willcocks. As an undergraduate at Cambridge he became a Choral Scholar with the Choir of King’s College; later, as a professional singer, he sang with the BBC Singers and with a certain renowned group of men’s voices that had grown out of the Choir of King’s College: The King’s Singers.

Although Chilcott had been composing since he was fourteen, his music for choral voices began to blossom around 1995, a time when he wrote much music for youth choirs, which were followed by large-scale works such as *Salisbury Vespers*, *Requiem*, *The Angry Planet* (an “environmental cantata”), *The King Shall Rejoice* (to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II), and *The Voyage*, a cantata that addresses the experience of aging. He has been director of the BBC Singers; in 2014 he was composer-in-residence for Choralis, a choir in Washington DC. His choral music has been recorded by John Rutter’s Cambridge Singers, Harry Christopher’s The Sixteen, The BBC Singers, The King’s Singers, the Choir of Wells Cathedral, and the Choir of King’s College. Chilcott believes that choral music is a force that connects people with each other.

*Gifts for the Child of Winter* — written in 2012 for the South Bend Chamber Singers, of South Bend, Indiana — is one of the dozens of pieces Chilcott has written for small choirs. Like so much of his work, this piece is a collaboration with the poet Charles Bennett, the composer’s friend and contemporary — a graduate of the University of London the University of Massachusetts (where

he had come to study with the Russian dissident poet Joseph Brodsky), and who now teaches at the University of Northampton in the UK.

Presumably Bennett intended his “child of winter” to represent the child of the Nativity, or (to extend that idea) the goodness that inexplicably enters our lives from time to time, unexpectedly and unbidden. In the poem the child receives three gifts from us, which, though lovely and heartfelt, are ephemeral. In return, the child brings us a gift that is eternal: “our summer without end”.

Chilcott’s music in this piece, like Bennett’s poem itself, is very reminiscent of the folksong of the British Isles: the tune is based on a modal scale (i.e. a scale lacking a leading tone), and is abundant in unexpected turns of melody. In each verse the first, second, and fourth lines are set to variations of the same melody, while the contrasting third line noticeably sails into a higher vocal register. In accordance with folksong style, the melody remains in the top voice (either the tenor solo or the choir sopranos), while the body of the choir provides a lilting accompaniment of harmonies drawn from the modal scale.

I give to you a plough-blade, a plough-blade made of snow  
To run a furrow down the field and make the winter grow.  
Its flowers will be white as frost, bright as the stars in heav’n:  
O bring us winter softly, and let our hearts be open.

I give to you a black-bird’s song, a song of sweetest breath  
To hang in ev’ry branch and tree and purify the earth.  
It floats in clouds of wonder, it comes to do no harm:  
O bring us winter gently, and let our hearts be warm.

I give to you a raindrop, frozen like a tear  
To quench your thirst forever and taste the winter air.  
It flows to bring the blossom, to water the field:  
O bring us winter quietly, and let our hearts be healed.

The plough-bade is for cutting, which comes before the seed.  
The black-bird sings of eventide and then she falls asleep.  
The raindrop falls just once and then is swallowed by the ground.  
O come to be our summer, our summer without end.

The child of winter.

—Charles Bennett



## II Seasons

2012

### Dominick Argento

I— Autumn

II— Winter

III— Spring

IV— Summer

In Bob Chilcott's *Gifts*, Summer and Winter each *represent* something. What a nice transition to Dominick Argento's *Seasons*, an *a cappella* cantata in which each of the four seasons also represents something! The Minnesota writer and poet Pat Solstad has given each season both a personality and a gender: Autumn is feminine; Winter and Spring are both masculine; Summer is again feminine.

The personality of each season is a metaphor for the weather that one experiences in the season itself, which Argento's music reflects impeccably in every phrase. Some examples:

"Cool, misty mornings" overcome "persistent Summer," revealing **Autumn** to be triumphantly "[e]nrobed in blazing reds and golds ... announcing herself with drunken joy", which the choir expresses with soaring *forte* chords in the upper register. Winter, in turn, overcomes Autumn: the tempo slows while the choral voices, in soft mildly dissonant harmonies, sing "With comforting arms, he gathers her up / and covers her with his soothing blanket of silver-white"

**Winter** then shows himself to be a "Master Artist" who "draws his hand across the landscape". But very soon, "[w]ithout warning, his mood changes from serene to stormy" — and we will now *avoid a spoiler alert* by *not* disclosing, in these annotations, the musical device that Argento uses to set these words! It's a surprise, which will be prominently audible the instant you hear it.

**Spring** then "blows away winter's crumbling canvas", as expressed in sweeping chords that swiftly ascend the entire choral register. "He commands hyacinth and crocus to appear", and much else as well. Soon, "[d]elighted children burst into the open", and again we won't mention here how Argento expresses this joyful activity in music; you'll discover that on hearing it!

"Out of the mists of Spring, the Goddess of **Summer** arrives, arms outstretched, eager to perform her annual miracle". For the third time, we won't disclose here the musical device with which Argento sets these opening words of this movement to music. And how eloquent is the music that the composer has found to express the words "Fireflies flicker in night skies, in concert / with moonlight and shooting stars"! The words that follow,

"[b]athed in this celestial light, fragrant angels' trumpets reflect a ghostly glow", are sung in quiet hovering harmonies that perfectly express this ethereal scene.

For the final verse of **Summer** Argento places a direction to the singers in the score: "*Stesso tempo ma quasi corale*" — "in the same tempo, but like a chorale". And just as J. S. Bach usually ended a cantata with a chorale, so does Argento's cantata end with this concluding chorale-like verse, which he sets to music of utmost elegance and serenity.

But wait — one might ask — why does Argento begin with Autumn and end with Summer? Doesn't the year begin with winter and end with fall? Well, yes, on the calendar. But Solstad at first wrote only the poem *Autumn*, which Argento set to music as a standalone; the idea of a four-part poem that would involve all four seasons came later; at any rate, Argento later said that he regarded the season of summer as the endpoint, the goal toward which the preceding three seasons were striving. All this brings up the Boston-area connection to Argento's *Seasons*:

In 2010, a Boston University graduate student, who wished to thank his teachers at BU and Harvard and who knew Dominick Argento, asked him to write a choral piece in their honor. The composer's response was a setting of *Autumn*, a poem by Argento's friend Pat Solstad. The piece was performed by singers at BU, under the student's direction. Its enthusiastic reception inspired Argento to ask Solstad to add verses for winter, spring, and summer, which he then set for choral voices also. The four-movement *Seasons* was premiered in July 2014 at the annual Beethoven Festival in Winona, Minnesota, with choral voices under the direction of Dale Warland, a prominent choral conductor of the Upper Midwest.

It might be interesting to note the great contrast between the historical musical tradition in which Bob Chilcott composed *Gifts of the Child of Winter*, and the tradition in which Argento's *Seasons* is composed:

Chilcott's *Gifts* is in the tradition of English folksong, which, like other European folksong and early art song styles, is based on strict alternation of verse and refrain, within which we hear a repeated melody. In this style, the music itself never really changes or develops, for the musical expression in a piece of this nature emerges from the repetitive structure itself.

The style of Argento's *Seasons*, on the other hand, lies in a direct line of descent from the style of the English and Italian madrigal — a style which is *never* based on verse and refrain, but in which the music at any given point is *always* deliberately and consciously composed in such a way as to reflect the inner thoughts, emotions, actions, and perhaps hidden meanings that lie behind the words at that same point. The opening paragraphs of these notes on *Seasons* give some examples of how this bond between poetry and music is

constantly in effect. Constantly! There is never a point in the music at which this connection does not exist.

The musical language that Argento uses to bond poetry with music is technically simple in comparison with much of the music of our era. It is based on the conventional harmonic system that has been in use since Monteverdi's day — though Argento uses this system in a manner entirely his own, and in a manner that is always full of invention. He finds his own unique way of distributing voice parts to form chords that are in other respects quite common. His key centers change frequently, sometimes every few measures, and range far afield from one another. Harmonies often contain poignant added notes that are "outside" the chord. Argento shows in *Seasons* that he is a master of the classical devices of fugue, canon, and madrigalian imitative phrase entrances, all of which can be found in this decidedly modern work. Yet none of these devices is never used for superficial effect, but always, and only, to emphasize and reinforce something dramatic that is going on in the words themselves.

There is a direct line of historical development from the Italian madrigal to Italian opera. A madrigal is effectively a miniature musical drama. In the nine books of madrigals that Claudio Monteverdi published during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, one at first finds unaccompanied madrigals, then more complex madrigals that call for small instrumental ensembles and are highly dramatic in nature. His next step was opera — the staged musical drama.

If Monteverdi invented music that would always reflect and reinforce the dramatic sense of the words he was setting — in whatever genre — then so did Dominick Argento, whose larger works include no less than fourteen operas, some of which, such as *The Voyage of Edgar Allan Poe* (1975) and *Casanova's Homecoming* (1984), received national acclaim that went far beyond the musical milieu in Minneapolis and St. Paul in which these works were commissioned and premiered. On a scale somewhere between *Seasons* and his operas were his many choral works, such as *Jonah and the Whale* (1973), *Dover Beach Revisited* (2003), and *Evensong: Of Love and Angels* (2008), which he wrote in memory of his wife Carolyn Bailey, who passed away in 2006; song cycles, such as *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf* (1974), *Miss Manners on Music* (1998); and monodramas (closely related to the song cycles) such as *A Water Bird Talk* (1976).

Dominick Argento was born in York, Pennsylvania, in 1927, a son of immigrants from Sicily. After military service, he learned his musical craft from a multitude of composers: he earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees in composition from Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, where he studied with the noted composers Henry Cowell and Hugo Weisgall; his journey to Florence to study composition with Luigi Dallapiccola in Florence was the first of many later periodic visits to that city; and while earning his Ph.D. at the Eastman

School of Music he studied with the composers Alan Hovhaness and Howard Hanson.

In 1958 Argento moved with his new wife to Minneapolis, having accepted a teaching position at the University of Minnesota, notwithstanding the negative advice of friends and his own skepticism — for he had been told that he couldn't establish a career in so remote a location. Soon, however, many local commissions came his way. As one of the founders of the Minnesota Opera, he had ample opportunities to have his operatic music performed. A renaissance of choral music in the Twin Cities, notably under the directors Philip Brunelle and Dale Warland, provided opportunities for performance of his choral music.

Dominick Argento is now Professor Emeritus at the University of Minnesota. He was eighty-five years old when he composed *Seasons*, and he has said that it will be the last piece of music he will write.

## I— Autumn

Cool, misty mornings now bathe parched lawns,  
yet there's a teasing as temperatures occasionally climb.  
Persistent Summer is struggling to upstage the next performer.

But it is Autumn's turn.  
Enrobed in blazing reds and golds,  
she cries out, announcing herself with drunken joy,  
knowing it's her time to be adored.

Short-lived, the raucous voice slowly transforms into a moan.  
As she stands alone, stripped of her once-stunning beauty,  
Winter arrives. With comforting arms, he gathers her up  
and covers her with his soothing blanket of silver-white.

Humming an ancient lullaby, he rocks her to sleep  
and she drifts into dreams of her glory days.  
Certain they will come again in time she smiles, sighs, and  
slowly slips away.

## II— Winter

Master Artist Winter draws his hand across the landscape and  
snowflakes appear. He guides them as they cover bare trees,  
picnic tables, and abandoned farm machinery,  
creating elegant monochromatic sculptures.

Without warning, his mood  
changes from serene to stormy.  
He shakes his fist, stomps his feet,  
and howls with intense fury.

His rage increases as he rips limbs  
from trembling trees and flings garbage cans around,  
sending them banging and clanging into empty streets.  
All creatures cower.

Children peer impatiently from windows,  
rabbits flee to cool warrens, and birds  
sink deeper into the sanctuary  
of their soft nests.

Winter, now lacking an audience, blusters a bit more,  
a reminder that he is still in charge.  
Then, anger spent, he becomes Master Artist once again.  
With a stroke of his paintbrush, skies clear to a placid  
blue, his preparation for  
the delightful intrusion of the regal red cardinal.

### III—Spring

With sweet baby breath, Spring blows away Winter's crumbling canvas.  
He calls to the soft rains to bathe him.  
The gentle breezes dry him and  
the sun smiles as it warms his naked newness.

He commands hyacinth and crocus to appear  
and nudges sleepy buttercups.  
He welcomes the arrival of the handsome coyote pups,  
as their joyful parade passes by.

Delighted children burst into the open,  
like wild colts too long confined,  
and run screaming through yards, dodging flailing sheets  
on newly hung clotheslines.

Then Spring, feeling quite smug,  
slips into his royal robe,  
struts about, surveying his kingdom,  
and grins.



## IV—Summer

Out of the mists of Spring,  
the Goddess of Summer arrives,  
arms outstretched, eager  
to perform her annual miracle.  
Joyful acolytes shed their leafy bedclothes.  
Ferns unfurl, coral bells awaken, roses lift their faces  
to the golden sun, and lilacs  
fill the air with intoxicating perfume.

Fireflies flicker in night skies, in concert  
with moonlight and shooting stars.  
Bathed in this celestial light,  
fragrant angels' trumpets reflect a ghostly glow.

Soon, the Goddess of Summer sees  
that all is proceeding as planned.  
Though reluctant to leave, she nods  
and sadly bestows her loving benediction.

— Pat Solstad

— *intermission* —

## III Gaudete!

Rejoice!

arranged by **Anonymous**

1582

arranged by **Steven Sametz**

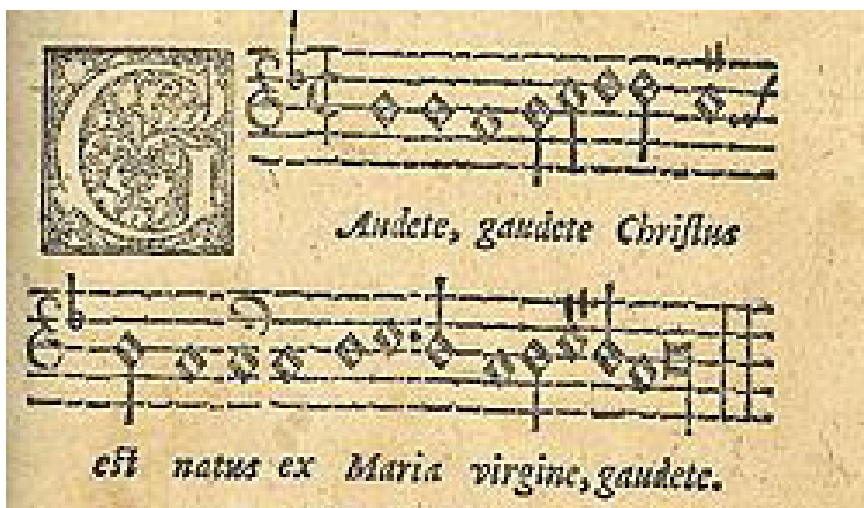
2000, after the original

Both pieces will be sung as a group, separated only by a very brief pause.

*Piae Cantiones (Songs of Faith)*, published in the year 1582 in Sweden, was a collection of about 75 spiritual songs for use in the Lutheran Church in Swedish-speaking and Finnish-speaking regions. One of these is *Gaudete*, a tune remarkable for its strong yet highly irregular rhythms, which suggest a secular rather than a spiritual origin. For this collection, an anonymous arranger harmonized the melody by adding three lower parts. A facsimile of the soprano voice of the melody, from the 1582 publication, is reproduced on the following page. It is in mensural notation, the system in which notes written down during the Renaissance.

The words of the four verses of *Gaudete* appear in the *Piae Cantiones* collection, but, curiously, they appear without the musical notation of the tune of the verses. The origin of that tune is unclear.

*Gaudete* became popular in Europe and the USA in the 1970's through its discovery and recording by the British folk-rock group Steeleye Span; later it was recorded by the King's Singers.



The American twelve-voice *a cappella* group Chanticleer commissioned the American composer and choral director Steven Sametz to arrange *Gaudete* for SATB choir, along with the 15<sup>th</sup>-century English carol *There is no rose*. For publication, he called the pair *Two Medieval Lyrics*.

Sametz (born 1954 in Westport, Connecticut), is Director of Choral Activities at Lehigh University. He has composed large-scale works for chorus and orchestra, and has written over forty choral songs for small *a cappella* choir. Their texts are drawn from an eclectic group of sources that include the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, Corinthians II, Lewis Carroll (the pen name of Charles Dodgson, author of *Alice in Wonderland*), Dante Alighieri, Ukrainian poetry, the eighth-century Alcuin of York, the poets Christina Rossetti, Siegfried Sassoon, Carl Sandburg, e. e. cummings, Walt Whitman, C. A. Swinburne, and Shakespeare.

To open his arrangement of *Gaudete*, Sametz provides an originally-composed "riff" of highly irregular rhythms, which serves as an introduction for the refrain. He uses the tune of the refrain unaltered, though only in the top voice, for he gives the three underlying voices a very audible alternate chord on the word *natus* — a chord perceptibly distant from the tune's own minor key. He follows the refrain with a variation of his original "riff."

The first verse, *Tempus adest gratiae*, is given unaltered, but with contrasting counter-rhythms down in the tenors and basses. The refrain follows, along with another variation of the “riff.”

The second verse, *Deus homo factus est*, is presented with lower voices doubling the melody both one and two octaves lower. (This is highly unconventional choral writing!)

The third verse, *Ezecheelis porta*, follows — but with neither the intervening refrain nor the “riff.” It is sung over a single-note drone in the basses that gives it a sound not unlike that of Carl Orff’s *Carmina Burana*. This time the refrain does follow, and again the “riff” follows that — though this time the alto voices simultaneously superimpose the *fourth* verse, *Ergo nostra concio*, in a rhythm that totally fights what the other voices are doing — à la Charles Ives.

Now things get really crazy: a repeat of the *Ezecheelis porta* verse follows, this time with the tenors throwing in *Ríu, ríu, chíu*, a 16<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish *villancico*!

Finally comes the fourth verse, in the “right place” this time, but with strong counter-rhythms in the tenor and bass voices. The refrain follows, with its alternate chord now sounding tame in comparison to what we have just heard. A long variation of the original “riff” follows, building up to a triple-*forte* that ends the piece.

Sametz’ musical influences are many and eclectic: medieval Europe, the present-day compositional trends of Europe and the Americas, the music of Asia, and the music of Africa. His arrangement of *Gaudete* beautifully reflects the medieval music of northern Europe, with a large dose of his own imagination thrown in.

Gaudete! Gaudete!  
Christus est natus  
Ex Maria Virgine, gaudete!

*Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Christ is born  
Of Mary the Virgin, rejoice!*

Tempus adest gratiae;  
Hoc quod optabamus.  
Carmina laetitiae  
Devote redamus.

*The time of grace has come;  
This is what we prayed for.  
Let us devoutly return  
Songs of joy.*

Deus homo factus est,  
Natura mirante;  
Mundus renovatus est  
A Christo regnante.

*God is made man,  
With nature admiring;  
The world is made new  
With the reign of Christ.*

Ezecheelis porta  
Clausa pertransitur;  
Unde Lux est orta,  
Salus invenitur.

*The closed gate of Ezekiel  
Is passed through;  
Light has arisen from whence  
Salvation is attained.*

Ergo nostra concio  
Psallat jam in lustris;  
Benedicat Domino  
Salus Regi nostro.

*Therefore let our meeting  
Sing praise in our purification;  
Let it bless the Lord;  
Greetings to our King.*

## IV There is no rose

composed by **Anonymous**

15<sup>th</sup> century

Gary Gengo, countertenor; Katheryn Currie, mezzosoprano;  
James Meyers, tenor

arranged by **Steven Sametz**

2014

solo: Molly McGuire, mezzosoprano, Nov. 30, Dec. 8;

Kelvyn Koning, countertenor, Dec. 2

directed by Katheryn Currie

Both pieces will be sung as a group, separated only by a very brief pause.

At Trinity College, of the University of Cambridge in the UK, is a parchment scroll known as the Trinity Carol Roll. It contains thirteen polyphonic songs, i.e. songs to be sung by two, three, or four voices, written in mensural notation. Most of the pieces are about Christmas; one song celebrates the victory of King Henry V over the French at the Battle of Agincourt. The fact that this battle took place in 1415 provides a reasonable date for the manuscript.

From the nature of the music itself, scholars have surmised that the thirteen pieces are all the work of a single individual, though there is no clue as to who that was. What is known with certainty is that this manuscript contains the earliest surviving examples of polyphonic music in England that are based on harmonic principles later used in the Renaissance. The scroll was given to the University of Cambridge in 1838; no one seemed to know where it had been kept for the previous four centuries. In 1952, John Stevens, of the Cambridge faculty, edited a reprint of the Trinity Carol Roll, in which the music is presented in modern notation, which makes it accessible to musicians who are not familiar with medieval mensural notation. (That would be most of them.) Stevens' edition is Volume 4 of the *Musica Britannica* series of historical reprints.

One particularly charming piece of this collection is the carol *There is no rose*. It consists of a simple refrain, or "burden" (as a refrain was called in early English music) for three voices, and five verses for two voices, each of which ends with a brief Latin phrase. The refrain is an excellent example of the English polyphony of the fifteenth century, which is full of chords made by sounding a third and then a sixth together with a basic note. French composers, fascinated with the rich and full sound of this English invention, gave it a name: "Contenance Angloise." (Current scholars also call it "English descant.") This manner of making harmony underwent further development in France, which led to the harmonic style in common use during the Renaissance.

(On the piano, play Middle C, then simultaneously play the E and the A keys above. Now, keeping the same distances between the keys, move this

pattern up and down the keyboard; it should sound interesting. Presto! You have discovered the Contenance Angloise, or English Descant!)

Benjamin Britten wrote a setting of *There is no rose* as a movement of his *Ceremony of Carols*, in which that composer made no attempt to have his piece imitate the setting of the 15<sup>th</sup>-century original of the Trinity Carol Roll. Sametz does not try to do this either (unlike his *Gaudete*, in which the sound of his own setting is deliberately based on the original). The predominant texture of Sametz' setting of *There is no rose* is solo voice with choral accompaniment, which the original definitely is not. But there is an interesting higher-level similarity between the original and Sametz' version:

The anonymous composer of the Trinity Carol Roll was experimenting with the sound of the "Contenance Angloise": three tones combined in a new way, with the intervals of a third and a sixth sounding above a basic tone. Sametz is doing a similar experiment! Not with thirds and sixths, but with simultaneous sounds of seconds, fourths, sevenths, tritones, and other adventurous intervals. What the listener hears in Sametz' setting is a series of fascinating *tone clusters*, all produced by human voices. Somehow all these sounds perfectly capture the other-worldliness of the lyrics of *There is no rose*.

(In Verse 4, Sametz' words are "The angels sang and the shepherds too.")

#### **Refrain (Burden):**

There is no rose of such virtue  
As is the rose that bare Jesu.

#### **Verses:**

There is no rose of such virtue  
As is the rose that bare Jesu.  
Alleluia.

For in this rose contained was  
Heaven and Earth in little space.  
Res miranda.

[What a] miraculous thing.

For by that rose we may well see  
That he is God in persons three.  
Pares forma.

Equal in form [to a human being].

The angels sungen the shepherds to:  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.  
Gaudeamus.

Let us rejoice.

Now leave we all this worldly mirth,  
And follow we this joyful birth.  
Transeamus.

Let us pass [from Earth to Heaven].

## V **Angelus ad virginem**      The angel [came] to the virgin

composed by **Anonymous**

14<sup>th</sup> century

Olivia Adams, soprano; Kelvyn Koning, Gary Gengo, countertenors

composed by **Eleanor Daley**

1997, after the original

directed by Valerie Thomforde

Both pieces will be sung sequentially, separated only by a very brief pause.

In the city of Dublin, in the mid-fourteenth century, there existed a large parchment Troper — a book of musical manuscripts used to celebrate Mass. One of its many pieces was a Christmas song, very popular at that time, that is thought to have originated in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and to have been brought to Ireland by French friars: *Angelus ad virginem*.

The musical structure of *Angelus* differs fundamentally from that of *There is no rose*, which appeared one or two centuries later. The harmony of *Angelus* is based not on thirds and sixths, as with English descant, but upon the harder sounds of fifths and octaves. Yes, there is in *Angelus* an occasional fifth interval with a third in the middle (what we would call a “major chord”); and yes, there are even a few passages containing English-descant-like harmonic structures — but this piece has a predominance of open fifth intervals, and even chains of parallel open fifths, which indicate a probable 13<sup>th</sup>-century origin. Another hint is the character of the melodic part, which sounds as though it may have originally been a monophonic (one-voiced) song, to which harmonizing voice parts were later added — for the notion of constructing a piece by taking an existing melody and adding parts to it is characteristic of the thirteenth century.

The original *Angelus* poem is five verses in length, of which the first three are a dialogue between the angel and the virgin. The fourth verse relates the angel’s private thoughts to himself. The fifth is the congregation’s supplication to the virgin. For brevity, our trio is performing only the first two verses of the original. Eleanor Daley’s setting omits the fourth verse.

Eleanor Daley (born 1955 in Parry Sound, Ontario) is a composer, choral director, and organist, and has since 1982 been active as music director at a church in Toronto. She has composed hundreds of choral works, published primarily by the Oxford University Press and Alliance Music Publications, and has been commissioned by dozens of choral groups in Canada, the USA, and Europe.

Just as Sametz based his *Gaudete* on the 16<sup>th</sup>-century original, Daley deliberately based her version of *Angelus ad virginem* on the 14<sup>th</sup>-century Dublin Troper original. The latter has a rather long melody, and so does Daley’s setting; as with the original, Daley repeats this melody for all of the verses. The repetitions are otherwise dissimilar, however: any arranger of *Angelus* (of which there have been many) is challenged by this tune, for many repetitions of a lengthy melody can test the listener’s attention span. Daley

solves this problem brilliantly, in two ways: she makes the original melody more interesting by giving it some ear-catching metric turns that are lacking in the original, and she writes a completely different texture for each of her four verses (the original fifth verse being her fourth), so that the listener, even though he or she hears four iterations of the same melody, is always hearing it in a different context.

The first verse is sung by the entire choir in unison (actually in octaves, as the tenors and basses double the sopranos and altos at the lower octave). It is in Daley's first verse that the listener can hear all the catchy metric playfulness, without being distracted by hearing harmony — for she alternates measures of 7/8 meter (DEE-ta-ta DEE-ta DEE-ta) with measures of 6/8 meter (DEE-ta-ta DEE-ta-ta), so that the listener never knows what's coming next. (Repeat each of the above patterns quickly to yourself several times, and you'll immediately hear the abrupt contrast between 7/8 and 6/8.)

For the second verse Daley adds a four-part harmonization of the melody, which is immediately interesting to the listener because the bass line clings to a "drone" note as the other three parts sail above it. This lasts only for half the verse, however, and in the second half all four parts are active in the harmony.

The choral sound is completely different in the third verse, for here the melody is passed (very prominently) to the tenors and basses in unison, while the two upper voices weave a duet of descants above it.

In the fourth verse the melody returns to the soprano voices, though the sound is completely different from that of the second verse, for here the basses drop out, and it is the tenors who now weave a very audible descant below the sopranos. The basses return for the second half, and the piece ends as the final phrase ("Vita frui beata...") is repeated by the high sopranos, who add an unexpected descant in their very highest register. Throughout the piece, the "home" chord has always been G minor — but for the final chord, Daley strikingly changes it to G major, with an added note that is intentionally "outside" the chord. A delight for the ear!

Angelus ad virginem,  
Subintrans in conclave;  
Virginis formidinem  
Demulcens, inquit "Ave!  
Ave, regina virginum:  
Coeli terraeque Dominum  
Concipies et paries intacta,  
Salutem hominum;  
Tu porta coeli facta,  
Medela criminum."

*The angel [came] to the Virgin,  
entering into her room;  
calming the Virgin's fear,  
he said, "Hail!  
Hail, queen of virgins:  
the Lord of heaven and earth  
you will conceive and bear, still as a virgin, [one  
who will be the] salvation of mankind;  
you will be made the gate of heaven,  
the curer of sins."*

"Quomodo conciperem,  
 Quae virum non cognovi?  
 Qualiter infringerem,  
 Quae firma mente vovi?"  
 "Spiritus sancti gratia  
 Perficiet haec omnia.  
 Ne timeas, sed gaudeas secura,  
 Quod castimonia  
 Manebit in te pura  
 Dei potentia."

*"In what manner will I conceive,  
 As I have never known a man?  
 How can I transgress  
 that which I have vowed with a firm mind?"  
 "The grace of the Holy Spirit  
 shall do all this.  
 Fear not, but rejoice in security,  
 for chastity  
 will remain pure in you  
 through the power of God."*

Ad haec virgo nobilis  
 Respondens inquit ei:  
 "Ancilla sum humilis  
 Omnipotentis Dei.  
 Tibi caelesti nuntio,  
 Tanti secreti conscio,  
 Consentiens et cupiens videre  
 Factum quod audio,  
 Parata sum parere  
 Dei consilio."

*To this, the noble virgin,  
 in response, said to him:  
 "I am the humble handmaiden  
 of all-powerful God.  
 To you, heavenly messenger,  
 bearer of so many secrets,  
 [I being] of consent, and desiring to see  
 done what I hear [from you],  
 I am ready to appear  
 as one advised of God."*

Eia Mater Domini,  
 Quae pacem reddidisti  
 Angelis et homini,  
 Cum Christum genuisti:  
 Tuum exora Filium  
 Ut se nobis propitium  
 Exhibeat et deleat peccata,  
 Praestans auxilium  
 Vita frui beata  
 Post hoc exsilium.

*Hail, mother of the Lord,  
 who brought peace  
 to angels and to mankind  
 as you bore Christ:  
 Pray your son  
 that he show himself favorable to us  
 and that he put an end to our sins,  
 setting before us assistance  
 in having the benefit of a blessed life  
 after this exile.*



photo by Ashley Mac



## VI *O magnum mysterium* O great mystery

composed by **Adrian Willaert**

1545

Adrienne Fuller, soprano; Kathryn Currie, mezzosoprano;

James Tresner, tenor; Dean Blackette, bass

composed by **Tomás Luis de Victoria**

1572

composed by **Morten Lauridsen**

1994

The three pieces will be sung as a group, separated by very brief pauses.

This time it is not a *tune* that is being recycled, but the *text* of a particular Gregorian chant melody. Each of the three above-named pieces is a separate and original composition; unlike the pieces in the previous groups, what these pieces have in common is not music, but text.

The original *O magnum mysterium* is a chant that arose in the tenth century, or possibly earlier. It is responsorial: the beginning of its melody is sung by a leader, after which the next part is sung, in response, by a body of singers, and so on. This chant is assigned to the Office of Matins for Christmas Day — the service sung during the night that precedes Christmas morning, which most often takes place in a monastery. The original chant, in the neumatic notation in which chants are written and from which they are sung, looks like this:

The image shows a musical score for the Gregorian chant "O magnum mysterium". The notation is neumatic, consisting of black squares (neumes) placed on a four-line red staff. The text is written below the staff in a Gothic script. The score begins with a large initial "O" and a "Resp. 3." marking. The text is: "mágnum \* mysté- ri- um, et admi-rá- bí-le sa- cra- mén- tum, ut a-nimá- li- a vi-dé-rent Dó- minum ná- tum, ja-céntem in praesé-pi- o: \* Be-á- ta Vir- go, cú-jus ví-sce-ra me-ru-é- runt portá- re Dó-mi-num Chrí- stum. V. A- ve, Ma-ri- a, grá-ti- a plé- na: Dó- mi-nus té- cum. \* Be-á- ta."

The text is in two parts. First it speaks of the great mystery (*magnum mysterium*) of the presence of animals at the birth, then it draws upon the words from Luke 1:42 in which Mary's cousin Elizabeth offers a blessing to the virgin (*beata virgo*).

Despite the reference to Luke, the text of *O magnum* is not biblical. Although none of the Gospels mention that animals were present at the birth of Jesus, that notion crept into the Nativity story somewhere over the course of the first millenium of the Christian Church. In the Hebrew Bible, Isaiah says that "an ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's manger"; those words may have been taken as prophetic, and may have contributed to the animals' inclusion. In any case, the idea that lowly animals were present at the Nativity seems to emphasize the humility of that event, and indeed makes their presence seem to be a "great mystery and wonderful sacrament".

We first present the setting of *O magnum* by Adrian Willaert (c. 1490 - 1562), one of the foremost composers of the Netherlands School of polyphonic composition. Willaert, a Belgian, was foremost among those who brought the Netherlands style to Italy, and he was a major influence on the music of the Italian Renaissance. (Just to tie things together with Group IV in this program: the Netherlands School was the final stage of the style that had begun in England with the "English descant" approach to harmony, as that style had crossed the Channel to the continent during the 15<sup>th</sup> century.)

Willaert's motet, composed in 1545, beautifully illustrates the main structural element of the Netherlands style: *imitation*. Each phrase of the text is introduced by one voice part, which is then imitated by another voice part, until all voice parts have participated. Though the many voice parts thus sing independently, their lines are interwoven in such a way as to produce a coherent musical texture. The genius of the Netherlands composers lay in their ability to write voice parts that did this.

Let us move forward a quarter of a century to 1572, when we find Tomás Luis de Victoria (c. 1548 - 1611) in the prime of his career. In that year he wrote a motet on *O magnum mysterium*, the first significant setting of it after Victoria's.

Victoria was born in Castile to wealthy parents (his mother was a *conversa*, i.e. a woman who had been born Jewish but had converted to Christianity). In 1565, in his late teens, aided by a grant from King Philip II of Spain, he went to Rome to study composition, possibly with Palestrina. he held several musical positions in and near Rome; in 1587 he returned to Spain to enter the service of Philip's sister, the Dowager Empress Maria, and remained in that position for the remainder of his days.

Victoria was the most influential composer of the Spanish Renaissance, and his music played a significant role in the Counter-Reformation in Spain. In 1592, twenty years after his motet on *O magnum mysterium*, he brought out the

*Missa O magnum mysterium*, which, in Renaissance “parody mass” fashion, was a Mass that used the music of the motet as a starting point. (Oriana will feature this Mass in its spring 2019 concert program.)

In the motet, the initial words “*O magnum mysterium...*” are introduced in imitation, on a melodic line distinguished by the drop of a fifth interval and an immediate jump back up to the beginning note. The words “*et admirabile sacramentum...*” begin in imitation, but soon join in homophony (in which all voices sing the same syllables together). Two voices sing the words “*et admirabile sacramentum...*” as a duet, to which the other two voices immediately reply, in imitation. The words “*...jacentem in praesepio*” are presented in imitation; then the phrase concludes homophonically.

Here we hear a major difference between the mid-Renaissance Netherlands style and the late-Renaissance Roman style: The former tends to be imitative throughout, whereas the latter tends to alternate elements of both imitation and homophony, thus lending variety to the musical texture.

The second part of the text, “*O beata virgo...*”, begins in homophony, with a long melisma to emphasize the holiness of the word *virgo*. A sort of modified homophony concludes the text on the word *Christum*. This is followed by a phrase on the word *Alleluia* and its repetition, then two restatements of that phrase, then a final coda in which the word *Alleluia* is sung a number of times in imitation.

Let us again move forward, this time to hear a setting of *O magnum mysterium* that followed Victoria’s by four hundred and twenty-two years.

Morten Lauridsen was born in Colfax, Washington State, in 1943. He studied composition at the University of Southern California and then taught there; later he chaired USC’s Composition Department and started a program in scoring music for films. He has composed solo songs, sacred and secular choral works, and instrumental works, all in great number; numerous recordings of these have earned him five Grammy awards. By the end of the twentieth century he had become the USA’s most popular choral composer.

Lauridsen’s *O magnum mysterium* was given its premiere in December 1994 by the Los Angeles Master Chorale under Paul Salamunovich. The composer has noted the influence of choral composers of the late Renaissance in writing this work; he sought to emulate their achievement of simplicity and clarity in expressing the essence of the text.

Lauridsen, as an example of this simplicity, confines himself to a simple major scale (D major), and uses only four of the seven possible harmonies within that scale — though with significant individual touches, for he uses many first-inversion chords (harmonically equivalent to the English Descant chords in Group IV), and he frequently adds notes to these simple harmonies that are “outside of the chord.” (The very first chord that you will hear in *O*

*magnum mysterium* has both of these features, which give it a floating, ethereal sound.)

The piece is built in four parts. The first starts with the words “*O magnum mysterium*” and concludes on the word “*sacramentum*”; the second starts by repeating “*O magnum mysterium*”, then skips to the words “*ut animalia...*”, and concludes with “*praesepio*.” The third part of the piece starts with the words “*Beata virgo...*”, and here is how the composer describes what he did in this third part:

“The most challenging part of this piece for me was the second line of text having to do with the Virgin Mary. She above all was chosen to bear the Christ child and then she endured the horror and sorrow of his death on the cross. How can her significance and suffering be portrayed musically? After exploring several paths, I decided to depict this by a single note. On the word “*Virgo*,” the altos sing a dissonant appoggiatura G-sharp. It’s the only tone in the entire work that is foreign to the main key of D. That note stands out against a consonant backdrop as if a sonic light has suddenly been focused upon it, edifying its meaning. It is the most important note in the piece.”

Listen carefully for this G-sharp moment! It’s incredibly beautiful!

The fourth part has the same words as the second part, and concludes with a serene “*Alleluia*” that is sung first by the tenors, and is then imitated by the other three voice parts.

O magnum mysterium,  
et admirabile sacramentum,  
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum,  
iacentem in praesepio.

*O great mystery,  
and admirable sacrament,  
that animals would see the Lord born,  
lying in a manger.*

Beata Virgo, cujus viscera  
meruerunt portare  
Dominum Jesum Christum.  
Alleluia!

*Blessed is the Virgin, whose womb  
was worthy to bear  
the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Alleluia!*



photo by Hendrik Broekman

## VII In dulci jubilo

In gentle joy

arranged by **Anonymous**

1544

Olivia de Geofroy, soprano; Andrea Hart, alto;

Harry Rosenberg, tenor; Christopher Pitt, bass

arranged by **Johann Sebastian Bach** 18<sup>th</sup> century

arranged by **Matthew Culloton**

2012

*In dulci jubilo* is a Christmas melody that has undoubtedly been arranged — recycled, if you will — many more times than any of the other tunes on this program.

There seems to be agreement that this tune had its origin in the year 1328, when a German friar by the name of Heinrich Seuse is said to have had a vision in which angels came down to him to ease his suffering, then sang and danced to him, upon which he joined in the merriment. Seuse then supposedly composed the words and the melody, which have remained substantially the same ever since:

In dulci jubilo,  
Nun singet und seid froh!  
Unsers Herzens Wonne  
Leit in præsepio,  
Und leuchtet als die Sonne  
Matris in gremio.  
Alpha es et O.

*In sweet exultation,  
Now sing and be glad!  
The bliss of our hearts  
Lies in a manger,  
And shines like the sun  
In his mother's lap.  
[He is the] Alpha and Omega.  
(= the beginning and end of all)*

O Jesu parvule,  
Nach dir ist mir so weh.  
Tröst mir mein Gemüte,  
O puer optime;  
Durch alle deine Güte,  
O princeps gloriae,  
Trahe me post te.

*O tiny Jesus,  
I feel such longing for you.  
Console my mind,  
O best young boy;  
Through all your good,  
O prince of glory,  
Draw me after you.*

Immediately noticeable is that the first line is in Latin, the second and third lines are in German, the fourth is in Latin, the fifth and sixth are in German, and the final seventh line is in Latin — and the rhymes sometimes begin in one language and end in the other! This is *macaronic* verse, used (often in humor) by students at medieval universities.

About 1400, *In dulci jubilo* first appeared in a manuscript, still as an unaccompanied melody. (This MS is now kept in the library of the University of Leipzig.) In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the tune found its way into various Lutheran hymnals, now harmonized with added voice parts: in *Geistliche Lieder* (*Spiritual Songs*), a 1533 hymnal by Joseph Klug; in the 1537 *Gesangbuch* (*Songbook*) of Michael Vehe; and in the 1545 *Geistliche Lieder* of Valentin Babst. It was included in the 1582 *Piae Cantiones* collection mentioned in the annotations for Group III, and, from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, it appeared in collections in England and Sweden.

Interestingly, the tune had no trouble passing from Catholics to Lutherans in the course of the Reformation, nor to non-German-speaking lands.

One of the more notable collections in which the tune appeared was the *Neue Deudsche Gesänge* (*New German Songs*), arranged by various anonymous composers and published by Georg Rhau in 1544. In the early German Baroque period, the composer Bartholomaeus Gesius arranged the tune in 1601, as did Michael Praetorius in 1607. In the late German Baroque, Johann Sebastian Bach arranged *In dulci jubilo* both as a vocal chorale and as an organ prelude.

In the English-speaking world, Robert Lucas de Pearsall (1795-1856) made an elaborate arrangement of the tune for semi-chorus, full chorus, and soloists. In the 1850s, the Englishman John Mason Neale arranged the tune in the form of the carol *Good Christian Men, Rejoice* — which is still very much in use today.

And, as you'll soon hear, the tune attracted the attention of Matthew Culloton, the noted American choral director and composer from the Upper Midwest. His arrangement for jazz choir (!) will conclude our program.

But we'll begin this group by presenting the fine arrangement of *In dulci jubilo* in Georg Rhau's *Neue Deudsche Gesänge* of 1544. What is notable about this version is that the melody is in the tenor voice, a musical feature that was popular in German-speaking lands in the sixteenth century. One can hear the melody clearly in the tenor, ornamented by what sounds like a double descant in the higher voice parts above the tenor.

J. S. Bach turns the tune into a stately chorale, at a stately tempo — and it's at this kind of tempo that we can hear the richness and inventiveness of Bach's harmonic genius.

Matthew Culloton is most inventive with this tune as well — undoubtedly in a way that Heinrich Seuse, in the year 1328, never imagined, even in the merriest of his dreams.