



Rejoice and Be Merry

December 2019

Ryan Phillips, Conductor

Trissina Kear, Pianist

Hark! (In 7/8)..... *arr. Steven Landau (b. 1960)*

There Is No Rose..... *Connor Koppin (b. 1991)*

The Rose..... *Ola Gjeilo (b. 1978)*

Touro-louro-louro..... *arr. Robert Shaw (1916-1999)
and Alice Parker (b. 1925)*

O Magnum Mysterium..... *Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)*

*O magnum mysterium et admirabile sacramentum,
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum jacentem in praesepio.
O beata Virgo, cujus viscera meruerunt portare Dominum Jesum Christum.*

Translation:

O great mystery and wonderful sacrament,
that animals should see the new-born Lord lying in a manger.
O blessed virgin, whose womb was worthy to bear the Lord Jesus Christ.

S'vivon B'sheva.....*arr. Robert Lopez-Hanshaw (b. 1988)*

*Sivivon, sov, sov, sov,
Chanukah, hu chag tov.
Sivivon, sov, sov, sov!*

*Chag simcha hu la-am
Nes gadol haya sham
Chag simcha hu la-am.*

Translation:

Dreidel, spin, spin, spin
Chanukah is a great holiday.
Dreidel, spin, spin, spin!

A holiday of happiness it is for the nation.
A great miracle happened there.
A holiday of happiness it is for the nation.

Bring Us in Good Ale.....*Gustav Holst (1874-1934)*

Brightest and Best.....*Shawn Kirchner (b. 1970)*

————— INTERMISSION —————

Ábreme la Puerta.....*arr. Christian Grases (b. 1973)*

*Ábreme la puerta,
Que estoy en la calle,
Y dirá la gente
Que ésto es un desaire.*

*A las arandela
de mi corazón.*

*Allá adentro veo?
Un bulto tapao,
No sé si será
Un lechón asao?*

Translation:
Open up the door,
'Cause I'm in the street,
And everyone will see
That you're rebuffing me.

Sing the arandela
to my heart.

What is that I see?
Something covered up,
Oh, could it be
A roast suckling pig?

Cradle Hymn.....*Kim André Arnesen* (b. 1980)

O Nata Lux.....*Thomas Tallis* (1505-1585)

*O nata lux de lumine, Jesu redemptor saeculi,
Dignare clemens supplicum laudes precesque sumere.
Qui carne quondam contegi dignatus es pro perditis,
Nos membra confer effici Tui beati corporis.*

Translation:
O Light born of Light, Jesus, redeemer of the world,
Mercifully deign to accept the praises and prayers of your suppliants.
O you who once deigned to be hidden in flesh on behalf of the lost,
Grant us to be made members of your blessed body.

Wassail Song.....*Ralph Vaughan Williams* (1872-1958)

Ding Dong! Merrily on High.....*arr. David Willcocks* (1919-2015)

Rejoice and Be Merry.....*John Rutter* (b. 1945)

Program Notes

- Ryan Phillips

Hark! (In 7/8) - arr. Steven Landau

Sure to lift your holiday spirit, Steven Landau's exciting arrangement of Mendelssohn's carol "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing" is cast in a 7/8 time signature. Landau sets the traditional harmonies over a rhythmically vivacious bass line to add depth to a piece that still has much to offer. The second verse allows the ear a traditional sense of the hymn-like text structure before revving back into gear for a concluding 7/8 finale.

There Is No Rose - Connor Koppin

Connor Koppin's arrangement of *There Is No Rose* breathes new life into an early fifteenth-century medieval English carol. Contemporary harmonies and a variety of textures allow each verse its own diverse makeup. At its thickest texture, voices split into seven parts. In tandem with *fortissimo* dynamics, this ushers in the most emotionally driven and climactic moment of the work. Though the original carol features six verses, the arranger chooses to only include the first two. He separates these verses by opening with women's voices, then transitions to men's voices. The text is divided into two different languages, which is referred to as macaronic. Short Latin phrases separate English verses. Koppin chooses to only use one Latin phrase, "resmiranda." This word simply translates to "something that marvels."

The Rose - Ola Gjeilo

Contemporary composer Ola Gjeilo employs a style that captivates the listener and activates an emotional response. He often does so by creating long phrases with linear melodies that create a flowing and luscious texture. Interestingly, the melody is only held in one voice, while the other parts sing similar stepwise patterns in augmented time. This makes the other three voices act as a harmonic overlay to the melody. In *The Rose*, Gjeilo takes a minimalist approach to the accompaniment, as the instrument's sole job is to uphold a driving 16th-note pattern. By arpeggiating chords "with sustain pedal" throughout, the instrument adds a layer of mystery to the choral voices.

The secular text by Christina Rossetti details the beauty of a rose, which is laid gently upon a thorn. One may enjoy a lily with a "smooth stalk," or the "sweetness in an apple tree" but the elegance of a rose will "set the world on fire."

Touro-louro-louro – arr. Robert Shaw/Alice Parker

Seventeenth-century French composer Nicolas Saboly wrote the melody to this holiday arrangement. The text tells the Christmas story from the point of view of witnesses going to see the baby in the manger. The arrangement is strophic - with three separate verses sung to the same tune - that lead the listeners on their journey. The first verse expresses the desire to see what could possibly be happening in the holy land. After rejection, the protagonist begins the long trip alone. The second strophe, let by three-part women voices, reveals the bitter cold of the journey and a need to shelter and rest. The final section uses polyphonic textures to outline the joy of seeing the newborn baby. This joy ends in a quick diminuendo to grant the tender sleep of the little one lying in the manger.

O Magnum Mysterium – Francis Poulenc

Francis Poulenc is one of the most famous members of *Les Six*, a group of six young French composers who sought the public's recognition for their daring and original compositional styles. The group disbanded by the time Poulenc was in his twenties, though he had already gained public praise for his unique harmonies and complex tonal structures.

Poulenc's early works mainly feature secular texts, as the composer was not religious. The composer wrote his first sacred work in 1936 when he found faith after the death of a dear friend in a car accident. *O Magnum Mysterium* is the first piece in a collection of four Lenten motets, written in 1952. This composition tells the Christmas story through a serene and mystic lens. The composer fully embraces twentieth-century compositional techniques through his use of intervallic leaps of a tritone, short disjunct phrases, and unexpected harmonic shifts which, when combined, create musical bliss. Poulenc captures a balance between melody and choral accompaniment amongst voices to weave this tapestry of sound.

S'vivon B'sheva - arr. Robert Lopez-Hanshaw

S'vivon B'sheva ("Dreidel In Seven") is an arrangement of a classic, and fairly terrible, Hanukkah melody. The original, simply called "S'vivon," is almost as ubiquitous as "The Dreidel Song," and certainly no deeper in lyrical content—a fact happily obscured by the Hebrew language of the lyrics. Nevertheless, it's a lot of fun, and it doesn't need to be anything else!

This arrangement was inspired by the rhythms and harmonies of Bulgarian folk music. That tradition makes heavy use of large, odd-numbered meters like 7 and 11, often at quick tempos. It also uses an unchanging "drone" pitch underneath the main melody, which can make "dissonant" harmonies sound quite stable and sensible. This piece is certainly not traditionally Bulgarian, but honors some of the materials from that music.

(Program note written by the arranger.)

***Bring Us in Good Ale* – Gustav Holst**

English composer Gustav Holst, best known for his orchestral suite *The Planets*, was born into a musical family. Both of his parents played the organ and gave Gustav his earliest musical training. The composer began writing music at grammar school and was conducting by age 17. Two years later, he enrolled at the Royal College of Music in London to study with Stanford and Parry.

In 1916, the composer wrote a set of four Christmas carols, with the final song as *Bring Us in Good Ale*, a traditional English drinking song. Minstrel singers of the medieval era passed the text down through generations and put it to paper in the fifteenth century. Holst does not retain the original melody of this carol, but instead sets it in his unique style. Contrapuntal melodies react against each other with keys often moving into unfamiliar territory. He writes in a style that does away with predictability, both musically and formally. Constant meter shifts allow for text to fall not where any listener would expect them.

***Brightest and Best* – Shawn Kirchner**

The well-known melody to *Brightest and Best* derives from William Walker's 1835 compilation "The Southern Harmony, and Musical Companion." This shape-note hymn and tune book was made up of 335 songs to be learned on *solfege*; a triangle represented *fá*, a circle *sol*, a square *la*, and a diamond *mi*. Together, these syllables were part of a system that helped bring music literacy and a new singing tradition to the Americas. Songs in *The Southern Harmony* were meant for all singers who wanted to sing. Tone was harsh and bright while conducting was simple; a jagged up and down motion strictly meant for tempo.

Shawn Kirchner's contemporary arrangement maintains the original melody of the song while including bluegrass-styled instrumentation. In blending bluegrass and *Southern Harmony*, he emboldens the musical roots of North America. He also applies compositional techniques, such as canon, that would also have been used nearly two centuries prior. Novice choral singers would have used this technique to create harmonies without the need to learn different parts. Finally, Kirchner's theme and variations arrangement of this old hymn-tune provides harmonic interest to sustain the listener through this strophic text.

Ábreme la Puerta – arr. Christian Grases

The term *aguinaldos* refers to Christmas songs that contain rhythmic and festive qualities. These “refrain songs” tend to contain multiple verses with catchy refrains meant to get everyone to join in. Accompaniments for these songs include the Puerto Rican *cuatro*, along with percussion instruments: bongo, maracas, *panderos*, and *güiros*. Musical groups would travel to different neighborhoods during the month of December late at night and play their *aguinaldos* loudly to wake up homeowners. The musicians would then hope for an invitation into the home for food and drinks. As the night continued, their group would get bigger and bigger as the festivities went on!

(Program notes adapted from the composer’s paragraph in *Ábreme la Puerta* sheet music.)

Cradle Hymn – Kim André Arnesen

Cradle Hymn’s text is from the 18th century composer Issac Watts, originally titled “Hush My Dear, Lie Still and Slumber.” The soothing text tells the story of Christ’s first infant hours, surrounded by his mother and shepherds. Arnesen’s lyrical melody perfectly paints the evening scene with gentle motives of a rising third. The composer also incorporates a pulsing eighth-note accompaniment which persists through the entirety of the work. This perpetual motion layered under a string quartet conveys the beauty of that night.

O Nata Lux – Thomas Tallis

Thomas Tallis is considered the father of English church music. In 1549, the Act of Uniformity outlawed Latin in English church services and replaced it with the Book of Common Prayer. This is why the composer published so many English anthems. Tallis was a gentleman at the Chapel Royal during the rules of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Elizabeth I, and worked there until his death. He also worked at the chapel as an organist alongside William Byrd. Queen Elizabeth I granted Tallis and Byrd an exclusive license to print music in 1575. This printing monopoly lasted twenty-one years and was the first of its kind.

That same year, Byrd and Tallis released *Cantiones Sacrae*, a collection of thirty-four Latin motets, with each composer contributing seventeen. This collection as a publication failed financially, though it showed stylistic advances of each composer. Most pieces are for five to seven voices, though occasional four-voice and three-voice motets are present. “O Nata Lux” is for five voices in homophonic texture, not out of character with Tallis’ compositional style. He plays with dissonance in this work, allowing the ear to be jarred awake. One example is his signature “Tallis cadence,” which can be found in the last measure of the work. This technique uses both a major and minor chord sung together to usher resolve through the final cadence. In the case of this work, both an F-natural and an F-sharp are sung together, creating a half step dissonance between D minor and D major.

***Wassail Song* – Ralph Vaughan Williams**

English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams had an extraordinary musical education while attending the Royal Academy of Music, Trinity College, and Cambridge. He studied under Parry, Stanford, and Wood, while becoming good friends with Holst. These influences grew his desire for a strong sense of nationalism in his music. Vaughan Williams set his mind to reaching his own countrymen before gripping a global audience.

“Wassail Song” is the final piece in his publication, *Five English Folk Songs* (1913), which illustrates his love for English folk music. The tune is taken from “The Gloucestershire Wassail”, which differentiates it from wassail melodies in other parts of England. The text of “Wassail Song” refers to the time when English men and women would go door to door, singing in exchange for drink. Vaughan Williams opens his composition with leaps of fourths and fifths, which is identifiable as a recurring motif which works its way into each of the six verses as a vocal accompaniment.

***Ding Dong! Merrily on High* – arr. David Willcocks**

David Willcocks’ arrangement of this well-known Christmas carol delights its singers and listeners through alternating female/male choral textures and intricate choruses. Each verse is sung simply with a unison vocal melody, though it is accompanied by a chorus that makes up that simplicity with intricate rhythmic motives that seamlessly fit with the original melismatic “Gloria” sequence that we all know. The tune of *Ding Dong! Merrily on High* originates from sixteenth-century France, where Jehan Tabourot originally composed it to accompany dance. The text is by George Ratcliffe Woodward, a twentieth-century composer. The work was first published in his 1924 book, titled *The Cambridge Carol-Book: Being Fifty-Two Songs for Christmas, Easter, and Other Seasons*.

***Rejoice and Be Merry* – John Rutter**

John Rutter’s triumphant carol “Rejoice and Be Merry” embodies the joyous spirit of Christmas. The text welcomes the birth of Christ and the crowds that gather to witness that joy. This strophic work implements a variety of choral textures to differentiate each new verse from the previous. Rutter shifts from full chorus to unison singing, then again to female voices followed by male voice, and finally sings the last verse with one part accompanied by humming in the other voices. The triumphant ending resounds the name of the work while using hemiola to build up excitement to the final cadence.

INSTRUMENTALISTS:

The Rose and Cradle Hymn:

Alan Brundage, *violin*
Ericka Roush, *violin*
Raphael Lizama, *viola*
Katie Capp, *cello*

Brightest and Best:

Alan Brundage, *violin*
Katie Capp, *cello*

