

Make We Merry

Welcome to the Festive Season offering for 2012 from *Serendipity: the choir*. To celebrate the season we present our usual eclectic mix of music, both old and new, sacred and secular.

The contemporary music we perform reflects a number of musical styles. Today we will sing two Spanish carols; *Fum Fum Fum* which, in a quirky kind of way, exhorts all creation to celebrate Christmas and *A La Nanita Nana*, a traditional Christmas lullaby. *Pat-a-Pan* is a traditional Burgundian carol but add Salsa to the title and we guarantee to have your toes tapping! We have added a samba 'feel' with Latin-American rhythms and a few other surprises to delight you (hint: mariachi). John Leavitt, a prolific American composer and arranger, uses a traditional Hebrew text to write *Ose Shalom*, a wonderful tribute to 'the One who brings peace' to our often divided world.

Negro Spirituals are a rich source of Christmas music, and today we present two: *Mary Had a Baby*, which tells the traditional Christmas story interspersed with more modern images, and *Let the Heaven Light Shine on Me*, a more abstract take on the reason for Christmas. This arrangement is by Moses Hogan, the 'grand-daddy' of spiritual-singing. *Mary's Little Boy Child*, often performed as a solo, needs little introduction, but listen anew as *Serendipity:the choir* presents it in a less familiar four-part choral setting. Also possibly unfamiliar by that master of modern carol-writing, John Rutter, is *Angels' Carol* – a piece of beautiful simplicity.

Christmas is often associated with animals, and we have two offerings in which animals spread the Christmas message. In *Do You Hear What I Hear?*, a lamb is the first creature to relay the Christmas story, while in *The Song of the Birds*, it is the dawn chorus that sang the Christ-child's praises. Finally this year's new music is rounded out by a splendid setting of *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas* by our own Ann Clipsham; this will surely take your breath away with its spellbinding beauty and delicious harmonic shifts.

The old carols – let's call them the 'have yourself a medieval Christmas' set – begin with two songs taken from 'A Ceremony of Carols' by Benjamin Britten. This work, written in 1942, was originally conceived as a series of unrelated songs but was later unified into one piece with a unison chant (this opens today's programme), based on the Gregorian antiphon 'Hodie Christus Natus Est', heard at the beginning and end. It is scored for three-part treble chorus, solo voices, and harp. Written for Christmas, the work consists of eleven movements, with text from *The English Galaxy of Shorter Poems*, by Gerald Bullett; it is in Middle English.

A Child Is Born in Bethlehem is similarly a modern recreation of a medieval text, full of the joyous Christmas message. You will notice the composer's use of unusual rhythmic motifs which give an equally unpredictable 'feel'. A macaronic text, it alternates between Latin and English, as do *A Song to Sing* and *Make We Merry*; both these carols encourage us all to celebrate - we have added a touch of "Seasonal Cheer", instrument-style.

Two medieval carols, set by two of Britain's favourite modern composers, are *Hay, Ay* and *Good Day, Sir Cristémas*. Rutter's *Hay, Ay*, from his song-cycle 'When Icicles Hang', is full of seasonal revelry (being in the southern hemisphere you may need to exercise your imagination to appreciate this aspect), while Andrew Carter's *Good Day, Sir Cristémas*, in challenging 5/4 time, greets the new-born Jesus. The title of this piece comes from the Old English: *Crīstesmæsse*, meaning "Christ's Mass". In the Biblical Christmas narrative the shepherds were first to greet the infant Jesus: *How Merrily We Live* contemplates the bucolic lifestyle of these gentlemen, presumably prior to the alarming advent of angels!

'Make We Merry' Repertoire

Procession and Wolcum Yole!
from: A Ceremony of Carols

*Britten

A Child Is Born in Bethlehem

Stopford

A Song to Sing – English*
soloist: Richard Bosly-Craft

Mochnik arr.Clipsham

Do You Hear What I Hear?

arr.Simeone/Fowles

Fum Fum Fum - Catalonia

arr.Wilberg/Fowles

Mary's Little Boy Child

Hairston arr.Lojeski

A La Nanita Nana - Spain

arr.Porterfield

Hay Ay!

Rutter

Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas

Blane arr.Clipsham

Ose Shalom - Hebrew *
trombone obbligato: Mike Butcher

Leavitt

Good Day, Sir Cristemas*

Carter

Mary Had a Baby - spiritual

anon.

Let the Heaven Light Shine on Me

arr.Hogan

How Merrily We Live

East

Angels' Carol

Rutter

Make We Merry*

Scott

The Song of the Birds – Catalonia

Osma arr.Fowles

Pat-a-Pan Salsa – Burgundy

arr.Fettke & Grassi