Rorate caeli desuper

Gregorian chant, named after Pope Gregory I (c. 540-604), is the term applied to the vast repertoire of liturgical plainchant assembled over the course of several hundred years, roughly 700-1300 A.D. There are almost 3,000 extant chants in the Gregorian repertoire, with texts specific to each day of the Roman Catholic Church's liturgical year. The text of *Rorate caeli desuper* (Let dew fall from the heavens) comes from the book of Isaiah. This chant is frequently sung in the Catholic liturgy on several occasions during Advent.

Let dew fall from the heavens above
and let clouds rain down justice;

Be not angry, O Lord,
neither remember iniquity for ever:
the holy cities are a desert,
Zion has become deserted:
Jerusalem is now a desolate waste,
our holy and our glorious house,
where our fathers praised thee.

We have sinned,
and are as an unclean thing.
and we all do fade as a leaf:
and our iniquities,
like the wind, have taken us away;
thou hast hid thy face from us,
and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.

Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people,
my salvation shall not tarry:
why wilt thou waste away in sadness,
why hath sorrow seized thee?
I will save thee, fear not,
for I am the Lord thy God,
Holy One of Israel, thy Redeemer.

Rorate caeli desuper
et nubes pluant justum:

Ne irascaris Domine,
ne ultra memineris iniquitatis:
ecce civitas Sancti facta est deserta:
Sion deserta facta est:
Jerusalem desolata est:
domus sanctificationis tuae et gloriae tuae,
ubi laudaverunt te patres nostri.

Peccavimus,
et facti sumus tamquam immundus nos,
et cecidimus quasi folium universi:
et iniquitates nostrae
quasi ventus abstulerunt nos:
abscondisti faciem tuam a nobis,
et allisti nos in manu iniquitatis nostrae.

Consolamini, consolamini, popule meus:
cito veniet salus tua:
quare moerore consumeris,
quia innovavit te dolor?
Salvabo te, noli timere,
egno enim sum Dominus Deus tuus,
Sanctus Israel, Redemptor tuus.
William Byrd, called the “Father of Musicke” by his contemporaries, was the most important composer of Elizabethan England. At twenty, Byrd received his first appointment as Organist and Master of the Choristers at Lincoln Cathedral. In 1570 he was appointed a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal and quickly found his way into the graces of the court. In 1575, he and his colleague Thomas Tallis found enormous favor with the Court: Queen Elizabeth granted them a twenty-one year monopoly for printing music and a patent for producing lined music paper. A devout Catholic in England — then militantly Protestant — Byrd was forced to go underground for much of his sacred work, composing Latin masses and motets for services held in secret. Byrd’s influence over all aspects of Renaissance composition cannot be overstated: he not only changed the face of church music, but he also resurrected the English song and virtually created the verse anthem.

The text of *Rorate caeli* would most likely be sung on the fourth Sunday of Advent as the Introit. Byrd’s compositional style employs pervasive imitation, insightful text painting (descending scale-wise motion on the words “caeli” and “justum” to portray the falling dew from the heavens and the falling judgment on earth), and a three-voice verse that blossoms into a homophonic “Gloria Patri et filio” section.

```
Rorate caeli desuper
et nubes pluant justum:
aperiatur terra et germinet Salvatorem.
Benedixisti, Domine, terram tuam:
avertisti captivitatem Jacob.
Gloria Patri, et Filio,
et Spiritui Sancto.
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc,
```

Let dew fall from the heavens above
and let clouds rain down justice:
Let the earth open and bring forth a Savior.
Thou hast blessed, O Lord, Thy land:
Thou hast turned away the captivity of Jacob.
Glory be to the Father, and the Son,
and the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

**O admirabile commercium**  

Slovenian composer Jacob Handl (also known as Jacobus Gallus) was one of the most skilled contrapuntalists of the High Renaissance. His professional life was centered primarily in Austria and what is now the Czech Republic. Although criticized in his day for the complexity of his writing — particularly in the number of voice parts he employed (he was a prime exponent of the Venetian polychoral style) — his music has enjoyed a consistently high reputation throughout history. Handl’s compositions display the culmination of the Netherlands school, characterized by the use of borrowed material (often from his own motets), complex canons, and a good deal of word painting. *O admirabile commercium* is a motet that is ubiquitously performed in liturgical services surrounding the Feast of Circumcision on January 1st. The piece is written in a double-choir format which showcases a choir of treble voices and a choir of tenors and basses. Handl’s mastery of polychoral writing is evident in how he utilizes both textures. One could imagine that the choir of treble voices represent heavenly angels and the lower voices portray the people of the world. The two choirs sing alone, overlap slightly, and also create an interplay of warm sound when the text acknowledges the divinity of the Infant.

```
O admirabile commercium!
Creator generis humani,
animatum corpus sumens,
de Virgine nasci dignatus est:
et procedens homo sine semine,
largitus est nobis suam Deitatem.
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O marvelous exchange!
Creator of humankind,
taking on a living body,
was worthy to be born of a virgin,
and, coming forth as a human without seed,
has enriched us with His divinity.
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Quem vidistis pastores?  

Andrea Gabrieli (c. 1582–1635)

Uncle to Giovanni Gabrieli, student of Adrian Willaert, friend of Orlando di Lasso, and successor to Claudio Merulo as the organist at Venice’s San Marco Cathedral, Andrea Gabrieli was pivotal in establishing the Venetian school of composition. Gabrieli shied away from the Franco-Flemish contrapuntal style which had dominated the 16th century. Instead, he favored a more homophonic, syllabic and sonorous writing style inspired by the vast space inside San Marco. Gabrieli’s sacred music was often polychoral, and it is likely that the choirs were separated within the huge cathedral to provide an antiphonal effect for the listener. Precisely this effect would have been achieved in *Quem vidistis, pastores?* (“Shepherds, Whom Did You See?”). As the choirs narrate the tale of shepherds witnessing the baby Jesus, they emulate the sound of angelic choirs singing praise, concluding with a joyful “Alleluia.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quem vidistis, pastores?</th>
<th>Shepherds, whom did you see?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dicite!</td>
<td>Tell us!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annuntiate nobis,</td>
<td>Tell us the news:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In terres quis apparuit?</td>
<td>Who has appeared on earth?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natum vidimus,</td>
<td>“We saw the newborn Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>et choros angelorum</td>
<td>and chorus of angels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collaudantes Dominum,</td>
<td>praising God,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alleluia!</td>
<td>Alleluia!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

O magnum mysterium  

Tomás Luis de Victoria (c. 1548–1611)

The music of Renaissance Spain is inexorably linked with Italy, primarily because so many of Spain’s composers traveled there to work and study. Composer and organist Tomás Luis de Victoria was born in Ávila and received training as a chorister in the Cathedral there. So promising was Victoria, he was sent to Rome at the age of sixteen to study at the *Collegio Germanico*. It is possible that he was tutored by the great Italian master Palestrina, who was teaching at the nearby Seminario — Victoria was certainly one of the few composers in Rome able to master the subtleties of Palestrina’s style. Victoria was ordained to the priesthood in 1575, but continued to compose throughout his life, holding a variety of posts in Italy and, from 1587 until his death, his native Spain. Victoria’s many masses, motets, and other religious compositions brought him a great deal of fame, certainly enhanced by his ability to publish most of his works — all but one of the eight volumes of his *Opera omnia* consist entirely of music published during his lifetime.

The justly famous motet *O magnum mysterium* (O Great Mystery) sets a sublime text from the Christmas Vespers. Victoria’s use of serenely interweaving polyphony at the opening bars leads to a hushed chordal declamation at the words “O beata Virgo.” An extended “Alleluia” section, first in triple meter, then in duple, concludes the motet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>O magnum mysterium</th>
<th>O great mystery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>et admirabile sacramentum,</td>
<td>and wonderful sacrament,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ut animalia viderent Dominum natum</td>
<td>that animals should see the new-born Lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jacentem in praesepio.</td>
<td>lying in a manger.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| O beata Virgo, cujus viscera meruerunt | O blessed is the Virgin, whose womb |
| portare Dominum Jesum Christum. | was worthy to bear Christ the Lord. |
| Alleluia. | Alleluia. |
Jean Mouton was born near Samer in northern France. After holding various positions at churches in Nesle, Amiens, and Grenoble, he joined the chapel of the French court, serving Queen Anne of Brittany, wife of Louis XII. In 1509, the Queen helped him to obtain a position as canon at St. André in Grenoble, a post he held in absentia while collecting the income from a benefice conferred to him in 1510. Mouton remained in the service of the French court for the rest of his life. A contemporary of Josquin Desprez, he is considered one of the most influential composers of motets of the early sixteenth century. Mouton’s surviving works include more than one hundred motets, fifteen masses, and over twenty chansons.

Mouton’s motet about the shepherds looking in awe at the infant Jesus was quite popular in his lifetime. Perhaps its remarkable simplicity is the key; the entire motet is based on two short motives, the first one appearing at the outset in each of the four voices and underlining the text, “Quaeramus cum pastoribus.” The second motif is even more instantly recognizable (four notes in a rising scale, followed by a leap of a minor third) and occurs throughout the work whenever the text turns to the repeated call of “Noel, Noel, Noel.” These two themes became the framework for the parody mass by Cristobal Morales heard last spring in Chanticleer’s program “Spanish Gold.”

Quaeramus cum pastoribus
Let us seek with the shepherds
Verbum incarnatum;
the Word incarnate;
cantemus cum hominibus for the King of the ages. Noel.
Quod tu vides in stabulo?
What do you see in the stable?
Jesum natum de Virgine. Noel.
Quid audis in praesepio?
What do you hear in the manger?
Angelos cum carmine and shepherds saying: Noel.
et pastores dicentes: Noe.
Ubi pascas, ubi cubes?
Where do you eat, where do you lie?
Dic, si ploras, aut si redes: Tell me, whether you weep or laugh:
Te rogamus, Rex Christe. Noe. We beseech you, Christ the King. Noel.
Cibus est lac virgineum, My food is milk of the Virgin,
lectus durum praesepium, my bed a hard manger,
carmina sunt lacrimae. Noe my songs are tears. Noel.
Pastores dicite, quidnam vidistis

Cristóbal Morales (c. 1550–1553)

Of the famous trio of composers who typified the sixteenth century Spanish church polyphony, Cristóbal de Morales was the oldest. Born in Seville, he probably received his music education at the cathedral there. Morales became maestro de capilla at Ávila (1526-1528) and Plasencia (1521-1531) before moving to Italy. In 1535, he was appointed to the Sistine Chapel choir in Rome as one of several Spanish singers, most likely as a baritone. Morales resigned from the choir in 1545 and returned to Spain, where he was first maestro at Toledo, then in Andalucía, where he directed music for the Duke of Arcos at Marchena until 1551. His final position was as maestro at Málaga Cathedral.

Morales’ surviving output is almost entirely liturgical. In the decades following his death, the composer’s works became known throughout Europe and Spain. Theorists continued to praise his music into the eighteenth century. Juan Bermudo, who knew Morales personally, perhaps gave the best short description of Morales’ music in the Declaración de instrumentos in 1555: “…his music possesses the charm and pleasing sound of Spanish music, yet at the same time is does not lack the profundity, the technical skill and the artifice of foreign music.” Pastores dicite demonstrates this charm and skill as the composer effortlessly manages the strictures of liturgical counterpoint while managing to insert a energetic exchange of “Noé” between voices, bringing to mind the sound of chatty shepherds, spreading abroad the news they received from the angels.

Shepherds, speak of what you have seen, and tell of the birth of Christ, Noel!

We saw the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and choirs of angels singing praises to the Savior, Noell!

Ainsi que parmi la prée

Bruno Gousset (b. 1958)

Gousset’s compositions have been heard frequently throughout France over the last thirty years. His output is prodigious: there are two operas, four string quartets, a host of choral works large and small, and an adaptation of Henri Duparc’s songs for baritone, string quartet, and harp commissioned by the Centre Lyrique d’Auvergne.

This strophic carol begins with a gentle call to attention in the bass voices. The lilt of the upper voices, in parallel motion, seems to call forth a mixture of the ancient “Musette” and English faux-bourdons. Gousset, born in Neuilly-sur-Seine in 1958 and the son of a jazz pianist, never lets the music come entirely to rest, though. Each strophe (verse) begins to reinvent itself harmonically as the text moves ever onward in its joy. Gousset’s jazz background makes itself evident in the almost improvisational way the harmonies build on each other. Towards the end of the carol, Gousset asks for tenderness as he describes sleepy shepherds kneeling in awe beside the manger. Then, in a bold stroke, as the shepherds turn for their homes, the music breaks into a double-time jog, leading to a surprising ending in the key of B major. The last verse also features repetitions of that opening shepherd’s-pipe call in the bass voice with which Gousset begins the carol.

On a hillside in the cold, as we’re told, where the streams run quick and deep, shepherd’s serv’d amongst this beauty simple duty, keeping watch over their sheep.

In the dark of night, intense, blinding sense, all was hidden from the eye: not the faintest light at all, in that pall, was apparent in the sky.

All at once this darksome cloak, at a stroke, from night’s back was torn away, and the sky was rent asunder, by a light as clear as day.

Ainsi que parmi la prée, diaprée, et près le cristal des eaux,

une troupe vagabonde, à la ronde,

faisait paître ses agneaux.

Et que déjà la nuit sombre de son ombre avait obscurci les yeux, et d’une épaisse fumée, embrouillé les cieux, la transparence des cieux.

Une lumière soudaine, par la plaine, vint étendre sa clarté, et, beaucoup plus que Diane, diaphane, fit cesser l’obscurité.
Ainsi déployant ses ailes immortelles, dit le céleste courrier; et puis reprit sa volée, élancée de l’air, par la champagne de l’air.

‘Levezvous, troupe endormie, de Syrie, levezvous tous à la fois, rompez, rompez la paresse, qui vous presse, et venez ouïr ma voix.

Voici l’heureuse nuitée, désirée de toute l’antiquité, où le céleste Messie, reçoit vie, conjointe en l’humanité.

Dans la flanc d’une pucelle, il recèle son immortel ornamente, et sa lumière féconde vient du monde oter l’éblouissement.

Allez pasteurs, à cette heure, sans demeure, en Bethléem la cité; allez, brigade champêtre, reconnaître l’heure de sa nativité.

D’une légère secousse, à la course, l’un va l’autre aiguillonnant, et tous sous même conduite, d’une suite, trouvent le céleste Enfant.

Dans une grange déserte, découverte, était né le fils de Dieu, et sa première venue fut connu au clos d’un si pauvre lieu.

Chacun de la compagnie s’humilie et se courbe devant lui; chacun d’eux humble l’adore, et l’honore, et le caresse à l’envi.

Chacun de main pastorale, libérale, lui présente un don nouveau, chacun à la départie le supplie pour son troupeau.

Et de retour emmi la prée, est chantée, en l’honneur de l’enfançon, par toute la troupe amie, réjouie, mainte gentile chanson.

While the shepherds greatly fear’d, there appear’d, God’s all glorious heav’ly throng, and an angel did declare, then and there, in a voice both loud and strong.

Think more about your beds, sleepyheads, shepherds stir yourselves I pray, cast all slothfulness away, no dismay, hear the news I bring today.

For this is the night of grace, in this place, which the prophets long foresaw, and the hour so long awaited, now donated, is to all forevermore.

Cradled in a virgin’s arm, safe from harm, is salvation’s one true light, from within this tiny child undefil’d, shines a heavenly radiance bright.

Now good shepherds haste away, no delay, and in Bethlehem you’ll find, lying in a manger bare, sleeping there, the redeemer of mankind.

Let each one of you take heart, play your part, make your way with simple joy: onward shepherds, now depart, light of heart, to salute the holy boy.

In a stable in the town, tumbledown, is the saviour Jesus born, see mankind to God restor’d in your Lord, by the feeble light of dawn.

When at last they reach’d the town, kneeling down, then their hearts began to sing, and with adoration fir’d, love inspir’d they reserv’d the infant King.

Each had brought some little thing: on the King they their presents now conferr’d, and in accent soft and slow, whisp’ring low, ask’d a blessing for the herd.

And turning homeward once again, these good men went rejoicing on their way, as they chanted, all amaz’d, ‘God be prais’d!’ On that happy Christmas Day.

Singing translation by Jeremy Jackman
Besides his membership to the Académie de Poésie et de Musique and his post at the French royal court, under the reigns of Charles IX (1560-1574) and Henri III (1574-1589), not much is known about Guillaume Costeley. His surviving music exists because of Le Roy & Ballard, a firm that published his music in 1570. Costeley's one hundred chansons are in one of two styles: an imitative counterpoint style that was pervading sixteenth century Europe, or in the Parisian style that explored new programmatic ideas and forms similar to the adventurous chansons of Clément Janequin. *Allons, gai bergères* is a chanson that is in the first style, which alternates imitative passages with homophonic sections which act as refrains. The chanson tells the charming pastoral story of a group of shepherdesses running to the stable and comparing the various gifts they are bringing to the baby Jesus as he suckles in his mother's lap.

```
Allons, gai bergères
Guillaume Costeley (c. 1531–1606)

Allons, gai, gai, gai, bergères,
Let's go gaily, Shepherdesses,
Allons, gai, soyez légères, suivez moi.
Let's go gaily, be light, follow me.

Allons, allons voir le Roi,
Let's go see the King,
Qui du ciel en terre est né. Gai, gai.
Who from heaven is born on Earth.

Allons, gai, gai, gai...
Let's go gaily …

Un beau présent lui fera, de quoi?
I'll make him an attractive present, of what?
De ce flageollet que j'ai tant gai.
This tin whistle that I have, so gay.

Allons, gai, gai, gai...
Let's go gaily …

Un gâteau lui donnerai, et moi?
I will give him a cake, and me?
Plein hanap lui offriray, gai, gai!
I'll offer him a full drinking cup.

Allons, gai, gai, gai...
Let's go gaily …

Ho, ho! Paix-la! Je le vois;
Oh, oh, hush! I see him;
Il tète bien sans le doigt, le petit Roi!
He nurses not with his thumb, the little King!

Allons, gai, gai, gai bergères,
Let's go gaily, Shepherdesses,
Allons, gai, soyez légères, le Roi boit!
Let us go gaily, be light, the King is drinking!
```
The indigenous music of his adopted Venezuela has shaped the study and compositions of Barcelona-born Alberto Grau. Like the younger Gustavo Dudamel, Grau has become something of a legend in the remarkable growth of the Venezuelan system of training young people in the musical arts. Grau was the founder of the Schola Cantorum de Venezuela and a student of the highly regarded and nationalistic Venezuelan composer Juan Bautista Plaza.

*Niño lindo* has a gently rocking folk rhythm which underpins simple vocal lines. The melodic interest is almost always in the soprano part; the alto, tenor and bass alternate eighth-notes with triplets to create a truly “local” sound. The harmonies are equally evocative, occasionally chromatic but never discordant. Such discords would truly be disruptive for a poem of such poignant sweetness. The narrative of the poem is somewhat in doubt: who is gazing on the little baby Jesus? Who is turning again toward home, secure in the hope that the glance of the tiny child will bring solace to a troubled life? Is it, perhaps, one of us?

Fum, fum, fum
Trad. Spanish Carol, arr. Shaw/Parker

Choruses big and small, professional and amateur, have been drawn for over six decades to the straightforward arrangements of Christmas carols by the legendary Robert Shaw and his colleague Alice Parker. In fact, Alice Parker, who celebrates her ninetieth birthday during this Christmas season, continues to arrange, teach, compose and conduct. With Shaw, and for the eponymous Robert Shaw Chorale, Parker arranged some 38 carols. The hearty flamboyance of this Spanish carol is not lost, even in their English translation.

On December five and twenty, Fum, Fum, Fum!
Oh, a child was born this night, so rosy white.
Son of Mary, Virgin Holy, in a stable mean and lowly, Fum, Fum, Fum!

On December five and twenty, Fum, Fum, Fum!
On December’s most important day, let us be gay!
We go first to church and then we have the sweetest buns and candy, Fum, Fum, Fum!

God will send us days of feasting, Fum, Fum, Fum!
Both in hot months and in cold, for young and old,
When we tell the Holy Story, ever singing of his glory, Fum, Fum, Fum!
The Spanish word *villancico*, which has come to mean “Christmas carol,” in earlier times referred to polyphonic love songs consisting of several stanzas and a refrain, derived from dance lyrics, with a distinctively rustic folk-like flavor. By the middle of the sixteenth century, the term became associated with popular devotional compositions (in Spanish rather than in Latin) introduced into the liturgy on feast days, especially Christmas and Corpus Christi. The following *villancico* is often attributed to Mateo Flecha the Elder (1481-1553), a composer in the Valencian court, and famous for his jokey, quodlibet-like Christmas *ensaladas*. *Ríu, ríu, chíu*, also found in the *Villancicos de diversos Autores*, is one of the most well-known *villancicos*. It displays a fiercely energetic dance quality, with an appealing solo melody answered by the complex choral entrances of the refrain. The opening words, meant to resemble a nightingale’s song, introduce a colorfully metaphorical text.

*Ríu, ríu, chíu, la guarda ribera:*

*Dios guardo el lobo de nuestra cordera.*

**Versos:**

*El lobo rabioso la quiso morder,*
*mas Dios poderoso la supo defender;*
*quiso la hazer que no pudiesse pecar,*
*ni aun original esta Virgen nos tuy viera.*

*Este qu’es nascido es el gran monarca,*
*Christo patriarca de carne vestido;*
*Hanos redimido con se hazer chiquito,*
*Aunqu’era infinito finito se hiziera.*

*Muchas profecias lo han profetizado*
*Ya un en nuestros dias lo hemos alcançado.*
*A Dios humanado vemos en el suelo*
*Y al hombre nel cielo porqu’el le quisiera*

**Riu, riu, chiu, he who herds by the river:**

*God has kept the black wolf from our ewe, our Lady.*

**Verses:**

*The mad wolf attempted to bite Her,*
*but God the almighty protected Her;*
*pure He wished to keep Her so she would never sin,*
*a Virgin unstained by our father’s fault.*

*The newly born Child is our mighty Monarch,*
*Christ patriarchal in flesh incarnate.*
*Through His humble birth He has redeemed us;*
*He who was infinite has become finite.*

*Many ancient prophets foretold His coming;*
*In our own time it has come to pass.*
*We see God in human form on earth*
*and we see man in heaven because God loved him.*
Gustav Holst’s setting of the mostly familiar Christmas poem, “Tomorrow shall be my dancing day,” is a bit disturbing. For one thing, the tune is not as familiar as at least two or three other settings. Furthermore, Holst sets the entire poem, which most contemporary composers do not. Holst’s carol takes on the entire ghastly narrative of the life of Christ, adhering to the facts laid down in the ancient creeds of the church and in the mystery plays of Medieval Christendom. Not only do we have the Virgin birth and what it represents, but also the baptism of Christ by John the Baptist and Christ’s temptation in the desert. Holst — and the poet — don’t stop at that; we are also invited to remember the betrayal of Jesus by his disciple Judas Iscariot and his fellow Jews, the inquisition of Pilate, the scourging, and the crucifixion. Holst’s musical setting constantly reminds us that it is for a greater love that Jesus endured all this and the carol setting becomes triumphant, the dance ever more insistent, as the resurrection and ascension are described. As the anthem comes to its close, Holst leads the listener into almost brass-like fanfares as he sets the text which brings humanity into one great, or as the poet calls it, “general” dance.

Holst, one of the most celebrated English composers of the early twentieth century, was no stranger to controversy. A forward-looking musical maverick, Holst produced works that have come to exemplify many of the compositional techniques of our time. His orchestral suite, The Planets, is a virtual textbook of orchestral images without which no modern movie composer could have existed, for instance. Holst was also interested in themes and cultures far beyond the Anglican norm. Not only did he set music for the liturgy of the English church, he set hymns from the Indian Rig Veda and even created an opera based on the ancient Indian legend of Savitri, the angel of Death, and the Afterlife. It is not surprising that Holst’s version of Christmas not only celebrates the English folk song tradition which he espoused, but it also makes the listener think beyond the tinsel.

This have I done for my true love

Gustav Holst (1874–1934)

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This have I done for my true love

Gustav Holst (1874–1934)
Into the desert I was led,
   Where I fasted without substance:
The Devil bade me make stones my bread,
   To have me break my true love’s dance.

  Chorus

The Jews on me they made great suit,
   And with me made great variance,
Because they loved darkness better than light,
   To call my true love to the dance.

  Chorus

For thirty pence Judas me sold,
   His covetousness for to advance:
Mark whom I kiss, the same do hold!
The same is he shall lead the dance.

  Chorus

Before Pilate the Jews me brought,
   When Barabbas had deliverance;
They scourged me and set me at nought,
   Judged me to die to lead the dance.

  Chorus

When on the cross hanged I was;
   When a spear to my heart did glance;
There issued forth both water and blood,
   To call my true love to the dance.

  Chorus

Then down to Hell I took my way
   For my true love’s deliverance,
And rose again on the third day,
   Up to my true love and the dance.

  Chorus

Then up to Heaven I did ascend,
   Where now I dwell in sure substance
On the right hand of God,
   That man may come into the general dance.

  Chorus
English composer John Tavener showed his musical talents at a young age, becoming remarkably proficient at organ and piano. He soon turned his attention to composition, and attended the Royal Academy of Music, where he won many major prizes and awards. In 1965, Tavener's dramatic cantata, *The Whale*, took the London audience by storm at its premiere, given at the debut concert of the London Sinfonietta. Since that time, he has been commissioned by most of the major organizations in England and the United States. Choral music makes up the largest part of Tavener's works, ranging from simple carols to large-scale works with orchestral accompaniment.

Tavener joined the Russian Orthodox Church in 1977, and its spirituality, liturgy and music have had an impact on many of his compositions. Tavener notes, “*Village Wedding* is a series of musical and verbal images, describing a village wedding in Greece. My insertion of Isaiah's Dance (the moment in the Orthodox Marriage Ceremony when the couple is solemnly led three times around the Holy Table by the Celebrant), and the whole tone of (Angelos) Sikelianos' poetry, however, show that everything in the natural and visible world, when rightly perceived, is an expression of a supernatural and invisible order of reality.”

*Village Wedding* was composed in 1992 for the Vale of Glamorgan Festival, where it was premiered by the Hilliard Ensemble. Chanticleer gave the United States premiere in 1995 and recorded it for the Grammy award-winning album *Colors of Love*.

To my beloved, who breaks my heart.
Do you listen within your veil,
Silent, God-quicken heart?
(O depth and stillness of Virginity!)
Follow your man.
Let them throw white rice
Like a spring shower.
May you — her mystical image...
Like a spring cloud let her now tenderly
spread her bridal veil.
O the peace of the bridal dawn.
And he listens.
And as in front of a fount of crystal water
Let the girls pass in front of the bride,
Observing her look from the corner of their eyes
As though balancing pitchers on their heads.

O like Leto giving birth to Apollo.
(Do you listen within your veil?)
When, standing, her hands slight and pale.
(Let them throw white rice)
She clasped the ethereal palm tree on Delos, ...
(Like a spring cloud)
May you — her mystical image...
(O the peace of the bridal dawn.)
Held by your husband's strong heart,
(And he listens.)
Bring into the world
With a single cry your child as the
Poet brings forth his creation.

Refrain:
O Isaiah, dance for joy, for the Virgin is with child.
**Today the Virgin** is a strophic setting of a text by Mother Thekla, an Orthodox nun who has been Tavener’s spiritual guide in addition to providing him with the librettis for several of his major works. In typical Orthodox style, a drone is employed in the bass, and the upper voices move in parallel fifths and octaves.

Today the Virgin comes to the cave  
To give birth to the Word eternal:  
Rejoice, O World!  
With the Angels and the Shepherds  
Give glory to the Child!  
Alleluia!

**Ave Maria**

German composer and arranger Franz Biebl studied music at the Humanistic Gymnasium in Amberg, and received Master of Music degrees in composition and choral conducting at the State Music Academy in Munich. Biebl worked as the choral music consultant to the Bavarian State Radio, where he worked relentlessly to fill the station’s archives with popular choral music, listening to and encouraging small choral groups all over Germany. As a composer, Biebl strove to expand the German folk song repertoire, composing hundreds of arrangements for all types of choral ensembles.

Biebl’s setting of the Marian antiphon **Ave Maria** exploits the richly sonorous possibilities of double-chorus writing for men’s voices. The familiar **Ave Maria** text is sung by a four-voice choir answered by a three-voice group of soloists. This forms a refrain separating the three chanted versicles of the **Angelus**, a devotional text commemorating the Incarnation, resulting in a satisfying blend of medieval melodic sound and warm, multi-voiced choral harmonies. This piece, as well as two versions for mixed chorus, is published by Hinshaw Music of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, under the **Chanticleer Choral Series** label.

Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariae  
et concepit de Spiritu sancto.  
Ave Maria, gratia plena, Domine tecum;  
benedicta tu in mulieribus,  
et benedictus fructus ventris tui Jesus.  
Maria dixit: Ecce ancilla Domini;  
fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.  
Et verbum caro factum est  
et habitavit in nobis.  
Sancta Maria, mater Dei,  
ora pro nobis peccatoribus.  
Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis  
nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.

The angel of the Lord made his annunciation to Mary and she conceived by the Holy Spirit.  
Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.  
Mary said, “Behold the servant of the Lord; let it be unto me according to Your word.”  
And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.  
Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners.  
Holy Mary, pray for us now and at the hour or our death. Amen.
A Spotless Rose

By the time of his death at the age of ninety in 1983, Herbert Howells was revered as one of the last century's most distinguished English choral composers, representing the tradition of such as Walton, Elgar, and Vaughan Williams. His church music combines influences from many of these composers, and displays a keen sense of choral textures appropriate for resonant cathedral acoustics. Howells' setting of the fourteenth century poem, A Spotless Rose, is one of three “carol anthems” dating from 1918-1920. Its free-flowing, almost meter-less movement evokes the character of plainsong.

A Spotless Rose is growing,
Sprung from a tender root,
Of ancient seers' foreshewing,
Of Jesse promised fruit;
Its fairest bud unfolds to light
Amid the cold, cold winter,
And in the dark midnight.

The Rose which I am singing,
Whereof Isaiah said,
Is from its sweet root springing
In Mary, purest Maid;
For through our God's great love and might,
The Blessed Babe she bare us
In a cold, cold winter's night.

I Saw Three Ships

This past September, Chanticleer was deeply saddened to hear that the beloved Sir David Willcocks passed away at the age of 95. The conductor, organist, composer, and arranger made an indelible mark on the many musicians and audiences who experienced his sublime music, his exuberant personality, and his astute musical mind. If one has ever attended a Christmas choral concert, there is a good chance that he has heard at least one of the incandescent Willcocks carol arrangements. Besides the ubiquity of his arrangements and compositions, his output of high-caliber choral performances can be heard from the King's College Choir (1957-1974) and the Bach Choir (1960-1998), both of which he supremely directed and demanded the highest level of choral singing. Sir David Willcocks was knighted in 1977 and also won a Grammy Award in 1963 for his recording with the Bach Choir of Benjamin Britten's War Requiem. Chanticleer is happy to sing one of his jubilant arrangements this Christmas.

I Saw Three Ships is a jaunty carol that has slightly more mystical undertones, as it is thought that the ships referenced in the verses originally carried relics of the three magi, or the “Three Kings of Cologne” — so called because their skulls are preserved as sacred relics in the grand cathedral of Cologne, Germany. The text (originally appearing as early as 1666) has been adapted countless times throughout the centuries, and the version with which modern listeners are most familiar has taken on a joyful tone for Christmas morning.

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

The German text of Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming (Est ist ein Ros entsprungen) comes to us from the late sixteenth century. We can thank Michael Praetorius for his 1609 harmonization, which has been — and continues to be — the chief model for those who wish to set their own colorful soundscape to the famous tune. In fact, the tune was so popular at the cusp of the seventeenth century that the Germans were devoting their time to procreating additional verses. Rumor has it that some twenty-three verses exist. This Shaw/Parker classic uses only two verses to create a simple and elegant four-part carol that juxtaposes the warm joy of the miraculous birth against the cold austerity of the simple manger scene. As for the virgin Mary herself, scripture tells us that she is the tender root from which the “spotless rose” has come.
Composer and organist Samuel Scheidt included *O Jesulein süß, o Jesulein mild* — one of numerous cradle-rocking songs that were popular in Germany in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries — in his collection of organ pieces entitled *Tabulatur-Buch hundert giestlicher Lieder und Psalmen* (1650). This version is the first presented in this adaptation. It is followed by a more elaborate harmonization based on the arrangement (BWV 493) that Johann Sebastian Bach contributed to George Schemelli’s *Musicalisches Gesangbuch* of 1736. Bach’s version, which consisted of just the melody and figured bass, is heard in a realization by the editors of *The New Oxford Book of Carols*, adding to the lively bass line a complex web of Bach-style passing tones in the inner parts.

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### *O Jesulein süß, o Jesulein mild!*

Deines Vaters Willen hast du erfüllt;  
Bist kommen aus dem Himmelreich,  
Uns armen Menschen worden gleich.  
O Jesulein süß, o Jesulein mild!

**O Little One sweet! O Little One mild!**  
Your Father’s will You have fulfilled;  
You have come from heaven’s Kingdom  
to become as one of us poor mortals.  
O Little One sweet! O Little One mild!

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### *O Jesulein süß, o Jesulein mild!*

Deins Vaters Zorn hast du gestillt,  
Du zahlst für uns all unser Schuld,  
Und bringst uns hin deins Vaters Huld.  
O Jesulein süß, o Jesulein mild!

**O Little One sweet! O Little One mild!**  
Your Father’s wrath You have stilled;  
You pay the debt for our guilt  
and bring us into your Father’s grace.  
O Little One sweet! O Little One mild!

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### *O Jesulein süß, o Jesulein mild!*

Du bist der Liebe ein Ebenbild  
Zünd an in uns der Liebe Flamm,  
Dass wir dich lieben allzusammen.  
O Jesulein süß, o Jesulein mild!

**O Little One sweet! O Little One mild!**  
Love finds a body in you.  
Ignite in us love’s flame,  
that we may give You back the same.  
O Little One sweet! O Little One mild!

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### *Quelle est cette odeur agréable?*

Another shepherd’s carol, this serene French melody dates from at least the beginning of the eighteenth century. (Set to different words, and sung in a much different style, it also served as an English drinking song.) The French text, thought to be from Lorraine, expresses the shepherds’ wonder at their encounter with the Christ child in a humble setting.

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**What is this pleasant fragrance,**  
**Shepherds, that so delights your senses?**  
**There has never been its likeness**  
even in Spring fields.

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**But what a brilliant light**  
**astounds our eyes?**  
**The Sun at its zenith**  
was never so bright.

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**In Bethlehem, in a cradle,**  
**He comes to be born our Savior.**  
**Come! Don’t let anything prevent**  
you from adoring the child.

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**Almighty God, Glory eternal.**  
The heavens you made praise you.  
Let universal peace  
and grace everywhere abound.
The Holly and the Ivy

Traditional English Carol, arr. Davies

A traditional English Christmas carol, *The Holly and the Ivy* is a lively example of Pagan traditions assimilated into Christianity, as holly and ivy were Pagan fertility symbols which also have been Christmas decorations of choice in the church since the fifteenth century. Evidence exists that singing contests were held between men and women in ancient England, during which men praised holly for its masculine traits while women exalted ivy for its feminine virtues. The resolution between the two was under the mistletoe. These three plants happen to be the most prominent green plants in the British native woodland during wintertime.

Wassail Song

Traditional English Carol, arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams

With his compatriot Holst, Ralph Vaughan Williams was extremely interested in the English folk-song tradition. Like Holst he was a bit of an iconoclast: not particularly interested in the “organized church,” nevertheless he was one of the important contributors to the revision of the English Hymnal in the early 1920s. Some of the most well-loved tunes in that hymnal, in fact, are either original Vaughan Williams compositions or arrangements by him of equally well-loved folk songs.

*Wassail Song* is one of a series of five folk songs arranged in 1913 for mixed chorus. The carol depicts the coming together of friends to celebrate with wassail, a spiced drink that was originally intended to create a good apple harvest! (As the medieval custom of celebration evolved, the idea of singing wassail translated itself into the ritual of going door-to-door singing Christmas carols.) Vaughan Williams’s *Wassail Song* begins and ends with villagers coming from afar. The music starts pianissimo, the jolly bright melody first introduced by the tenors. Varieties of toasts are heard, some of which are fairly bawdy. Finally, after the cry of “Wassail” is heard “all over the town” — and with a dynamic marking of triple forte — the townsfolk once again retreat into the distance, going to their homes hale, happy, and perhaps a bit well-oiled.

A Medley of Christmas Spirituals

Traditional, arr. Joseph Jennings

Christmas is an amalgamation of hundreds of years of cross-cultural traditions, both sacred and secular, including those of the slave community in the American South. The holiday provided the slaves with a break from daily labors as well as special freedoms, including the opportunity to visit family and friends and to partake in recreational and social activities. Music was always an important part of the celebration. The human story of Christmas — a King born in a lowly stable among poor shepherds — inspired many songs for slaves who themselves knew lowliness and poverty. After the slaves’ emancipation, the Christmas holiday became even more festive, celebrating the birth of Christ, the coming of the New Year, and their new lives as free men and women.

In 2014, Music Director Emeritus Joseph H. Jennings was the first recipient of Chorus America’s Brazeal Wayne Dennard Award acknowledging his contribution to the African-American choral tradition. During his 25 year tenure as singer and music director with Chanticleer his gospel and spiritual arrangements became part of Chanticleer’s identity and were appreciated by worldwide audiences. This medley is an example of his remarkable ability to inject the vocal freedom inherent in the Southern Baptist tradition into the structure of classical music.