

2023 Winter Concert Program Notes

Veni Emmanuel

Composer Matt Neufeld: The melody "Veni, Veni, Emmanuel" is a beloved Christmas melody, often set to the words "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." The Latin text dates back to the 8th or 9th century, and the first appearance of the melody was found in a 15th century manuscript by renowned British musicologist Mary Berry. The first appearance of the English text and the melody combined dates to 1851, when Thomas Helmore published it in his "Hymnal Noted."

This song is one of my absolute favourite melodies to sing at Christmastime. The chant-like melody and ancient text always transport me to medieval Europe, in a cathedral somewhere, singing words that have been sung together by people for over 1,200 years. We know that music brings people together from all corners of the world, and in this setting of "Veni Emmanuel," it brings people together throughout time as well.

*O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel;
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

So Wondrous Bright is based on a Puerto Rican carol. Although written for concert band, the piece initially implies a more intimate group, representing a traditional Puerto Rican ensemble. Throughout the work, various combinations of instruments, colors, textures and rhythms are utilized and explored. The following translated text can be sung along with the main melody:

*From a distant home, the Savior we come seeking,
Using as our guide the star, so brightly beaming.
Lovely Eastern star, that tells us of God's morning.
Heaven's wondrous light, O never cease thy shining.
Glory in the highest to the Son of Heaven,
And upon the earth be peace and love to all.*

Christmas Lights: Holiday Gems from the Vinyl Age

Take a ride back to a time when many of our most beloved Christmas pop tunes were born and the vinyl record was in its prime! This medley gives a friendly nod to the sounds of those classic recordings, while taking each tune in a fresh new direction, with plenty of fun parts to play across the whole band. Includes "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree", "Dominic the Christmas Donkey", "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus", and "Mele Kalikimaka".

We Three Kings

This rock-and-roll-inspired setting of We Three Kings is based on the original hymn. However, creative arranger John M. Pasternak uses syncopated rhythms and driving percussion to provide an upbeat musical experience for the performer and listener. Creative harmonies provide additional flair to this beloved holiday carol.

Hodie Christus natus est

*Today is Christ born;
today the Savior has appeared;
today the Angels sing, the Archangels rejoice;
today the righteous rejoice, saying:
Glory to God in the highest. Alleluia!*

Halcyon Days

*Sacred days draw near, traditions hallowed and wan,
Well-worn prayers embrace their heirs when love returns as embers.
Dreams delayed, hopes frayed in the blue nights of winter.
Daybreak dreams of reunions lost.
Rise up, tattered and torn! Rise up, barren and reborn!
Go forth in peace, bring joy to the dawn, and grace, turn your face upon us.*
- Jacqueline Goldfinger

Composer Melissa Dunphy: “We all have good years and bad years, but few years have been as stormy for so many people as 2020. It’s hard to think of the upcoming winter holidays without acknowledging the effects of current events, as millions of people sacrifice precious time with their loved ones for the safety of their communities. Along with poet Jacqueline Goldfinger, my hope for this December is that we each can create our own Halcyon Days – a period of calm during winter storms – where we can reflect on what we have lost but rise up to face the new year with joy and grace.” (October 2020)

Siyahamba

We are marching in the light of God

Nanita Lullaby

*My child is sleepy. He will be blessed.
Like a fountain that runs clear with the sounds of running water,
Like a bird singing in the forest, he sings and cries,
He is quieted in the cradle that is singing.*

Nanita Lullaby is based on a Spanish carol (“A La Nanita”) often heard during the holiday season. This is a lullaby sung by “nanita”, a person to whom the child is significantly dear. Nanita is probably the child’s grandmother, great aunt, or some other close relative. The name “Nana” is often used today by many children when referring to their grandmother or great-grandmother.

Choose Love

*Astra inclinant; sed non obligant
The stars incline us; they do not bind us
Fate may conspire
the gods may desire
History repeats its ideas and deeds
but you can refuse
what will you choose?
I choose love.*

Composer Kyle Peterson: “I don’t remember where or when I first heard the evocative Latin phrase *Astra inclinant, sed non obligant* (‘The stars incline us, they do not bind us’), but I do recall being immediately captivated by this expression. It affirms that though we undoubtedly are influenced by various important factors (destiny, culture, upbringing, disposition, events) that nudge and work on us in a particular way, we are still free-free to chart our own path, free to choose a new way of being in the world. Ultimately, we are free to choose love—to love others even when it’s hard to do so. This message seems especially relevant given the tremendous amount of hostility, anger, violence, and judgment that has erupted in our world. May we choose love instead.”

Here We Come A-Wassailing

Wassail is a mulled beverage, such as cider, ale, or wine and spices. The song speaks of people traveling from home to home to sing carols and wish the homeowners and their families a joyous holiday, good health, and general prosperity. In turn, the carolers hope they will be rewarded with a warm cup of wassail to help them soldier on in the cold weather.