

About the Christmas Eve Music – 8:00 & 11:00 Service

By Caitlin & Trystan Bennett

Hodie Christus Natus Est

This Gregorian chant is the antiphon for the Magnificat, when sung at the close of Vespers on Christmas Day. The text translates to: 'Today Christ is born, today the Savior has appeared, today on earth sing the Angels, the Archangels rejoice: today the just exult, singing "Glory to God in the highest, alleluia.'

Noëls en Trio avec un Carillon, S. 130

Michel Richard de Lalande, a French composer and organist, wrote this collection of sixteen French carol arrangements for flute/violin, oboe and continuo. The source for this collection was published 20 years after his death. Michel Richard de Lalande taught music to the daughters of Louis XIV of France, and was director of the French chapel royal from 1714 until his death at Versailles in 1726. He is considered one of the greatest composers of 'French Grands Motets', which influenced J. S. Bach's cantatas and Handel's Water Music.

Trumpet Sonata in D Major Z. 850

Henry Purcell's *Trumpet Sonata in D Major Z. 850* is comprised of three movements, the first and the third will be played tonight between William Billings' 'A Virgin Unspotted'. Written in 1694, a prolific year which included his famous works *Te Deum* and *Jubilate Deo*, this was only a short time away from his untimely death in November 1695 at the height of his career. The Sonata was originally written for natural trumpet, two violins, viola, and basso continuo.

A Virgin Unspotted (Judea)

Billings is considered to be the first American choral composer and his songbooks would eventually influence the Sacred Harp singing tradition in the rural south. One of William Billings' most famous compositions, *Judea*, a tune set to the text of A Virgin Unspotted, was written in 1778 for his songbook 'The Singing Master's Assistant'. The carol originates from 1661, when the oldest known version was written in 'New Carolls for this Merry Time of Christmas'. It is said to be based on A Virgin Most Pure, a similar carol. This carol is in a 3/4 rhythm in the verses, but speeds up to a 6/8 rhythm in the chorus. Billings likely borrowed heavily from earlier versions of this carol.

In Dulci Jubilo

Robert Lucas Pearsall was an English composer known for his vocal compositions, living from 1795 - 1856. He was particularly interested in early music of the Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions and helped to re-establish plainsong, Renaissance polyphony, and ancient church hymns in German and English-speaking countries. Today, his most famous arrangement is of the German carol, *In Dulci Jubilo*. Pearsall notes in the score of his arrangement, "the original melody employed as a Cantus firmus, in the following composition, is to be found in an old German book published in the year 1570...even there it is called 'A very ancient song (uraltes Lied) for Christmas-eve'...it was formally sung in the processions which took place on Christmas-eve, and is so still in those remote parts of Germany...the words are rather remarkable, being written half in Latin and half in German dialect. I have translated them to fit the music, and endeavored to preserve, as much as I could, the simplicity of the original. The music in the following passages was written for and performed by the Choral Society at Karlsruhe." The version heard this evening was rearranged from the original eight-part piece into a version for four voices by W. J. Westbrook in the early 20th century.

Noël sur les instruments, H.534: A la venue de Noël & Joseph est bien marié

Noël sur les instruments, H.534 was written by Marc-Antoine Charpentier in 1693 for 2 flutes, 2 violins, haute-contre, taille and basse continuo. Tonight, we will play two movements from this series of noels between Balbastre's '*Premier Suite de Noël's*', *A la venue de Noël* and *Joseph est bien marié*. At the time these Noels were written, Charpentier served as maître de musique (music master) to the Jesuits, working first for their collège of Louis-le-Grand then for the church of Saint-Louis adjacent to the order's professed house on the rue Saint-Antoine.

'A la venue' from Premier Suite de Noël's

'A la venue' is the second movement from Claude Balbastre's '*Premier Suite de Noël's*', first published in 1770. Balbastre was the organist of the Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris and of the Chapelle Royale. He also became harpsichordist to the French royal court where he taught queen Marie-Antoinette, and became organist for Louis-Stanislas-Xavier, Count of Provence, who later became Louis XVIII, King of France. Balbastre's fame was so great that the Archbishop of Paris, Christophe de Beaumont, had to forbid him to play at Saint Roch during some of their services, as the church would become over-crowded when Balbastre played. It is also of note that Balbastre survived the events of the French Revolution through his composition of several patriotic tunes, effectively 'switching allegiance'.

Prelude from 'Te Deum', H. 146

Henry Purcell's *Te Deum* was written for Saint Cecilia's Day, 1694, the first English *Te Deum* ever composed with orchestral accompaniment. The *Te Deum* (also known as Ambrosian Hymn or A Song of the Church) is an early Christian hymn of praise. The title is taken from its opening Latin words, *Te Deum laudamus*, rendered as "Thee, O God, we praise". The hymn remains in regular use in the Roman Catholic Church, Anglican Church and Methodist Church (mostly before the Homily) in the Office of Readings found in the Liturgy of the Hours, and in thanksgiving to God for a special blessing such as the election of a pope, the consecration of a bishop, the canonization of a saint, a religious profession, the publication of a treaty of peace, a royal coronation, etc. In the traditional office, the *Te Deum* is sung at the end of Matins on all days when the Gloria is said at Mass; on all feasts (except the Triduum) and on all ferias during Eastertide. Today, Purcell's *Te Deum* is known for being used as the theme music for some broadcasts of the European Broadcasting Union, most notably the Eurovision Song Contest.

In nativatem Domini canticum, "Quem vidistis pastores" H.314

'In nativatem Domini' is a canticum or oratorio by Marc-Antoine Charpentier written in 1671, during his 17 years as house composer to Marie de Lorraine, duchesse de Guise. During this time, he composed a considerable quantity of vocal works for her, among them Psalm settings, hymns, motets, a Magnificat setting, a mass and a Dies Irae for the funeral of her nephew Louis Joseph, Duke of Guise, and a succession of Italianate oratorios set to non-liturgical Latin texts. Many of these were written for a trio of singers, usually made up of two women and a singing bass, plus two treble instruments and continuo. H. 314 is one of five 'In nativatem Domini' canticums that Charpentier composed, each written in different points of his life, and H.314 being his earliest.

O Magnum Mysterium

'O Magnum Mysterium' is the fourth of the nine responsories for Matins on Christmas Day. Many composers have set this text, but most famous is that of Tomás Luis de Victoria, first published in 1572. Victoria was an important Spanish composer of the Counter-Reformation and was an accomplished organist, singer, and Catholic priest. Translation: O great mystery and wonderful sacrament, that animals should see the new-born Lord lying in a manger! O blessed is the Virgin, whose womb was worthy to bear Christ the Lord. Hail Mary, full of grace: the Lord is with you. Blessed is the Virgin whose womb was worthy to bear Christ the Lord. Alleluia!