

A NOEL TAPESTRY (2007)

A CHORAL SUITE FOR CHRISTMAS

BY JOHN LAING

For SATB Choir, SAT soloists, Flute, Harp, Organ, Triangle, Timpani

“A Noel Tapestry” was premiered by The John Laing Singers in December 2007, and it has since been received with much enthusiasm in several Canadian cities. This work comprises new musical settings to twelve beautiful carols from the Mediaeval and Renaissance eras.

The suite opens with a joyful recounting of the Annunciation, in which the audience joins. The two following carols celebrate the good news of the saviour’s birth. A harp interlude introduces a group of carols centered around the theme of mother and child. A flute pastorale leads us to the singing of the shepherds. Then a carol of good of good cheer brings us to a finale celebrating the love between God and humankind, in which once again the audience joins.

I derived much pleasure from my research of the literary sources which led me to discover these old poems. Many of them contain a very direct and compelling message of faith and love, a timeless message that is often given strong clarification by simplicity of form and language, and one that is relevant to all eras and certainly to our own. Many of these noteworthy texts are still little known.

For accompaniment to choir and soloists, I have chosen instruments – flute, harp and organ – that convey the beauty and warmth of the nativity season, and at times I have added the colours of triangle and timpani. In creating this new addition to the Christmas choral repertoire, I have drawn from texts which celebrate the mystery, hope and festivity of Christmas.

Margo Keenan, conductor of Sainte-Anne Singers (Montreal) which recently performed this suite, writes: “This work evokes all of the emotions we associate with the story of the Nativity: ecstatic joy, wonder, contemplation and celebration. It is a striking and truly beautiful composition which deserves widely to be performed.”

1. Processional Carol: What Heard Ye Not?
2. Carol: Sing We All For Time It Is
3. Meditation: To Love Thee, Sweet Jesus (soprano solo)
4. Interlude for Solo Harp
5. Our Blessed Lady’s Lullaby (alto solo)
6. Meditation: Jesu, Be Thou My Joy (tenor solo)
7. Carol: The Sun of Grace

8. Carol: Shall I, moder?
9. Duo: That Thou a Blessed Virgin (Solo Tenor and Flute)
10. Pastorale for Flute
11. A Shepherd's Hymn
12. Meditation: Shall I Silent Be? (Solo soprano and male chorus)
13. Carol: Make we mery
14. Finale: Of the love of God

*For the duration of the year 2014, choirs are hereby given permission to print the score of this work and to duplicate as many copies as they require for their own performances. Permission is also given them to perform this work, and those who choose to do so are asked to inform John Laing ahead of time, using my **contact** page.*