

Singer's Delight

Music is the "sweet and healing medicine of troubles." ~ Horace

Sweet Treats: Part One

Uncle Bob started collecting and posting music for his singing buddies during the Covid years. Those collections can be found [here](#). The Sweet Treats herein are drawn from my 64 years in various choruses, beginning in high school with "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" – the very first piece I remember rehearsing, and one Aunt Claire and I both performed just this past Christmas. That's 1961 and 2024. Michael Praetorius, the German composer, knew it as [Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen](#).

The entire Sweet Treats, Part One playlist can be accessed [here](#). Cited pieces are also linked individually. Translations are provided on pages 3-4.

Johannes Brahms' wonderful choruses have enriched us in many experiences, from "How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place" in high school; at Plymouth State College with the Opus 104 set, including the poignant, late-in-life reflection [In Autumn](#) (Im Herbst); and most recently to a quartet I assembled to sing the third song of Op. 31, [The Path to My Beloved](#) at the Camp Ogontz Choral Workshop that we attended for over 30 years.

Ogontz gave us enough good musical experiences for five lifetimes. One summer we sampled English works collected by John Rutter. Two bittersweet treats from that volume are Willbye's [Draw on Sweet Night](#) and Bennett's [Weep O Mine Eyes](#). In our later Ogontz years the group began a tradition of singing one or two favorite pieces down by the lake. Claire and I referred to these as "Deck Songs," and by midweek we could tell what most of them would turn out to be, so please enjoy Parsons' [Ave Maria](#), Rheinberger's [Abendlied](#), and Stanford's [Beati Quorum Via](#).

Outstripping our three decades at Ogontz by over ten years was our membership in the local North Country Chorus. Claire and I called Haverhill, New Hampshire, on the Connecticut River north of Hanover and Dartmouth College, home for 47 years, and we were thrilled to hear about this group just after we settled in. They were preparing Brahms' Requiem and planning an Ireland tour. NCC is a large group and performs mostly large works which don't fit the theme of sweet treats for this collection, but there were numerous occasions when we diverged from that format. Every so often one of our directors would let me wave my arms and lead the shorter works, such as Mozart's well known [Ave Verum Corpus](#). Another Ave Verum, that of Elizabethan composer [William Byrd](#) is just as lovely, and when I started my own independent choir, the Valley Singers in 1991, this was a must-do for the program.

Attending a concert in Hanover, NH, Claire and I were awe-struck by another Byrd masterwork, the Mass for Four Voices, particularly the final [Agnus Dei](#). Our director Mary Rowe was with us and was very impressed. The listener will hear the mesmerizing Dona Nobis Pacem section at the end. "O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world ... grant us thy peace." Composers who take on this movement had better write a sweet piece. Another personal favorite [Agnus Dei](#) is one of many by Victoria. I've performed this one in both large

and small groups, and in the excellent chamber choir Bel Canto in the Dartmouth area. Bel Canto, co-founded by dear friend, fine soprano, vocal coach, and Professor of Voice, Katherine DeBoer, performed a mix of shorter and lengthier works. A trio of Shakespeare poems set by Vaughan Williams, includes the haunting [Cloud-Capped Towers](#), and I truly believe singers to be “such stuff as dreams are made on.”

Wait for it! Some contemporary composers have sacred choruses wrestle through disharmony as they work out their atonal angst. But ah, when they get over the hump the treats are very sweet. These next tracks have durations in the 12 minute range and are well worth a thorough listen while you wait for the extremely, sensuously pleasing endings. We’ve sung the Stravinsky Symphony of Psalms with both Bel Canto and NCC, and this third psalm [Alleluia, Laudate Dominum](#), ends with what I describe as the “purest air we breathe set to music.” The Gloria of Francis Poulenc is one of sacred devotion, though at times, playful and as sensuous as one could imagine. Check out the final movement, [Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris](#) and see if you agree.

Why All This Christian Sacred Material? I once asked a good Jewish friend why she sang so much of it in NCC. She said: it’s good music. I’m aware that early music, such as chant, was meant to quiet, even stultify the mind, and that Baroque sacred works were meant to dazzle and awe, but I doubt that modern ears of any faith, or no faith, will fall victim to unwanted proselytizing. So just relax and enjoy the good music, as we do.

So What’s New? In 2021, we moved to our new home in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. We’ve been singing with an Episcopal church choir, and its director borrowed a fave standard of mine to use for an anthem: [Cantate Domino](#) by Pitoni. We have also joined a Renaissance Choir, sponsored by Bryn Mawr College, and this choir both rehearses and performs a cappella (without instruments). These last three selections should give you an idea of our work. [So far ich hin](#) by Schütz; Arcadelt’s [Il bianco e dolce cigno](#); and finally, from the late 15th century, the lovely [Mille Regretz](#) of Josquin.

So What’s Next? Soon we will have a second installment of Sweet Treats. We wanted to keep playlists to a reasonable number of “songs.” For the future, we are contemplating other collections. We have posted one list of [Christmas favorites](#), but there is so much more to cite, especially since Claire and I hosted holiday parties in New Hampshire for 40 years running. We could also compile playlists of highlights from the very large works, as well as samples from small ensembles and even solos. Please stay tuned!

Translations follow on page 3.

Translations

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming, as men of old have sung.
It came, a floweret bright, amid the cold of winter, when half spent was the night.
Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the Rose I have in mind;
With Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright, She bore to men a Savior, when half spent was the night.

Im Herbst

Autumn is sad. And when the leaves are falling, sinks too the heart in troubled grief to lave.
Still is the field, and flown to South winds calling, are songsters, still, as to the grave.
Drear is the day, and pallid clouds are veiling, the sunlight as the spirit free.
Soon comes the night: then rest all powers empaling, oblivion falls on all that be.
Tender grows man. He sees the sun declining, divines that life too as the year, must close.
Moist are the eyes, but thro' the teardrops shining, utflows the heart and holiest solace knows.

Op. 31 #3 The Path to My Beloved

The moon shines down, so I should set out again to my love,
How is she, I wonder?
Alas, she's despairing and lamenting, lamenting she'll never see me again in her life!
The moon went down, but I hurried off happily,
Hurried so that no one should steal my love.
Keep cooing, you doves, keep whispering, you breezes,
So that no one should steal my love!

Ave Maria

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee;
blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus [Christ].
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Abendlied

Bide with us, for evening shadows darken, and the day will soon be over;
O bide with us, for evening shadows darken.
Tr. John Rutter (b. 1945)

Hail, true Body, born of the Virgin Mary, who has truly suffered,
was sacrificed on the cross for mortals, whose pierced side flowed with blood:
Be for us a foretaste [of Heaven] in the final judgement.
Oh sweet, oh pious, oh Jesus, son of Mary, have mercy on me. Amen.

Beati quorum via

Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.

Ave verum corpus

Hail the true body, born of the Virgin Mary:
You who truly suffered and were sacrificed on the cross for the sake of man.
From whose pierced flank flowed water and blood:
Be a foretaste for us in the trial of death.
O sweet, O merciful, O Jesus, Son of Mary, have mercy on me. Amen.

Agnus Dei

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

Alleluia. Laudate Dominum [Psalm 150]

Hallelujah. Praise the Lord in His sanctuary.
Praise Him in the firmament of His power.
Praise Him for His mighty acts,
Praise Him according to His excellent greatness.
Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet.
Praise Him with the timbrel and dance.
Praise Him with strings and organ.
Praise Him with joyful cymbals.
Let everything that breathes praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.

Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris

Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.
For thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord. (Amen)
Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Cantate Domino

Sing to the Lord a new song,
Sing and give praise to his name, for he has done marvelous deeds.
Sing and exult and praise in songs with the harp and the voice, for he has done marvelous deeds.

So fahr ich hin

Thus do I go to Jesus Christ stretching forth my arms; so do I fall asleep, and rest in peace;
no man can wake me up but Jesus Christ, the Son of God,
who will open the door to heaven and will lead me to eternal life.

Il bianco e dolce cigno

The white and sweet swan singing dies, and I weeping, reach the end of my life.
Strange and different fate, that he dies inconsolable and I die blessed.
Death, which in dying fills me full of joy and desire.
If in dying, I [were to] feel no other pain, a thousand times a day I would be happy to die.

Mille regretz

A thousand regrets have I to leave your loving face. I think I shall die.