

Singer's Delight

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

Sweet Treats: Part Two

These two latest collections of choral music differ from previous [Uncle Bob music posts](#), in that Claire and I have a personal connection with every piece featured here. These connections were established through lengthy associations with the North Country Chorus (VT/NH) and the Choral Workshop at Camp Ogontz in Lyman, NH, as well as considerable associations with Plymouth (NH) Singers, Bel Canto Chamber Singers, the Madrigal Dinner fundraisers of NCC, Bryn Mawr Renaissance Choir, Bob's conducting experiences, and the private parties we hosted.

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

Christmas: Even though we fully intend to do another collection of Christmas music, and even though we've tried to pick around this domain, the sheer volume of lovely noels has nudged its way into this effort, beginning with Poulenc's [O Magnum Mysterium](#). Fans of Britten's *Ceremony of Carols* might also enjoy an intimate version of [I Sing of a Maiden](#) set by Hadley for sopranos and altos.

Sticking with the contemporary era, we have some favorites from parties, Christmas and otherwise, that we held for over 40 years at our home in Haverhill, NH. Meditate on the rich harmonies of Casals' [O Vos Omnes](#) and the weaving of eight voices in Lotti's [Crucifixus](#). Uncle Bob was not shy in programming for his small choirs, Valley Singers and the NCC's Summerlite series. Enjoy Walton's [Set Me as a Seal](#), John Rutter's setting of the 23rd Psalm, [The Lord is My Shepherd](#), and a companion piece – Isaac Watts' [My Shepherd Will Supply My Need](#), followed by Britten's [Evening Primrose](#) from his *Flower Songs*, and [Prayer of the Dove](#) from Ivor Davies setting of six *Prayers from the Ark*. We often began a party with Durufle's [Ubi Caritas](#), whether or not it was Christmastime. The text "Where there is love and charity, God is there" seemed fitting considering the lovely people gathered in every case.

Our North Country Chorus gave us the opportunity to introduce Lindberg's breezy [Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day](#) and Vaughan Williams's rapturous [Serenade to Music](#), which upon hearing reduced none other than Rachmaninoff to tears. We used Lichetti's [Earth Song](#) to set up an eerie evening for my King Arthur play at NCC's last Madrigal Dinner, and here we must depart from the modern era.

Madrigal Dinner, in its 36-year run, had always devoted a good share of its efforts – in addition to providing good food, visual tableaux, and scripted plays – to celebrating choral music. A January offering would always have some Christmas-y Twelfth Night holdovers, but also Renaissance madrigals sung by small groups, and then a final mini-concert by the full cast. When I wrote a King Arthur play for this event, based on a character from 7th century England, we had to make some concessions on the music – all of it being from later periods. I choose to set the drama in an ecclesiastical tone, and that gave us the opportunity to present some pearls of the Renaissance, including Victoria's [Ave Maria](#), Palestrina's [Sicut cervus](#) and his [Alma redemptoris](#). The final choral recital broke away from the period, and we presented Stanford's [Beati quorum via](#) and a traditional parting Sussex Mummers Carol.

One of our collections is called [Paired Treats](#) and features two composers' settings of the same texts. We have one more pair to add now: settings of [Verleih uns Frieden](#). One by Mendelssohn came from the Rutter European collection that we surveyed at Ogontz. The [other by Schütz](#) was in our 2024 Renaissance Choir program. "O Lord Got grant us thy peace and thy mercy for these times in which we live" – thoughts similar to many we have heard expressed recently. We include Felix Mendelssohn here to remind us that we have left a sector of choral music almost completely absent from these treats – the Romantic Era: the hugely popular and widely sung vast catalogue of megaworks by larger-than-life composers.

Heavy Hitters: We've stayed away from the three B's (Buxtehude, Boyce, and Chuck Berry?) with an eye toward a future collection for you of large-scale masterworks. How are we going to accomplish that? Dunno yet, but Bill McLaughlin on Public Radio's *Exploring Music* does a good job in sixty minutes of presenting works, petite and grande, five days a week, and he talks about them too. Claire and I sang under his baton a long time ago.

We saved a B to end this narrative and complete another circle. Bob cites high school again [see Treats, Part 1] and the year 1963-64. President John Kennedy had been assassinated in the fall and that spring we proudly and solemnly performed Brahms' [How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place](#).

So, as we finish Treats 1 and 2, we realize we have promises to keep. Please enjoy the music and watch for further collections in the choral vein. Cheers.

Translations follow on page 3.

Translations

O magnum Mysterium

O great mystery and wonderful sacrament, that the animals should see the new-born Lord lying in a manger.

Blessed is the Virgin whose womb was worthy to bear Christ the Lord.

Alleluia!

O vos omnes

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.

Crucifixus

He was crucified also for us, suffered under Pontius Pilate, and was buried.

Ubi Caritas

Where charity and love are, God is there. Christ's love has gathered us into one. Let us rejoice and be pleased in him. Let us fear, and let us love the living God.

And may we love each other with a sincere heart. Amen.

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.

Hail Mary! Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Sicut cervus

Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks: so longeth my soul after thee, O God.

Alma redemptoris

Loving mother of the Redeemer, gate of heaven, star of the sea,
assist your people who have fallen yet strive to rise again. To the wonderment of nature
you bore your Creator, yet remained a virgin after as before, You who received Gabriel's
joyful greeting, have pity on us poor sinners.

Beati quorum via

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

Verleih uns Frieden

O Lord Got grant us thy peace and thy mercy for these times in which we live! For there
is none other save thou, Lord, who hath the power to fight for us.