

Michelle and Eric

STAR OF BETHLEHEM, SHINE FOR ME

Sugar Hill Choir Christmas Concert

December 8, 14, 15, 2013

CHOIR: "Star of Bethlehem" (CHOIR SITS)

NARRATOR:

"Above the manger stood a star, a star all wondrous white; and all about His lowly bed there welled a flood of light. It bathed the stable in its glow, it shone 'round Mary's head; and on the kneeling shepherds' cloaks its radiant beams were shed. Star of the world! Through time and space it flames in glory bright to make man's pathway through the years a pilgrimage of light. It shines for us—that light still shines! No cloud can dim its spark; its radiance blossoms bright with joy, a beacon in the dark... Oh, never doubt it shines for you, though skies seem dark and low—Keep looking up, keep lifted up, somewhere a star will show!..." ["Lo! The Light!", Elizabeth Landeweer]

CHOIR: "Christmastime" (CHOIR SITS)

NARRATOR:

"As shadows cast by cloud and sun flit o'er the summer grass, so in Thy sight, Almighty One, Earth's generations pass. And as the years, an endless host, come swiftly pressing on, the brightest names that Earth can boast just glisten and are gone. Yet doth the star of Bethlehem shed a luster pure and sweet; and still it leads, as once it led, to the Messiah's feet. O Father, may that holy star grow every year more bright, and send its glorious beams afar to fill the world with light." ["Christmas," William Cullen Bryant]

CHOIR: "The First Nowell" (CHOIR REMAINS STANDING)

NARRATOR:

"These gifts I wish for you this Christmas day, these simple gifts the heart may ever hold: The faith to see the Holy Star's clear ray leading to Bethlehem; the treasured gold minted from friendship through the changing years; the frankincense of hope to ease despair— The myrrh of love that will illumine your tears, revealing Heaven through the gate of prayer. In the garden of

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your thoughts may there be flowers, petaled with all the beauty you have sown to burgeon for another's perilous hours— Who walks with beauty never walks alone. These gifts I wish for you, and may they bring the chrism of peace that you may find the King.” [“That You May Find the King,” Mabel Law Atkinson]

CHOIR: “Whence is That Goodly Fragrance Flowing” (CHOIR SITS)

→ Organ Solo
NARRATOR:

There's a song in the air! There's a star in the sky! There's a Mother's deep prayer, and a Baby's low cry! ...There's a tumult of joy o'er the wonderful birth, for the Virgin's sweet Boy is the Lord of the earth. Ay! The star rains its fire while the beautiful sing, for the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King. In the light of that star lie the ages impearled; and that song from afar has swept over the world. ...We rejoice in the light, and we echo the song that comes down through the night from the heavenly throng...” [“There's a Song in the Air – An Anthem for Christmas,” Josiah Gilbert Holland]

CHOIR: “Ding Dong Merrily on High” (WOMEN ONLY SIT)

MEN'S CHOIR: “A Gentlemen's Christmas” (MEN SIT)

NARRATOR:

Light is surely one of the most meaningful and beloved symbols of the season, and not only because it was the light of a new star that led the wise men of the East to the source of all Light. Others notably from the other end of the social spectrum, were drawn to the manger by other means. Humble shepherds were honored to be the first to learn of the Messiah's birth. That announcement came by way of angelic messenger, accompanied by “a multitude of the heavenly host” (Luke 2:13). Singing, not just “saying” their praises.

DOUBLE TRIO: “As Lately We Watched”

NARRATOR:

It has been observed that “the simple shepherds heard the voice of an angel and found their Lamb; the wise men saw the light of a star and found their Wisdom.” [Fulton John Sheen]

“Nor crown, nor robe, nor spice I bring as offering unto Christ, my King. Yet I have brought a gift

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the Child may not despise, however small; for here I lay my heart today, and it is full of love to all, take Thou the poor but loyal thing, my only tribute, Christ, my King!" ["My Gift," Eugene Field]

CHOIR: "The Little Drummer Boy/Peace On Earth" (CHOIR REMAINS STANDING)

NARRATOR:

"Before you bid, for Christmas' sake, your guests to sit at meat, O please to save a little cake for them that have no treat.

Before you go down party dressed in silver gown or gold, Oh please to send a little [coat] to them that still go cold.

Before you give your girl and boy [rich] gifts to be undone, Oh please to spare a little toy to them that will have none.

Before you gather round the tree to dance the day about, Oh please to give a little glee to them that go without."

["For Them," Eleanor Farjeon]

CHOIR: "Masters in This Hall" (CHOIR SITS)

NARRATOR:

Years ago, a young minister visited a children's hospital near Christmas-time and felt his heart penetrated as he read a framed message hanging on the Christmas tree in the lobby:

"I wonder, what does Christmas mean, with its stars and shiny balls? Is Christmas more than Christmas trees and toys and games and dolls? Of this I'm sure: There's something more, for I've heard many say that in a strange and far-off land, a child was born this day. And Christmas is to celebrate His coming from above. He showed us how we all should live and told us we should love." [Plaque at Primary Children's Hospital, quoted by Thomas S. Monson]

Charles Dickens, well acquainted with the Christmas spirit, reminds us: "It is good to be [a child] sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child Himself."

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[*A Christmas Carol, and Other Christmas Writings*]

CHILDREN'S ENSEMBLE: "Bethlehem Night"

The menfolk were not the only ones to observe and celebrate the birth of the Christ Child, whatever tradition may infer with mention of wise men, shepherds, kings, and "good Christian men"!

"The Queens came late, but the Queens were there with gifts in their hands and crowns in their hair.

They'd come, these three, like the Kings, from far, following, yes, that guiding star.

They'd left their ladles, linens, looms, their children playing in nursery rooms,

And told their sitters: "Take charge! For this is a marvelous sight we must not miss!"

The Queens came late, but not too late to see the animals small and great,

Feathered and furred, domestic and wild, gathered to gaze at a mother and child.

And rather than frankincense and myrrh and gold for the babe, they brought for her

Who held him, a homespun gown of blue, and chicken soup – with noodles, too -

And a lingering, lasting, cradle-song. The Queens came late and stayed not long,

For their thoughts already were straining far -- past manger and mother and guiding star

And a child aglow as a morning sun -- toward home and children and chores undone."

["The Queens Came Late," Norma Farber]

WOMEN'S CHOIR: "On This Still, Silent Night" (WOMEN REMAIN STANDING WITH MEN JOINING THEM)

NARRATOR:

Mother Teresa, a true follower of the Christian ideal, said, "It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you...yes, it is Christmas every time you smile at your brother and offer him your hand."

A modern-day apostle and prophet, Thomas S. Monson, put it this way: "As we seek Christ, as we find Him, as we follow Him, we shall have the Christmas spirit, not for one fleeting day each year, but as our constant companion always." ["In Search of the Christmas Spirit"]

"Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child, make Thee a bed soft, undefiled, within my heart, that it may be

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a quiet chamber kept for Thee. My heart for very joy doth leap, my lips no more can silence keep. I too must sing, with joyful tongue, that sweetest ancient cradle song. Glory to God in highest Heaven, who unto man His Son hath given, while angels sing with pious mirth, a glad New Year to all the earth." [“Ah, Dearest Jesus,” Martin Luther]

→ Insert Because of the sacred content - - - -
CHOIR: “Away in a Manger” (CHOIR SITS)

PRAYER

NARRATOR:

“Long after the angels disappear into the heavens, the shepherds return to their flocks, the magi journey home, and the new star sets, Jesus remains. The Child in whom we discover God’s great love for humanity becomes the adult Redeemer who challenges us to imitate His selflessness and compassion in order that we might transform our world by love. May we allow the miracle of Christmas to continue long after the holiday is over...” [“Post-Christmas Prayer,” by unknown author]

“Christmas is not a day or a season, but a condition of heart and mind. If we love our neighbors as ourselves; if in our riches we are poor in spirit and in our poverty we are rich in grace; if our charity vaunts not itself, but suffers long and is kind; if when our brother asks for a loaf we give ourselves instead; if each day dawns in opportunity and sets in achievement, however small; then every day is Christ’s day and Christmas is always near.” [James Wallingford, *Words of Life*, Charles L. Wallis, ed.]

CHOIR: Finale - “Rejoice!”

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