

CHRISTMAS IS CHRIST

Selections taken from Frederic Farrar's Life of Christ

"The Nativity"

Children's Chorus

Available in December 2014 *The Friend*

(Alternate choice: "Stars were gleaming")

NARRATOR: Within a few years of the birth of Christ, there appeared a phenomenon in the heavens so remarkable that it could not possibly have escaped the observation of an astrological people. The two largest superior planets, Saturn and Jupiter were joined by Mars in a fiery triangle, a conjunction that happened three times in the years before Christ' birth. There is, therefore, nothing extraordinary in the fact that Eastern magi would have bent their steps to Jerusalem; they had seen the star of the Messiah in the East, and that to discover Him was the motive of their journey.

Herod the Great was residing in his new palace on Zion. After a life of splendid misery and criminal success, he had now sunk into old age, when he was thrown into a fresh paroxysm of anxiety by the visit of the Eastern Magi. They bore the strange intelligence that they had seen in the East the star of a newborn king of the Jews, and had come to worship him. Herod ... summoned to his palace the leading priests and theologians to inquire of them where the Messiah was to be born. Bethlehem was the town indicated by Micah. Concealing, therefore, his desperate intention, he dispatched the wise men to Bethlehem, bidding them to let him know as soon as they had found the child, that he too might come and do him reverence.

"A New Star over Bethlehem"

SSATB or Soprano/Tenor Solo

Available at www.tuiofuandthomasmusic.com

(Alternate choice: "Stars were gleaming")

NARRATOR: One mile from Bethlehem is a little plain where shepherds kept watch over their flock at night. On that night, indeed, it seemed as though the heavens must burst to disclose their radiant minstrelsies; and the stars, and the feeding sheep, and the "light and sound in the darkness and stillness," and the rapture of faithful hearts, combine to furnish us with a picture painted in the colors of heaven.

But we are not told that those angel songs were heard by any except the wakeful shepherds of an obscure village;—and those shepherds, amid the chill dews of a winter night, were guarding their flocks from the wolf and the robber, in fields where Ruth, their Saviour's ancestress, had gleaned, sick at heart, amid the alien corn, and David, the despised and youngest son of a numerous family, had followed the ewes great with young.

"And suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of good will."

“Come Away, Exultant Angels!”

Available at www.tuiofuandthomasmusic.com

(Alternate choice: “Far, Far Away on Judea’s Plains”)

NARRATOR: From their northern home at Nazareth, Joseph, the village carpenter, had made his way along the wintry roads with Mary his espoused wife who was great with child. Fallen as were their fortunes, they were both of the house and lineage of David, and they were traversing a journey of eighty miles to the village which had been the home of their great ancestor while he was still a ruddy shepherd lad, tending his flocks upon the lonely hills.

Traveling in the East is a very slow and leisurely affair, but the heavy languor, or even the commencing pangs of travail, must necessarily have retarded the progress of the maiden-mother. Others who were traveling on the same errand, would easily have passed them on the road, and when, after toiling up the steep hill-side, they arrived at the khan, or inn, every place was occupied.

In the rude limestone grotto attached to it as a stable, among the hay and straw spread for the food and rest of the cattle, weary with their day's journey, far from home, in the midst of strangers, in the chilly winter night—in circumstances so devoid of all earthly comfort or splendor that it is impossible to imagine a humbler nativity—Christ was born.

“Silent Night”

SSATB with Violin and Piano

Available at www.tuiofuandthomasmusic.com

(Alternate choice: “Away in a Manger”)

NARRATOR: The associations of our Lord's nativity were all of the humblest character, and the very scenery of His birthplace was connected with memories of poverty and toil.

"Come now! let us go into Bethlehem, and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord made known to us," said the shepherds, when the angel songs had ceased to break the starry silence. Their way would lead them up the terraced hill, and through the moonlit gardens of Bethlehem, until they reached the summit of the grey ridge on which the little town is built.

The Magi came to Bethlehem, and offered to the young child in his rude and humble resting-place a reverence which we do not hear that they had paid to the king in his glittering palace. "And when they had opened their treasures they presented unto him gifts, gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."

“If Not for Love”

SATB

Available at www.tuiofuandthomasmusic.com

(Alternate choice: “With Wondering Awe”)

NARRATOR: Distant but a few miles, towered the palace-fortress of the Great Herod. The magnificent houses of his friends and courtiers crowded around its base. But the cattle-stables of the lowly caravansary were a more fitting birthplace for Him who came to reveal that the soul of the greatest monarch was no dearer or greater in God's sight than the soul of his meanest slave; for Him who had not where to lay His head; for Him who, from His cross of shame, was to rule the world.

“Joy to the World”

Congregational Hymn with Choral descant

Available at www.tuiofuandthomasmusic.com

Available

(Alternate choice: “Christ the Lord is Risen Today”)