

Thoughts on words and music

CANTATE DOMINO

- Sing Praises to the Lord!

Words from the Book of Psalms, the foremost treasure of Jewish psalms since ages ago, even at the time of Jesus. The psalms were recited and sung in the homes, in the synagogues and, not least, in the Temple of Jerusalem at the great festivals.

The Christian church appropriated the Book of Psalms; its significance is precious. Seldom has the agony and assurance of the soul been expressed more truly and profoundly. The features of the Saviour emerging ever clearer. And the praises to the Lord of Creation have never been sung more genuinely!

Many authors have mined the Book of Psalms for gems and paraphrased them. Still more composers have drawn inspiration from it. One of the best known works is the Italian romanticist Enrico Bossi's magnificent Cantate Domino. The piece is actually titled "Westminster Abbey" in tribute to the grand English cathedral, albeit we know it from its first

performance in 1920 for its opening words in Latin.

"Sing and make music to the glory of God!" Organ, brass and woodwind, and choir, whose voices, in ever widening harmonies, grow into a jubilant crescendo, culminating in the eight part Gloria – Glory! "Let every thing that has breath praise the Lord!"

1. Cantate Domino

Cantate Domino, canticum novum, laus eius in Ecclesia Sanctorum. Exsultabunt Sancti in gloria, laetabuntur in cubilibus suis.

Sing unto the Lord a new song and His praise in the congregation of saints.

Let the saints be joyful in glory let them sing aloud upon their beds.

CONCERTO FOR ORGAN IN A MAJOR

It was not unusual for great composers of the past to "borrow" a melody or theme from others. Even Bach, himself, transferred four of Vivaldi's concertos to organ.

Just like this concert. Walther, who, by the way, was related to Bach on his mother's side, was a specialist in such adaptations. The basis for this work is a violin concerto by a Signor Gentili. A cheery, playful piece with great latitudes for individual interpretations. Listen and rejoice at the intrinsic dynamic of the light touch, the swinging tempo and the graceful violin imitations in the phrasing.

THREE ADVENT HYMNS

Life's great Expectation with all its facets of dawning intuition, dashed hopes and an ever growing new certitude – at some point, with every fiber of our being, we must have experienced it, and then, its sudden, liberating realization, to truly grasp the meaning of Advent.

It begun, reaching its first climax, the day Jesus entered Jerusalem. The arrival of the Messiah – the turning point of history. Already in his message, delivered to the owner of the two donkeys, is his consciousness obvious. "The Lord has need of it." The Lord – Kyrios, the most divine of all titles. It takes shape, visible to the multitudes, in the entrance to the holy city on a donkey's back. The promise of the prophet is – at last – a reality: "Rejoice greately, O daughter of Zion. Behold, your king comes to you, riding upon an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass." (Zech. 9.9)

The response from the very depths of the collective soul is not long in coming. In wild enthusiasm they spread their garments on the road – the red-carpet of the day – and leafy branches, shouting "Hosannah to the son of David". The words of the psalm, recited during Passover for centuries, reverberate: "This is the day which the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it..." (Ps. 118:24).

It continues and reaches a second culmination every time we begin a new ecclesiastical year. For the Christian church the dimensions have attained a greater depth. He, who is entering Jerusalem a king, has his final days — Good Friday and Easter — outlined in the same

psalm, only a few words before the cheering: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." (Ps. 118:22, 23). King and Saviour — the universal vanquisher of fundamental evil.

This is where our hymns belong. Handel's Daughter Zion does not immediately point to the man riding on the ass. Rather it sounds like a well-rehearsed ovation to a king – the hymn was originally written for some pompous oratorios on the theme of freedom.

Vogler's Hosannah has a more popular appeal, so much so that by its inherent dynamic, it has abandoned the elevated choir loft for the humble pews, where it has become a traditional hymn of praise.

You may ponder the meaning of the First of Advent today. Why do these hymns stir such a response in our souls? Is it that greatest Expectation, the yearning for the last, that final Advent when the Lord will return? That day, when heaven and earth shall pass away and the Kingdom of God, in all its sovereignty shall appear with Him, who is coming?

Paul Nilssons's Zion's daughter with Otto Olsson's congenial music makes me think of that last Advent. The other time dimensions are there, too - Jesus entering Jerusalem and the first day of the church year. The words and music form a prism in which the epochs are refracted. Suddenly you see - and hear how the whole work is interwoven by Jesus' words of how, one day, "to the roar of the sea and waves", the world will witness the return of the Messiah. "And when these things begin to take place, look up and lift your heads, for your redemption draws near" (Luke 21:25-28). It is "a joy such as the world has not known".

3. SIONS DOTTER

Sions dotter, lyft din panna!
Himmelriket är dig när.
Jubla högt ditt hosianna!
Se, din konung nu är här!
Gud sin Son till jorden sänt.
Fröjda dig, det är advent.
Kom med famnen full av palmer,
låt ditt hjärta vidga sig,
kom med sånger, kom med psalmer!
Ärans konung möter dig.

Salighetens dag han tänt. Fröjda dig, det är advent! Sions jubel ej kan stanna. Liksom stora vattens dån ljuder evigt: Hosianna, hosianna Davids son! Sådan fröjd ej världen känt. Fröjda dig, det är advent!

Zion's daughter, lift your eyes, as Heaven's kingdom now is near Shout Hosannah in the highest Lo, your king is coming here. God, His son to earth has sent Sing for joy, this is Advent. Spread His path with leaves and flowers Open wide your heart to Him Trust in Him whose love empowers light and life in very limb. Blessed day of His descent Sing for joy, this is Advent. Never cease this jubilation, like the roaring of the sea we will shout with every nation praising Him eternally. King of Glory, heaven sent Sing for joy, this is Advent.

4. DOTTER SION

Dotter Sion, fröjda dig! Jubla högt, Jerusalem! Se, din konung nalkas dig till din hjälp och salighet. Dotter Sion, fröjda dig! Jubla högt, Jerusalem!

Hosianna Davids son! Högt välsignad vare han! Ljus och sanning är hans skänk, "Gud med oss" hans dyra namn. Hosianna Davids son! Högt välsignad vare han!

TOCHTER ZION

Tochter Zion, freue dich, jauchze laut, Jerusalem! Sieh, dein König kommt zu dir, ja, er kommt, der Friedefürst. Tochter Zion, freue dich, jauchze laut, Jerusalem!

5. Hosianna Davids son

Hosianna Davids son! Välsignad vare han! Välsignad Davids son, som kommer i Herrens namn! Hosianna i höjden, hosianna! Välsignad Davids son, som kommer i Herrens namn!

Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heavens!

Rejoice

In 1781, when the Dagö Swedes left their Baltic island (off Estonia) for the lands by the lower Dniepr in the Ukraines, granted them by the Russian empress, Catherine II, a piece of eastern Swedish culture, with its traditions and language, came to be preserved and continued in Gammelsvenskby (Old Swedish Village). This unique little group held steadfastly to their Charles XII bible and the Hymnal of 1695, in which No. 116, "Fröjda dig, du Kristi brud", is the one we know as "Gläd dig, du Kristi brud" (Rejoice, Bride of Christ), Swedish hymn No. 104.

The author is unknown – yet it carries unmistakable traits of the pious work songs, common all over Scandinavia, sung to locally varying folk melodies.

6. Fröjda dig

Fröjda dig, du Kristi brud och möt din Herre och Gud. Förhanden är hans nåde, som de profeter spådde. Hosianna, heder och ära skall denna vår konung vara.

En åsna honom bär, som dock en konung är. Hans prål är ganska ringa, dock kan han döden tvinga. Hosianna, heder och ära skall denna vår konung vara.

O Bride of Christ, Rejoice O Bride of Christ, rejoice! Exultant raise thy voice To hail the day of glory, Foretold in sacred story. Hosanna, praise and glory: Our King, we bow before thee.

LULLABY

Like a gently billowing movement across the whole world, wave upon wave – a mother rocking her child. Though his feverish pulse would force the tempo, he is being lulled into a soothing rhythm of an incomprehensible sense of security: the good Saviour will keep you from all evil, sleep peacefully in my arms.

7. LULLABY

Sleep in my arms, the birds homeward fly, sleep in my arms, the cool evening falls round thee.

Christ was born for thee, died for thee.

Sleep in my arms, little baby, thy mother is here.

Sleep in my arms, thou frail
weary one,
sleep in my arms, for thy Lord
watches o'er thee.
Christ was born for thee, died
for thee.
Sleep in my arms, the sweet Saviour
will keep thee from harm.

IL EST NÉ LE DIVIN ENFANT - Christ is born the Child Divine

The mystery of the Incarnation, the assurance of God becoming Man, has been expressed in many ways. As an echo of the angelic choruses – now in the formal church works, now in somewhat pompously dramatic hymns – as an answer from deep within man in tender songs or cheery children's tunes.

"Il est né" belongs to the latter. A French virelai or carole, from the Middle Ages or even earlier, with a dance-like melody and a repeated refrain. The words relate to the major events in the life of Jesus.

The airy, cheerful voices make the scene come alive: French students celebrating the Christmas holidays from the Cathedral school, by roaming the streets singing and playing. The market crowds are not that busy you can't stop a while to smile at the boys' antics. Listen. "He is born, the child divine. Play the oboe, sound the bag pipe." And toss them a coin. Commercial Christmas? Oh no, pleasure may be mixed with business, surely?

8. Il est né le divin enfant Il est né le divin enfant, jouez haut-bois, résonnez musettes, il est né le divin enfant, chantons tous son avènement. Depuis plus de quatre mille ans nous le promettaient les prophètes, depuis plus de quatre mille ans nous attendions cet heureux temps. Il est né etc

Ah! qu'il est beau, qu'il est charmant ah! que ses grâces sont parfaites! Ah! qu'il est beau, qu'il est charmant. qu'il est doux ce divin enfant! Il est né etc.

O HOLY NIGHT

Those of an older generation would enjoy hearing Adam's Christmas song again. To many it was long a "must", without which Christmas mass would not be the same. But why necessarily a baritone? Is the clear soprano not serene enough to interpret in human tongue how God himself takes mortal form, right here in our world, to win our battle for freedom. which we could not do of ourselves. And the choir's mighty echoes of the heavenly hosts, do they not make us realize that the only act possible in the face of this wonder of all wonders, is to fall on our knees in utter gratitude and worship?

9. Julsång

O, helga natt, o helga stund för världen, då Gudamänniskan till jorden steg ned! För att försona världens brott

och synder för oss han dödens smärta led. Och hoppets stråle går igenom

världen

och ljuset skimrar över land och hav.

Folk, fall nu neder och hälsa glatt din frihet.

O, helga natt, du frälsning åt oss gav.

Ty Frälsarn krossat våra tunga bojor,

vår jord är fri, himlen öppen nu är.

Uti din slav du ser en älskad broder,

och se, din ovän skall bli dig så kär. Från himlen bragte Frälsaren oss friden,

för oss han nedsteg i sin stilla grav. Folk, fall nu neder och hälsa glatt din frihet.

O, helga natt, du frälsning åt oss gav.

Cantique de noël Minuit Chrétien c'est l'heure solemnelle Où l'homme Dieu descendit jusqu'à nous Pour effacer la tache originelle Et de son père arrèter le courroux Le monde entier tressaille d'espérance A cette nuit qui lui donne un sauveur Peuple, à genoux, attends ta délivrance Noël, Noël, voici le rédempteur.

De notre foi que la lumière ardente Nous guide tous au berceau de l'enfant

Comme autre fois une étoile brillante Y conduisit les chefs de l'orient Le Roi des Roi nait dans une humble crèche

Puissans du jour fiers de votre grandeur

À votre orgueil c'est de la qu'un Dieu prèche

Courbez vos fronts devant le rédempteur.

Le rédempteur a brisé toute entrave La terre est libre et le ciel est ouvert Il voit un frère où n'était qu'un esclave

L'amour unit ceux qu'enchainait le fer Qui lui dira notre reconnaissance C'est pour nous tous qu'il nait qu'il

souffre et meurt Peuple, debout, chante ta délivrance Noël, Noël, chantons le rédempteur.

THE BLESSED DAY

The melody we are familiar with is a typically Nordic work song to be hummed in the homes and the fields alike. None of our hymns has inspired so many popular tunes. Not least in Dalecarlia, where almost every self-respecting parish has its own version.

The melody here is from Mora. Long ago it broke its provincial boundaries and spread throughout the nation. A sweet and pure tonal sequence indicative of the bright new morning.

10. DEN SIGNADE DAG

Den signade dag, som vi nu här se av himmelen till oss nedkomma, han blive oss säll, han låte sig te oss allom till glädje och fromma. Ja, Herren den högste oss alla idag för synder och sorger bevare.

O DAY FULL OF GRACE
O day full of grace that now we see
Appearing on earth's horizon,
Bring light from our God that we
may be
Replete in his joy this season.
God, shine for us now in this
dark place;
Your name on our hearts emblazon.

SILENT NIGHT

This hymn was written one Christmas Eve morning, as probably most of you know by now. How Joseph Mohr, the assistant minister in the village of Oberndorf near Salzburg, was preparing his Christmas sermon that morning in 1818, when the chaste words of the gospel according to Luke 2 emerge and come to life, as portrayed in Silent Night, Holy Night. The same day, his friend and

organist, Franz Gruber sets it to music. At the end of the Midnight Mass it is sung for the first time to an enraptured congregation, with only the accompaniment of Gruber's guitar. It may never have come about if the church organ hadn't broken down...

Few texts are as easy to meditate upon as the Christmas gospel. "Silent Night" can only help. The calm of night is expressed by the girls' voices. The velvety, starry sky with the Star illuminating the barren lands of Judea. In the warmth of the cave, the young Mary and her Joseph, exhausted, gazing down at their newborn. O Child, child in slumber sweet, unaware of the destiny awaiting you.

The harsher male voices, yet calmly restrained, sing of the shepherds. Down to earth men, not given to neurotic delusions, abandon their flocks and hurry across the fields, blinded by the sudden appearance of the celestial herald. What's going on inside their minds? They must see for themselves, with their own eyes...

The mixed voices interweave in a holy alliance of Heaven and Earth. Hush, not too loud, don't disturb him, he needs

sleep. Let the joy become an intimatness instead. May be he is awake? The smile of love upon his face. You understand our joy, little one?

11. STILLE NACHT

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht! Alles schläft, einsam wacht nur das traute, hochheilige Paar. Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar, schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht! Hirten erst kund gemacht, durch der Engel Hallelujah tönt es laut von fern und nah: Christ, der Retter ist da!

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht!
Gottes Sohn, o wie lacht
Lieb aus deinem göttlichen Mund,
da uns schlägt die rettende Stund,
Christ, in deiner Geburt.

Mariae Wiegenlied – Mary's Lullaby

While meditating I find Max Reger helps me focus on the center of the picture. It doesn't matter if the words transport us to that first summer's morning, warm with the scent of roses and birdsong. My eyes rest on the center: the sweet young mother for a moment holding up her son, then cradling him to her bosom, rocking him into a peaceful slumber.

12. MARIÆ WIEGENLIED

Maria sitzt am Rosenhag und wiegt ihr Jesuskind,

durch die Blätter leise weht der warme Sommerwind.

Zu ihren Füssen singt ein buntes Vögelein:

Schlaf, Kindlein, süsse, schlaf nur ein!

Hold ist dein Lächeln, holder deines Schlummers Lust, leg' dein müdes Köpfchen fest an deiner Mutter Brust! Schlaf, Kindlein, süsse, schlaf nur ein!

CHRISTMAS

In 1908 Otto Olsson wrote "Twelve organ pieces on choral themes", opus 36. The

theme for this piece is the Swedish hymn "Var hälsad sköna morgonstund" the music written by Philip Nicolai in Frankfurt am Main, 1599. (O Morning Star, How fair and bright, 399 of the Methodist Hymnal.) The characteristic intervals of the fifths are heard already in the first few bars, before the whole choral becomes gradually more distinct.

The instrumental has an advantage over the vocal piece in that it leaves the listener free to form his own images. What feelings are stirred, what does the music "say"? Perhaps the memories of Christmas morning Mass and candle warmth? Listen – and listen again.

ZITHER CAROL

The longest afternoon of the year. The minutes crawling by. Only the adults are busy behind closed doors. But here in the nursery... Aren't they done yet? Time's at a stand'still. The doll in the corner might like some company for a bit... And maybe the fire-engine should be started... Soon imagination catches hold of the children though.

Until the door opens. Now, children,

hurry. No shoving. Here, by the table. Be still. If you kneel we can all see the manger. Oh, look. Baby Jesus! and Mary! and the ox! The joy of recognition bursts through the momentous occasion, just as the sudden tempo changes from 2/4 to 3/4 in our joyous children's song.

And when all the church bells ring in the Holy days of the Nativity for our Czech family, the tinsel angels and the seraphs, suspended from all the bright lights in the firmament, join in Creation's song of praise to the newborn Saviour.

That which the dim-eyed doubt never discovers, the child spots at once. If only you kneel. And dare to be like a child, of course

14. ZITHER CAROL

Girls and boys, leave your toys, make no noise,

kneel at His crib and worship Him. At Thy shrine, Child divine, we are Thine,

our Saviour's here.

"Hallelujah" the churchbells ring, "Hallelujah" the angels sing, "Hallelujah" from ev'rything. All must draw near. Shepherds came, at the fame, of Thy name, angels their guide to Bethlehem. In that place, saw Thy face, filled with grace, stood at Thy door. "Hallelujah" etc. Love evermore. Cherubim, Seraphim, worship Him. sun, moon and stars proclaim His power. Everyday, on our way, we shall say Hallelujah! "Hallelujah" etc. Hallelujah!

WHITE CHRISTMAS

The American popular composer, Irving Berlin became world renowned at the age of twentythree with his Alexander's Ragtime Band. Since then he wrote several musicals and also hundreds of Evergreens.

Evergreens, well, what do you do when Christmas is always green? Probably just what Berlin did: recapture the snow-laden Christmas of childhood. In the spirit of Berlin, Alf Linder's accompaniment of improvisations show that this classical musician once was a skillful jazz pianist.

I'm dreaming of a White Christmas

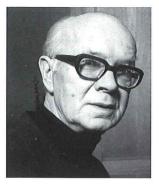
15. WHITE CHRISTMAS

just like the ones I used to know, where the treetops glisten and children listen to hear sleigh bells in the snow. I'm dreaming of a White Christmas: with ev'ry Christmas card I write may your days be merry and bright and may all your Christmases be white. The sun is shining, the grass is green, the orange and palm trees sway. There's never been such a day in Beverly Hills, L.A. But it's December, the twentyfourth,

Text: Günther Niemeyer

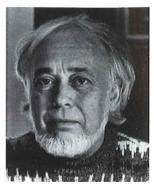
Translation: Christel Palmcrantz-Garrick

and I am longing to be up north.



Alf Linder, 1907-83, studied at the College of Music under a.o. Otto Olsson, made his début in Stockholm in 1933 and studied later under the great German masters J.N.David, Hermann Grabner and Günther Ramin in Leipzig and Fritz Heitmann in Berlin. He was the organist of the Oscar church 1945-83. His brilliant presentation of all Bach's works for organ attracted great attention at the concerts in the Oscar church in 1944, and in 1950/51 on the then new organ. In 1955/56 he recorded all of Buxtehude's works in Our Lady's church in Skänninge. As professor of organ, Alf Linder has had substantial influence on a whole generation of organists.

Torsten Nilsson, born in 1920, was 1962-82 the precentor and choir master of the Oscar church. Apart from considerable educational contributions - teacher of liturgical singing in Uppsala and Stockholm etc. - Torsten Nilsson has found time for numerous performances as organist and choir leader both at home and abroad, including radio performances. He belongs to the foremost organ improvisors of today, and has earned his greatest reputation as one of the most dynamic composers of Swedish music with music drama works, instrumental and vocal works. He has written a.o. an organ symphony, dedicated to his collegue, Alf Linder





Oscar's Motet Choir was founded in 1962 by Torsten Nilsson and was active in the Oscar Church up until 1982. The choir toured abroad, as well as performed on radio. Many composers have written music specially for them, such as Karl-Erik Welin and Werner Jacob.

Marianne Mellnäs

After an education in her home town of Gothenburg and the College of Music in Stockholm, Marianne Mellnäs studied at the Opera School in West Berlin.

Not having singled out any particular genre she sings sacred as well as secular music from different epochs. She has performed abroad and at home in various settings, radio, TV, churches and concert halls, often modern classical music, and has performed on several recordings.

Recorded January 23-25 and April 29 1976 in Oscarskyrkan, Stockholm, by Bertil Alving, who used a Revox A77 and only two microphones, Pearl TC4; in July 1993 he remastered from the same A77 the original sound of the analog tapes. U-Matic by Rune Persson/RP Recording, Processing: DCM, Bromma. Cover art: Robert Turner. Commentary: Günther Niemeyer, translated by Christel Palmcrantz-Garrick. Photo (A.L.): Studio Landfeldt & Nilsson. Production: Iacob Boëthius.

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Stockholm, Sweden,

MADE IN SWEDEN

- 1 CANTATE DOMINO 5'34"

 Enrico Bossi (1861-1925)

 Text: Psalt. 149:1, 5

 Kör, orgel, trumpeter och basuner
- 2 Konsert för orgel, A-dur 5'25'' *Johann Gottfried Walther (1684-1748)*Allegro Adagio Allegro
- 3 ADVENT 3'37"

 Otto Olsson (1879-1964)

 Text: Paul Nilsson (1866-1951)

 Kör och orgel
- 4 DOTTER SION, FRÖJDA DIG 1'38" Georg Friedrich Händel (1685-1759) Kör
- 5 HOSIANNA DAVIDS SON 2'29"

 Georg Joseph Vogler (1749-1814)
 Text: Matt. 21:9

 Kör, orgel, trumpeter och basuner
- 6 Fröjda dig, du Kristi brud 1'41" Folklig koral från Gammelsvenskby Text: SvPs 116:1-2 i 1695 års psalmbok Sopransolo
- 7 Lullaby 1'08" Koreansk folkmelodi Text och arr: Malcolm Sargent (1895-1967) Kör
- 8 IL EST NÉ LE DIVIN ENFANT 1'51" Fransk julsång Arr: John Rutter; Kör

- 9 Julsång 4'12"

 Adolphe Adam (1803-56)

 Körbearb: Albert Lindström
 Sopran, kör och orgel
- 10 DEN SIGNADE DAG 1'10" Folklig koral från Mora, trad Finnkarin Andersdotter Text: Laurentius Jonæ (d 1597) Sopransolo
- 11 STILLE NACHT 3'27"
 Franz Gruber (1787-1863)
 Sättn: Hanns Miessner
 Text: Joseph Mohr (1792-1848)
 Kör
- 12 Marlæ Wiegenlied 3'13''

 Max Reger (1873-1916)

 Sopran och orgel
- 14 ZITHER CAROL 1'59" Tjeckisk folkmelodi Text och arr: Malcolm Sargent Kör
- 15 WHITE CHRISTMAS 2'54" *Irving Berlin (f 1888)*Damkör och orgelimprovisation

This remarkable album — for many years appreciated for its exquisite sound quality in the recording of choraland solovoices — set a new standard in sound engineering. • A most euphon

CANTATE DOMINO

• A most euphonious selection of Christmas music!

Oscars Motettkör, Stockholm

Torsten Nilsson, conductor

Alf Linder, organ

Marianne Mellnäs, soprano

Bossi Cantate Domino • Walther Konsert

för orgel, A-dur ullet *Otto Olsson* Advent ullet

Händel Dotter Sion • Vogler Hosianna • Fröjda dig, du Kristi brud • Lullaby •

Il est né le divin enfant • Adam Julsång •

DEN SIGNADE DAG • Gruber STILLE NACHT •

Reger MARIÆ WIEGENLIED • Otto Olsson Jul •

ZITHER CAROL • Berlin WHITE CHRISTMAS

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