



proprius

PRASACD 7762



SUPER AUDIO CD

CANTATE DOMINO

Oscar's Motet Choir
Torsten Nilsson, *conductor*
Alf Linder, *organ*
Marianne Mellnäs, *soprano*

ENRICO BOSSI (1861-1925)

1. *Cantate Domino*

Lyrics: Ps. 149:1, 5

Choir, organ, trumpets and trombones

JOHANN GOTTFRIED WALTHER (1684-1748)

Concerto for Organ in A major

2. I. Allegro

3. II. Adagio

4. III. Allegro

OTTO OLSSON (1879-1964)

5. *Advent*

Lyrics: Paul Nilsson

Choir and organ

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685-1759)

6. *Dotter Sion, fröjda dig*
(*Daughter of Zion, rejoice!*)

Choir

GEORG JOSEPH VOGLER (1749-1814)

7. *Hosianna Davids son*
(*Hosanna to the Son of David*)

Lyrics: Matt. 21:9

Choir, organ, trumpets and trombones

TRADITIONAL

8. *Fröjda dig, du Kristi brud*
(*Rejoice, you bride of Christ*)

Religious folksong from Gammelsvenskby

Lyrics: Swedish hymn-book (1695)

Soprano solo

KOREAN FOLKSONG

9. *Lullaby*

Lyrics and arr: Malcolm Sargent

Choir

FRENCH CAROL

10. *Il est né le divin enfant*
(*Christ is born the Child Divine*)

Arr: John Rutter

Choir

ADOLPHE ADAM (1803-1856)

11. *Julsång* (*Christmas song*)

Arr: Albert Lindström

Soprano, choir and organ

TRADITIONAL

12. *Den signade dag*
(*O Day full of Grace*)
Religious folksong from Mora, Dalecarlia
(Finnkarin Andersdotter)
Lyrics: Laurentius Jonæ
Soprano solo

FRANZ GRUBER (1787-1863)

13. *Stille Nacht (Silent Night)*
Arr: Hanns Miessner
Lyrics: Joseph Mohr
Choir

MAX REGER (1873-1916)

14. *Mariæ Wiegenlied*
Soprano and organ

OTTO OLSSON (1879-1964)

15. *Jul (Christmas)*
Organ

CZECH FOLKSONG

16. *Zither Carol*
Lyrics and arr: Malcolm Sargent
Choir

IRVING BERLIN (1888-1989)

17. *White Christmas*
Female Choir and organ improvisation

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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.*

2-4. 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 greatly, 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 Olssons 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."

5. ADVENT

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 fannan full av palmer,
låt ditt hjärta vidga sig,
kom med sånger, kom med psalmer!
Årans 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.

6. DOTTER SION FRÖJDA DIG (Daughter of Zion, rejoice!)

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

Daughter of Zion, rejoice!
Exult, O Jerusalem!
See, your king approaches
To aid and to bless you.
Daughter of Zion, rejoice!
Exult, O 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!*

*Hosanna, son of David!
Most blessed be he!
He grants us light and truth.
Immanuel is his precious name.
Hosanna, son of David!
Most blessed be he!*

7. HOSIANNA DAVIDS SON (Hosanna to the Son of David)

*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!
Blessings on the Son of David,
who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heavens, Hosanna!
Blessings on the Son of David,
who comes in the name of the Lord!*

REJOICE

In 1781, when the Dagö Swedes left their Baltic island (off Estonia) for the lands by the lower Dniepr in Ukraine, 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.

8. FRÖJDA DIG DU KRISTI BRUD (O Bride of Christ, Rejoice)

*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.*

*Rejoice, you bride of Christ
To meet your Lord and God.
He grants you his grace
As the prophets foretold.
Hosanna, honour and glory
Shall be to this our king.*

*He rides upon an ass,
Although he is a king.
He is not dressed in splendour,
Yet he can defeat death itself.
Hosanna, honour and glory
Shall be to this our king.*

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.

9. 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?

10. 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?

11. JULSÅNG (Christmas song)

*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.*

*O holy night, O holy hour,
When God incarnate came to earth!
To reconcile the sins of the world
He suffered the agony of death.
Hope radiates through the world
And light shines upon land and sea.
People, kneel and welcome your liberation.
O holy night, that has given us salvation.*

*For the saviour has crushed our bonds,
Our world is free and the heavens have opened.
In the slave you see a beloved brother,
And behold, your enemy will become dear to you.
The saviour brought peace to us from heaven,
For our sake he entered the quiet grave.
People, kneel and welcome your liberation.
O holy night, that has given us salvation.*

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.

12. DEN SIGNADE DAG (O Day full of Grace)

*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 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 intimacy instead. Maybe he is awake? The smile of love upon his face. You understand our joy, little one?

13. STILLE NACHT (Silent Night)

*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.*

MARIÆ WIEGENLIED

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.

14. MARIÆ WIEGENLIED (Mary's Lullaby)

*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 dem Lächeln, holder deines Schlummers Lust,
leg' dem 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 standstill. 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.

16. 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 Saviours 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!" etc.*

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.

17. WHITE CHRISTMAS

*I'm dreaming of a 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 its December, the twentyfourth, and I am longing to be up north.*

Text: Günther Niemeyer

Translation: Christel Palmcrantz-Garrick

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.

Alf Linder

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. Alf Linder 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.

Oscar's Motet Choir

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.

Torsten Nilsson

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 colleague, Alf Linder.



SUPER AUDIO CD

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These are the words of Proprius founder, Mr Jacob Boëthius. For over 30 years, quality in every aspect has been the hallmark of Proprius.

Cantate Domino is a world-wide renowned reference recording of Christmas music. Recorded in 1976 by Bertil Alving and now, in 2003, remastered by Torbjörn Samuelsson for this SACD Hybrid release.

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