

A BAROQUE ORGAN CHRISTMAS

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All the pieces in this recital are Baroque organ compositions based on Christmas carols.

JAN PIETERSZOOM SWEELINCK (1562-1621)

Chorale Prelude on *Freu dich sehr, o meine Seele*

This chorale prelude is based on a psalm tune by Louis Bourgeois, originally for Psalm 42 in the Geneva Psalter (1550). The chorale has been attached to many texts, including the Advent hymn, "Comfort, comfort ye my people," and the Lutheran chorale "Freu dich sehr, o meine Seele," written by Christoph Demantius in 1620.

Freu dich sehr, o meine Seele
und vergiß all Not und Qual.
weil dich nun Christus, der Herre,
ruft aus diesem Jammerthal.
Aus Trübsal und großem Leid
sollst du fahren in die Freud,
die kein Ohr hat je gehöret,
die in Ewigkeit auch währet.

Rejoice greatly, o my soul,
and forget all misery and suffering,
for now Christ, your Lord
calls you out of this valley of misery!
From affliction and great sorrow
you will journey into the joy
that no ear has ever heard,
that also awaits you in eternity.

Chorale Variations on *Puer nobis nascitur*

This is a set of variations on from a Latin Christmas hymn which dates from the 15th century. The carol is often sung to a harmonization by early Baroque composer Michael Praetorius. The tune appears in modern hymnals with English translations of the original Latin, including "Unto a Boy Is Born" or "Unto Us Is Born a Son."

Puer nobis nascitur
Rector angelorum;
In hoc mundo pascitur
Dominus dominorum.

Unto us a Boy is born,
King of all creation:
Came he to a world forlorn,
The Lord of every nation.

DIETRICH BUXTEHUDE (c.1637-1707)

Chorale Prelude on *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* BuxWV 223

Lutheran poet and composer Philipp Nicolai wrote "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern" in 1597. Nicolai adapted his text from Psalm 45, a psalm that describes a celestial marriage, which many Christians have interpreted as describing the mystical bond between Christ and the Church. Nicholai probably adapted the tune of "Wie schön leuchtet" from an older German melody from the sixteenth century.

Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern
Voll Gnad' und Wahrheit von dem Herrn,
Die süße Wurzel Jesse!
Du Sohn David zus Jakobs Stamm,

How brightly shines the Morning Star,
full of mercy and truth from the Lord
the sweet root of Jesse.
Thou Son of David from Jacob's stem,

Mein König und mein Bräutigam,
Hast mir mein Herz besessen,
Lieblich, freundlich,
Schön und herrlich, groß und ehrlich,
Reich von Gaben,
Hoch und sehr prächtig erhaben!

*my King and Bridegroom
Thou hast possessed my heart.
Sweet, friend,
beautiful and glorious,
rich in gifts.
High and splendidly exalted!*

FRANZ XAVER MURSCHHAUSER (1663-1738)

Variations on *Lasst uns das Kindelein wiegen*, In Imitation of a Cuckoo

This sweet lullaby carol is a traditional German folk carol. Murschhauser's delightful setting keeps the rocking 6/8 rhythm, while working in plenty of falling minor thirds, as though a cuckoo-bird is singing to the Christ Child. The image of birds and other animals singing to the holy Babe is a common theme in folk carols of many countries.

Laßt uns das Kindelein wiegen,
das Herz zum Krippelein biegen.
Laßt uns im Geist erfreuen,
das Kindelein benedeien.
O Jesulein süß, o Jesulein süß.

*Let us rock the little child,
and bow our hearts toward the manger.
Let us rejoice in spirit,
to bless the little child.
O sweet Jesus. O sweet Jesus.*

TWO FRENCH ORGAN NOËLS

Noëls, or traditional French carols, were greatly loved in Baroque France, and their melodies were a popular source for Baroque French composers. These next two pieces are Noëls pour l'orgue, carols arranged for organ: one by Michel Corrette, and one by Jean-François Dandrieu, two prolific composers in this genre. Little is known of the origin of the lovely carol "Vous qui désirez sans fin." We know only a little more about "Joseph est bien marié"—it appears in a 1537 anthology of noëls edited by Pierre Sargent, entitled Les Grans Noelz.

MICHEL CORRETTE (1707-1795)

Suite No. 1 from *Nouveau Livre de Noëls*

2. Joseph est bien marié

Joseph est bien Marié à la fille de Jessé.
C'était chose bien nouvelle
D'être mère et pucelle.
Dieu y avait opéré: Joseph est bien marié.

*Joseph is well-married, to the daughter of Jesse.
It was a new thing
to be a mother as well as a virgin.
God was at work there. Joseph is well-married.*

JEAN-FRANÇOIS DANDRIEU (1682-1738)

From *Livre de noëls pour l'orgue et le clavecin* (1759)

46. Vous qui désirez sans fin

Vous qui désirez sans fin
ouïr chantez
Que nôtre Dieu est enclin
A écouter
Nôtre prière et complainte
Tous les jours,
Quand nous invoquons feinte
Son secours.

*You who endlessly desire
to hear sung
That which our God is inclined
to hear:
Our prayer and complaint
every day,
When we invoke
His help.*

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

The following three chorale preludes come from the Neumeister Collection, a manuscript of organ works by Bach and others preserved by Johann Gottfried Neumeister (1757–1840). The collection languished in obscurity until it was rediscovered in the collections of Yale University in 1984. Bach's chorales in this collection are particularly well-suited to small pipe organs like ours at Ascension.

Der Tag, der ist so Freudenreich BWV 719

Both the words and melody of this Lutheran chorale are derived from a 14th-century Latin carol, "Dies est laetitiae."

Der Tag der ist so freudenreich	<i>This day is full of joy</i>
Aller Kreature;	<i>for all creatures;</i>
Denn Gottes Sohn vom Himmelreich	<i>for God's Son, from heaven,</i>
Über die Nature	<i>ruler of all nature,</i>
Von einer Jungfrau ist geboren.	<i>is born of a virgin.</i>
Maria, du bist auserkorn,	<i>Maria, you are chosen</i>
Dass du Mutter wärest.	<i>to become a mother.</i>
Was geschah so wundergleich?	<i>What happened, that was so wonderful?</i>
Gottes Sohn vom Himmelreich,	<i>God's Son, from heaven,</i>
Der ist Mensch geboren.	<i>He is born as a man.</i>

Wir Christenleut BWV 1090

This chorale was written in 1592 by Kaspar Fügler the elder, a Lutheran clergyman. The melody first appeared in 1589, and its composer is unknown.

Wir Christenleut	<i>We Christian people</i>
haben jetzund Freud,	<i>have joy now,</i>
weil uns zu Trost Christus ist Mensch geboren,	<i>for Christ has been born as a man for us,</i>
hat uns erlöst.	<i>has redeemed us.</i>
Wer sich des tröst'	<i>The one who is comforted by this,</i>
und glaubet fest, soll nicht werden verloren.	<i>and believes firmly, will not be lost.</i>

Das alte Jahr vergangen ist BWV 1091

We're only a little early for this chorale. "Das alte Jahr vergangen ist" is a hymn of praise to God for bringing us safely through another year. The text first appeared in a hymnal published in Nürnberg in 1568. The tune is attributed to Johannes Steurlein, a composer of several chorales and the son of a Lutheran pastor.

Das alte Jahr vergangen ist;	<i>The old year is gone;</i>
Wir danken dir, Herr Jesu Christ,	<i>We thank you, Lord Jesus Christ,</i>
Dass du uns in so groß Gefahr	<i>That you, through such great danger,</i>
Bewahrt hast lange Zeit und Jahr.	<i>have preserved us through this long time and year.</i>

JOHANN MICHAEL BACH (1648-1694)

Chorale Prelude on *In dulci jubilo*

This joyful little chorale prelude was formerly attributed to J.S. Bach, but more recent scholarship has shown that it was actually composed by Johann Michael Bach, J.S.'s first cousin, once removed (baroque Germany was awash with musical Bachs). "In dulci jubilo" is an example of a poetic genre called "macaronic," which is a poem written partly in Latin, and partly in the vernacular. This text dates from the middle ages, possibly written by Heinrich Seuse around 1328. and the tune has been around at least since 1400. Today, this tune is sung both to translations of its original text, and to a Victorian adaptation by J.M. Neale entitled "Good Christian Men, Rejoice."

In dulci jubilo,
Nun singet und seid froh!
Unsers Herzens Wonne
Leit *in praesepio;*
Und leuchtet wie die Sonne
Matris in gremio.
Alpha es et O!

In sweet rejoicing,
now sing and be glad.
Our heart's desire
lies in the manger,
and shines like the sun
in his mother's lap.
He is the Alpha and the Omega.