

# Director's note

Over the last five years, Lux has built our reputation performing contemporary and modern choral music. It's a world of music that we as a group are incredibly passionate about and very much enjoy performing. The relationships we build and interactions we've had with living composers as we perform their music are second to none. With *The Town Lay Hushed*, though, we wanted to explore something new, which is to say, something old.

As we developed the concert program for *The Town Lay Hushed*, we aimed to push ourselves into a different style of singing, and to explore the roots of the contemporary music we love so much. The resulting program included Christmas and Advent music spanning nearly 400 years, all of which heavily influenced choral music being written today. It's fitting that we began these concerts with Tomás Luis de Victoria, one of the most celebrated composers of the Renaissance Period, who, along with Byrd and Tallis, deeply shaped the way Western composers write for the voice, even today.

As a director, especially with a group like Lux, one of the most exciting things about this music is its potential for truly dynamic performances. For some, the potential is more obvious—Bruckner has always been known for the drama and power he imbues his music with—but a piece like Gabrieli's "Quem vidistis pastores", written some 300 years earlier, offers its own dramatic opportunities even without any markings on the original score.

In this release, we've paired these explosive pieces with more peaceful or reserved songs including chorale-style pieces like Vaughan Williams's "This Is The Truth From Above", Tallis's "Third Mode Melody" (paired here with the classic "O Little Town of Bethlehem" text), Byrd's stunningly simple "Lulla, Lullaby", and Howells's beloved "A Spotless Rose".

We give our deepest gratitude to everyone who aided in the creation of this album—Frank & Kathy Napoli, John Vengrouskie, St. Jerome's Church, our generous donors, and so many more; not to mention you! Your support assists us in the continuation and expansion of our recording projects, concerts, and educational outreach. For that, we are truly thankful.

We hope you enjoy *The Town Lay Hushed*.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robby Napoli". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name of the director.

—Robby Napoli, director

# 1 Hodie Christus natus est

*Today Christ is born*

MUSIC BY Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562-1621)

TEXT Magnificat Antiphon for Vespers of Christmas Day

## TEXT

Hodie Christus natus est, (*Noel!*)

Hodie salvator apparuit, (*Alleluia!*)

Hodie in terra canunt angeli,

Laetantur archangeli, (*Noel!*)

Hodie exsultant justi, dicentes:

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Alleluia! (*Noel!*)

## TRANSLATION

Today Christ is born, (*Noel!*)

Today the savior has appeared, (*Alleluia!*)

Today angels sing on earth,

The archangels rejoice, (*Noel!*)

Today the righteous exsult, saying:

Glory to God in the highest.

Alleluia! (*Noel!*)

## NOTES

The text for this piece, taken from a Christian evening prayer service on Christmas Day, comes from two different books of the Bible: excerpts from the psalms address the coming of the Messiah, while a passage from the apostle Luke tells of Christ's birth. Written in a motet style, this expressive piece intersperses the prayer with joyful acclamations of "Alleluia". The celebratory mood is emphasized by the polyphonic voices, each of which seems to want to proclaim louder than the last, and which often end up overlapping almost incomprehensibly.

## 2 A Spotless Rose

MUSIC BY Herbert Howells (1892-1983)

TEXT Traditional German carol, trans. Catherine Winkworth

SOLO John Mullan

### TEXT

A spotless rose is blowing, sprung from a tender root,  
Of ancient seers' foreshowing, of Jesse promised fruit;  
Its fairest bud unfolds to light  
Amid the cold, cold winter, and in the dark midnight.

The Rose which I am singing, Whereof Isaiah said,  
Is from its sweet root springing, in Mary, purest maid;  
For through our God's great love and might,  
The blessed babe she bare us in a cold, cold winter's night

### NOTES

Herbert Howells is one of the most revered modern English composers, and his choral works are especially well-known. His style was influenced by Tallis and fellow English composer Vaughan Williams, who would later go on to teach Howells as a composition student. Howells's *A Spotless Rose* comes from a set of "Three Carol-Anthems". His setting of this fourteenth-century Marian text is filled with an overwhelming sense of peace, portrayed through the sweeping phrases which imitate the blowing wind described in the poetry. This sense of peace strikes a contrast with the harmonies at the end, which portray the harshness of the "cold winter's night."

## 3

# Legend

(The Crown of Roses)

MUSIC BY Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

TEXT Richard Henry Stoddard

## TEXT

When Jesus Christ was yet a child  
 He had a garden small and wild,  
 Wherein He cherished roses fair,  
 And wove them into garlands there.

Do you bind roses in your hair?  
 They cried, in scorn, to Jesus there,  
 The Boy said humbly: "Take, I pray,  
 All but the naked thorns away."

Now once, as summer time drew nigh,  
 There came a troop of children by,  
 And seeing roses on the tree,  
 With shouts they plucked them merrily.

Then of the thorns they made a crown,  
 And with rough fingers pressed it down,  
 Till on His forehead fair and young,  
 Red drops of blood like roses sprung.

## NOTES

Alternatively known as "The Crown of Roses" (the title given by the poet), *Legend* is set to a poem written in 1857 by Richard Henry Stoddard and was originally set in Russian as part of Tchaikovsky's "Sixteen Songs for Children" in 1883. Tchaikovsky's strophic setting takes a turn from its melodic repetition in the final verse to accentuate Jesus's suffering by using a slew of musical techniques including a melody which falls down the scale as Jesus' crown is "pressed down" onto his head.

# 4 O magnum mysterium

*O great mystery*

MUSIC BY Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548-1611)

TEXT Responsorial for Matins of Christmas Day

## TEXT

O magnum mysterium,  
et admirabile sacramentum  
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum  
jacentem in praesepio.

Beata Virgo  
cujus viscera meruerunt portare Dominum  
Christum. *Alleluia!*

## TRANSLATION

O great mystery  
and wondrous sacrament  
that animals should see the newborn Lord  
lying in their manger.

Blessed [is] the virgin  
whose womb merited to carry Christ the  
Lord. *Alleluia!*

## NOTES

Tomás Luis de Victoria, one of the most famous Spanish composers of the 16th century, first published this motet in 1572. It is to this day one of the most well-known works from the Renaissance period. The motet opens with each part introducing the first theme, discussing the “great mystery” with subtle layering of harmonies. Open intervals, particularly fifths, punctuate the first section; the first full chord arrives with the bass entrance. Largely imitative with punctuations of homophonic texture, the piece is organized into three large sections, the last being reminiscent of the first. The middle section picks up the tempo on the word “Alleluia,” which carries through to the end.

## 5

## Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe

*Glory to God in the highest*

MUSIC BY Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

TEXT Traditional Christian

SOLOS Beth Ann Zinkievich, Collin Power, Amanda Densmoor, Zach Taylor

**TEXT**

Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe, und Friede auf Erden, und den Menschen ein Wohlgefallen! Wir loben dich, wir benedeien dich, wir beten dich an, wir preisen dich, wir sagen dir Dank um deiner grossen Herrlichkeit. Herr Gott, himmlischer König, allmächtiger Vater! Herr, du eingeborner Sohn, Jesu Christe! Herr Gott, du Lamm Gottes, Sohn des Vaters! Der du die Sünde der Welt trägst, Erbarme dich unser! Der du die Sünde der Welt trägst, nimm an unser Gebet! Der du sitztest zur Rechten des Vaters, erbarme dich unser. Denn du allein bist heilig, denn du allein bist der Herr, du allein bist der Allerhöchste, Jesus Christus, mit dem heiligen Geiste in der Herrlichkeit Gottes des Vaters. Amen.

**TRANSLATION**

Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, and to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory. Lord God, heavenly king, almighty father! Lord, only-begotten son, Jesus Christ! Lord God, Lamb of God, son of the father. You take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us! You take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. You are seated at the right hand of the father, receive our prayer. For you alone are the holy one, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the most high, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

**NOTES**

One of Mendelssohn's later works, this piece comes from a set of sacred works for double choir called "die Deutsche Liturgie". Mendelssohn's choral music is often reminiscent of Bach's chorale style, but this piece has more lush and romantic leanings. The two choirs interact, mostly using imitative motion, sometimes just responding to one another. The dense texture is somewhat broken up in the middle section, with the introduction of solo voices, heightening the pleading motives in the text. The polyphonic end theme is triumphant, with a smooth ending on the word "Amen".

# 6 The Truth Sent From Above

MUSIC English folk song — Arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)  
TEXT Traditional  
SOLOS Austin Nikirk, Zach Taylor, Victoria Delgado, Thomas Rust, Anya Trudeau

## TEXT

This is the truth sent from above, / The truth of God, the God of love; / Therefore don't  
turn me from your door, / But hearken all both rich and poor.

The first thing that I will relate, / Is that God did man create; / The next thing which to  
you I'll tell: / Woman was made with man to dwell.

Thus we were heirs to endless woes / 'Til God the Lord did interpose / And so a promise  
soon did run / That he would redeem us by his Son.

And at this season of the year / Our blest Redeemer did appear, / And here did live, and  
here did preach, / And many thousands he did teach.

Thus he in love to us behaved, / To show us how we must be saved; / And if you want to  
know the way, / Be pleased to hear what he did say.

## NOTES

The English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams is known for his work with English folk songs. He collected over 800 folk songs, helping to save many from extinction, and incorporated this knowledge—along with the techniques of Tallis and Byrd—into his own compositions. Vaughan Williams's arrangement of *The Truth Sent From Above* is the opening carol of his larger work *Fantasia On Christmas Carols*, composed in 1912. The text of the song tells the story from the Old Testament of the events that led to the need for redemption and the coming of Christ.

## 7

## Quem vidistis, pastores?

FOR 8 VOICES

*Who did you see, shepherds?*

MUSIC BY Andrea Gabrieli (1532-1585)

TEXT Third Responsory for Matins of Christmas Day

**TEXT**

Quem vidistis, pastores,  
Dicite, annuntiate nobis,  
in terris quis apparuit?  
Natum vidimus, et chorus angelorum  
collaudantes dominum. Alleluia!

**TRANSLATION**

Who did you see, shepherds;  
Speak, tell us,  
Who has appeared on earth?  
We saw the newborn, and choirs of angels  
praising the Lord. Alleluia!

**NOTES**

Andrea Gabrieli was one of the first masters of the Venetian School of choral music, which arose during the transition from the Renaissance to the Baroque era, and was based out of St. Mark's Basilica in Venice. The space's unique acoustic and multiple choir lofts led composers to develop a compositional style which relied heavily on complex, antiphonal arrangements to accommodate the Basilica's architecture. Gabrieli's friendship with the composer Orlande de Lassus influenced him to blend Lassus's expressive Franco-Flemish style with the sensibilities of the emerging Venetian School. In *Quem Vidistis Pastores*, Gabrieli sets a Christmas Day responsory from a traditional Christian morning prayer service (Matins) for double choir. The dialogue in the original text between the shepherds and the townspeople is represented through the densely-layered, joyful call and response between the choirs.



# 8 Lulla, Lullaby

MUSIC BY William Byrd (c. 1540-1623)

TEXT Anonymous

## TEXT

Lulla, lullaby, my sweet little baby, what meanest thou to cry?

## NOTES

William Byrd was famously a contemporary of Thomas Tallis; both lived in England and wrote choral music at the same time. *Lulla, Lullaby* is an excerpted section from a much longer setting of the same text. In classic Renaissance form, Byrd employs imitative entrances for each line of text. New melodic content is used to denote a new line of text or a new emotive idea, which is then passed around the choir in any manner of different ways, from direct imitation passed back-and-forth, to continuous development of a theme over which the original is restated.

# 9 Ave Maria

*Hail Mary*

MUSIC BY Anton Bruckner (1824-1896)

TEXT Traditional Christian

## TEXT

Ave Maria, gratia plena,  
Dominus tecum.  
Benedicta tu in mulieribus et benedictus  
fructus ventris tui, Jesus.  
Sancta Maria, mater Dei,  
ora pro nobis peccatoribus,  
nunc et in hora mortis nostrae.  
Amen.

## TRANSLATION

Hail Mary, full of grace,  
the Lord is with you.  
Blessed are you among women, and blessed  
is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, mother of God,  
pray for us sinners,  
now and at the hours of our deaths.  
Amen.

## NOTES

Anton Bruckner set the “Ave Maria” text three times. This famous motet is his second setting of the text, composed for mixed choir in 1861. His first setting, composed in 1856, is for mixed choir, soprano and alto soloists, organ, and cello, and his third setting, composed in 1881, is for alto soloist and organ. The opening of this motet alternates phrases between high and low voices, until all voices join together for the first time in the piece to proclaim the name of Jesus. The choir diminuendos only when the text shifts to asking the Virgin Mary to pray on behalf of “us sinners”, an effect which indicates the petitioner’s sorrow for their sins.

# 10 Ave Maria

*Hail Mary*

MUSIC BY Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979)

TEXT Traditional Christian

## TEXT

Ave Maria, gratia plena,  
Dominus tecum.  
Benedicta tu in mulieribus et benedictus  
fructus ventris tui, Jesus.  
Sancta Maria, regina caeli,  
dulcis et pia, O mater Dei,  
ora pro nobis peccatoribus,  
ut cum electis te videamus.  
Amen.

## TRANSLATION

Hail Mary, full of grace,  
the Lord is with you.  
Blessed are you among women, and blessed  
is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, queen of heaven,  
sweet and devout, O mother of God,  
pray for us sinners,  
that with the chosen we may see you.  
Amen.

## NOTES

Violist and composer Rebecca Clarke is most known for her instrumental chamber works, particularly her Piano Trio and Viola Sonata, while her choral compositions are relatively unknown. This *Ave Maria* was published in 1937, around the time Clarke began exploring the registers and timbres of the treble voice; it was her first published choral work. The setting uses modal scales and Renaissance techniques to pay tribute to the history of the text. The particular version of the Marian prayer Clarke chose to set contains some alternative text, the source of which is unknown—but it has also been set by other composers such as Josquin des Prez and Tomás Luis de Victoria, as well as by Ola Gjeilo in a setting (*Second Eve*) which Lux has also performed before.

# O virgo virginum

*O virgin of virgins*

MUSIC BY Josquin des Prez (c. 1450-1521)

TEXT Traditional English Magnificat Antiphon for December 23 (addition to the “O antiphons”)

## TEXT

O virgo virginum, quomodo fiet istud?  
Quia nec primam similem visa es nec  
habere sequentem.  
Filiae Jerusalem, quid me admiramini?  
Divinum est mysterium hoc quod cernitis.

## TRANSLATION

O virgin of virgins, how will this be?  
For neither before you was any like you, nor  
will there be after.  
Daughters of Jerusalem, why do you marvel  
at me?  
The thing which you behold is a divine  
mystery.

## NOTES

This motet for six voices, *O virgo virginum*, by early Renaissance composer Josquin des Prez, emphasizes the mystery of the virgin birth. The text is written in two sections—the first from the point of view of the daughters of Jerusalem, the second Mary’s response. In the Anglican tradition, this text is traditionally added to the famed “O antiphons” (most famous in the form “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”), a tradition which stretches back to before the separation of the Church of England and the Catholic Church. The piece displays typical characteristics of Josquin des Prez’s motets: imitation between the lower voices, and long, sustained notes in the upper voices. A quoted chant melody can be found in the soprano line, except when only the lower voices are singing, during which it can be found instead in the tenor.

# 12      O Little Town of Bethlehem

MUSIC BY    Thomas Tallis (1505-1585)

TEXT BY     Phillips Brooks (1835-1893)

## TEXT

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie.  
Above thy dleep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars go by.  
Yet in thy dark streets, it shines: the everlasting light.  
The hopes and the fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of virgin pure, and gathered all above  
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.  
O morning stars, all at once, proclaim the holy birth,  
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given,  
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.  
His coming no ear may hear; but in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.

## NOTES

We've chosen to use this melody, known as the "Third Mode Melody", to set the famous Christmas poem "O Little Town of Bethlehem". Originally, though, it was used as one of nine tunes for the Anglican Archbishop Matthew Parker's translation of the Psalms, which was published around 1560. The melody gets its name because it is written in the Phrygian mode, often referred to in that time as the "third mode" because it can be thought of as based on the note E, the third note in a C major scale. Though commonly used in church services with any number of texts, this melody is probably most famous today for inspiring Ralph Vaughan Williams's orchestral work "Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis".

## 13

## Virga Jesse

*The root of Jesse*

MUSIC BY Anton Bruckner (1824-1896)

TEXT Gradual for the Feast of the Annunciation

**TEXT**

Virga Jesse floruit;  
Virgo Deum et hominem genuit;  
pacem Deus reddidit,  
in se reconcilians ima summis.  
Alleluia.

**TRANSLATION**

The root of Jesse has blossomed;  
A virgin has brought forth God and man;  
God has restored peace,  
reconciling in himself the lowest and highest.  
Alleluia.

**NOTES**

This motet was composed in 1885, likely for the centenary of the church in Linz, Germany where Bruckner served as organist. The text, which honors the Virgin Mary, comes from the book of Isaiah. Stylistically, this piece ranges from a fairly conventional harmonic style into rather complex chordal harmonies. The triumphant Alleluia theme, which repeats twice with different parts leading, is a well-suited mix of the two extremes presented in this piece. Its dynamic contrasts summarize the emotional context of the work as a whole—celebratory, reflective, and filled with praise.

# 14 Coventry Carol

MUSIC      Anonymous  
TEXT        Traditional English  
SOLOS      Robby Napoli, Austin Nikirk, Thomas Rust

## TEXT

*Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child,  
By, by, lully, lullay.*

O sisters too, how may we do  
For to preserve this day  
This poor youngling for whom we do sing: By By, by, lully, lullay.

Herod the king in his raging  
Chargéd he hath this day  
His men of might in his own sight all young children to slay.

That woe is me, poor child for thee! And ever morn and day  
For thy parting, neither say nor sing: By, by, lully, lullay.

## NOTES

The *Coventry Carol* is an English carol that dates to the sixteenth century. It gets its name from the town of Coventry, where it was originally performed as part of a mystery play. The text refers to the Massacre of the Innocents, in which King Herod, feeling threatened after the Magi inform him that they have come to worship a king, decides to have all children under the age of three executed. “Lully” and “lullay” are not common words in modern English, but in 1500s slang they mean, roughly, “I saw, I saw!”

15

# Nyne otpushchayeshi

[Нынѣ отпущаеши]

*Lord, now let depart*

MUSIC BY Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

TEXT Traditional Christian (Canticle of Simeon / “Nunc dimittis”)

SOLO Robby Napoli

## TRANSLITERATION

Nyne otpushchayeshi raba Tvoego,  
Vladyko, po glagolu Tvoemu s mirom:  
yako videsta ochi moi spaseniye Tvoe,  
ezhe esi ugotoval pred litsem vsekhn lyudei,  
svet vo otkrovenie yazykov, i slavu lyudei  
Tvoikh Izrailya.

## TRANSLATION

Lord, now you let your servant depart in  
peace, according to your word. For my eyes  
have seen your salvation which you have  
prepared before the face of all people. A  
light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of  
your people, Israel.

## TEXT

Нынѣ отпущаеши раба Твоего,  
Владыко, по глаголу Твоему, с миром;  
яко видеста очи мои спасение Твое,  
еже еси уготовал,  
пред лицем всех людей,  
свет во откровение языков  
и славу людей Твоих Израиля.

## NOTES

The text of this piece, more commonly known (at least in the west) under the Latin title “Nunc dimittis”, is frequently used in the Christian night prayer service of Compline as well as in funeral vigils. This setting is the fifth movement of Rachmaninoff’s famous “All-Night Vigil”, and is likely the most excerpted movement after the famous *Bogoroditse Devo* (“Ave Maria”). Two of this setting’s more memorable features are the soaring tenor solo at its onset, which returns at the end, and the final descent down the B-flat minor scale, leading towards one of the most satisfying low B-flats in choral music.



# Credits

## **Soprano**

Victoria Delgado  
Amanda Densmoor  
Austin Nikirk  
Emily Shallbetter

## **Alto**

Taylor Hinds  
Abigail Hines  
Emily Howell  
Kimberly Parr  
Anya Trudeau  
Beth Ann Zinkievich

## **Tenor**

Andy Boggs  
Anthony Jones  
Robby Napoli  
Zach Taylor  
John-Paul Teti

## **Bass**

Dale Auen  
Ben Busch  
Ciaran Cain  
Tim Crane  
John Mullan  
Collin Power  
Thomas Rust

All tracks recorded at St. Jerome's Church in Hyattsville, MD on January 12, 2020.

## **Producers**

John Vengrouskie and Robby Napoli

## **Design**

John-Paul Teti and Robby Napoli

## **Sound Engineer**

John Vengrouskie

## **Cover Art**

Anonymous (Pixabay)  
<https://archive.is/MzOGr>

## **Assistant Sound Engineer**

Howard Sanner

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