a medieval english christmas
& a burgundian new year
& a few days on the island of cyprus
a medieval English Christmas
& a Burgundian New Year
& a few days on the island of Cyprus

PROGRAM

I. Advent

Veni, veni, Emanuel
   Thirteenth century? / AC & men
Conditor alme siderum
   Verses 1, 3, 5, chant
   Verses 2, 4, 6, Guillaume Du Fay (c. 1397–1474) / MN JM MS
O rex virtutum / Quis possit dignexprimere
   Anonymous, Cypriot MS (Turin, Biblioteca nazionale, J.II.9), c. 1413–22

II. Annunciation

Angelus ad virginem
   Monophonic song, 13th-century French? (Arundel MS) / DT
   Two-voice setting, 14th-century English (Cotton Fragments, 1349) / LK SS
Hayl, Mary, ful of grace
   Trinity Roll (early 15th century)
Nesciens mater
   Bytteryng (Old Hall MS, c. 1415) / PD AC GB
Ther is no rose of swych vertu
   Trinity Roll / DT MS PG

III. Christmas

Christe redemptor omnium
   Verses 1, 3, 5, 7, chant
   Verses 2, 4, 6, Du Fay / MN JM AC
Nowel syng we now al and sum
   Trinity Roll
Nova vobis gaudia refero
   Nicolas Grenon (c. 1380–1456)

INTERMISSION
IV. Songs for the New Year

Ce jour de l’an qui mant doišt estrenier  
*Baude Cordier (d. ?1397/8) / LK JM MS*

La merchi, ma dame at Amours!  
*Gilles de Bins, called Binchois (c. 1400–1460) / DT SS SM*

Je donne a tous les amoureux  
*Du Fay / DT JM MS*

La plus belle et doulce figure  
*Grenon / LK MS SM*

Je requier a tous amoureux  
*Du Fay / PD SS AC*

V. Christmas

A solis ortus cardine  
*Sarum chant*

Letabundus  
*Du Fay*

Hodie puer nascitur / Homo mortali  
*Anonymous, Cypriot MS, c. 1413–22*

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**Saturday, December 22, 2007, at 8 p.m.**

the shortest day of the year — sunrise in Boston: 7:10 a.m.; sunset: 4:15 p.m.

First Church in Cambridge, Congregational

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**Blue Heron**

Pamela Dellal  
Lydia Heather Knutson  
Martin Near  
Daniela Tošić  
Allen Combs  
Jason McStoots  
Steven Soph  
Mark Sprinkle  
Glenn Billingsley  
Paul Guttry  
Darrick Yee

Scott Metcalfe, director, vielle & harp

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*This organization is funded in part by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.*
Today we gather on the shortest day of the year to enjoy music first heard during the season of Advent, Christmas, and New Year’s in the early decades of the fifteenth century. The great and wonderful paradox of the December solstice is that it marks at once the beginning of winter and the moment at which the sun begins to climb in the sky again. There may be months of snow and cold ahead, but we have arrived at the darkest day of the year, and from now on the lengthening days assure us that spring will return, and with it warmth and green leaves.

It’s a season that inspires feelings of yearning and expectation, and prophetic moods. In Christendom, the weeks leading up to Christmas are given over to remembering the words of the Hebrew prophets and the hope they offered to the people of Israel: “A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots,” said Isaiah; “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined”; “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 11:1, 9:2, and 7:14). Isaiah’s words, interpreted as heralding the savior Christians recognize in Jesus, underly a series of antiphons sung one each day on the seven days before the eve of Christmas, December 17-23. Written no later than the eighth century, the so-called O antiphons address the Messiah to come in various attributes: O Sapientia (wisdom), O Adonai (Lord), O Radix Jesse (root of Jesse), O Clavis Davidica (key of David), O Oriens (the morning star), O Rex (king), O Emanuel (“God with us”). The initial letters of each text, after the O, spell out the promise in a reverse acrostic, SARCORE: “ero cras,” “Tomorrow I shall be there.” Veni, veni, Emmanuel is a metrical version of five of the seven O antiphons, and O rex virtutum a highly troped and elaborated meditation on the antiphon for today, December 22, O Rex gentium et desideratus earum.

The Annunciation is logically commemorated nine months before Christmas, of course, but the miracle is remembered and celebrated at the Christmas season with retellings of the archangel Gabriel’s appearance to Mary, their conversation—brief, yet charged with import—and the divine conception. In the second set on the concert we sample some of the rich repertoire of medieval carols, a uniquely English phenomenon in the fifteenth century. The deceptively simple form and melodies of these graceful strophic songs with a refrain are captivating at first hearing.

Europeans have long celebrated the season around the winter solstice with the ritual exchange of gifts and wishes for good luck and a prosperous new year. The custom in its present form coalesced around the Christian feast of Christmas only in the late nineteenth century, but its roots in western culture can be traced as far back as the ancient Near East. Romans of the imperial era marked the Kalends of January with a festival several days in length, during which the people offered tributary gifts called strenae to the emperor in exchange for presents of money. Medieval Europe absorbed the Roman New Year’s festivities into its own calendar, modifying them somewhat according to the evolving sensibilities of the Christian church, and the tradition of giving presents at New Year’s persisted despite the efforts of the church to suppress what it regarded as pagan beliefs in good luck omens and the efficacy of ceremonial gift exchange. In France, the Latin strena passed into the vulgar tongue as éstraine (estreine, ètrenne, etc.), retaining its meaning of “omen of good fortune” as well as “New Year’s gift.”

New Year’s was celebrated with peculiar intensity at the courts of the nobles of Valois who ruled both France and Burgundy in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, and members of the courts exchanged precious gifts in enormous quantity. Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy from 1364 to 1404, disbursed an average of 6.5 percent of his annual budget on éstraines, while his nephew and political enemy Louis d’Orléans spent no less than 19,000 livres at New Year’s in 1404. (At the time a good horse or a finely ornamented harp might be had for around 50 livres, a house for a hundred or so.) Illuminated books, jewel-encrusted saltcellars, enamelled serving vessels, golden cups, reliquaries, pendants, brooches, rings, horses, dogs, hunting falcons: all changed hands in an ostentatious public ritual which honored the chivalric virtue of largesse (liberality, generosity), cemented social ties, established position within the courtly hierarchy, and allowed the rich and powerful to flaunt their wealth.
Just as it does today, all this flamboyant materialism also benefitted those further down the social ladder, the artisans and craftspeople who were employed to fashion the sumptuous objets d’art so prized by their noble commissioners. The makers of New Year’s gifts included poets and musicians, and it is a small irony that while one single, superb little golden and bejeweled tabernacle is the only known étreffe aside from manuscripts to have survived—much of the rest having been melted down and sold off to finance the endless wars pursued by a bellicose and perpetually cash-strapped nobility—27 songs remain to us that commemorate the occasion; 10 of these are by Guillaume Du Fay. While we don’t know the exact circumstances in which New Year’s songs were written, we can imagine that a courtier would provide a composer with verses to set to music, and the song would then be presented to the courtier’s lady love en bonne estraine, or perhaps performed at a public celebration. In exchange for his étreffe a courtier might hope to win the lady’s amorous favor, while the musicians could expect a gift of money or household necessaries.

In keeping with the conventions of chivalric love, these fifteenth-century New Year’s songs are not boisterous, champagne-inspired toasts; most are marked with a graceful sort of melancholy, for the point of courtly love is that it can never be consummated, but only yearned and suffered for. Elegantly crafted and finely wrought, the songs’ merit as gifts can be measured in part by their ingenuity, their “conceptual dexterity, [their] ability to flatter the recipient’s wit” (in the words of Brigitte Buettner), qualities conveyed by the contemporary value of estrangeté.

The island of Cyprus may seem worlds away from the halls of England and the courts of northern France, but in the early fifteenth century it was ruled by a noble French family. Richard Coeur de Lion conquered the island in 1191 on his way to the Crusade; he sold it to the Knights Templars, who in turn gave it to Guy de Lusignan, recently deposed as king of Jerusalem. The Lusignan dominion on Cyprus lasted from 1192 until the Venetians took it in 1489; it was subsequently captured by the Ottomans in 1571. One single manuscript bears witness to a thriving musical and literary culture on Cyprus around the turn of the century. It may have been compiled on Cyprus in the years 1413-22, or perhaps a decade or so later in Savoy, by musicians with a connection to Cyprus. In any case the repertory contained in it is clearly Cypriot in origin, for (among other clues) it opens with a newly-composed plainchant Office and Mass in honor of the island’s Saint Hylarion. The entire repertory, including chant, polyphonic settings of the sections of Mass Ordinary, 41 motets, and 167 secular songs, is anonymous, and not one work is known to exist in any other manuscript.

Among the unusual treasures of this unique source is a cycle of nine isorhythmic motets. The first seven set texts inspired by the seven O antiphons, the eighth tropes an additional “O” text addressed to the Virgin and traditionally sung on Christmas Eve (“O virgo virginum”), and the final motet, for Christmas Day (Hodie puer nascitur, with which we conclude our concert), celebrates the birth of the Son. In these motets, the upper voices sing two texts simultaneously, making it all but impossible to understand the complicated thread of argument spun out by the philosophical and meditative verse. Significant words do nevertheless emerge from the texture of cross-rhythm, melisma, and hocket (a term, related to the English hiccup, describing a rapidfire back-and-forth exchange of single notes), notably the imploring “Veni,” “come.” Several lines from Hodie puer nascitur offer an apt analogy for the mystical mood of these motets, their complicated mathematical structure, and the way they contain a surfeit of meanings, more than one can apprehend just by listening, by reading, by studying, or by singing:

Thus two things created with a double nature produce one unique thing,
with the multiple grace
of the distinct parts;
but the third and uncreated thing
has made a [work]
such as heaven’s grace
had not yet made.

The double natures of an isorhythmic motet include its bitextuality, its marriage of pitch and rhythm, its combination of several melodic lines into polyphony, or its subtle union of words and music. (For more on the technique of isorhythm, go to our website and read
the notes for concerts in March and November 2006, or consult the notes accompanying our CD.)

Finally, a word on words. Our human nature, too, is double, containing both good and evil, and it is a bitter truth that some of the most joyous Christmas texts are marred by venomous barbs aimed at Jews and others regarded by Christianity as unbelievers; some of these were set to beautiful music. There is no single solution to this problem. Our choice is to emend the texts so that we can sing them wholeheartedly, and Richard Tarrant and Larry Rosenwald devised good solutions for *Nova vobis gaudia* and *Letabundus*. As for the Middle English of the carols, we sing it as if it were modern English, our own mother tongue. We lose thereby the savor of the original pronunciation (insofar as we can know what that was), but gain immediacy in understanding and in communication between singer and listener. Again, no solution is perfect; for those who wish to enjoy the original texts, we have included them among the printed texts.

The happiest of holidays to one and all!

—Scott Metcalfe
VENI, VENI, EMANUEL!
Captive Israel, who laments in exile,
deprived of the son of God.

Gaude! gaude! Emanuel
nascetur pro te, Israel.

VENI, O JESSE VIRGULA!
Lead your people from the enemy's claws,
from the pit of hell,
and from the maw of the abyss.

VENI, VENI, O ORIENS!
Console us with your advent,
dispel the gloom of night,
and pierce the nocturnal shadows.

VENI, VENI, ADONAI,
who on the mount of Sinai
gave your people the Law
in glorious majesty.

CONDITOR ALME SIDERUM,
O bountiful creator of the stars,
everlasting light of believers,
enduring death and earthly destruction,
you saved the suffering world,
bringing us healing for our sins.

Vergente mundi vespera,
lit the salvation of his chamber,
you came forth from the most pure
cloister of a virgin mother.

Cujus forti potentie
before your mighty power
all creatures kneel down,
in heaven and on earth,
all accept your command.

So we pray you,
O judge of the world to come,
preserve us when we face
the enemy with treacherous arms.

Advent hymn, seventh century
TRIPLUM
O Rex virtutum, gloria,
desideratus gentium,
lapis ductus in angula,
incognitus amentium,
aule celestis incola,
spes et dilectus fortium,
veni, fōstinus, immola
corpus nobis dominicum.
Qui utraque unum facis
tui ordinis virtute,
qui creatum orbem alis,
eternali probitate,
expectantes diu colis
paternali caritate,
nos esurientes velis
pascere sacietate.
Quem de limo tu formasti,
veni et salva hominem
quem de nichilo creasti,
redempturus per virginem;
dele crimen prothoplausti
a quo eximi neminem,
recto iure, voluisti,
nisi puram et immunem
per quam carnem liberasti.
DUPLUM
Quis possit dignexprimere
sacre rei misterium?
Qua via comprehendere
quis possit puerperium?
Ut se possit inserere
in almam matris alveum,
sine reatus scelere,
quo nobis datur vinculum?
Sine peccato originis,
nasciturus ex virgine,
veni, benignus premiis,
libera nos voragine,
tui terrore fulminis
infice, quos in flumine
Flegetontis inveneris,
desišat diro turbine.
Quos tu creasti, redime,
qui sedemus in tenebris,
et nos sperantes suscipe,
purgemur a miseris.

Trope of O Rex gentium
(O antiphon for December 22)

Translated by Larry Rosenwald.
**Angelus ad Virginem** sub intrans in conclave, Virginis formidinem demulcens, inquit: —Ave! Ave Regina Virginum! Celi terrequae Dominum concipies, et paries intacita salutem hominum; tu porta celi faeta, medela criminum.

—Quomodo conciperem que virum non cognovi? Qualiter infringerem quod firma mente vovi? —Spiritus sancti gracia perficiet hec omnia. Ne timeas, sed gaudeas secura, quod castimonia manebit in te pura Dei potencia!


*Philip the Chancellor? (d. 1236)*

The angel, coming secretly to the Virgin, calming the Virgin’s fear, said: —Hail! hail, Queen of Virgins! You shall conceive the Lord of Heaven and Earth and give birth, remaining a virgin, to the salvation of mankind; you, made the gateway of heaven, the cure for sin.

—How shall I conceive, since I know not a man? How shall I break what I have resolutely vowed? —The grace of the Holy Spirit shall perform all this. Fear not, but rejoice, confident that chastity will remain pure in you by the power of God.

At this, the noble Virgin, replying, said to him: —I am the humble servant of almighty God. To you, heavenly messenger, who know so great a secret, I give my assent and desire to see done what I hear and am ready to obey God’s will.

The angel disappeared, and at once the girl’s womb swelled up by the power of the birth of salvation. He, having been contained in the womb for nine months, came out from it and entered the conflict, taking on his shoulder the cross, by which he gave a blow to the mortal enemy.

O Mother of the Lord, who restored peace to angels and men when you gave birth to Christ, beg of your son that he may show himself favorable to us and wipe away our sins, offering help to enjoy the blessed life after this exile.

Translation from *The New Oxford Book of Carols.*


_Hayl, Mary, ful of grace, moder in virgynyte._

The Holi Goôté is to the sent from the Fader omnipotent; now is God withyn the went Whan the angel seide “Ave.”

Whan the angel “Ave” byganne, flesh and blode togedre ranne; Mary bare bothe God and manne throw vertu and throw dyngnyte.

So seith the Goôpel of Syn Johan: God and man is made but one in flesch and blode, body and bone, O God in personys thre.

Moche joye to us was graunt and in erthe pees yplaunte whan that born was this faunte in the londe of Galile.

Mary, graunte us the blys ther thy Sonys wonyngge ys; of that we han ydone amys pray for us pur charite.

---

Nesciens mater virgo virum, peperit sine dolore salvatorem seculorum. Ipsum regem angelorum sola virgo lactabat, ubera de celo plena.

_Ther is no rose of swych vertu as is the rose that bare Jhesu._

Alleluia.

For in this rose conteynyd was Heven and erthe in lytył ʃpace, res miranda.

Be that rose we may weel see that he is God in personys thre, pari forma.

The auengelys sungyn the shepherdes to: “Gloria in excelsis Deo!”

_Gaudeamus._

---

Christe redemptor omnium, ex patre, patris unice, solus ante principium natus ineffabiliter. Tu lumen, tu splendor patris, tu ʃpes perennis omnium,

The virgin mother, not knowing a man, gave birth without pain to the savior of the world. To that very king of the angels the virgin alone gave suck, her breasts filled by heaven.

Ther is no rose of swych vertu
as is the rose that bare Jhesu.

Alleluia.

For in this rose conteynyd was Heven and erthe in lytył ʃpace, res miranda.

Be that rose we may weel see that he is God in personys thre, pari forma.

The auengelys sungyn the shepherdes to: “Gloria in excelsis Deo!”

_Gaudeamus._

---

Christe redemptor omnium, ex patre, patris unice, solus ante principium natus ineffabiliter. Tu lumen, tu splendor patris, tu ʃpes perennis omnium,
accept the prayers poured out
to you by your worldly servants.
Remember, O author of salvation,
how you once assumed our human form
being born
of an undefiled virgin.
Thus testifies the present day,
cycling through the years:
that you, sole salvation of the world,
proceed from the Father's throne.
Whence heaven, earth, sea,
and all that are in them
laud the Author of your Advent
with exultant song.
And we, who by your holy
blood are redeemed,
on this day of your birth
sing a new hymn.
Glory be to you, Lord,
who is born of a virgin,
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Christmas hymn

Nowel syng we now al and sum,
for Rex Pacificus is cum.
In Bedleem, in that fayr cete,
a child was born of a maydn fre
that xal a lord and prynce be,
a solis ortus cardine.
Childryn were slayn ful greth plente,
Jhesu, for the love of the;
qwerfore here sowlys savyd be,
hostis Herodes impie.
As sunne schynth thorw the glas,
So Jhesu in his modyr was:
the to serve now graunth us gras,
O lux beata Trinitas.
Now God is comyn to wurchepyn us;
now of Marye is born Jhesus;
make we mery amongys us,
exultet celum laudibus.

the King of Peace
from lands that see the sun arise
Herod, ungodly enemy
O light, blessed Trinity
let the heavens exult with praises
Nova vobis gaudia refero:
natus est rex virginis utero;
dum prospero cursum considero,
omnes de cetero talia dicite:
   Noel, Noel!
Natus est rex, salvator seculi,
reparator labentis populi
quem tres reges laudant et parvuli
necnon et emuli; O omnes, credite:
   Noel, Noel!
Arthe Satham Eva seducitur,
deducendo virum inducitur,
ars fallitur, illabens labitur,
dum partus sequitur
   Virginis inclite:
   Noel, Noel!
Lux oritur, moritur vicium,
pax oritur, tollitur odium;
rex omnium per carnis pellium,
confer remedium salutis perdite:
   Noel, Noel! Amen.

Strophe 2 emended by Larry Rosenwald.

Ce jour de l'an qui mant doit estrenier
joieusement sa belle et doule amie,
quant est de moy, je veul de ma partie
mon cuer, mon corps entirement donner.
A ma dame, qui tant fait a loer,
tout quant que jay plainement li ottrie
ce jour de l'an qui mant doit estrenier
joieusement sa belle et doule amie.

Mon cuer me fait loialament amer
a ce jour cy, et pour toute ma vye;
soulas et ris, joie, chiere lye
je puis trop bien si faire et donner.

Ce jour de l'an…

La merchi, ma dame et Amours!
Mon coeur est ung peu de dolour
Ostez, et de triste pensee.
A ce premier jour de l'annee
Viengies suis davains de leurs tours.
Riviere de plaintes et plours
J'estoient, mes si tous les jours
Ilz font maintenant grand risee.
La merchi, ma dame et Amours!
Mon coeur est ung peu de dolour
Ostez, et de triste pensee.
Se ces deus euissent esté sours,
En verite j'eusse tous jours
Mené vie desesperée,
Mais Belacueil la grand méslée

This New Year's day, when each must give a gift joyfully to his fair and sweet love, as for me, I wish for my part to give my heart and body entirely.
To my lady, who is so worthy of praise, all that I have I bestow upon her this New Year's day, when each must give a gift joyfully to his fair and sweet love.
My heart compels me to love faithfully on this day, and for all of my life; mirth and laughter, joy and cheerfulness, are the gifts I may fittingly give to her.
This New Year's day…

Mercy, my lady and Love!
My heart is somewhat relieved from grief and sad thoughts.
On this first day of the year I am defended against their stratagems.
A river of laments and tears was I, but nowadays they always offer me a big smile.
Mercy, my lady and Love!
My heart is somewhat relieved from grief and sad thoughts.
If those two had remained unassailable, in truth, I would forever have led a desperate life, but Fair Welcome entered the great fray
Desfist et y vient au secours.
La merchi, ma dame et Amours…

Je donne a tous les amoureux
pour estrines une soussye
qui c'est an aiment sans partie
a garir leurs cuers dolereux.
Pis ont qu'a plure laboureux
ne charatier qui se desvye:
Je donne a tous les amoureux
pour estrines une soussye.
Des liens de Dangier plantereux,
de triisrresse et de jalouslye
seront gari, je ne doubt mye:
c'est bien rayson, ainsy m'aist Dieux.
Je donne a tous les amoureux…

La plus belle et douce figure,
la plus noble, gent faiture,
c'est ma chiere dame et mestresse:
bon an, bon jour, joye et liesse
li doinst dieux, et bone aventure.
C'est tout mon bien, c'est ma deesse,
celle par qui ma dolour cesse,
en qui je preign ma noreture,
qui servir vueil sans nul destresse
de cuer tant que voglie me lesse,
n'en ce monde d'autre en ay cure.
Former la sut dieux de nature,
blans, blond, belle, tout par mesure,
playsamment y jouta josnesse,
largesse, honour, toute noblesse
en fais, en dis et en parleure.
La plus belle…

Je requier a tous amoureux
qui jugent par leur courtoisie:
ceux qui nosent pas dire “amye”
sont en amours si bien heureux.
A ce jour de l'an graceux
me treuve de celle partye.
Je requier a tous amoureux
qui jugent par leur courtoisie.
Mais vray Espoir, qui est songneux
de moy garir ma maladie,
me dis que je ne me soussye,
que l'an a venir avray mieux.
Je requier a tous amoureux…

and comes to my rescue.
Mercy, my lady and Love…

I give to all those in love,
for their New Year's gift, a marigold,
for it is by loving forever
that their suffering hearts can be healed.
They have it worse than laborers when it rains,
or a driver who goes off the road:
I give to all those in love,
for their New Year's gift, a marigold.
From the abundant snares of Danger,
from grief and jealousy
they will be saved, I do not doubt:
it's only right, so help me God.
I give to all those in love…

The most beautiful and sweet figure,
the noblest, most gracious form,
is that of my dear lady and mistress:
a good year, a good day, joy and happiness
may God grant her, and good success.
She is all my good, she is my goddess,
she through whom my grief ceases,
from whom I take sustenance,
whom I wish to serve without the least distress
of heart, as much as she will permit me,
nor in this world do I have any other desire.
God formed her naturally
pale, blond, lovely, all in just measure
and pleasingly, and he added youth,
generosity, honor, and every nobility
of deed, word, and speech.
The most beautiful…

I call upon all lovers
to judge by their courtesy:
those who dare not say “My love”
are most fortunate in love.
On this gracious New Year’s day
I find myself one of that party.
I call upon all lovers
to judge by their courtesy.
But True Hope, who is anxious
to cure me of my malady,
bids me not to worry,
for in the year to come I will fare better.
I call upon all lovers…

Translated by Christopher Page.
From lands where the sun arises
unto the ends of the earth,
let us sing of Christ the Prince,
born of the Virgin Mary.
The blessed creator of the world
put on a servant’s body,
so that, liberating the flesh through becoming flesh,
he would not lose what he had made.
The chaste mother’s belly
is filled with heavenly grace:
the girl’s womb bears
secrets which she has not known.
The modest dwelling of her body
becomes God’s new temple;
untouched, not knowing a man,
through a word she conceived the Son.
By her birth pangs she bore
the one whom Gabriel announced,
whom John, hidden within his mother’s womb,
acknowledged by leaping joyfully.
Glory be to you, Lord,
who is born of a virgin,
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Full of joy,
let the chorus of the faithful exult:
Alleluia.
The King of Kings
is brought forth from an intact womb,
a thing of wonder.
The Angel of Counsel
is born of a virgin,
the sun from a star:
A sun that knows no setting,
a star ever shining,
always bright.
As a star its ray,
the Virgin produces her Son,
alike in form.
Neither the star by its ray,
nor the mother by her son,
is corrupted.
The tall cedar of Lebanon
is formed by the low hyssop
in our valley:
Verbum, mens altissimi, 
corporari passum est, 
carne sumpta.

Isaia cecinit,
Synagoga meminit;
Hec Scriptura definit
Esse fačta.
Sic et nostris vatibus
Nec non et gentilibus
Sibyllinis versibus
Hec predicītā.

Nunc age propera
Et Christum venera,
Crede et nova et vetera.
Quem docet litera
Natum considera,
Ipsum genuit puerpera.

Christmas sequence (strophes 5-6
revised & translated by Richard Tarrant)

TRIPLUM

Hodie puer nascitur,
antec secula genitus,
agnus tener deprometitur,
carne mortali conditus,
matre intacēa ducitur,
luce quam fecit candidus,
qui previdetur, colitur,
quod non videtur splenditum.

Splendor in nubem funditur,
nec a sole divellitur,
splendor in nube conditur,
nec a nube minuitur,
nubes eodem alitum,
nubes interdum palitur,
nec ille splendor pungitur.

In carne verbum seritur
unione fortissima,
qua caro verbum creditur
ratione firmissima,
et verbum non desertetur
a carne solidissima,
nec unquam caro linquitur
a luce potentissima,
inest qui splendor textitur
alma cum semper anima.

the Word, the mind of the Highest,
descended into a human body,
having assumed flesh.

Isaiah sang of it,
The Synagogue recalls it;
Scripture reveals that it
Has been fulfilled.
Thus has this been foretold
By our own prophets
And those of the gentiles,
In the Sibylline oracles.

Come now, make haste
And worship the Christ,
Believe both the new and the old [revelations];
Whom the scripture proclaimed,
Look upon at his birth:
His mother has brought him forth.

A boy is born today,
a boy begotten before all time;
a tender lamb is brought forth,
concealed in mortal flesh.
He is drawn from a virgin mother,
from the light which his brightness made,
he who is foreseen and worshipped,
he who is more radiant than any thing.

His light is diffused into a cloud
and yet is not severed from the sun,
the radiance is established within the cloud,
and the cloud does not diminish it.
By him the clouds are given food,
yet no food is taken from them.
For the moment he endures the cloud,
nor is his radiance troubled.

The Word is woven in the flesh
by the strongest of all unions;
flesh is believed to be Word
by the strongest of all reasons.
And the Word is not abandoned
by the solid flesh,
nor is the flesh ever abandoned
by the light of power;
the indwelling radiance is woven
within the ever-kindly soul.
Homo mortalis, firmiter
carni cum heret anima,
humana passibiliter
coniuncta sunt hec infima,
duo creata duplici
natura reddunt unicum,
cum gratia multiplici
seperandarum partium,
sed increata tercia
talem confecit hominem,
qualem superna gratia
ubi vis fecit neminem.

Nam splendor carni additus
et anime, mirabilem,
perpetuum divinitus,
sibi assumpsit hominem.
Ergo, si caro linquitur
ab anima passibili,
mortuus homo creditur
tantum natura duplici.

Man is mortal because the soul
is firmly linked to the flesh,
and human traits undergo
union with lower nature.
Thus two things created with a double
nature produce one unique thing,
with the multiple grace
of the distinct parts;
but the third and uncreated thing
has made a man
such as heaven's grace
had not yet made.
For splendor added to the flesh
and to the soul has raised up
a miraculous man,
everlastingly divine.
So then: if the flesh is abandoned
by the passionate soul,
then man is thought dead
only by his double nature.

Translated by Larry Rosenwald.

Translations © 2007 by Scott Metcalfe where not specified otherwise.
The vocal ensemble **Blue Heron** combines a commitment to vivid live performance with the study of original source materials and historical performance practice. Blue Heron's principal repertoire interests are fifteenth-century English and Franco-Flemish polyphony, ranging from Dunstable and Du Fay through Ockeghem to Josquin; Spanish music between about 1500 and 1575; and neglected early sixteenth-century English music, especially the rich and unexplored repertory of the Peterhouse partbooks (c. 1540). The ensemble has also reached outside these areas to perform very early music (organa by the twelfth-century French composer Perotinus), very recent music (new works by the Australian composer Elliott Gyger), and more, including the complete *Eighth Book of Madrigals* by Luca Marenzio at the international Marenzio conference at Harvard University in April 2006. Founded in 1999, Blue Heron presents its own series of concerts in Cambridge, performs regularly at Monadnock Music in New Hampshire, and has appeared at other venues throughout the Northeast, including the 2005 Boston Early Music Festival and the 92nd Street Y in New York City. Its first CD, featuring music by Guillaume Du Fay, was released in March of 2007.

Baritone **Glenn Billingsley** made his debut with the New York City Opera National Company, and has sung with the Santa Fe, Chautauqua, and Lake George Opera companies. He has appeared in the Spoleto and Madeira Bach Festivals, toured the United States, South America, and Europe with the Waverly Consort, and done significant solo work with New York's Ensemble for Early Music, the Bach Aria Group, New York's Musica Sacra, Johannes Somary's Amor Artis Chorale, and numerous other choral organizations in New York and Boston. A longtime member of the Choir of the Church of the Advent, he is a founding member of Blue Heron. Glenn's wife, soprano Monique Phinney, is on the voice faculty of The Boston Conservatory; their son Ken is the drummer for the band Exhale, and their daughter Lisa is majoring in music theater at The Boston Conservatory.

Tenor **Allen Combs** is a native of Idaho Falls, Idaho, and received his education at the University of Idaho and the University of Lowell. In addition to his work with Blue Heron, Mr. Combs has performed with Schola Cantorum and Cappella Alamire. His recital repertoire embraces music from the Renaissance to the twentieth century and includes the major song cycles of Schubert and Britten. Mr. Combs has given world premieres at the Lowell New Music Festival and with Composers in Red Sneakers. He performs frequently at Phillips Academy, Andover, where he is a member of the voice faculty. Currently a soloist and cantor at the Church of the Advent, Mr. Combs has served as music director of the Andover Choral Society since 1990. He is also the vocal director for the Composers' Conference and Chamber Music Center at Wellesley College and music director for the New England Dance Ensemble.

**Pamela Dellal**, mezzo-soprano, is a much sought-after oratorio soloist who has performed with renowned ensembles in Boston and throughout the world. She has been featured in leading roles in operas of Purcell, Mozart, Britten, and others. As a member of Sequen- tia's women's ensemble, Vox Feminae, Ms. Dellal has recorded the music of Hildegard von Bingen and toured the US, Europe, and Australia. She appears frequently with Musicians of the Old Post Road and Ensemble Chaconne and is a regular soloist with Emmanuel Music. Her broad repertoire ranges from early chamber music to contemporary pieces.

Bass-baritone **Paul Guttry** enjoys a varied career including opera, oratorio, and chamber music. He recently played the Mother in Weill’s *7 Deadly Sins* with Intermezzo and Balthasar in Schumann’s *Genoveva* with Emmanuel Music. Paul has sung with the medieval music ensemble Sequencia and is a former member of Chanticleer. In Boston he has performed with Emmanuel Music, Handel & Haydn, the Boston Cecilia, Boston Revels, Prism Opera, and Collage New Music. Paul can be heard on BMG recordings of medieval music with Sequencia, Erato recordings of the Boston Camerata, and Koch International recordings of Bach with Emmanuel Music.

Mezzo-soprano **Lydia Heather Knutson** has performed around the world, appearing on radio and at leading international music festivals in the US, Canada, Europe, Latin America, and Australia. She is a founding member of the medieval ensemble Fortune’s Wheel, sang for many years with the women’s ensemble of Sequencia, Cologne, and has sung with Blue Heron since 2003.
Locally, she has performed with the Boston Camerata, Boston Cecilia, La Donna Musicale, and Emmanuel Music, among others. She has recorded for Dorian, Erato, and BMG Classics/Deutche Harmonia Mundi. In addition to singing, Dr. Knutson is a chiropractor and the director of the Lydian Center for Integrative Medicine in Cambridge.

Jason McStoots, tenor, has been celebrated as one of the “new generation of New England singers” and described by critics as “particularly outstanding,” with “a perfect light-opera voice,” “sweet, appealing tone and real acting ability.” He has sung with groups around the US including Boston Lyric Opera, Handel Choir of Baltimore, New Haven Symphony Orchestra, Emmanuel Music, Granite State Opera and Opera Providence; and has performed recitals with Tanglewood Music Center, MIT Recital Series, and Boston French Library. His most recent appearance with the Florestan Recital Project was hailed by the Boston Globe as “at least as polished as it is promising.”

Scott Metcalfe is a specialist in music between 1400 and 1750 whose career as a violinist and conductor has taken him all over North America and Europe. Besides directing Blue Heron, he serves as concertmaster of the Trinity Consort in Portland, Oregon, under the direction of Eric Milnes, enjoys a varied freelance career as a player, teacher, conductor, and writer, and is presently becoming an active member of Montreal’s burgeoning early music scene, working with Montreal Baroque, Arion, Les Boréades, and other groups. Metcalfe directed the Renaissance choir Convivium Musicum from 1996 through 2007 and was a founding member of La Luna and The King’s Noyse. He appears on recordings on harmonia mundi, ATMA, Dorian, Wildboar, and elsewhere. He received a bachelor’s degree in 1985 from Brown University, where he majored in biology, and in 2005 completed a master’s degree in historical performance practice at Harvard.

Countertenor Martin Near began his professional singing career at age ten, advancing to Head Chorister at Saint Thomas’s Fifth Avenue in New York City. Mr. Near currently sings with Blue Heron, Vox Triniti, Boston Secession, Amiable Consort, and with the choir of the Church of the Advent. He has appeared as guest soloist with the Fromm Players at Harvard, Seraphim Singers, Boston Choral Ensemble, Exultemus, the Harvard-Radcliffe Chorus, Andover Choral Society, and NotaRiotous. Trained in composition at the New England Conservatory, Mr. Near was composer and music director of the one act opera Six Characters in Search of an Opera for Project ARIA (AIDS Response by Independent Artists), which received five performances in Boston, supported by a grant from the American Composers Forum Boston. An advocate of new music, Mr. Near has been a soloist in numerous world premieres, including Temptation in the Desert by Elliott Gyger, written for Mr. Near and Seraphim Singers, On Prayer and Praying by Rodney Lišter, written for Mr. Near and organist Ross Wood, and You Are There by Johanna Malone, a microtonal piece in 72-note equal temperament.

Tenor Steven Soph, a native of Denton, Texas, attended the University of North Texas, where he sang with Lyle Nordstrom’s Collegium Musicum. In 2006 he recorded the roles of Historicus in Carissimi’s Jonas and Jephte with New Trinity Baroque in Atlanta, and in April of 2007 returned to Atlanta to record a Monteverdi program. In Boston he has performed repertoire ranging from the Renaissance to jazz, singing with Schola Cantorum of Boston, Cambridge Early Music Project, Philvox, Cut Circle, the Choir of the Church of the Advent, and the Boston Secession.

Tenor Mark Sprinkle has appeared as a soloist with Concerto Palatino, the Handel & Haydn Society, the Boston Early Music Festival, Emmanuel Music and Blue Heron, among many others. An active Bach Passion Evangelist, he appeared in 2007 with Chorus Pro Musica as Evangelist in the St. John Passion in Boston and in 2008 will perform the same role with the Boulder Bach Festival in Boulder Colorado. He was a founding member of the Cambridge Bach Ensemble. He has performed at music festivals in Bergen Norway, Vancouver, Edinburgh, and Aldeburgh, UK and has recorded with Dorian, Koch, Harmonia Mundi, Decca, Arabesque, and Telarc. He is a member of the voice faculty at Boston College. In addition to singing and teaching, he is an American Canoeing Association Open Water Sea Kayaking Instructor and a Registered Maine Guide.
Mezzo-soprano Daniela Tošić, a native of Belgrade, Yugoslavia, toured with the Belgrade-based ensemble Renaissance throughout the former Yugoslavia. In the Boston area she has worked with Ensemble P.A.N., Revels, Balmus, Foundling, and La Donna Musicale, and has premiered several new works. She is a founding member of Tapestry, the acclaimed vocal ensemble that records with Telarc International and MDG and tours widely throughout the US and abroad. She is also a founding member of the medieval-world fusion ensemble HourGlass.

Darrick Yee has performed regularly with a wide array of Boston-area vocal ensembles over the past fifteen years, from the close-harmony groups Downtown Crossing and the Harvard Krokodiloes to the early music ensembles Exsultemus and Blue Heron. He has performed on local and national stages, including Boston’s Symphony Hall, the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, and Lincoln Center’s Alice Tully Hall, and in nationally televised performances on ABC, A&E, and PBS. His diverse interests have afforded him the opportunity to perform with such luminaries as Bryn Terfel, Simon Carrington, Barry Manilow, and Sarah Jessica Parker, in programs ranging from vocal jazz and pop to sacred early music. Darrick appears on recent recordings of Philovox Ensemble, Boston Secession, and Blue Heron.
**Acknowledgments**

Many thanks to Larry Rosenwald and Richard Tarrant for emending and translating texts. Thanks to the Cambridge Society for Early Music for a grant supporting this season’s pre-concert talks. We plan to make these talks available as podcasts: check our website details and to download a podcast of last November’s talk by Myke Cuthbert about Dunstable.

Evan Ingersoll (empict multimedia) designs our programs and our website. Chris Clark (Cave Dog Studio) designs our publicity materials and program covers. We are fortunate to work with two so talented, reliable, and patient graphic artists. We are equally blessed to have Doc Davis record so many of our concerts, both efficiently and beautifully.

We are honored and grateful to have so many generous donors. Blue Heron could not exist without you. Many, many thanks.

**Donations from December 15, 2006 through December 14, 2007**

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