ELEKTRA WOMEN'S CHOIR WITH RITA COSTANZI, HARP



A CEREMONY OF CAROLS

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A CEREMONY OF CAROLS

John Rutter:

Benjamin Britten:		
A Ceremony of Carols (1943)		23:49
1 Procession	1:43	
2 Wolcum Yole!	1:22	
3 There is no Rose	2:49	
4 That yongë child	1:35	
Marianne de Kleer		
5 Balulalow	1:18	
Katherine Goheen		
6 As dew in Aprille	0:55	
7 This little Babe	1:18	
8 Interlude	4:06	
9 In Freezing Winter Night	3:54	
10 Spring Carol	1:04	
11 Deo Gracias	1:12	
12 Recession	2:02	
Paul Csonka:		
Concierto di Navidad (1958)		15:18
Lorraine Reinhardt		
13 Amoroso Pastorcillo	4:13	
14 Al Nino Jesús	5:07	
15 La Nana	5:54	

Dancing Day (1974) 26:12 Part 1 16 Prelude 3:52 17 Angelus ad Virginem 1:52 5:21 18 A virgin most pure *Corlynn Hanney* Margaret Barry Maggie Burr 19 Personent Hodie 1:53 Part II 20 Interlude 4:18 21 There is no rose 1:50 Katherine Goheen Marianne de Kleer 22 Coventry Carol 3:48 23 Tomorrow shall be 3:08 my dancing day Katherine Goheen

TOTAL: 65:35

Producer: Karen Wilson | Recording Engineer: Stuart Tarbuck

Skylark 9703

Cover Photo: Paul Terpanjian / Masterfile | Choir Photo: David Cooper

Costanzi Photo: Victor Derso Foto | Design: Jose Verstappen

Programme notes: Morna Edmundson & Diane Loomer

DDD Recorded and Manufactured in Canada

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Deirdre Rogers Carmen Rosen

Rosemary Speakman

ELEKTRA WOMEN'S CHOIR

Morna Edmundson and Diane Loomer, co-directors with Rita Costanzi harp

Elektra Women's Choir was founded by co-directors Morna Edmundson and Diane Loomer in 1987. The choir is known for its adventurous programming, seeking out music written specifically for women and frequently commissioning new works. The singers are selected by audition and share an enthusiasm for challenging repertoire. Elektra was awarded first prize for women's choirs in four consecutive rounds of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's National Choral Competition, as well as several major prizes for performance of contemporary music. The choir's first CD, Elektra Women's Choir, was nominated for a JUNO award in 1994, and subsequent recordings Classic Elektra and From the Heart are commercially distributed in Canada, the U.S. Britain and Hong Kong. In May 1996, Elektra was awarded "Most Significant Choral Event of the Past Two Years" by the Association of Canadian Choral Conductors for its premiere of Stabat Mater by Ramona Luengen. The choir is frequently heard on CBC Radio across Canada and on National Public Radio in the United States. In 1996, it represented Canada at the Fourth World Symposium on Choral Music in Sydney, Australia, and in 1997, performed at the national convention of the American Choral Directors Association.

Morna Edmundson holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of British Columbia, a Diploma in Choir Pedagogy from the Stockholm Conservatory, and a Master of Music degree in Choral Conducting from Western Washington University. Her professional music career spans fifteen years of singing and conducting, including eight years as a professional singer in the Vancouver Chamber Choir. Morna often takes on special projects in the choral field, including several years of software development and a two-year position as Assistant Director of the 1993 World Symposium on Choral Music in Vancouver. Besides co-directing Elektra, Morna conducts the Vancouver Orpheus Male Voice Choir and the Coquitlam District Youth Chorus. Morna and her husband Dean live in Surrey, BC with their two young daughters, Laurie and Julie.

Diane Loomer is an honours graduate of Gustavus Adolphus College and the University of British Columbia School of Music. Her professional music career includes over fifteen years of teaching, clinicing and conducting in the United States and Canada. She is currently on faculty at the University of British Columbia's School of Music. She is currently on the faculty opf the School of Music at the University of British Columbia where she conducts the 150-voice Coral Union. Diane also founded and conducts Canada's other prize-winning equal voice ensemble, Chor Leoni Men's Choir. In May 1994, she conducted and toured with the prestigious National Youth Choir of Canada. She was named by the YWCA as *Vancouver's Woman of Distinction for Arts and Culture* for 1994. Her choral compositions and arrangements have been published, performed and recorded internationally, and she often speaks on CBC Radio as an advocate and promoter of classical music.

Publisher information:

A Ceremony of Carols Boosey & Hawkes 16832 Concierto di Navidad Peer International Corporation Dancing Day Oxford University Press



RITTA COSTANZI

Heralded as "an artist of immense gifts" and "one of Vancouver's cultural milestones", Ms. Costanzi continues to captivate audiences with the warmth, conviction and exquisite virtuosity of her playing. Recipient of the Lily Laskine Award, the ITT International Fellowship and twice the winner of the American Harp Society Competition, she has performed at the Tanglewood and Marlboro international festivals, at the Sixth World Harp Congress, and as a concerto soloist with orchestras across North America.

In 1997, she performed a solo concert of Canadian works (including her own) at the new music festival "Musikfest Horwelten" in Hamburg, Germany. Highly acclaimed for her outstanding musicianship and extensive repertoire, Ms. Costanzi pursues an active solo, chamber music and recording career. She is currently Principal Harp with the CBC Vancouver Orchestra. Ms. Costanzi continues to explore her new role as actress, receiving much acclaim for the unusual new performance piece "Harp and Solo", written for her by Vancouver playwright Kico Gonzalez-Risso.

In the words of renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma, "Rita's playing is full of lyricism. She explores the full range of colour of her instrument. Her playing has life, passion, and never loses sight of the 'long line'."

A CEREMONY OF CAROLS

This disc brings best wishes for Christmas to all lovers of classical choral music from one of Canada's foremost choral ensembles, Elektra Women's Choir. The combination of outstanding Christmas repertoire and the musical gifts of our guest artist, harpist Rita Costanzi, have made this project a particular joy.

One of the most famous pieces ever written for choir and harp opens the recording. **Benjamin Britten** wrote most of *A Ceremony of Carols* in 1942 in a matter of days while crossing the Atlantic aboard the *Axel Johnson*. As this was the middle of World War II, the threat of attack from U-boats was omnipresent.

Britten's cabin was airless and bleak and the ship's crew "witless recruits". To make matters worse, customs officials had seized his draft of "Hymn to Saint Cecilia" (for *a cappella* mixed choir, poetry by W. H. Auden) as possible coded information. During a landing at Halifax, Nova Scotia, Britten had purchased a copy of "The English Galaxy of Shorter Poems", and here he found the texts that were to become the genesis of *A Ceremony of Carols*. Britten's first conceived the piece for women's voices ("sopranos and altos") and it was by women that it was first premiered in December 1942. By December 1943, with Nos. 4a (That yongë child) and 7 (Interlude) added, the work was published, calling for "treble" (boys') voices instead. The work itself, framed by the unison plainchant "Hodie Christus Natus Est" (Today Christ is born), is a series of musical gems that together make up a work that is exuberant, innocent and moving. The central theme in this work is the perfection and joy of childhood, mirroring our state of innocence before the Fall.

In performing this work, a choral director is always faced with questions of pronunciation regarding the early English texts. To rhyme or not to rhyme? Does the different spelling necessitate a different pronunciation from modern English? Is it better for the audience to hear modern words although Britten was setting medieval poems? We are indebted for our solution to the meticulous work of the Philadelphia Singers on their recording "Ceremonies of Carols" (Michael Korn, conductor; RCA Victor 7787-2-RC). Like them, we chose to give as "authentic" pronunciation as possible to the words, feeling that Britten, with his insightful choice of texts for all his vocal works, might have enjoyed the flavour of these words as we have. Listeners will find that the texts written before the 16th century have a very different pronunciation from those written later, in accordance with English language research.

Paul Csonka (1905-1996) was born and trained as a musician in Vienna. He had a lifelong interest in opera and championed the presentation and performance of twentieth century music. In 1933 he formed the Opera Guild in Salzburg, but because of the subsequent threatening political situation in Europe, this outstanding Guild had to be disbanded in 1938 and Csonka fled to La Habana, Cuba. Here he continued to compose and teach in several music conservatories, direct choral groups and local opera companies. Receiving an honorary doctorate from New York College of Music in 1944, Csonka went on to become Director of the Opera Department at the University of Louisiana, was a member of the Lyric Opera Company of Chicago and founded the first opera school in Cuba. His compositional output covers a wide spectrum of forces and forms: symphonies, masses, cantatas, concertos, operas, oratorios, solo songs and numerous other works for orchestra and chamber ensemble. Many of these compositions which are based on the flavour and colour of Cuban rhythms and folk melodies, won several prizes.

Concierto de Navidad uses traditional Spanish religious poems as its text. It was written in 1958 and dedicated to Edna Phillips, an outstanding harpist with the Philadelphia Orchestra. The Spanish sensuousness and catchy complexity of Cuban rhythms, fully imbued in both the voice writing and the harp, are found in each movement of this earnestly warm and buoyantly challenging work.

John Rutter (b. 1945) is undoubtedly the most prolific choral writer of today and his compositional career is a continuing commitment to choral music. Rutter's works embrace both large- and small-scale works for choir, various orchestral and instrumental pieces, a piano concerto, two children's operas, music for television, and specialist writing for such groups as the King's Singers. He was Director of Music at Clare College, England, from 1975 to 1979, but gave up his Clare post to compose, freelance, and conduct the Cambridge Singers, a young mixed-voice choir that has made numerous recordings with him. Rutter, an honorary Fellow of Westminster Choir College, Princeton, is a frequent guest of universities, churches, music festivals, and conferences throughout the world.

Dancing Day celebrates Christmas with a tapestry of familiar carols and old texts dating back as far as the 14th Century. Several of these songs are "people's music" - the merry medieval dance tunes that with their religious text had one foot in the church door, and with their dance melodies one in the village square. This strange amalgam of secular experience and religious story retell the central event of Christmas with vivid imagery and affecting simplicity. Through them all runs the sense of wonder and danceable joy.

A Ceremony of Carols

1 **Procession**

Hodie Christus Natus est: hodie Salvator apparuit: hodie in terrra canunt angeli: lætantur archangeli: hodie exsultant justi dicentes: gloria in excelsis Deo. Alleluia!

Transl: Today Christ is born; today the Saviour has appeared; today the angels sing, the archangels rejoice; today the righteous rejoice, saying: Glory to God in the highest. Alleluia!

2 Wolcum Vole!

Anon., 14th century
Wolcum be thou hevené king Wolcum
Yole!
Wolcum, born in one morning,
Wolcum for whom we sall sing!
Wolcum Thomas marter one,
Wolcum seintes lefe and dere, Wolcum.
Wolcum Innocentes every one,
Wolcum, Twelfth Day both in fere,
Wolcum.
Candelmesse, Quene of bliss,
Wolcum bothe to more and lesse.
Wolcum be ye that are here.
Wolcum alle and make good cheer.

Wolcum alle another yere, Wolcum Yole.

3 There is no Rose

— Anon., 14th century There is no rose of such vertu as is the rose that bare Jesu. Allehuia For in this rose conteined was Heaven and earth in litel space. Res miranda (marvellous thing). By that rose we may well see there be one God in persons three. Pares forma (equal in nature). The aungels sungen the shepherds to, "Gloria in excelsis Deo". Gaudeamus (Let us rejoice). Leave we all this werldly mirth and follow we this joyful birth. Transeamus (Let us pass over).

4 That yongë child

— *Anon., 14th century.* That yongë child when it gan weep With song she lulled him asleep: That was so sweet a melody It passed alle minstrelsy.

The nightingale sang also: Her song is hoarse and nought thereto: Whoso attendeth to her song And leaveth the first, then doth he wrong.

5 Balulalow

— James, John and Robert Wedderburn, 1561

O my dear hert, young Jesu sweit Prepare thy creddil in my spreit, And I sall rock thee to my hert, And never mair from thee depart.

But I sall praise thee evermoir With sanges sweit unto thy gloir; The knees of my hert sall I bow, And sing that right Balulalow!

6 As dew in Aprille

—Anon., c. 1400

I sing of a maiden that is makeless: King of all kings to her son she ches.

He came al so still there his moder was, As dew in Aprille that falleth on the grass,

He came al so still to his moder's bour, As dew in Aprille that falleth on the flour.

He came al so stille there his moder lay, As dew in Aprille that falleth on the spray.

Moder and mayden was never none but she:

Well may such a lady Goddes moder be.

7 **This little Babe** — *Roberth Southwell (1561? - 1595)*

This little Babe so few days old, Is come to rifle Satan's fold; All hell doth at his presence quake, Though he himself for cold do shake; For in this weak unarmed wise The gates of hell he will surprise.

With tears he fights and wins the field, His naked breast stands for a shield; His battering shot are babish cries, His arrows looks of weeping eyes, His martial ensigns Cold and Need, And feeble Flesh his warrior's steed.

His camp is pitched in a stall, His bulwark but a broken wall; The crib his trench, haystalks his stakes; Of shepherds he his muster makes; And thus as sure his foes to wound, The angels' trumps alarum sound.

My soul with Christ join thou in fight; Stick to the tents that he hath pight. Within his crib is surest ward; This little Babe will be thy guard. If thou wilt foil thy foes with joy, Then flit not from this heavenly Boy.

8 Interlude

9 In freezing winter night

-Robert Southwell

Behold a silly tender babe, In freezing winter night In homely manger trembling lies Alas, a piteous sight!

The inns are full; no man will yield This little pilgrim bed. But forced he is with silly beasts In crib to shroud his head.

This stable is a Prince's court, This crib his chair of state; The beasts are parcel of his pomp, The wooden dish his plate.

The persons in that poor attire His royal liveries wear; The prince himself is come from heav'n; This pomp is prized there.

With joy approach, O Christian wight, Do homage to thy King. And highly praise his humble pomp, Which he from Heav'n doth bring.

10 Spring Carol

William Cornish (14??-1523)
Pleasure it is to hear iwis the Birdes sing, The deer in the dale, the sheep in the vale, the corn springing.
God's purveyance for sustanance, it is for

man.

Then we always to give him praise and thank him than.

11 Adam lay ibounden — Anon., 15th century

Deo gracias! (*Praise be to God*) Adam lay ibounden, bounden in a bond; Four thousand winter thought he not too long.

And all was for an appil, an appil that he took,

As clerkès finden written in their book. Ne had the appil take ben,

Ne haddè never our lady a ben hevnè quene.

Blessèd be the time the appil takè was. Therefor we moun singen: Deo gracias!

12 Recession

(same text & translation as opening *Procession*)

Concierto di navidad

13 Amoroso Pastorcillo – Dionisio Solis

Cantad y bailad, pastorcillos! Que en medio de sombras y de oscuridad al sol increado se mira brillar!

14 Al Nilio Jesus

– Ventura de la Vega

Al hymno que los Angeles entonan en.el cielo, unamos nuestros cánticos desde el humilde suelo. Cantad, mortales, al Niño Redemptor, Hosanna al Unigénito que del celeste trono hoy baja a ser la victima del mundanal encono! Hosanna al Que desciende en nombre del Señor!

15 La Nana

- R.S. Gomis

A la nanita nana nanita Ea; mi Jesús tiene sueño, bandito sea! Pimpollo de canela lirio en capullo! Duérmete, vida mia, mientraste arullo! Sing and dance, gentle shepherds! Ye, who in darkness and in the shadows can anticipate the incredible sun that will soon appear!

To the hymns of the angels that on high resound, We lift up hosannas from our humble ground. Sing to him, mortals, the Redeemer, the Child! The only child, who from His celestial throne lowers himself to be victim of the world's animosity! Glory to Him who from heaven descends in the Lord's name!

Sweetly sing a lullaby, hush him to sleep! Drowsy is my little Jesus; blessed may he be! Sprig of cinnamon, my loved one, my lily blossom! Sleep, my soul, my life, my dear one, while I sing to Thee! Duérmete, que del alma mi canto crota, y un deliquio de amóres en cada nota! Niño en cuyos ojos el sol fulgore, cerrarlos es cerrarme de noche oscura, Pero cierra bien los ojos bellos! Fuentecilla que corre, clara y sonora, calla, mientras la cuna se balancea: calla ruiseñor!

Dancing Day

16 Prelude

17 Angelus ad Virginem

— words and melody 14th century

Angelus ad virginem subintrans in conclave, Virginis formidinem demulcens inquit "Ave! Ave regina virginum; caeli terræque Dominum concipies et paries intacta Salutem Hominum; Tu porta cæli facta, medela criminum."

"Quomodo conciperem quæ virum non cognovi? Qualiter infringerem quod firmamente vovi?" "Spiritus Sancti gratia perficiet hæc omnia; ne timeas, sed gaudeas, secura quod castimonia manebit in te pura Dei potentia." Sleep, while up from out my bosom wells my tender lay,
A delight of love in every note I sing to Thee! Babe, whose flashing eyes so sparkling mean the sun to me,
When you close them you leave me in darkest night;
Yet the time has come to shut them; close your beautiful eyes!
Sweet fountain that runs and babbles, cease thy murmur now.
While the cradle swings, be silent, yes nightingale, even you!

Th'angel to the Virgin said, ent'ring into her bower, For dread of quaking of this maid, He said "Hail" with great honoure. "Hail, be thou queen of maidens mo, Lord of heaven and earth also, conceive thou shalt, and bear withal the Lord of might, heal of all mankind. He will make the gate of heaven bright, Med'cine of all our 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."

18 A virgin most pure

- words and melody English traditional

A virgin most pure, as the prophets do tell, Hath brought forth a baby, as it hath befel,

To be our Redeemer from death, hell and sin,

Which Adam's transgression hath wrapped us in:

Aye and therefore be merry, rejoice and be you merry,

Set sorrows aside:

Christ Jesus our Saviour was born on this tide.

At Bethlem in Jewry a city there was,

Where Joseph and Mary together did pass, And there to be taxed with many one mo' For Cæsar commanded the same should be so:

Aye and therefore be merry...

But when they had entered the city so fair, A number of people so mighty was there, That Joseph and Mary, whose substance

was small, Could find in the inn there no lodging at all.

Aye and therefore be merry...

Then they were constain'd in a stable to lie,

where oxen and asses they used for to tie; Their lodging so simple, they held it no scorn,

But against the next morning our Saviour was born.

Aye and therefore be merry...

Then God sent an angel from heaven so high,

To certain poor shepherds in fields where they lie,

And bade them no longer in sorrow to stay,

Because that our Saviour was born on this day.

Aye and therefore be merry...

Then presently after the shepherds did spy A number of angels that stood in the sky; They joyfully talked and sweetly did sing, To God be all glory, our heavenly King. Aye and therefore be merry

19 Personent Hodie

— words and melody from Piæ Cantiones (1582)

Personent hodie voces puerulæ, laudantes jucunde qui nobis est natus, summo Deo datus. Et de virgineo ventre procreatus.

In mundo nascitur, pannis involvitur, præsepi ponitur stabulo brutorum, Rector supernorum. Perdidit spolia princeps infernorum.

Magi tres venerunt, parvulum inquirunt, Bethlehem adeunt, stellulam sequendo, ipsum adorando, aurum, thus, et myrrham ei offerendo.

Omnes clericuli, pariter pueri, cantent ut angeli: advenisti mundo, laudes tibi fundo. Ideo gloria in excelsis Deo.

20 Interlude

21 There is no Rose

There is no rose of such virtue as is the rose that bare Jesu.Alleluia.For in this rose contained was heaven and earth in little space.Res miranda (*marvellous thing*).

Let children's voices resound today, merrily praising him who has been born, sent by almighty God, and brought forth from a virgin's womb.

He was born into the world, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and placed in the manger in a cattle shed, the Lord of the heavens, the Prince who destroyed the spoils of hell.

Three wise men appeared; they offered gifts and asked for a boy-child, following a star; they worshipped him, offering him gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Let all the clerics, and likewise the boys, sing like the angels: "You have come to the world; therefore I pour out praises to you: Glory to God in the highest!"

22 The coventry carol

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

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 lully, lullay?

Herod the King, in his raging,

Charged 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.

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

thou little tiny child, By by, lully, lullay.

23 Tomorrow shall be my dancing day

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day: I would my true love did so chance To see the legend of my play, To call my true love to my dance: Sing O my love, This have I done for my true love.

Then was I born of a virgin pure, Of her I took fleshly substance; Thus was I knit to man's nature, To call my true love to my dance: Sing O my love...

In a manger laid and wrapp'd I was, So very poor, this was my chance, Betwixt an ox and a silly poor ass, To call my true love to my dance: Sing O my love...

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day...

Acknowledgements

Betty and Dave Anderson Elizabeth Brodovitch Miriam Durbach Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd and Yvonne Frazer Katherine Goheen Sandra Head Janice Hill and Mike Dunn Bruce Hoffman

Eric and Rose Hominick Thomas and Mary Irwin Mrs. Ada Little Sheila Little Margaret Molloy Marjorie Niblock Elizabeth Rathbun Mrs. Lenore Rathbun Thelma Reid Lower Norma Selwood Patricia Speakman Dr. Barbara Stafford Sheila Toshach and one anonymous donor

