

Early Music Christmas

RTHK Radio 4
10 – 11 am

Programme 4
Sunday 26th December 2004

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MUSIC: Bach “In dulci jubilo” **CD 44909-00 1 tr. 10** **1:00**

KANE: Christmas greetings and good wishes to you! And welcome to join me, Ciaran Kane, for this **final** Early Music *Christmastime* programme, featuring music sung, played or first heard on one of these late December days in centuries past. When Handel was in Italy, between 1706 and 1709, he must have heard some of the local Christmastime pastoral carols, traditionally sung by shepherds who came down from the hills to the towns playing their bagpipes and shawms. Their style and spirit influenced the ‘pastorale’-type of Christmas music written, for instance, by Archangelo Corelli just a few years after Handel’s visit. A well-known *Neapolitan* song evidently stuck in Handel’s memory, to be used some 35 years later when he wrote “The Messiah”. Listen

MUSIC: Quando nascette ninno **98 X 02 tr 10** **2:26**

KANE: The traditional Neapolitan carol ‘Quando nascette ninno’ “When Christ was born in Bethlehem, The night appeared as though it were day!” France also had a wealth of Christmas folk-song, the “noëls” which many French composers (notably organists) have arranged or woven into other works. Perhaps the most successful adaptation of ‘noëls’ into more formal music has been done by Marc-Antoine Charpentier, who died **just** 300 years ago shortly before Handel went to Italy. His “Messe de Minuit” (Midnight Mass) has been re-discovered within the past 30 years or so, and become his best-known work and one now regularly performed in this season. The ‘Messe de Minuit’ has the ordinary Latin Mass texts, but set to the melodies of more than 10 noëls. I’m going to play the first section, the Kyrie: this begin with an organ prelude based on the noël “Joseph est bien marié”; the first ‘Christe’ uses a slower, quieter melody, “Or, nous dites, Marie” (‘pray, tell us, Mary’); the second

one the Noël “Une jeune pucelle” (‘a young maiden’), which appears again as an organ *solo* at the end of the Kyrie movement. The “Kyrie” from Charpentier’s ‘Messe de Minuit’, with the BBC Singers and London Baroque Soloists, directed by Stephen Cleobury.

MUSIC: Charpentier: “Kyrie” (from Messe de Minuit) 98 X 06 tr 10 6:08

KANE: The ‘Kyrie’ of Charpentier’s ‘Midnight Mass’. We haven’t had anything *Dutch* in this series of programmes; but one of the most delightful settings of the Christmas Day text “Hodie Christus natus est” is by Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, of Amsterdam, a hundred years or so before Charpentier’s time. “This day Christ was born, Noel! Today the saviour appeared, Alleluia. Today the angels sing on earth.... Today the just rejoice, saying Glory to God in the highest, Alleluia, Noel!”

MUSIC: Sweelinck: “Hodie Christus natus est” 98 X 02 tr 14 3:39

KANE: “Hodie Christus natus est”, ‘This day Christ was born’, by Dutch organist, harpsicordist, teacher and composer, Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, performed by Ex Cathedra Chamber Choir and Baroque Orchestra. The major work today is music written specifically for the day after Christmas Day, the second part of J.S.Bach’s “Christmas Oratorio”. This was first heard on 26th December 1734 in Leipzig. Like the rest of the Oratorio, not *all* the music was being heard for the first *time*: some of it was re-cycled from earlier cantatas, with new words. But the whole of the Oratorio *and* each of its parts is meticulously structured and inter-related, as it progresses through the story of the birth of Christ, in the gospels of St Luke and St Matthew. Parts two and three focus on the shepherds in the fields, and oboes and flutes dominate in the scoring rather than the more jubilant trumpets and horns featuring in other parts. So, part two *begins* with the famous “pastoral symphony” before getting down to the evangelist’s recitative of shepherds watching over their flocks by night. We’ll hear, today, up to the end of the second chorale --- which is a pivotal point: the exact middle of part two and thus the centre of the carefully symmetrical first three parts: and, evidently very deliberately, the *melody* of that chorale is the great Lutheran anthem “Von Himmel hoch da komm ich her” ‘From heaven above to earth I come’, though it’s got different words here: ‘Behold here: there in a dark stable lies the One

who has dominion over all.'

MUSIC: Bach: Christmas Oratorio pt 2 CD 1503 disc 1 ttrr 10 – 17 16:22

KANE: 'Where, before, an ox sought food, *there* now rests the Virgin's Child'. From part 2 of J S Bach's Christmas Oratorio, a recording by the Munich Bach Choir and Orchestra directed by Karl Richter. Last week we had a setting by Giovanni Gabrieli of a popular Latin text which comes from the old monastic 'office' of Matins for Christmas Day, "O Magnum Mysterium". Today, another setting of the same words, from the same period: this time by English composer William Byrd whose life overlapped Gabrieli's. But their lives were very different, religiously. Byrd wrote to both Latin and English texts but much more in Latin for which there was little opportunity of public performance. Byrd was virtually neglected for nearly 300 years till the early 20th-century revival of interest in his work; and even then, it was some of his *English* compositions that caught attention. Awe and wonder are the mood of his quiet setting of "O Magnum Mysterium" 'O Great mystery and wonderful sacrament that animals should see the new-born Lord lying in a manger'

MUSIC: Byrd: O Magnum Mysterium 90 R 03 tr 15 5:42

KANE: The Cambridge Singers directed by John Rutter singing William Byrd's "O Magnum Mysterium" By now, the name of Hildegarde of Bingen has become well-known as a pioneering woman composer and poet, as well as mystic.. But there were over a dozen nuns in 17th century Italy (Monteverdi's time and afterwards) who published their own music. Foremost among them was Chiara Margarita Cozzolani of Milan. She lived almost her entire adult life in the Benedictine Convent of Santa Radegonda, across the road from the Milan Cathedral, and eventually became Prioress and then Abbess of the monastery. Her fame and that of her music-making companions spread well beyond the city of Milan, and at one stage, when she was Abbess, she had to defend her monastery from attacks by the strict Archbishop who wanted to limit the nuns' music-making and contacts with the world outside the cloister walls. Chiara Margarita Cozzolani published a number of collections of her own motets and concerti. Here's her "Gloria in altissimis Deo", a dialogue between the angels and shepherds at Christmas. 'Come, shepherds,

awake, run, behold, worship! What is this new light ? What is this joyful voice ? Who is this joyful messenger ?'

MUSIC: Cozzolani: Gloria in Altissimis Angels & tr 8 4:59

KANE: "Gloria in altissimis Deo" (Glory to God in the highest), by 17th century Italian Abbess and composer, Chiara Margarita Cozzolani. We've had lots of angels and shepherds these past few weeks of Early Music for Christmastime --- time, before we close, for a *different* style of popular song, a lullaby. "Sweet was the song the virgin sang" comes from England, the original verse dating from the 1500s, the *melody* documented from the 1590s. Here's Emma Kirkby, soloists and the Rose Consort of Viols.

MUSIC: Swete was the song the Virgine soong Adeste tr 15 5:01

KANE: You've been listening to a *series* of Early Music programmes for Christmastime, with me Ciaran Kane. So, here I say Good-bye to you for now, and wish you blessings and happy music-listening in the New Year.

[MUSIC: Bach: In dulci jubilo pre-faded to 52']

[new ending 2007]

[You've been listening to Early Music for Christmastime, with me Ciaran Kane. Enjoy Christmas, and join me again next week at the same time for a final programme of Christmastime Early Music](#)

Music: 44:18 (exc.Into/end)

Script-words: 1160