

Cantate 16

Our program today's theme is on the Feast of the Epiphany.

The observance had its origins in the Eastern Christian Churches, and was a general celebration of the [Incarnation](#) of [Jesus Christ](#). It included the commemoration of: his birth; the visit of the [Magi](#) ("Wise Men", as Magi were Persian priests) to [Bethlehem](#); all of Jesus' childhood events, up to and including his [baptism](#) in the [Jordan](#) by [John the Baptist](#); and even the miracle at the [Wedding of Cana](#) in Galilee. It seems fairly clear that the Baptism was the primary event being commemorated.

Christians fixed the date of the feast on January 6 quite early in their history.. The [Biblical Magi](#), who represented the non-Jewish peoples of the world, paid homage to the infant Jesus in stark contrast to [Herod the Great](#) (King of Judea), who sought to kill him. Saint [John Chrysostom](#) identified the significance of the meeting between the Magi and Herod's court: "The star had been hidden from them so that, on finding themselves without their guide, they would have no alternative but to consult the Jews. In this way the birth of Jesus would be made known to all."

The earliest reference to Epiphany as a Christian feast was in A.D. 361, by [Ammianus Marcellinus St. Epiphanius](#) says that January 6 is (Christ's "Birthday; that is, His Epiphany").

In 385, the [pilgrim Egeria](#) (also known as Silvia) described a celebration in [Jerusalem](#) and [Bethlehem](#), which she called "Epiphany" (*epiphania*) that commemorated the [Nativity of Christ](#). Even at this early date, there was an [octave](#) associated with the feast.

In a sermon delivered on December 25, 380, St. [Gregory of Nazianzus](#) referred to the day as the Theophany an alternative name for Epiphany, saying expressly that it is a day commemorating the holy nativity of Christ and told his listeners that they would soon be celebrating the baptism of Christ. Then, on January 6 and 7, he preached two more sermons, wherein he declared that the celebration of the birth of Christ and the visitation of the Magi had already taken place, and that they would now commemorate his Baptism. At this time, celebration of the two events was beginning to be observed on separate occasions, at least in [Cappadocia](#).

We start out with two settings of *Wie Schon Leuchtet Der Morgenstern*, (How Brightly Beams the Morning Star). The first written for organ by Dietrich Buxtehude, played by Ulrik Spang-Hanssen from a CD entitled, *Buxtehude Complete: Ulrik Spang-Hanssen Plays*. Then an arrangement sung by the Kings Singers. They continue to be one of the most sought-after and critically acclaimed vocal ensembles in the world, performing a rich and varied repertoire from Gesualdo to György Ligeti and Michael Bublé. Internationally recognized for their work in the classical field, in early music in particular, they retain the sparkle that delights so many fans when they perform much loved numbers from the lighter end of the repertoire. Whatever the music The King's Singers are instantly recognizable for their spot-on intonation, their impeccable vocal blend, the flawless articulation of the text and incisive timing.

Track 1 (6:13) Wie Schon Leuchtet Der Morgenstern, Dietrich Buxtehude

Track 2 (4:12) Wie Schon Leuchtet Der Morgenstern, The Kings Singers

**Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern
Voll Gnad' und Wahrheit von dem Herrn,
Die süße Wurzel Jesse!
Du Sohn David aus Jakobs Stamm,
Mein König und mein Bräutigam,
Hast mir mein Herz besessen,
Lieblich, freundlich,
Schön und herrlich, groß und ehrlich,
Reich von Gaben,
Hoch und sehr prächtig erhaben!**

*How beautifully shines the morning star
full of grace and truth from the Lord,
the sweet root of Jesse!
You son of David from the line of Jacob,
my king and my bridegroom,
have taken possession of my heart,
[you who are] lovely, friendly,
beautiful and glorious, great and honourable,
rich in gifts,
lofty and exalted in splendour!*

Next from their CD Anniversary Carols, we hear Soli Deo Gloria Cantorum, directed by Almeda Berkeley singing Jesu, Son Most Sweet and Dear. The internationally renowned 40-voice choir Gloriæ Dei Cantores (Singers to the Glory of God) holds a passionate dedication to find and express the most authentic and compelling interpretation of sacred choir music of all historical periods and styles.

Then Chorus Angelicus & Gaudeamus directed by Paul Halley singing The Blessed Son of God from their CD What Child is This?

Chorus Angelicus is comprised of four choral ensembles, involving more than seventy children who hail from towns throughout southwestern New England. The Artistic Director is Grammy-nominated composer and conductor, Nicholas White, and the choirs are in residence at Trinity Episcopal Church in Torrington, CT.

The choruses perform a large and varied repertoire, from the classics of choral literature to contemporary and original compositions. There is a strong emphasis placed on musical education, as well as performance, for all the age groups and ability levels.

This internationally acclaimed children's choir has impressed audiences with the best of choral music, both sacred and secular, since its founding in 1991 by Paul Halley.

Gaudeamus is an adult chamber choir of professional and semi-professional free lance singers formed in 1992, and directed by Nicholas White. This choir performs in conjunction with Chorus Angelicus, providing the alto, tenor and bass parts, and giving the younger choristers the opportunity to experience singing such masterworks as Bach's St. John Passion and Mass in B Minor, Handel's Dixit Dominus, Britten's Saint Nicholas, and Schnittke's Requiem.

Track 3 (4:08) Jesu, Son Most Sweet and Dear.

Je-su, Son most sweet and dear, Mean the bed you lie on here, And that af-flicts me sore. For your cra-dle's like a bier, Ox and ass are with you here, And I must weep there-fore. Je-su, sweet one show no wrath, I have not the poor-est cloth to wrap you in its me fold. Not a rag in which to wrap, Hold you safe up on my lap, And shield you from the cold. Je-su, Son most sweet and dear, Mean the the bed you lie on here, And that af-flicts me me sore. For your cra-dle's like a bier, Ox and ass are with you you here, And I must weep there-fore

Track 4 (3:08) The Blessed Son of God

The blessed son of God only
In a crib full poor did lie;
With our poor flesh and our poor blood
Was clothed that everlasting good.
Kyrieleison.

The Lord Christ Jesu, God's son dear,
Was a guest and a stranger here;
Us for to bring from misery,
That we might live eternally.
Kyrieleison.

All this did he for us freely,
For to declare his great mercy;
All Christendom be merry therefore,
And give him thanks for evermore.
Kyrieleison.

Nest is the lovely *Shepherd's Farewell* of Hector Berlioz. Near the end of each of its three repetitions, it has a tonal modulation of almost staggering beauty. It is sung by the Choir of Tewkesbury Abbey.

Track 5 (5:25) The Shepherd's Farewell

Thou must leave thy lowly dwelling,
The humble crib, the stable bare.
Babe, all mortal babes excelling,
Content our earthly lot to share.
Loving father, Loving mother,
Shelter thee with tender care!

Blessed Jesus, we implore thee
With humble love and holy fear.
In the land that lies before thee,
Forget not us who linger here!
May the shepherd's lowly calling,
Ever to thy heart be dear!

Blest are ye beyond all measure,
Thou happy father, mother mild!
Guard ye well your heav'nly treasure,
The Prince of Peace, The Holy Child!
God go with you, God protect you,
Guide you safely through the wild!

Now, from the Epiphany scripture readings, the anthem “Arise Shine” for You Light Has Come”, the Third Song of Isaiah, by the composer Richard Dirkesen, sung by the Choir of St. John’s Cathedral, Denver from their CD, Sing we Hallelujah.

Track 6 (2:47) Arise, Shine for Your Light Has Come

*Arise, shine, for your light has come
The glory of the Lord has risen on you!
Arise, shine, your light has come*

Next we hear The Three Kings, sung by the Choir of King’s College, Cambridge, then We Three Kings, sung by the Robert Shaw Chorale, from their CD The Millennia Collection.

Track 7 (2:42) The Three Kings

Track 8 (3:3) We Three Kings of Orient Are

Next, Felix Mendelssohn's Say, Where is He Born? There Shall a Star from Jacob Shining, sung by the Choir of St. Edmundsbury Cathedral and their CD So Rich a Crown

Track 9 (7:10) Say, Where is He Born? There Shall a Star from Jacob Shining, Mendelssohn

When Jesus, our Lord, was born in Bethlehem, in the land of Judaea; behold, from the east to the city of Jerusalem there came the wise men and said: Say, where is he born, the king of Judaea? For we have seen his star, and are come to adore him. There shall a star from Jacob come forth, and a Sceptre from Israel rise up. And dash to pieces princes and nations. How brightly beams the morning star! With sudden radiance from afar. With light and comfort glowing! Thy Word, Jesus, inly feeds us, rightly leads us, life bestowing. Praise, oh praise such love o'erflowing!

From the Jessye Norman Collection, CD Christmastide – In the Spirit, Noel Nouvelet arranged by Bruce Saylor sung by Ms. Norman and the choirs of St. Thomas Episcopal, Riverside Church, and St. Barnabas Episcopal churches, New York City.

Track 10 (2:34) Noel Nouvelet

Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici,
Dévotes gens, crions à Dieu merci !

New Christmas, Christmas we sing here,
Devout people, let us shout our thanks to God!

Chorus :

Chantons Noël pour le Roi nouvelet ! (bis)

Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici !

Chorus:

Let us sing Christmas for the new King! (repeat)

New Christmas, Christmas we sing here.

L'ange disait! pasteurs partez d'ici!

En Bethléem trouverez l'angelet.

Chorus

The angel said! Shepherds leave this place!

In Bethlehem you'll find the little angel.

Chorus

En Bethléem, étant tous réunis,

Trouvèrent l'enfant, Joseph, Marie aussi.

Chorus

In Bethlehem, all united,
Were found the child, Joseph, and Mary too.

Chorus

Bientôt, les Rois, par l'étoile éclaircis,
A Bethléem vinrent une matinée.

Chorus

Soon, the Kings, by the bright star
To Bethlehem came one morning.

Chorus

L'un portait l'or; l'autre l'encens bém;
L'étable alors au Paradis semblait.

Chorus

One brought gold, the other priceless incense;
The stable thus seemed like Heaven.

Chorus

Now listen as Todd Wilson plays, Maurice Durufle's organ prelude based on the melody from the chant for the Introit for Epiphany

Track 11 (2:41) Prelude sur l'introit de l'épiphanie, Todd Wilson, organ

Perhaps the most famous and certainly the most extraordinary of the Rachminnoff's Vigil movements, this setting of the Song of Simeon (Luke 2: 29–32) is the high point of Vespers. The text is said by the priest whenever a child is received into the church. Rachmaninoff was particularly fond of this movement and wanted it at his funeral, but this wish was not granted because no place could be found for it in the funeral service. Against a gently rocking background, the tenor solo sings a Kiev chant. At the end of the movement the basses descend step by step to a low B flat in what is one of the most impressive passages in the whole work. We hear the USSR Ministry of Culture Chamber Choir conducted by Valery Polyansky. Following this will be the same text sung to a completely different setting by the Gabrieli Consort and Players from their CD, Road to Paradise, Gustav Holst's, setting of the Nunc Dimittis.

Track 12 (4:10) Nunc Dimittis, Rachmaninoff

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.

Track 13 (3:11) Nunc Dimittis, Gabrieli Consort

Finally, we return to another setting of “How Brightly Beams the Morning Star”. This one, from the CD Blessed Christmas, by Kenneth Preston.

Track 14 (4:03) How Brightly Beams the Morning Star

Thank you for listening again today and I hope you’ve enjoyed this edition of Cantate. I leave you with this prayer, the Nativity Prayer of St. Bernard of Clairvaux:

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Amen.

Let Your goodness Lord appear to us, that we
made in your image, conform ourselves to it.
In our own strength
we cannot imitate Your majesty, power, and wonder
nor is it fitting for us to try.
But Your mercy reaches from the heavens
through the clouds to the earth below.
You have come to us as a small child,
but you have brought us the greatest of all gifts,
the gift of eternal love
Caress us with Your tiny hands,
embrace us with Your tiny arms
and pierce our hearts with Your soft, sweet cries. Amen.