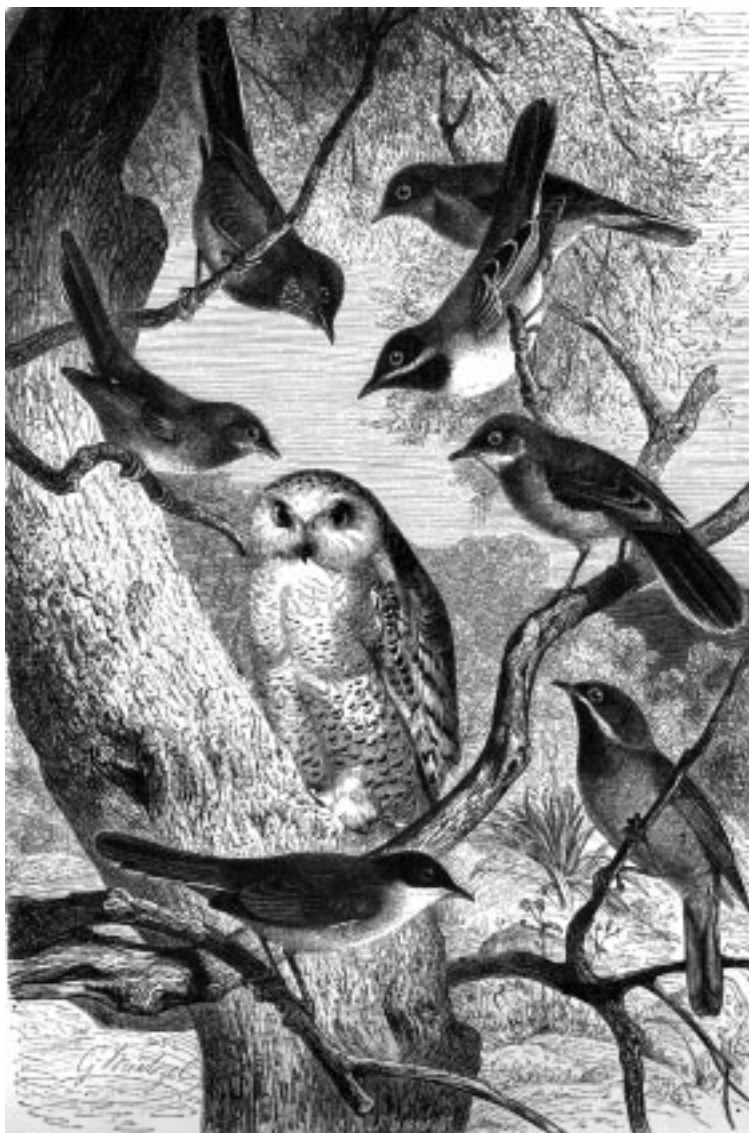


The Birds Of Bethlehem

A Christmas musical for Unison Children's Choir and Tenor

SATB Soloists, piano

Optional obbligato instruments (violin, flute, cello, clarinet, horn, trombones)



Music by Richard Shephard

Text and Story by Mark Schweizer

St. James Music Press

www.sjmp.com

The Birds Of Bethlehem

The Story

Brother Francis, a monk, is working at the abbey at Christmastide. The children come in and beg a story of the Christ child's birth. After the children reject several of the well known stories they have heard before, Brother Francis tells them the story of the Birds of Bethlehem.

When the baby Jesus was born, the birds came from every shore to offer their gifts to the child. The nightingale offers the baby the gift of song, the bluebird, the gift of happiness. The cuckoo offers the holy child the gift of laughter, the owl, the gift of wisdom and the stork offers the gift of family and home.

Then the Evil One, in the form of a raven comes and foretells the Passion and death of Jesus. But the dove appears lastly and bestows the message of hope and salvation.

Production Notes

Cast

Children's Choir

Brother Francis	tenor
Nightingale	soprano (opt. violin)
Bluebird	alto (opt. flute)
Cuckoo	tenor (opt. clarinet)
Owl	baritone or bass (opt. horn)
Stork	alto (opt. cello)
Raven	baritone or bass (opt. trombones/tuba)
Dove	soprano

The roles of the birds can be sung by four soloists. (If necessary, Brother Francis can also sing the "Song of the Cuckoo.") Alternatively, the songs of the birds be divided among different singers and do not have to be memorized. They should be sung from the side, away from the action and acted out by children in costume, by dancers, by kites suspended on poles, or in any other manner which may be appropriate.

The obbligato instruments (violin, flute, viola, clarinet, horn, trombones) are entirely optional. You may choose to use some or all of them depending on your resources.

It is also possible to shorten the production by omitting one or two of the first five birds' songs.

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The Birds of Bethlehem

A Christmas musical for Unison Children's Choir and Tenor
SATB Soloists — Optional obbligato instruments (violin, flute, cello, clarinet, horn, trombones)
piano

Text by Mark Schweizer

Music by Richard Shephard

Overture

piano $\text{♩} = 72$ *mf*

4 *cresc.*

7

10 *f*

13

16

19 *Enter children* *f*

rit. - - - - -

Chor. Ding dong! mer-ril - y on high, in

23

Chor. heav'n the bells are ring - ing Ding dong! ver - i - ly the sky is riv'n with an-gels sing - ing

26 *1st time f*
2nd time p

Glo

28

Chor. ri - a, Ho - sa - na in ex - cel - sis.

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31

Chor. *f*

E'en so, here be-low, be-low, let stee-ple bells be swung-en, And *i - o, i - o, i - o,* by

34

Chor. priest and peo-ple sung - en, *f* Glo
p

For Review Only

36

Chor. ri-a, Ho - sa - na in ex - cel - sis.

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39

Chor. *f*

Pray you du - ti - ful - ly prime your ma - tin chime, ye ring - ers;

42

Chor. 

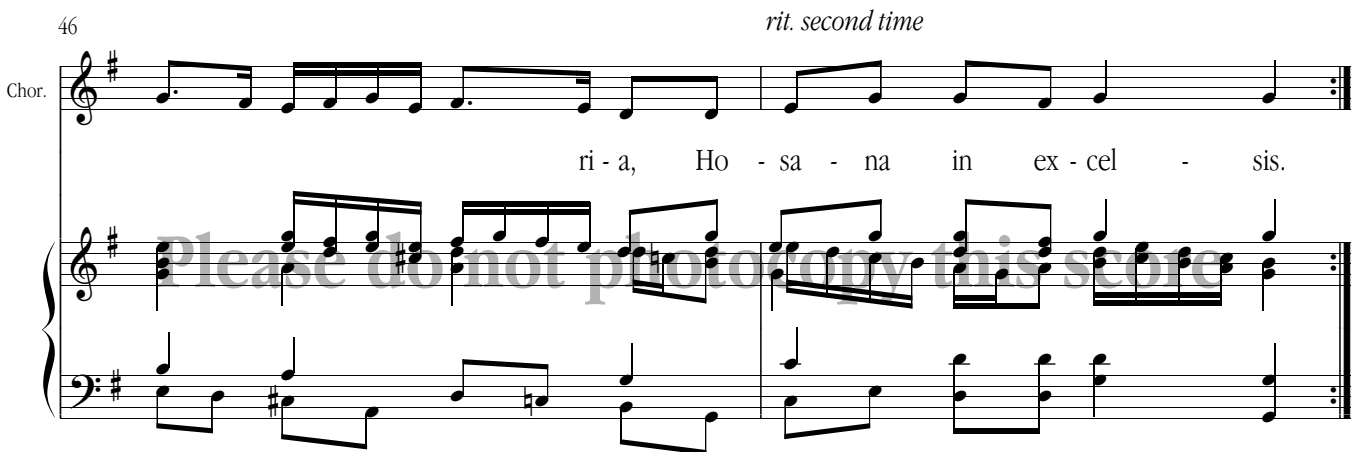
May you beau-ti-ful-ly rime, your eve-time song, ye sing-ers.

44

Chor. 

p Glo - ri - a, *f* Ho - sa - na in ex - cel - sis.

46

Chor. 

rit. second time

ri - a, Ho - sa - na in ex - cel - sis.

48 $\text{♩} = 56$

Chor. *mf*

Brother Francis is working. The children gather around. Brother Francis, we come to see you this day Our

53

Chor.

parents have bid us your foot-steps a-dorn We'd like to come sit in the straw and the hay And

57

Chor.

have you to tell us of Beth-lehem morn. A sto-ry, a sto-ry of Jes-us's birth, Tell of the an-gels and

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62

Chor.

peace to the earth. O tell of the shep-herds and

66

Chor.

tell of the kings Tell of the gold and the gifts that they bring Tell of the an - i - mals, -

70

Chor.

tell of the star, Tell us a sto - ry of Beth-le-hem far. A sto - ry, a sto - ry of

74

Chor.

Jes - us - 's birth, Tell of the an - gels and peace to the earth.

77

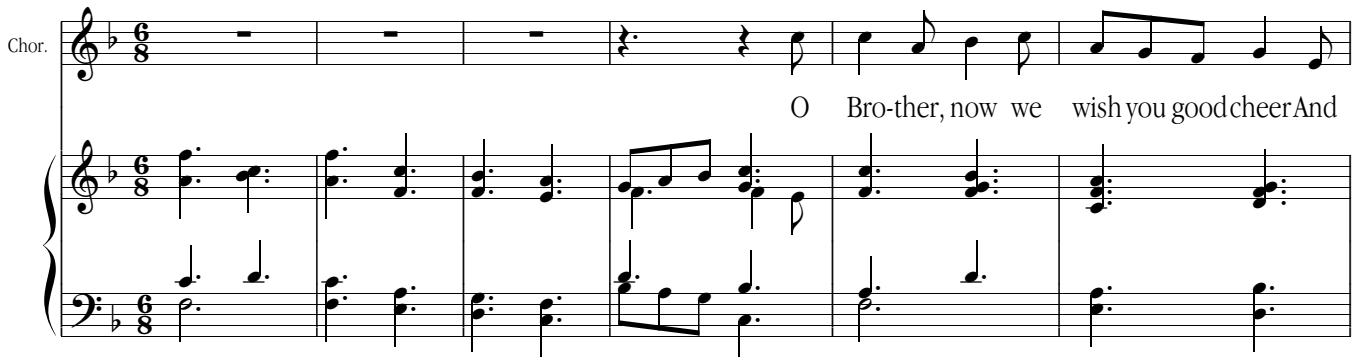
Dance

mp (repeat f)

81

Brother Francis: Ah children, I'm so happy to see you, but I can't stop to tell you a story just now.

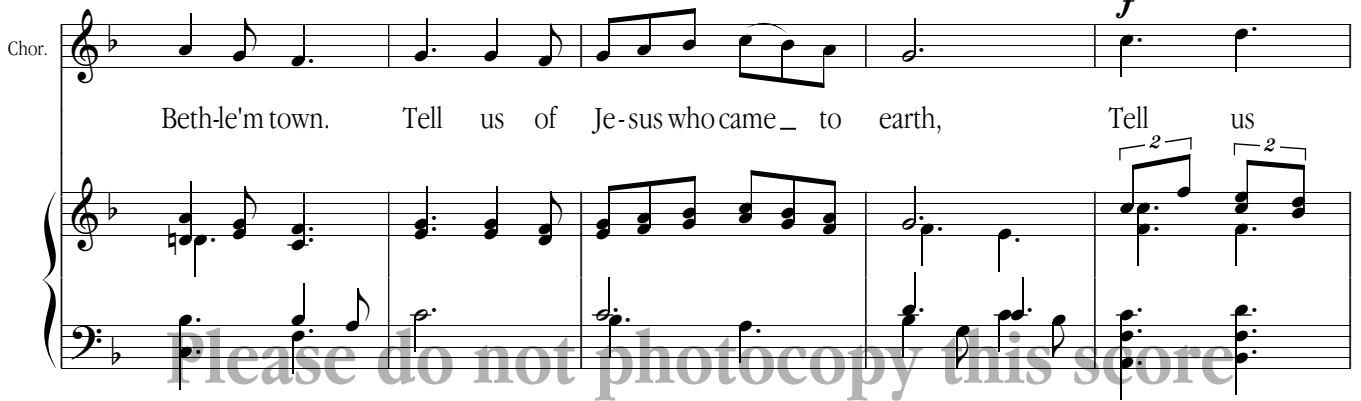
86 ♩. = 70

Chor.  O Bro-ther, now we wish you good cheer And

92

Chor.  wel-come in__ the fes-tive year. We gath-er all and bid you come down To tell us a sto-ry of

97

Chor.  Beth-le'm town. Tell us of Je-sus who came_ to earth, Tell us *f*

102

Chor.  all of his ho - ly birth. *mf* O child-ren all, please

Bro. F 

106

Bro. F

let me be, For I am bu-sy as you can see. The mangers are empty, the don-key is loose, The

111

Bro. F

chickens are hun-gry, as is the goose, Ox - en and hor-ses have gone a -

115

Bro. F

stray *f* I've no time on this blus-te-ry day.

119

Chor.

mf
But Bro - ther, we have come to town Our

123

Chor.

par - ents traveled from miles a-round To gath - er at the mar - ketplace And

127

Chor.

trade with folk of ev' - ry race So we have come to the ab-bey this

131

Chor.

morn Just to hear how the Sa - vior was born.

Brother Francis: Ah well, I suppose I have no choice in the matter. A story then.

136

Bro. F.

mp parlando *Children nod*

♩ = 110

Would you like to hear the one a - bout the kings?
like to hear the one a - bout the beasts?

140

Bro. F *mp*

Three kings had trav - eled from a - far
The friend - ly beasts have gath - ered there

143

Chor. *f*

NO, NO, we've heard that one,
Fol - low - ing the guid - ing star...
'Round the man - ger, cold and bare...

146

Chor.

we _ know that one. Tell us a new one, tell us a - noth - er, Tell us a tale of

150

Chor. 1. 2.

Christ - mas, bro - ther. bro - ther. *p parlando*

Bro. F

Would you Would you like to hear the one a - bout the

154 *Children nod*

Bro. F *mp*
 an - gels? The an - gels sing - ing in the sky

158

Chor. *f*
 NO, NO, we've heard that one,
 Bro. F
 Glo - ry be to God on high...

161

Chor.
 we__ know that one. A new sto - ry is the one we need. A sto - ry that we

165

Chor.
 have - n't heard.
 Bro. F *mp*
 Then I will tell you of the birds.

170 ♩ = 70

Chor. *mf*

Yes, tell the sto - ry of the birds And

176

Chor. we will lis - ten to ev' - ry word.

Bro. F *f*

The birds that came from far - thr'st shore To

180

Chor. *f*

Gifts of great glo-ry and of great worth,

Bro. F *f*

add their gifts to the ba - by's store. Gifts of great glo-ry and of great worth,

185

Chor. Gifts to hon - or the ba - by's birth.

Bro. F Gifts to hon - or the ba - by's birth.

189 *Brother Francis:* *p* *p* *p* *p*

A long time ago, on the plains of Judah, in the town of Bethlehem, in a lowly stable

a new babe was born who was to be the Savior of the World.

underscore — Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

His mother wrapped him in a soft cloth and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn. The holy babe's only attendants in those early hours were the animals, for the shepherds had not yet heard the message of the angels, and the kings had not yet arrived with their costly gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Yet while the animals were still in wonder that the holy child should be born among them, the birds arrived, bringing the gifts that only they could bestow.

193 ♩ = 60

pp

198

204 *attacca*

14 *The birds enter. They may be danced or acted out by children in costume, portrayed by kites, or in any other manner. The soloists should sing the bird's songs, but not act them out.*

209 ♩ = 84

Bro. F *f*

Full ma-ny abird did wake and fly
night-in-gale and blue-bird came

211

Chor. Now - ell, now - ell, now - ell!

Bro. F Now - ell, now - ell, now - ell! Full ma - ny a bird did wake and fly To the
The cuck - oo, stork, and rav - en came And

213

Chor. *f* On Christ-mas night,

Bro. F *mp* man - ger bed with wand-ring cry On Christ-mas night,
they did sing in Je - sus' name

215

Chor.

Bro. F Now - ell, now - ell! *f*

Now - ell, now - ell! The owl was there with eyes so wide

217

Chor. Now - ell, now - ell, now - ell!

Bro. F Now - ell, now - ell, now - ell! The__ owl was there, the dove be - side And__

219

Chor. On__ Christ-mas night,

Bro. F they did sit at Ma - ry's side On__ Christ-mas night,

221

Chor. *cadenza* *[[falsetto?]* Now-ell, now-ell!

Bro. F. Now ell, now-ell, now-ell!

Song of the Nightingale (Soprano)

Brother Francis: The first bird to come to the baby Jesus was the nightingale.

223 *Violin*

vln. *mp*

n.gale The night - ingale from 'cross the sea, From Per - sia, and the

$\text{♩} = 60$

mp

228

vln. *Please do not photocopy this score*

n.gale an - cient land. Her song _____ is fair - est mel - o - dy,

232

vln.

n.gale

She sings _____ for Kings at their com- mand.

236

vln.

n.gale

Now to come and

240

vln.

n.gale

of - fer free The gift _____ of mu - sic, sent _ to thee.

244

Chor. *mp*

The gifts of mu - sic and of song The gifts to all of us be-long, The

249

Chor.

birds to Beth-hem flew a-right And gave their gifts that ho - ly night, to Je - sus.

Song of the Bluebird (Alto)

Brother Francis: The bluebird offered the gift of happiness.

254

Flute

fl.

bb *mf*

espress. ♩ = 60

Con - si - der now the lil - lies fair They do not toil nor do they

260

fl.

bb

spin The blue - birds flit-ting through the air no melan - cho - ly cares be -

266

fl.

tr

bb

gin; Now to come and of-fer free — The gift of

272

fl.

bb

Chor.

hap - pi - ness, to thee. *mp*

The gifts of hap-pi -

♩. = 60

277

Chor.

ness and song The gifts to all of us be - long, The birds to Beth - l'hem

281

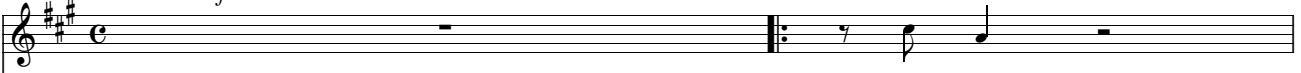
Chor.

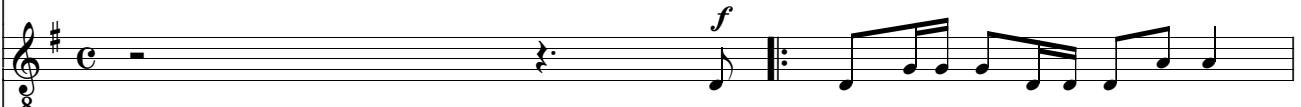
flew a - right And gave their gifts that ho - ly night, to Je - sus.

Song of the Cuckoo (Tenor) *(may be sung by Brother Francis)*


Brother Francis: The cuckoo was next. A bird of merriment and laughter.

285 *Clarinet in B flat*

clar. 

c'koo 

From out of a wood did a cuc - koo fly,
hopped, he _ curt-sied, _ round he flew,



287

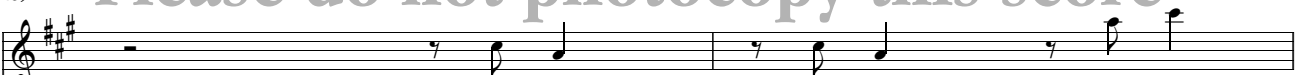
clar. 


c'koo 

Cuc - koo, cuc - koo, cuc - koo From _ out a wood did a cuc - koo fly And _
Cuc - koo, cuc - koo, cuc - koo And his laugh - ter filled the _ sta - ble through As _

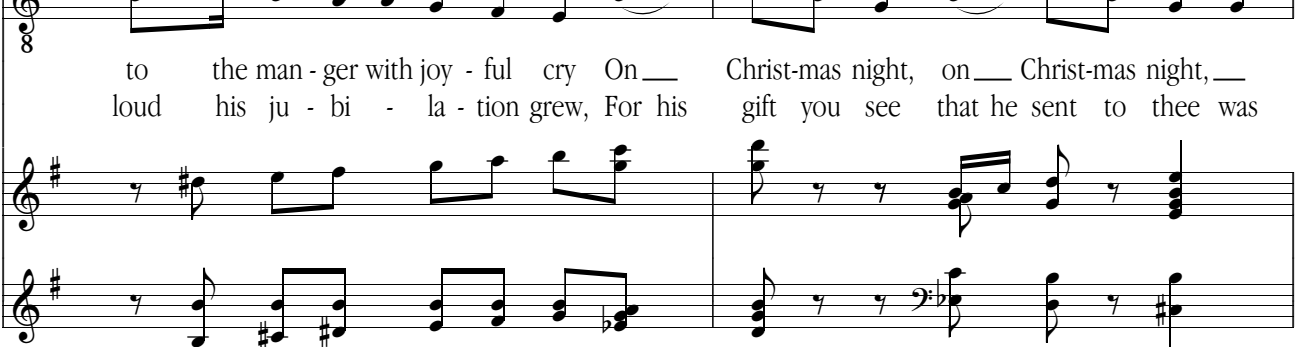


289

clar. 

c'koo 

to the man - ger with joy - ful cry On _ Christ - mas night, on _ Christ - mas night, _
loud his ju - bi - la - tion grew, For his gift you see that he sent to thee was



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291

clar.

c'koo

Cuc-koo, cuc-koo, cuc-koo. He

mf The

294

Chor.

gifts of laugh-ter and of song The gifts to all of us be-long, The birds to Beth-l'hem

299

Chor.

flew a - right And gave their gifts that ho - ly night, to Je - sus.

Song of the Owl (Baritone)

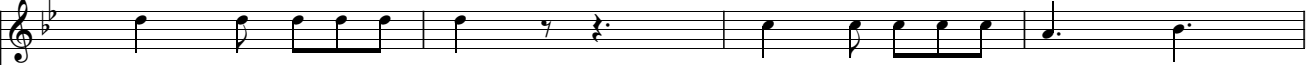
Brother Francis: The owl, the wisest of all the birds, was next.


303 *Horn in F* *f*

alla caccia ♩ = 80 *f*


The owl, the hun - ter, ques - tions all; Who is this child? Who is this king?

308

hn. 

owl 

Who shall the hearts of men enthrall? To whom shall we bring of - fer-ing?



312

hn. 

owl 

Who shall need com - fort? Who can say? Who will pro-TECT him ev - 'ry day? And



316

hn. 

owl 


who will come and of - fer free The gift of wis - dom? I, _ for thee.




321

♩. = 60

mf

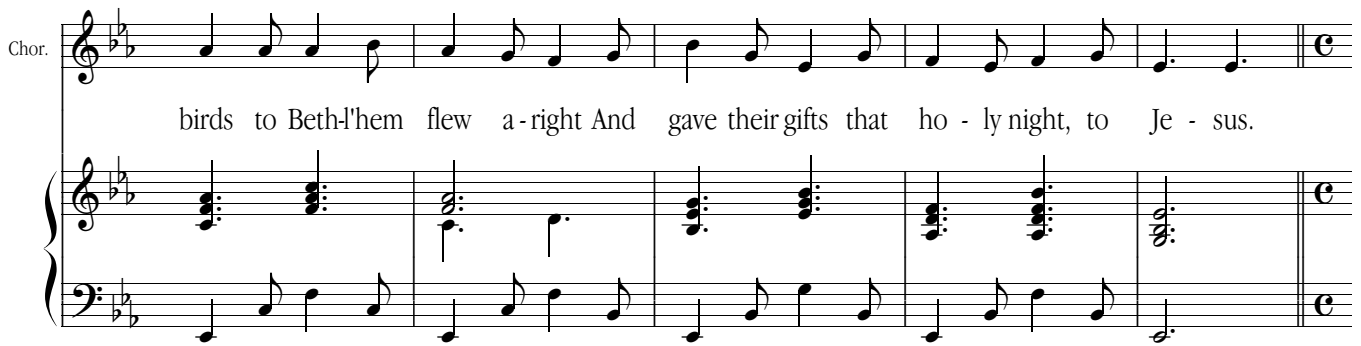
Chor. 

The gifts of wis - dom and of song The gifts to all of us be-long, The



326

Chor.



birds to Beth-'hem flew a-right And gave their gifts that ho - ly night, to Je - sus.

Song of the Stork (Alto)

Brother Francis: The stork came, and offered her gift, dropping her feathers into the baby's manger.

331

*Cello**legato*

vcl.



mp
espressivo The Stork, she rose on Christ-mas Eve And
from her snow - y breast she plucked Her

334

vcl.



asked at__house__ and__ hall "Now where is He of David's
feath - ers__ warm, to of - fer thee; She strewed them in the manger

337

vcl. 1.

stork

line?" "He lies _____ in an ox-'s stall.." "A - las," mourned she, "how
bed The gift of home and fa-mi -

341

vcl. 2.

stork

poor His bed Who rules the un-i-verse o'er head!" Then ly.

345

Chor. *mp*

The gifts of fa-mi - ly and song The gifts to all of us be-long, The

351

Chor.

birds to Beth-l'hem flew a-right And gave their gifts that ho - ly night, to Je - sus.

356 *recit.*

Bro. F *p* But after the birds had brought their gifts To the baby, meek and mild, The evil one was wicked swift and hastened to the little

360

Bro. F child. In the form of a raven, he took his flight, And settled sta - ble there. on the And as he

364

Song of the Raven (Bass or Baritone)

rav. *p* came, day turned to night, And dark-ness fo-llow'd ev' - ry-where.

Three trombones (or 2 trombones and tuba) If all three trombones are used, omit piano until m. 376

367

 $\text{♩} = 72$

tb

rav. gift from all is free - ly giv'n Un - to this babe, so won-drous - ly, And —
babe will be a - dored by all The bles - sed one, by pro-phets heard Yet —

371

1.

tb

rav.

wor - thy of the Prince of Heav'n Yet this the gift I give__ to thee; This
when re-deem - ing A - dam's fall His grave will be the fin - al

375

2.

tb

rav.

word.. My gift is death__ up-on the tree, His nail-torn hands,__ His piercéd

379

tb

rav.

side; His crown of thorns will ev - er be__ The mark of man-kind's fool - ish pride.

383

tb *sf*

rav.

Bro. F *sf* I bring you death. *espress.* Gloom-y night — embraced the

mf

388

Bro. F place, wherein the ho - ly in - fant lay The babe looked up and

text: Richard Crasbow

392

Bro. F showed his face, in spite of dark - ness, it — was day,

396

Bro. F Sum-mer in win - ter, day in night, e - ter - ni - ty shut in a

400

Bro. F

span They saw him and they blessed the sight, —

403

Bro. F

Heaven in earth and God — in man. And as they watched, filled with great

p

Song of the Dove (Soprano)

407

dove

This ba - by's death has

Bro. F

fear A ti - ny tur-tle-dove drew near.

mp

molto legato e espressivo

$\text{♩} = 100$

412

dove

been — fore - told Scourged, whipped and sent to harm,

417

dove

Yet through his stripes we shall be whole

422

dove

And find sal - va - tion in his arms. He shall not

For Review Only

427

dove

sleep, but live a - gain And ris - ing from the grave shall

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432

dove

be The Word made Flesh, both God and man.

438

dove

Our hope e - ter - nal - ly. This is the gift, by God de -

Bro. F

This is the gift, — by God de -

444

dove

fined, — The gift of life for all — man - kind.

Bro. F

fined, The gift of life for all — man - kind.

451

♩. = 64

Chor.

mf

The gifts of Christ-mas

456

Chor.

and of song The gifts to all of us be - long, The birds to Beth - l'hem

460

Chor. flew a - right And gave their gifts that ho - ly night, to Je - sus.

Brother Francis: And now remember from this day
The gifts the birds brought to the child.
And count them blessings for yourselves;
For God and man are reconciled.

Now begone, my young friends. Let me get on with my work!
(exits)

464

Chor. Dingdong! mer-ril-y on high, in heav'n the bells are ring - ing

$\text{♩} = 72$

467

Chor. Dingdong! veri-ly the sky is riv'n with an-gels sing - ing *mp* Glo

f

470

Chor. ri-a, Ho - sa - na in ex-cel - sis.

Children exit (or bow music)

473

Musical notation for measures 473-474. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth-note patterns, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

475

Musical notation for measures 475-476. The right hand continues with eighth-note patterns, and the left hand maintains the accompaniment.

477

Musical notation for measures 477-478. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth-note patterns, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

479

Musical notation for measures 479-480. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth-note patterns, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

481

Musical notation for measures 481-482. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth-note patterns, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

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